WRITINGS OF J C PHILPOT

by J.C. Philpot

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by J.C. Philpot, compiled for study and devotional reading.

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Chapter 2

01.00. Contemplations & Reflections

Contemplations & Reflections by J. C. Philpot

PRIDE

IDOLATRY Communion with God

Name and Fame Religion, in some shape or other All the devil's tricks! The call and qualifications for the ministry Countless treasures!

Christian giving The Work of the Holy Spirit Experimental Preaching Doctrinal Preaching

Sanctification The Two Natures in a Believer Disease & Remedy The depth of the fall The experience of a believer The grace of God Spiritual-mindedness The Sovereignty of God Personal revival of the soul The incomprehensible of God The love of Jesus for His people The treasures of Divine truth Before we can read to our soul's profit In this world of ours

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Sunday Schools The work of the ministry A minister should not to be too sensitive

01.01. Pride

PRIDE (J. C. Philpot, from his "Reviews" 1853) "I hate pride and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13 "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure

of this: They will not go unpunished." Proverbs 16:5 Of all sins pride seems most deeply imbedded in the very heart of man. Unbelief, sensuality, covetousness, rebellion, presumption, contempt of God’s holy will and word, hatred and enmity against the saints of the Most High, deceit and falsehood, cruelty and wrath, violence and murder--these, and a forest of other sins have indeed struck deep roots into the black and noxious soil of our fallen nature; and, interlacing their lofty stems and gigantic arms, have wholly shut out the light of heaven from man’s benighted soul. But these and their associate evils do not seem so thoroughly interwoven into the very constitution of the human heart, nor so to be its very life blood as pride. The lust of the flesh is strong, but there are respites from its workings; unbelief is powerful, but there are times when it seems to lie dormant; covetousness is ensnaring, but there is not always a bargain to be made, or an advantage to be clutched. These sins differ also in strength in different individuals. Some seem not much tempted with the grosser passions of our fallen nature; others are naturally liberal and benevolent, and whatever other idol they may serve, they bend not their knee to the golden calf. Strong natural conscientiousness preserves many from those debasing sins which draw down general reprehension; and a quiet, gentle, peaceable disposition renders others strangers not only to the violent outbreaks, but even to the inward gusts of temper and anger. But where lust may have no power, covetousness no dominion, and anger no sway--there, down, down in the inmost depths, heaving and boiling like the lava in the crater of a volcano, works that master sin, that sin of sins—pride! As Rome calls herself the Mother and Mistress of all the churches, so is Pride the Mother and Mistress of all the sins; for where she does not conceive them in her ever-teeming womb, she instigates their movements, and compels them to pay tribute to her glory. The origin of evil is hidden from our eyes. Whence it sprang, and why God allowed it to arise in his fair creation, are mysteries which we cannot fathom; but thus much is revealed, that of this mighty fire which has filled hell with sulphurous flame, and will one day involve earth and its inhabitants in the general conflagration, the first spark was pride!

It is therefore emphatically the devil’s own sin; we will not say his darling sin, for it is his torment, the serpent which is always biting him, the fire which is ever consuming him. But it is the sin which hurled him from heaven and transformed him from a bright and holy seraph into a foul and hideous demon. How subtle, then, and potent must that poison be, which could in a moment change an angel into a devil! How black in nature, how concentrated in virulence that venom, one drop of which could utterly deface the image of God in myriads of bright spirits before the throne, and degrade them into monsters of uncleanness and malignity! Be it, then, borne in mind that the same identical sin which wrought such fearful effects in the courts of heaven was introduced by the Tempter into Paradise. "You shall be as gods," was the lying declaration of the father of lies. When that declaration was believed, and an entrance thus made into Eve’s heart, through that gap rushed in pride, lust, and sinful ambition. The fruit of the forbidden tree was "pleasant to the eyes;"

there was food for lust. It was a tree "to be desired to make them wise;" there was a bait for pride. "They would be as gods;" there was a temptation to sinful ambition. The woman tempted the man, as the serpent had tempted the woman; and thus, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12.)

There are sins which men commit that devils cannot. Unbelief, infidelity, and atheism, are not sins of devils; for they believe and tremble, and feel too much of the wrath of God to doubt his threatenings or deny his existence. The love of money is a sin from which they are exempt, for gold and silver are confined to earth, and the men who live on it. The lusts of the flesh in all their bearings, whether gluttony, drunkenness, or sensuality, belong only to those who inhabit tabernacles of clay. But pride, malignity, falsehood, enmity, murder, deceitfulness, and all those sins of which spirits are capable, in these crimes, devils as much exceed men as an angelic nature exceeds in depth, power, and capacity a human one. The eye of man sees, for the most part, only the grosser offences against morality; it takes little or no cognizance of internal sins. Thus a man may be admired as a pattern of consistency, because free from the outbreaks of fleshly and more human sins, while his heart, as open to God’s heart-searching eye, may be full of pride, malignity, enmity, and murder, the sins of devils. Such were the scribes and pharisees of old; models of correctness outwardly, but fiends of malice inwardly. So fearful were these holy beings of outward defilement, that they would not enter into Pilate’s judgment-hall, when at the same moment their hearts were plotting the greatest crime that earth ever witnessed—the crucifixion of the Son of God!

All sin must, from its very nature, be unspeakably hateful to the Holy One of Israel. It not only affronts his divine Majesty and is high treason against His authority and glory, but it is abhorrent to His intrinsic purity and holiness. It is, indeed, most difficult for us to gain a spiritual conception of the foul nature of sin as viewed by a Holy Jehovah; but there are, perhaps, times and seasons when, to a certain extent, we may realize a faint idea of it. It is when we are favored with the presence of God, see light in his light, and have the mind of Christ. Then how do we feel towards our base backslidings and filthy lusts? With what eyes does the new man of grace then view his sinful yoke-fellow--that base old man, that body of sin and death, that carnal mind in which dwells no good thing, that heaving reeking mass of all pollution and abomination, which he is compelled to carry about with him while life lasts? He views it, how can he but view it, except with loathing and abhorrence. But what is this, for the most part, short and transient, and, in its very nature, weak abhorrence of evil, compared with the enduring and infinite hatred of God against sin, though it may aid us in obtaining a dim and faint conception of it? But among all the evils which lie naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, pride seems especially to incur His holy abhorrence; and the outward manifestations of it have perhaps drawn down as much as, or more than, any other sin, his marked thunderbolts. His unalterable determination against it, and his fixed resolve to bring down to the dust every manifestation of it, is no where so pointedly or so fully declared as in that striking portion of Holy Writ which forms the second chapter of the Prophecies of Isaiah. And this is the theme of the whole, "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isaiah 2:17.)

But, besides these general declarations, the sacred record teems with individual instances of God’s anger against this prevailing sin. Pride cost Sennacherib his army and Herod his life; pride

opened the earth to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and hung up Absalom in the boughs of an oak; pride filled the breast of Saul with murderous hatred against David, and tore ten tribes at one stroke from the hand of Rehoboam. Pride drove Nebuchadnezzar from the society of his fellow-men, and made him eat grass as oxen, and his body to be wet with the dew of heaven, until his hairs were grown as eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And as it has cut off the wicked from the earth, and left them neither son nor nephew, root nor branch, so it has made sad havoc even among the family of God. Pride shut Aaron out of the promised land; and made Miriam a leper white as snow; pride, working in the heart of David, brought a pestilence which cut off seventy thousand men; pride carried captive to Babylon Hezekiah's treasure and descendants, and cast Jonah into the whale's belly, and, in his feelings, into the very belly of hell. It is the only source of contention; (Proverbs 13:10;) the certain forerunner of a fall; (Proverbs 16:18;) the instigator of persecution; (Psalms 10:2;) a snare for the feet; (Psalms 59:12;) a chain to compass the whole body; (Psalms 73:6;) the main element of deceitfulness; (Jeremiah 49:16;) and the grave of all uprightness. (Habakkuk 2:4.) It is a sin which God especially abhors, (Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 16:5,) and one of the seven things which he abominates; (Proverbs 6:17;) a sin against which he has pronounced a special woe, (Isaiah 28:1) and has determined to stain it, (Isaiah 23:9,) to abase it, (Daniel 4:37,) to mar it, (Jeremiah 13:9,) to cut it off, (Zechariah 9:6) to bring it down, (Isaiah 25:11,) and lay it low (Proverbs 29:23.)

Pride was one of the crying sins of Sodom, (Ezekiel 16:49), desolated Moab (Isaiah 16:6; Isaiah 16:14,) and turned Edom, with Petra, its metropolis, into a land where no man should dwell, and which no man should pass through. (Obadiah 1:3-4; Obadiah 1:9-10; Jeremiah 49:16-18.) But pride is not content with her dominion over the children of this world (Job 41:34), her native born subjects and willing slaves, among whom she rules with lordly sway, at once their tormenting mistress and adored sovereign. Not only does she set up her worship in every family of the land, and reigns and rules as much among the low as the high, swelling the bosom of the blind beggar who holds his hat for a half-penny as much as of that high-born dame who, riding by in her carriage, will not venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness. Not only does pride subject to her universal influence the world of which Satan is god and prince, but she must needs intrude herself into the Church of Christ, and exalt her throne among the stars of God.

She comes indeed here in borrowed garb, has put off her glittering ornaments and brave attire, in which she swells and ruffles among the gay flutterers of rank and fashion; and with demure looks, and voice toned down to the right religious key, and a dialect modeled after the language of Canaan, takes her seat among the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, much as Satan stood up among the sons of God. (Job 1:6.) And as she has put off her apparel, so has she changed her title, assuming that which shall give her the readiest and most unquestioned passport. "Humility" is the name with which she has newly christened herself; and, slipping into the camp by the most lowly portal, she moves onward, aiming at no lower seat than the throne, and no less weapon than the scepter.

Some, however, of Zion's watchmen, and no one more than the writer of the work before us, have lifted up her veil, found out her real character, and, having first branded her on the forehead, "SPIRITUAL PRIDE," have labored hard, though hitherto ineffectually, to cast her out of the congregation of the saints. But as all their labors have hitherto been ineffectual, and she still dwells

in our midst, it may be well to describe some of the features of this dangerous intruder.

1. Ignorance, and that worst species of it—ignorance of one's own ignorance—is evidently a main feature in her face. In this point she wonderfully resembles that stolid brother of hers who is so much in every company—worldly pride. We are all ignorant, sadly ignorant of everything that belongs to our peace; but the first step out of ignorance is to be conscious of it. No people are so thoroughly impracticable, so headstrong, so awkward to deal with, so deaf to all reason, so bent on their own will and way, so self-conceited, and so hopelessly disagreeable, as those unhappy people, whether in the world or in the church, who are ignorant of their own ignorance. Touchy, sensitive, quarrelsome, always grumbling and complaining, unable to lead and yet unwilling to follow, finding fault with everything and everybody, tyrannical where possessed of power, though abject enough where any advantage is to be gained, bungling everything they do and yet never learning to do any better, making up in a good opinion of themselves for the general ill opinion of them by others—such people are the plague of families, workshops, churches, and congregations. When people of this stamp become, as it is called, religious, being all the time really destitute of grace, their pride runs in a new channel, and with a strength in proportion to the narrowness of the banks. In them we see the disease at its height. But there are many of the Lord's people who exhibit strong symptoms of the same evil malady. Yet what can be more opposed to grace or to the spirit and example of Him who said, "Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart?" Where the true light shines into the soul there is a discovery of the greatness and majesty of God, of his holiness, purity, power, and glory; and with this there is a corresponding discovery of our own nothingness, insignificance, sinfulness, and utter worthlessness. This divine light being accompanied by spiritual life, there is raised up a tender conscience as well as an enlightened understanding. Thus is produced self-abasement, which every fresh discovery of the holiness of God and of our own vileness deepens and strengthens. This lays the foundation for true humility; and when God's mercy meets man's misery, and Christ is revealed to the soul, it cannot too much abase itself before his blessed Majesty, nor lie low enough in the dust of self-loathing and self-abhorrence. Humility is the daughter of grace, as pride is the child of ignorance.

2. Another marked feature in this impostress, is her self-deceptiveness. She may not succeed in deceiving others, but she rarely fails in deceiving herself. Thus she usually hides her real character most from those who are under her special influence. They are 'patterns of humility' externally to others—and patterns of humility internally to themselves. Sweet is the incense which regales their nostrils from the admiration of others; but sweeter far is the odor of their own admiration of themselves. Other sins are not so self-deceptive, so self-blinding, so self-bewitching. Sensual thoughts, blasphemous or rebellious imaginations, anger, carnality, prayerlessness, deadness, coldness, unbelief—these and similar sins wound conscience, and are, therefore, at once detected as essentially evil. But the swellings of spiritual pride, though not hidden from a discerning eye and a tender conscience, are much concealed from those very religious people whose 'amazing humility' and undeviating obedience are ever sending forth a sweet savor to delight their approving nostrils.

3. The grossness and universality of her appetite is a no less prominent feature. Other sins feed only on a limited and appropriate diet. Covetousness is confined to the love of money; sensuality, drunkenness, gluttony, to their peculiar gratifications. But pride is omnivorous! To her greedy appetite, no food comes amiss. Like the eagle, she can strike down a living prey; or, like the

vulture, banquet on putrid carrion. Some are proud of their knowledge, others of their ignorance; some of their consistency, others of their freedom from all tight restraints; some of their gifts, others of their very graces; some of their ready speech, others of their prudent silence; some of their long profession, others of their deep experience; some of their Pharisaic righteousness, others of their Antinomian security. The minister is proud of his able sermons; the deacon of his wise and prudent government; the church member of his privileges above the rest of the congregation. Some are proud because they attend to the ordinances, others because they are not tied up in the yoke of church discipline; some are proud of the world's contempt, and others of the world's approbation; some are proud of their sophistication and culture, and others of their vulgarity; some of their learning, and not a few of their lack of it; some of their boldness to reprove, and others of their readiness to forgive; some of their amiability, and others of their austerity; some because others think well of them, and others because nobody thinks well of them, but themselves.

Thus, as some weeds flourish in every soil, and some animals feed on every food, so does pride flourish in every heart, and feast on every kind of food. When an apostle was caught up into the third heaven, pride assailed him as soon as he came back to earth, so that it was needful for a thorn to be given him to rankle in his flesh for the remainder of his life, in order to let out its venom. Pride would have been too much even for Paul's grace, but for this messenger of Satan daily to buffet him. Pride set the twelve disciples to argue who would be the greatest; and pride widened, if it did not originate, the breach between Paul and Barnabas.

Pride was the pest of the first Christian churches as well as of our own. The pride of gifts was the besetting sin of the Corinthian church; the pride of legal observances the sin of the Galatian church, the pride of vain philosophy of the Colossian church. Timothy was not to allow novices to preach, for pride was their besetment; and he is especially cautioned against those who will not consent to wholesome words as being "proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." (1 Timothy 6:4-5.)

None are exempt from pride's baneful influence. She works in the highest Calvinist as well as in the lowest Arminian; swells the bosom of the poorest, most illiterate dissenting minister, as well as puffs up the lawn sleeves of the most lordly bishop. And, what is far worse, even in those who know, love, and preach the truth, spiritual pride often sets brother against brother, friend against friend, minister against minister. She is full of cruel jealousy and murderous envy, greedily listens to the slanderous tales of whisperers and backbiters, drinks down flattery with insatiable thirst, measures men's grace by the amount of their approbation, and would trample in the mire the most honored of God's servants, that by standing upon them she might raise herself a few inches higher! The very opposite to charity, pride is not patient, and is never kind. She always envies, and ever boasts of herself. She is continually puffed up, always behaves herself rudely, is ever self-seeking, is easily provoked, perpetually thinks evil of others, rejoices in the iniquity of others, but never rejoices in the truth. She never bears with others, believes nothing good in a brother, hopes nothing good for others, and endures nothing. She is ever restless and ever miserable, tormenting herself and tormenting others, the bane of churches, the fomentor of strife, and the extinguisher of love. May it be our wisdom to see, our grace to abhor, and our victory to overcome pride!

"I hate pride and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13 "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Proverbs 16:5

01.02. Idolatry

The History of an Idol, its Rise, Reign and Progress J. C. Philpot, October, 1855 "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart. We need not go very far to find of this the most convincing proofs. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly, and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God.

It amazes us sometimes in reading the history of God's ancient people, as recorded in the inspired page, that, after such wondrous and repeated displays of his presence, glory, and majesty, they should again and again bow down before stocks and stones. That those who had witnessed all the plagues of Egypt had passed through the Red Sea by an explicit miracle, were daily living on manna that fell from heaven and water that gushed out of the rock, who had but to look upward by day to behold the pillar of the cloud, and by night the pillar of fire to manifest the presence of Jehovah in their midst—that this people, because Moses delayed coming down from the Mount, should fall down before a golden calf, and say, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt," does indeed strike our minds with astonishment. And that this sin should break forth in them again and again through their whole history down to the period of the Babylonish captivity, in spite of all the warnings of their prophets, all the terrible judgments of God, all their repeated captivities, and, what would be far more likely to cure it, all their repeated deliverances, does indeed show, if other proof were lacking, that it is a disease deeply rooted in the very constitution of fallen man.

If this be the case, unless human nature has undergone a change, of which neither scripture nor experience affords any evidence, the disease must be in the heart of man now as much as ever; and if it exists it must manifest itself, for a constitutional malady can no more be in the soul and not show itself, than there can be a sickness in the body without evident symptoms of illness.

It is true that the disease does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped, at least the calf is not, if the gold be, nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone. But that rank; property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are as much idolized now as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea, and Juggernaut now is in the plains of Hindostan, is true beyond all contradiction. But what is idolatry? To answer this question, let us ask another. What is an idol? Is not this the essence of the idea conveyed by the word, that an idol occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, in our dependence and reliance, in our worship and devotedness, which is due to God only? Whatever is to us what the Lord alone should be, that is to us an idol. It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size, so is it in these inner idols of which the outer are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been too base or too brutal, too great or too little, too noble or too vile, from the sun walking in its brightness to a snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag, which man has not worshiped. And these intended representations of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what man inwardly worshiped—for the inward idol preceded the outward, and the fingers merely carved what the imagination had previously devised. The gross material idol, then, whether an Apollo, "the statue which enchants the world," or a negro fetish, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man. In that inner mind there are certain feelings and affections, as well as traditional recollections, which sin has perverted and debased, but not extinguished. Such are, a sense of a divine Creator, a dread of his anger and justice, a dim belief in a state after death of happiness or misery, an accountability to him for our actions, and a duty of religious worship. From this natural religion in the mind of man, a relic of the fall, sprang the first idea of idolatry—for the original knowledge of God being lost, the mind of man sought a substitute, and that substitute is an idol—the word, like the similar term "image," signifying a shape or figure, a representation or likeness of God.

Against this therefore, the second commandment in the Decalogue is directed. Now, this idea of representing God by some visible image being once established by the combined force of depraved intellect and conscience, the debased mind of man soon sought out channels for its lusts and passions to run in, which religion might consecrate; and thus the devilish idea was conceived and carried out, to make a god of SIN. Thus bloodshed, lust, theft, with every other crime, were virtually turned into gods named Mars, Venus, Mercury, and so on; and then came the horrible conclusion, that the more sin there was committed, the more these gods were honored. Need we wonder at the horrible debasement of the heathen world, and the utter prostration of moral principles produced by the worship of idols—or at the just abhorrence and wrath of God against idolatry? But we need not dwell on this part of the subject. There is another form of idolatry much nearer home; the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan or a modern Hindoo, but that of a Christian.

Idolatry is the very breath of the carnal mind. All that "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," desires, thirsts after, is gratified by, or occupied with, is its idol—and so far as a Christian is under the influence of this carnal mind, this old man, this evil heart of unbelief, this fallen Adam-nature, this body of sin and death—all which are Scripture terms to express one and the same thing—he bows down to the idol set up in the chambers of imagery.

There is an old Latin proverb, that "love and a cough are two things impossible to be concealed;" and thus, though an idol may be hidden in the heart as carefully as Laban’s teraphim in the camel’s saddle, or the ephod and molten image in the House of Micah, (Judges 18:14), yet it will be discovered by the love shown to it, as surely as the suppressed cough of the consumptive patient cannot escape the ear of the physician. Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to find out each our own idol—what it is, and how deep it lies, what worship it obtains, what honor it receives, and what affection it engrosses. Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?" If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another, "What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?" for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot in a field.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to the farm, the shop, the business, the investment, to the husband, wife, or child; to that which feeds lust or pride, worldliness or covetousness, self-conceit or self-admiration—that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and yet we may both be idolaters. You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool or such a sinner as to hug it to my bosom; and I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours. You may condemn me, and I condemn you; and the word of God's grace and the verdict of a living conscience condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable those idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning, literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. Music, vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second; so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. Science, mathematical or mechanical, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind; these are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper, or even that less debasing but enervating idol—sleep and indolence, as if life's highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty. An idol is not to be admired for its beauty or loathed for its ugliness, but to be hated because it is an idol. You middle-class people, who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ballfield, may still have an idol. Your garden, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty children, so admired as they walk in the street; or your new house and all the new furniture; or your son who is getting on so well in business; or your daughter so comfortably settled in life; or your dear husband so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer SELF that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to—who shall count the thousands of idols which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone?

You may not be found out. Your idol may be so hidden, or so peculiar, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer; it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with divine eye-salve. Hidden love is the deepest of all love; hidden diseases the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor's; but an idol is still an idol, and an image still an image, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

Every man has his idol; but it is not every man who sees it. Few groan under it.

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

"The dearest idol I have known,

Whatever that idol be,

Help me to tear it from my heart,

And worship only Thee."

Chapter 5

01.03. Communion with God

Communion with God By J. C. Philpot

Nothing distinguishes the divine religion of the child of God, not only from the dead profanity of the openly ungodly, but from the formal lip-service of the lifeless professor—so much as communion with God.

How clearly do we see this exemplified in the saints of old. Abel sought after fellowship with God when "he brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof," for he looked to the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. God accepted the offering, and "testified of his gifts" by manifesting his divine approbation. Here was fellowship between Abel and God. Enoch "walked with God;" but how can two walk together except they be agreed? And if agreed, they are in fellowship and communion. Abraham was "the friend of God;" "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face;" David was "the man after God's own heart"—all which testimonies of the Holy Spirit concerning them implied that they were reconciled, brought near, and walked in holy communion with the Lord God Almighty. So all the saints of old, whose sufferings and exploits are recorded in Hebrews 11:1-40 lived a life of faith and prayer, a life of fellowship and communion with their Father and their friend; and though "they were stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword;" though "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" though "they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," yet they all were sustained in their sufferings and sorrows by the Spirit and grace, the presence and power of the living God, with whom they held sweet communion; and, though tortured, would "accept no deliverance," by denying their Lord, "that they might obtain a better resurrection," and see him as he is in glory, by whose grace they were brought into fellowship with him on earth. This same communion with himself is that which God now calls his saints unto, as we read, "God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," (1 Corinthians 1:9,) for to have fellowship with his Son is to have fellowship with him. As then he called Abraham out of the land of the Chaldees, so he calls elect souls . . .

out of the world,

out of darkness,

out of sin and death,

out of formality and self-righteousness,

out of a deceptive profession,

to have fellowship with Himself, to be blessed

with manifestations of His love and mercy. To this point all his dealings with their souls tend to bring them near to himself, all their afflictions, trials, and sorrows are sent; and in giving them tastes of holy fellowship here, he grants them foretastes of that eternity of bliss which will be theirs

when time shall be no more, in being forever swallowed up with his presence and love.

Even in the first awakenings of the Spirit, in the first quickenings of his grace, there is that in the living soul which eternally distinguishes it from all others, whatever be their profession, however high or however low, however in doctrine sound or unsound, however in practice consistent or inconsistent. There is, amid all its trouble, darkness, guilt, confusion, and self-condemnation, a striving after communion with God; though still ignorant of who or what he is, and still unable to approach him with confidence. There is . . .

a sense of His greatness and glory;

a holy fear and godly awe of His great name;

a trembling at His word;

a brokenness,

a contrition,

a humility,

a simplicity,

a sincerity,

a self-abasement,

a distrust of self,

a dread of hypocrisy and self-deception,

a coming to the light,

a laboring to enter the strait gate,

a tenderness of conscience,

a sense of helplessness and inability,

a groaning under the guilt and burden of sin,

a quickness to see its workings, and an alarm

lest they should break forth--all which we never

see in a dead, carnal professor, whether the

highest Calvinist or the lowest Arminian. In all these carnal professors, whatever their creed or name, there is a hardness, a boldness, an ignorance, and a self-confidence which chill and repel a child of God. Their religion has in it no repentance and no faith—therefore no hatred of sin or fear of God. It is a mere external, superficial form, springing out of a few natural convictions, and attended with such false hopes and self-righteous confidence as a Balaam might have from great gifts, or an Ahithophel from great knowledge, or the Pharisee in the temple from great consistency, but as different from a work of grace as heaven from earth.

How different from this is he who is made alive unto God. His religion is one carried on between God and his own conscience, in the depths of his soul, and, for the most part, amid much affliction and temptation. Being pressed down with a sight and sense of the dreadful evil of sin, he at times dares hardly draw near to God, or utter a word before the great and glorious majesty of heaven. And yet he is sometimes driven and sometimes drawn to pour out his heart before him, and seek his face night and day, besides more set seasons of prayer and supplication. And yet this he cannot do without peculiar trial and temptation. If he stays away from the throne, he is condemned in his own conscience as having no religion, as being a poor, prayerless, careless wretch; if he come, he is at times almost overwhelmed by a sight of the majesty and holiness of God, and his open, dreadful sins against and before the eyes of his infinite purity. If he is cold and dead, he views that as a mark of his own hypocrisy; if he is enlarged, and feels holy liberty and blessed confidence spring up in his soul, he can scarcely believe it real, and fears lest it be presumption, and that Satan is now deceiving him as an angel of light; if he has a promise applied, and is sweetly blessed for a time, he calls it afterwards all in question; if favored under the word, to see his salvation clearly, he often questions whether it were really of God; and if his mouth is opened to speak to a Christian friend of any sweetness he has enjoyed, or any liberty that he has felt, he is tried to the very quick, before an hour is gone over his head, whether he has not been deceiving a child of God. But by all these things living souls are instructed. The emptiness of a mere profession, the deceitfulness of their own hearts, the darkness, misery, and death that sin always brings in its train when secretly indulged, the vanity of this poor, passing scene, the total inability of the creature, whether in themselves or others, to give them any real satisfaction, all become more thoroughly inwrought into their soul’s experience. And as they get glimpses and glances of the King in his beauty, and see and feel more of his blessedness and suitability to all their wants and woes; as his blood and righteousness, glorious person, and finished work are more sensibly realized, believed in, looked unto, and reposed upon; and as he himself is pleased to commune with them from the mercy-seat through his word, Spirit, presence, and love, they begin to hold close and intimate fellowship with him.

Every fresh view of his beauty and blessedness draws their heart more towards him; and though they often slip, stumble, start aside, wander away on the dark mountains, though often as cold as ice and hard as rock—with no more feeling religion than the stones of the pavement, and viler in their own feelings than the vilest and worst—still ever and anon their stony heart relents, the tear of grief runs down their cheek, their bosom heaves with godly sorrow, prayer and supplication go forth from their lips, sin is confessed and mourned over, pardon is sought with many cries, the blood of sprinkling is begged for, a word, a promise, a smile, a look, a touch, are again and again besought, until body and soul are alike exhausted with the earnestness of expressed desire.

O, how much is needed to bring the soul to its only Rest and Center. What trials and afflictions; what furnaces, floods, rods, and strokes, as well as smiles, promises, and gracious drawings! What pride and self to be brought out of! What love and blood to be brought unto! What lessons to learn of the freeness and fullness of salvation! What sinkings in self! What risings in Christ! What guilt and condemnation on account of sin; what self-loathing and self-abasement; what distrust of self; what fears of falling; what prayers and desires to be kept; what clinging to Christ; what looking up and unto his divine majesty, as faith views him at the right hand of the Father; what desires never more to sin against him, but to live, move, and act in the holy fear of God, do we find, more

or less daily, in a living soul! And whence springs all this inward experience but from the fellowship and communion which there is between Christ and the soul? "We are members," says the Apostle, "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." As such there is a mutual participation in sorrow and joy. "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He can, therefore, "be touched with the feelings of our infirmities," can pity and sympathize; and thus, as we may cast upon him our sins and sorrows, when faith enables, so can he supply, out of his own fullness, that grace and strength which can bring us off eventually more than conquerors. But here, for the present, we pause, having only just touched the threshold of a subject so full of divine blessedness. Such a subject as this, descending to all the depths of sin and sorrow, and rising up to all the heights of grace and glory, embracing fellowship with Christ in his sufferings and fellowship with Christ in his glory, is a theme for Paul after he had been caught up into the third heaven, and for John in Patmos, after he had seen him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; nor even could their divinely-taught souls adequately comprehend, nor their divinely-inspired pens worthily describe all that is contained in the solemn mystery of the communion that the Church, as the Bride of the Lamb, is called to enjoy with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the great and glorious Three-in-One God

01.04. Name and Fame

Name and Fame By J. C. Philpot

During his lifetime, Absalom had built a monument to himself in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son to carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and it is known as Absalom's Monument to this day.

2 Samuel 18:18

There is a yearning in the mind of man after name and fame. Shrinking from oblivion, grasping at an earthly immortality, the ambitious heart desires not wholly in death to die. It would not pass away as unnoticed and as unknown as the leaf which falls into the babbling brook, and, after a few whirls, sinks to the bottom with scarce a bubble to mark its vanishing out of light into darkness. Few indeed care for life eternal—for an immortality of happiness and holiness in the mansions of heavenly bliss; or if there be a passing desire for heaven, it is but to escape hell. But to achieve an immortality among their fellow-men; to be or to do something which shall secure the proud and rare distinction of living after death in the memories and on the lips of successive generations, is a deep-seated feeling in the human bosom.

This, the school-boy feels, who cuts his name on the form, as much as the painter, who longs that the canvas may breathe his name when the fingers which spread it with form and color lie mouldering in the dust; or the poet, who is content to die if his verses live for him from generation to generation. But this coveted distinction is attained by few. "Surely," says the Psalmist, "they are disturbed in vain." "Their memorial is perished with them." But could they obtain their object, it would be but a shadow. No applauding breath of man reaches them in their gloomy abode; no rills of human praise let fall a drop of water from earth to hell to cool their burning tongue. Most names that are remembered and handed down to posterity are of men in whom the Spirit of God was not. They were of the world; their words and actions were inspired by a worldly spirit, and directed to worldly ends. Therefore the world loved them in life, honored them in death, and bestows on them after death the only reward it has to give—an earthly immortality. But when we view what they were in life, and what they are in death; when we lift up the veil which hides the mansions of the dead, is their lot worth coveting? Alas! no! Their soul is no more cheered by the honors paid to their memory than their mouldering dust is gladdened by the marble monument which stands over their grave. Solomon has already written the epitaph of this admired son of fame, the compendious history of his birth and death, beginning and end. "For he comes in with vanity, and departs in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Yes, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet has he seen no good; do not all go to one place?" (Ecclesiastes 6:4, Ecclesiastes 6:6.) But there are a few, and a few only, who have won a double immortality. Their names, their works, their influence survive them on earth when their happy spirits are bathing in the bliss of heaven. To be a Shakespeare, a Byron, a Voltaire—who that fears God would accept so wide-spread a name to accept with it what we may well apprehend is their present and future portion? Better be the lowest pauper who starves on a parish pittance; better be the shoeless

wretch that sweeps the public crossing; better live in a hovel and die in a hospital, with the grace of God in the heart, than have a world-wide, time-enduring name when the soul is howling in hell.

Chapter 7

01.05. Religion, in some shape or other

Entangled

"Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17

If we are entangled in the love of the world—or fast bound and fettered with worldly anxieties—and the spirit of the world is rife in our bosom—all our profession will be vapid, if not worthless. We may use the language of prayer—but the heart is not in earnest. We may still manage to hold our head high in a profession of the truth—but its power and blessedness are neither known nor felt. To enjoy any measure of communion with the Lord—we must go forth from a world which is at enmity against Him. We must also go forth out of self—for to deny it, renounce it, and go forth out of it—lies at the very foundation of vital godliness.

Sweet spirituality of mind "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6

Without this spirituality of mind, religion is but—a mere name—an empty mask—a delusion—a snare. Just in proportion as our heart and affections are engaged on heavenly objects—shall we feel a sweet savor of heaven resting upon our spirit. Preparedness for heaven much consists in that sweet spirituality of mind whereby heavenly things become our only happiness—and an inward delight is felt in them, that—enlarges the heart—ennobles the mind—softens the spirit—and lifts the whole soul, as it were, up into a holy atmosphere in which it bathes as its choice element! A secret yet sacred power

Wherever Jesus is graciously and experimentally manifested to the soul, and made known by any sweet revelation of His glorious Person, atoning blood, and finished work—a secret yet sacred power is put forth, whereby we are drawn unto Him—and every grace of the Spirit flows toward Him as towards its attractive center.

Friendly enemies Shall we quarrel with—these doubts and fears—these temptations and trials—these assaults from Satan—these workings-up of inward corruption—when they are, in God’s mercy and in God’s providence, such blessed helpers? If they drive us to a throne of grace—if by them we are brought out of lying refuges—if by them all false hopes are stripped off from us—if by them we are made honest and sincere before God—if by them we turn away from all human help, and come wholly and solely to the Lord—shall we quarrel with these things, which are, if I may use the expression—such friendly enemies—that are so changed from curses into blessings—that in God’s overruling providence are made so mysteriously to work for our good? Shall we not rather bless God—for every trial that brings us to His footstool—for every temptation that has stripped away creature righteousness—for every blow that has cut us off from the world—for every affliction that has embittered the things of time and sense—for everything, however painful to the flesh, which has brought us nearer to Himself—and made us feel more love towards Him, and more desire after Him? Surely, when we sum up God’s mercies, we must

include in the number—things painful to the flesh—and which at one time we could only look upon as miseries. No, in summing up the rich total, we must catalogue in the list—every pang of guilt—every stroke of conviction—every agonizing doubt—every painful fear—every secret temptation—everything that has most disturbed us. And could we assign a more prominent place to one of God's mercies—we would give the most distinguished place to the deepest trial. We would say, "Of all mercies, the greatest have been our troubles, trials, exercises, and temptations—for we now see that their blessed effect has been to cut us clean out of fleshly religion, and out of those delusions which, had we continued in them, would have been our destruction. These trials eventually brought us into more sweet and special communion with God Himself!" A fleshly religion "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13 The flesh, however high it may rise, can never rise above itself. It begins in hypocrisy—it goes on in hypocrisy—and it never can end but in hypocrisy. Whatever various shapes it puts on—a fleshly religion never can rise above itself. There is—no brokenness of heart—no contrition of spirit—no godly sorrow—no genuine humility—no living faith—no spiritual hope—no heavenly love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit—in those that are "born after the will of the flesh." No abasing views of self—no tender feelings of reverence towards God—no filial fear of His great name—no melting of heart—no softening of spirit—no deadness to the world—no sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory—ever dwelt in their bosoms! The flesh, with all its workings, and all its subtle deceit and hypocrisy—never sank so low as self abhorrence and godly sorrow—and never mounted so high as into communion with God. The depth of the one is too deep—and the height of the other too high for any but those who are "born of God." This birth by "the will of the flesh," leaves a man just where it found him—dead in sin—destitute of the fear of God—and utterly ignorant of that divine teaching, which alone can save his soul from eternal wrath.

Madly enamored with his own righteousness

One reason why people don't receive Christ is their self-righteousness. Until self-righteousness is in a measure broken down in a man's heart, he never can see any beauty nor loveliness in a bleeding Jesus. Being madly enamored with his own righteousness, and not seeing it in the light of God's countenance as "filthy rags," he has—no eyes to see—no ears to hear—no heart to receive that glorious robe of righteousness, which the Son of God wrought out, and which is imputed to all that believe on His name. This work of grace "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1

Until God by His Spirit quickens the soul into spiritual life, there must be a determined rejection of Christ. However a man may receive Him into his judgment, the inward bias of his heart and the secret speech of his soul is, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" If, then, there are any who do believe in Him, receive Him, love Him, and have a blessed union with Him—it all springs from the quickening Spirit of God working with power in their souls. Wherever the quickening power of God's Spirit has passed upon a man's conscience, he is invariably brought to see and feel himself to be a sinner. This inward sight of self cuts him off, sooner or later, from—all self-righteousness—all false refuges—and all vain confidences with which he may seek to prop up his soul. The Lord will convince all His people of their lost state before Him—and cast them as ruined wretches into the dust—without hope, strength, wisdom, help, or righteousness—except that which is given to them, as a free gift, by sovereign grace. This work of grace in the conscience, pulling down all a man's

false refuges, stripping him of every lying hope, and thrusting him down into self-abasement and self-abhorrence—is indispensable to a true reception of Christ. Whatever a man may have learned in his head, or however far he may be informed in his judgment—he never will receive Christ spiritually into his heart and affections, until he has been broken down by the hand of God in his soul, to be a ruined wretch. When a man is effectually brought here, the Lord is pleased, for the most part, to open up to his astonished view, and to bring into his soul, some saving knowledge of the Lord of life and glory. He casts into the mind a light, and He brings into the heart a power, whereby the glorious Person of Christ, His atoning blood, dying love, finished work, and justifying righteousness—are looked upon by spiritual eyes—touched by spiritual hands—and received into a spiritual and believing heart. A secret, soft, gentle going forth of love & affection

There will be from time to time, in saved souls, a flowing forth of affection towards Jesus. From time to time He gives the soul a glimpse of His Person—He shows Himself, as the Scripture speaks, "through the lattice"—passing, perhaps, hastily by, but giving such a transient glimpse of the beauty of His Person, the excellency of His finished work, dying love, and atoning blood—as ravishes the heart, and secretly draws forth the affections of the soul—so that there is a following hard after Him, and a going out of the desires of the soul towards Him. Thus, sometimes the Lord is pleased secretly to work in the heart, and there is a melting down at the feet of Jesus—or a secret, soft, gentle going forth of love and affection towards Him, whereby the soul prefers Him before thousands of gold and silver—and desires nothing so much as the inward manifestations of His love, grace, and blood. And thus a soul receives Christ—not merely as driven by necessity—but also as drawn by affection. He does not receive Christ merely as a way of escape from the wrath to come—merely as something to save a soul from the unquenchable fire and never-dying worm—but mingled with necessity, sweetly and powerfully combined with it, and intimately and intricately working with it—there is the flowing forth of genuine affection and sincere love, that goes out to Him as the only object really worthy of—our heart’s affection—our spirit’s worship—and our soul’s desire. This is a very different thing from receiving Christ merely into our judgment, or into our understanding in a doctrinal manner. Saving faith is to receive Him in the depths of a broken heart—as the only Savior for our guilty soul—as our only hope for eternity—as the only Lord of our heart’s worship—and the only object of our pure affection—so that in secret, when no eye sees but the eye of God, and only the ear of Jehovah hears the pantings of our pleading heart—there is the breathing out of the spirit after the enjoyment of His love, grace, and blood.

What a pretty looking thing! The man in the fable found a dead viper—at least dead to all appearance through the cold. What a pretty looking thing! He puts it into his bosom and warms it—then it revives and bites him! So it is with a man who plays with his lusts—indulging them—his carnal heart goes out after them—until at last, like the torpid viper, it turns to a living adder and stings him! The spider & the fly

See the spider watching a fly. The poor little fly has just been caught in the edge of the web—the spider lies in its hole. As soon as he sees the web shake, down he runs, and draws the threads around his victim, kills him, sucks his carcass, and leaves it. Thus the devil may be compared to the spider working in his web—waiting, lurking, in reality to suck the very bones and blood of a child of God and cast him into hell—and so he would, were it not for preserving grace.

Growth in grace No one who reads the Word of God with an enlightened eye can deny that there is contained in it such a doctrine as growth in grace. The very idea indeed of ’life’ implies advance, growth, progress, increase. Lambs grow up into sheep—vine buds into vine branches—sons into fathers. Their grand distinguishing mark of living things, is that they grow. And, therefore, absence of growth implies absence of life. Hypocrites, indeed, may grow in hypocrisy—Pharisees may grow in self-righteousness—Arminians may grow in fleshly performances—dead Calvinists may grow in head knowledge—proud professors may grow in presumption—self deceivers may grow in delusion—and the untried may grow in vain confidence. But the dead never grow in the divine life, for "the root of the matter" is not in them. A damnable thing

Sin is a damnable thing—and every one of God’s people is made, has been made, or will be made, to feel it so. And the more that they see of sin, know of sin, feel of sin—the more damnable will sin appear in their eyes—and with greater weight and power will its dreadful guilt and filth lie upon their conscience. Now there are but few, comparatively speaking, who have any clear sight or any deep feeling of what sin really is—and the reason, for the most part, is because they have such a slight, shallow, superficial knowledge of who and what God is. But let them once see the purity of God by the eye of faith—let them once have a manifestation of His justice and holiness, majesty and greatness to their soul—and let them have a corresponding sight and sense of the deep and desperate state in which they are as fallen children of a fallen parent—then will they no longer have slight, superficial feelings of the nature and evil of sin—but will so see and feel its hideous and damnable character as to make them cry out with Isaiah in the temple, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5

O what work does sin then make in the conscience, when it is opened up by the Spirit of God! Whatever superficial or shallow views we may have had of sin before, it is only as its desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit, that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality. It is this sword of the Spirit which cuts and wounds—it is this entrance of life and light that gashes the conscience—it is this divine work which lacerates the heart and inflicts those deep wounds, which nothing but the "balm in Gilead" can heal. But the voice soon comes

There are many times when it seems as if this present world could satisfy us—when we build up our earthly paradises, and seek as it were ease and rest here below. But the voice soon comes, "Arise, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted." Micah 2:10 Keep me from evil

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that. . . .You would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested." 1 Chronicles 4:10

Jabez was a poor burdened sinner who could not keep himself. If he could keep himself, this petition would be an idle mockery. He need not to have fallen outwardly to teach him this. There are inward falls—slips of the tongue—glances of the eye—filthy desires—roving imaginations—covetous projects—proud desires—idolatrous lustings—secret backslidings into carnality and worldliness. A blessing indeed "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that You would bless me indeed." 1 Chronicles 4:10 To be—weaned from idols—delivered from broken cisterns—separated in spirit and affection from the world—and have our heart fixed on things above—is a blessing indeed. To feel an appetite after God’s Word—to receive the truth in

the love of it—to have sweet and holy communion with Jehovah—and to live under the solemn anointings of the blessed Spirit—is a blessing indeed. That such a wretch and filthy monster of iniquity should have a smile from the great and holy Jehovah, seems a blessing too great—but would be a blessing indeed!

What makes them cry?

"Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Psalms 107:6 Not before, not after, but in it. When they were in the midst of it—when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah—when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it—when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind—when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed—then it was that they cried. But what makes them cry? It is this solemn feeling in their hearts—that they have no other refuge but God. The Lord brings all His people here—to have no other refuge but Himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintances—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is—no refuge—nor shelter—nor harbor—nor home into which they can fly—except the Lord. Thus troubles bring us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much—and they drive out that 'notional experience' and 'dry profession' that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists—and they bring a man to this solemn spot—that he must have communications from God to support him under, and bring him out of his trouble.

If a man is not brought to this point by his troubles—they have done him no good. They have been like the clouds that have passed over the desert, and transmitted to it neither fertility nor fruitfulness—they have been like the rain that drops upon the pavement, and is evaporated by the sun, producing neither fruit nor flower. But the troubles that God sends into the hearts of His people are like the rain that falls upon the fertile soil—causing them to bring forth fruit, and every grace of the Spirit to deepen and fructify in their soul. The believer's path The believer's path is indeed a mysterious one—full of harmonious contradictions and heavenly paradoxes. He is never easy when at ease—nor without a burden when he has none. He is never satisfied without doing something—and yet is never satisfied with anything that he does. He is never so strong as when he sits still—never so fruitful as when he does nothing—and never so active as when he makes the least haste. He wins—pardon through guilt—hope through despair—deliverance through temptation—comfort through affliction—and a robe of righteousness through filthy rags. Though a worm and no man—he overcomes Omnipotence itself through violence. And though less than vanity and nothing—he takes heaven itself by force. Thus amid the strange contradictions which meet in a believing heart, he is—never so prayerful as when he says nothing—never so wise as when he is the greatest fool—never so much alone as when most in company—and never so much under the power of an inward religion as when most separated from an outward one. The burden may still remain "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you." Psalms 55:22 The burden may still remain—but strength is given to bear it. The trials may not be lessened—but power to endure them is increased. The evils of the heart are not removed—but grace is communicated to subdue them. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

01.06. All the devil's tricks!

All the devil’s tricks! by J. C. Philpot

Moving in our own comparatively narrow circle, and separated as much by principle as by precept and practice from the seething religious mass which, like a troubled sea, boils all around us, how little do most of us know of that outer world of scheming policy and energetic action which is ever tossing its restless waves against the strong barriers of divine revelation. Dull sounds, feeble echoes, passing whispers, and stray rumors ever and anon reach our ears about Popery, Infidelity, Socialism, etc.—and the pulpit sometimes blows a faint alarm against the awful progress which these destructive agents of Satan are making in every direction; but how few of us possess any clear, distinct, or definite knowledge either of the nature or the advance of these deadly enemies of the truth of God. In some respects this ignorance of ours is a mercy; for, as with our maiden daughters, there are subjects on which ignorance is a blessing and knowledge a blot, and there is deep truth in the well-known lines, "Where ignorance is bliss, Tis folly to be wise."

If your situation in life, if your natural habits and circumstances, if your quiet seclusion and little retired cot admit it, or if your sensitive mind and tender conscience shrink from any knowledge of any contact with the outer world, happy in your ignorance, do not desire to lift the veil. It may be your safeguard from many sore exercises and grievous temptations which sadly assail those who are less happily circumstanced than you. Could, indeed, this happy ignorance be depended upon as a safeguard for all, as it is for you, the mercy couched in it would at once be doubled; but, unhappily, in this wretched world of ours, ignorance is no more a protection for those who have to battle with it, than the simplicity of a country bumpkin protects him in London streets from the artifices of frauds.

Since the fall a knowledge of good and evil has been man’s inheritance; and even in divine things the matured Christian is he who has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:14) While, then, we would sternly contend against the principle and practice of ’dabbling in evil’ to learn its nature, and would firmly abide by the precept, "Keep yourself pure," yet there is in many cases a disadvantage in being altogether ignorant of what is passing around us, and with which we may unexpectedly be brought into contact, or have to grapple with as if for life or death. In this world we cannot always live either with ourselves, or to and for ourselves, as if dear self were the sole object of our thought, cares and affection. We have wives or husbands, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and perhaps servants and dependants; or if free from such ties, we are bound up in church fellowship, or the strong bonds of affection with the people of God. In all or some of these we may feel the deepest interest, and most earnestly and affectionately desire their present and eternal welfare. For their sake, therefore, more than for our own, we cannot always preserve our happy ignorance. The most careful and watchful guardian of her daughters is not the mother who is ignorant of human nature and the snares laid for unsuspecting innocence—but she who has the keenest eye to discern the snake’s nest in the grass, and crush each egg before it breaks out into a viper. We may have to guard and warn our children against a

dangerous companion, or may see a subtle snare of Satan approaching, if not already entangling, a friend or fellow family member, and may be enabled to speak a word which may be owned and blessed to his deliverance from the temptation.

"So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for

we are not ignorant of his schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan is so wily . . .

his agents so surround us,

their designs are so masked,

their language so plausible,

their manners so insinuating,

their appearance often so imposing,

their arguments so subtle,

their activity so unwearied,

their insight into our weaknesses so keen,

their enmity against Christ and His gospel so implacable,

their lack of all principle and all honesty so thorough,

that the net may be drawing around us, before we

have the slightest suspicion of these infernal plots

being directed against us!

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able

to stand against all the devil’s tricks!" Ephesians 6:11 And as we in our ignorant simplicity are unaware of the nature, so are we as little acquainted with the amazing extent of the operations thus going on around us. You read or hear, for instance, good reader, sometimes about nuns and nunneries, and form to yourself, perhaps, some dreamy idea of what a sad thing it must be for a young female to be shut up for life in one of these gloomy abodes, hopelessly subject in body and soul to the will of the superior of the house, if not exposed to the worse dominion of priests and father confessors. But have you any idea of the number of these poor creatures thus immured? What do you think of 10,000 nuns at this present moment in our good old Protestant England? Yes!—in that England whose very life blood is freedom from Popish thraldom there are 10,000 English women tied hand and foot by vows, and under the irresponsible dominion, government, tyranny—call it what you will, of mother superiors, priests, and confessors.

You have also heard, perhaps, of what is called, by a dreadful profanation of terms, "Spiritualism"—that is, the diabolical system of calling up, by some infernal jugglery, the spirits of the dead, and conversing with them. And how many figures do you think would represent the

number of believers in this doctrine of devils? "Well," you answer, "perhaps, to take a large figure, one or two thousand." What do you think of five million? Well, then, gentle reader, it seems that you and we have been living in a considerable, and, perhaps, comfortable, state of ignorance of what is going on with such activity all around us. You may be happily secure against such awful delusions by your knowledge and love of the truth, and may tartly say, "What is all this noise about? Why do you want to bother me with all this stuff and nonsense about nuns and devil worshipers? I am not going to be caught in these traps of the devil." No! but that pleasing, amiable daughter of yours, whom you have this evening let go to a little party of friends; what security have you that there may not be among those young people some one who has been initiated into the mysteries of table turning and spirit rapping, and lend her some little book about "mediums and spiritual agencies," which, after your long family prayers are over, she is devouring in her bedroom, with all the zest of a new sensational novel? And her younger sister, that dear little girl, so full of smiles and affection, whom you are so fond of, and as she goes tripping off to school so merrily and innocently, and looks back to give you a nod, your very heart cries, "Bless the little darling!" how do you know whether some school teacher, or an elder pupil, who is drawing her by kindness to her bosom, is not tainted to the very core with Popish views, and is secretly instilling them into her mind? Where do you think all these 10,000 nuns came from? Say that half were born Roman Catholics. Now that leaves 5,000 entangled in such meshes as we have named, and perverted from their Protestant faith. And just consider the probable amount of misery which many if not most of these misguided girls caused to their own families before they took so decided and fatal a step as entering a nunnery. Think of a daughter of yours, perhaps the most dutiful and affectionate of them all, (for those are soonest entangled,) turned Papist, withdrawing herself from all your Lord’s Day and family worship, viewing you and her mother as heretics, half the day at her beads and devotions upstairs, and running off at every opportunity to confess her sins and all your family secrets and affairs to some young priest. Scores, if not hundreds, of families in this country are thus being racked and torn to pieces by wives or daughters entangled in the nets laid for them by Popery under its various guises. And it is spreading in all directions, entangling the poor as well as the rich, the young as well as the old. The high church party are now drawing off our little village and Sunday schools into some large central school, under a certificated teacher, tainted, perhaps, to the very core with views which are really Popish though nominally Protestant, and thus carrying off the rising generation. We cannot enlarge on this subject, but these hints may show that the danger may be nearer at hand, even to you, than you dream. But assume that, through the Lord’s goodness and mercy, neither you nor yours are exposed to such snares and dangers, and that God’s truth is not only your shield and defense, but that his grace or providence is stretched over those near and dear to you by earthly ties. Still there may be many of our readers less favored than yourself, to whom a word of instruction or warning may be seasonable. And even on the supposition that none of those under whose notice our words come need a warning sound, yet they may feel an interest in looking from their peaceful harbor on the storm-tossed sea, where many a ship is struggling and heaving amid the waves, and many a wreck may be seen through the white surf that is beating and curling over the rocks and shoals in the hazy distance.

There are three fearful shapes which Satan now seems to have chiefly assumed to deceive the nations, and though they all unite in denial and disbelief of the truth of God’s Word; yet they each present their distinct aspects, and adapt themselves to the peculiar constitutions of men. These three desperate foes of God and man are Infidelity, Popery, and now this Spiritualism, or rather

Devilism. And just observe how they meet and adapt themselves to the various dispositions of the human heart.

Some men naturally possess reasoning, arguing minds, which cannot be satisfied without penetrating into the causes of things, and revolt from everything supernatural, miraculous, and that does not lie quite level with the grasp of our mental faculties. Now these are the men who chiefly fall under the power of INFIDELITY. They do not see what our deepest thinkers are now fully agreed upon, that there are subjects which lie beyond the reach of pure mental reasoning, and which, therefore, can only be received, if received at all, by faith as distinct from logical argument. Rejecting, therefore, everything which they cannot reconcile to their reasoning mind, they fall an easy prey to infidelity; and as this at once sweeps away all those moral restraints connected with an eternal future state which hold others in check—they can, if sensually disposed, indulge in their passions and drink down sin like water. Hundreds, if not thousands of the working classes, and indeed of all classes, and none more so than some among the most educated and refined, are open or secret infidels! But there is a peculiar class of mind which shrinks from infidelity as something horrible, as indeed it is, and repugnant to our natural conscience. If we may coin a word for the occasion, there is in some people A NATURAL RELIGIOSITY—that is, a disposition to be religious. If they had been born in Turkey, they would have been devout Muslims; if in Italy, they would have become priests, monks, or nuns, and as ready to burn a heretic as their fathers; if born and bred in England, they would be devout churchmen, pious dissenters, sisters of mercy, and so forth—just as the various circumstances of birth and education, habits and associations, might dispose or determine. Now to these naturally religious minds, when fully ripened and blended with a stern spirit of self-denial, which usually accompanies and grows up with it, no system so thoroughly adapts itself as that of Popery—for it just meets and gives full play to that habit of mind which yields, like clay, to every object of superstitious veneration.

Memory recalls to us two striking instances of the two natural dispositions which we have mentioned. We once well knew two brothers. We hardly like to mention their names, though none are better known through the breadth and length of the land. They were both men of most powerful intellect, refined and cultivated to the highest point by the most indefatigable study, and were distinguished ornaments of the famous University to which they belonged. Where and what are they now? One, the elder brother, whom we knew less intimately, is the most distinguished pervert from the Church of England that Rome has received! The other, once an intimate friend, an eminent professor of classical learning, is now an avowed infidel! But whence came, humanly speaking, this strange difference, this wide divergence between two brothers of almost, if not altogether, equal abilities and similar education, habits, and associations, so that after acute mental struggles of years the one should finally settle at one pole of the most groveling superstition, believing in all the pretended miracles of the Romish saints, and the other at the opposite pole, denouncing Christianity itself as an imposture? May we not account for it from the constitutional difference of their minds—that the one is naturally credulous and superstitious, disposed to bow to authority, venerating names and ancient traditions—and the other is confident in its own reasoning powers, and determined to accept nothing but what can be logically proved? But there is a third class of mind quite distinct from the two above-mentioned, though in many points allied to the first, which is naturally visionary, imaginative, ever living in a little world of its own, little disposed to bow to authority or venerate names or places, and still less unwilling and

often unable to reason and argue, but very awake and alive to dreams, omens, supernatural appearances, and some breakings in of an unseen world—as distinct from that hard, stern, common-place, every-day world where men toil and sweat for their bread all their lives, and then die, and are thrust out of sight. What the soul is, what is a future state, what evidences there are, reliable and trustworthy, that there is one at all, what has become of departed friends—do they know anything about us, is their spirit ever near us?—many a mind that you little think of, is exercised with these thoughts and inquiries. But you will say, "Why don't they believe the Bible? That would at once satisfy their minds, answer their inquiries, and clear up their anxieties." Yes, but that is the very thing they neither will nor can do. You can do it, because grace has touched your heart and you have felt the power of the word in your soul. But we are not speaking here of the believing, but of the unbelieving—not of the favored few who have received the love of the truth—but of the masses of society generally, the thousands who wander on without light or life, guide, guard, or God. Your talking about their reading and believing the Bible is almost like what the little daughter of Louis XVI said to her governess, when she told her that the people in Paris were starving for lack of bread—"Why don't they eat buns?"

You have bread and buns too; and with your well-spread table, your dinner and dessert, your finest of the wheat, and wine on the lees well refined—you can hardly conceive the case of poor creatures starving for bread "who are pulling off the salt leaves from the brushwood, and making a meal of roots." (Job 30:4)—who madly feed upon ashes, with a deceived heart, and a lie in their right hand. (Isaiah 44:20) It is of such we are speaking, for our present object is to show why it is that such damnable errors, as you justly see them to be, find so wide an acceptance, and number their converts and devotees by thousands and hundreds of thousands.

We are endeavoring to explain how it is that Satan has such rule and dominion, and why some are held fast in the chains of Popery, others bound hand and foot in the prison of Infidelity, and others are bewildered and intoxicated with this last gust of smoke from the bottomless pit, this commerce with spirits, or rather with demons and devils, awfully miscalled Spiritualism. But it is high time to come to our Review of the work at the head of our present article. We may freely, then, say that we have read a good part of it with much interest; and we confess that we had no idea of the vast prevalence of this new delusion, "Spiritualism," until we found it stated in it on seemingly such undeniable authority. Though the title of the work is "Spiritualism"—yet the title hardly gives a fair representation of its contents, for by far the greater part of it is devoted to show the craft, subtlety, and abominations of Popery. This subject was, of course, not altogether a new one to us, as we have read many works on Romanism and yet the authoress—for the work is the production of a lady, has sketched it in striking colors; and if she has not brought forward anything very new, yet she has put together many striking facts, and confirmed her assertions by proofs and evidence drawn from the writings and speeches both of the friends and foes of the Papal system. As far as we can judge, she sincerely loves the great truths of the gospel, and sees clearly and feels deeply the nature and prevalence of those fearful delusions of Satan which she aims to expose, with the hope that she may be made an instrument either of rescuing some of their miserable victims, or of warning others, lest they fall into the same trap. The chief value of the book, we think, consists in the copious extracts which she has given from various sources of the present practical working of Puseyism and Popery; for what is mainly needed is not loud and sweeping declamation against this and that evil, but facts—solid, well substantiated facts, from which we can draw our own

conclusions. Before we can form any right opinion, or come to a clear decision upon any case presented to our mind, we must have substantial evidence, plain facts, solid proofs—or our judgment is but a blind prejudice, a mere crediting reports and rumors, and adopting other people's views without knowing whether they are true or false. But when we get facts, proofs, undeniable evidence—then we move on solid ground, and our judgment has a firm basis to rest upon. These facts our authoress supplies; and thus enables us to see the very inside of some of those schemes of Satan whereby he is deceiving thousands to their perdition.

We who live outside the circle have little idea of what is going on within it. We hear or read perhaps of this or that high churchman, and what is now doing in the very parish church in the town or village where we live; and some friend or neighbor, or the children, may tell us of the late grand Christmas decorations, and the beautiful new altar-cloth, and the lighted candles, and the large flower vases, and the little chorister boys chanting and singing so prettily, and we may carelessly reply, "O poor creatures, with their dead forms!" But it were well if these ceremonies were but dead forms! Dead indeed they are, dead enough according to our view of spiritual life and death—but in another sense they are filled with a life of their own, most active and energetic, and absorbing the mind and feelings of their devotees to an extent you perhaps little dream of. The old type of churchman has much passed away, and a new generation has sprung up which has almost ousted the quiet, regular orthodox rectors and vicars of our youth or of our fathers, who droned away to their scanty congregations half asleep under the shelter of the high-backed pews. A new spirit is abroad which is not only repairing and restoring churches, but, by resuscitating dead forms, seeks to animate them with a life hostile to the truth of God, hostile to our reformed principles, and is in secret league with Rome against our most prized religious and civil liberties. A new life—not spiritual, for it is the very opposite; but a life of energy, zeal, and most bigoted, almost furious devotion to views and principles which are the very life blood of Popery, is now at work under these very forms and ceremonies which seem to you so dead and unmeaning. They are so, and that justly to you; but there are thousands to whom they are signs and symbols of a religion to which they cling with the most fervid enthusiasm. In this consist both their delusiveness to their adherents and their danger to us.

Look at that poor Irish reaper going on a Sunday morning to mass at the Romish chapel. "O," you say, "what a poor foolish fellow he must be to worship a piece of bread!" But under that blind devotion you do not see the smouldering flame which makes him hate you as a heretic, with deadly hatred, and which, if urged on by a Fenian rebellion, would slake itself in your blood. So with these high-church forms—these raised altars, wax candles, intonings, and all the frippery and millinery of priestly vestments—which in the days of our fathers the whole parish would have hooted down as rank Popery. They appear at present to be only forms; but mark the spirit which breathes beneath them, as it sometimes breaks out in the pulpit, and see whether it be not the same as lighted up the Smithfield bonfires in the days of bloody Mary.

Here, then, is the chief value of a book like this. It enlightens our happy ignorance by bringing forward facts which cast a broad light on the doings and dealings of Satan and his agents!

Chapter 9

01.07. The call and qualifications for the ministry

The CALL and QUALIFICATIONS for the Gospel Ministry by J. C. Philpot

It is evident from observation and experience that a very wide and marked difference exists between ministers of truth, not only in the possession of grace and gifts—but in the amount of the blessing of God which rests on their ministry; and it being no less evident from the word of truth that unless expressly called and sent by God and furnished by him with needful qualifications for the work, they cannot profit his people—it can hardly be considered a serious or unfair digression from our subject if we here turn aside to consider two important points which not only much concern but must ever deeply interest every true servant of the Lord. These two points are closely connected with each other, and are—

1. What is meant or implied by a call to the ministry.

2. What are the needful qualifications for its exercise to the glory of God and the good of his people.

1. What is meant or implied by a CALL to the ministry. This call need not be so signal and special as that of the Old Testament prophets; or, we may add, of the Apostles under the New Testament, who occupy, as such, a peculiar position.

It is a very difficult and delicate point clearly to lay down what is a sufficient call to the ministry, for many of God's own sent servants, who have been most fully received by the living family as his commissioned ambassadors, have been much tried to make their calling to the work plain and clear to their own satisfaction, while some, if not many, who have spoken great swelling words of their call, are not commended to the consciences of God's own people as sent by him to preach his word at all, and have either been obliged to give up their preaching through positive failure of hearers, or from the thorough wearing out of what little gift they ever had for the work. Thus, when the trembling, exercised servant of the Lord has waxed stronger and stronger, and been more and more established in the hearts and affections of the family of God, these pretenders have become more and more manifest as led by a false spirit, and if not willful deceivers, at least themselves willingly deceived. When we say this, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we believe every sent servant of God will have, sooner or later, more or less, a witness in his own conscience that he is called to the work, for without some such inward testimony, he must soon faint under its burden, and always speak in fetters and shackles; but it may be some time before he is clearly established in his own mind. And besides this, he must have also a witness in the hearts and consciences of God's living people, who are often better judges of his call to the work than he himself can be, especially when he is under much trial and temptation.

What is thought to be a call to the ministry is more common than many people suppose. In saying this, we purposely set aside all those schemes of human contrivance by which religious young men are manufactured into ministers by the aggregate, and can be sent out to order, to suit any pulpit and any people; and we take as little account of those numerous instances where pride and

ignorance, vanity and self-conceit, love of ease, and aversion to hard and daily work, combine, with some natural ability of mind and readiness of speech, to persuade an aspiring youth, that a pulpit is the proper place for him to adorn, and for it to adorn him. Such man-made ministers, and such self admiring beauties, have no place in the Church of Christ, and no place in the consciences of those who know and love truth in its power. But take the case of one really called by grace in his youth, blessed with the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and possessed of a fair share of ability of mind, knowledge of the Scriptures, and utterance in prayer, private or public. Many if not most of such, in the warmth of their first love, in their liberty of access and freedom of utterance before the throne, in their zeal for the truth in its purity and power, in their strong affection to the family of God, and in their devotedness of heart and willingness to suffer for the Lord's sake, feel such impulses and movements on their spirit as make them long to testify to all who will hear what God has done for their soul, and to give themselves up to his service. But time and circumstances abundantly show them that this was not a call to the ministry, for as their first love declined, these movements towards the ministry declined with it, and they clearly saw that it was not the will of God that they should stand up in his name. It is not, therefore, any or every secret impulse or movement of the mind, even when honest and sincere, or any inward persuasion of the heart or desire for the work which will prove to be a call to the ministry, for many such blossoms drop off and are never matured into fruit. There must be, therefore, other things working together with the feelings and desires that we have named, to constitute a divine and sufficient call.

1. First, then, generally there is a great BACKWARDNESS to the work. We see this in Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, and if not expressly mentioned in the case of the other prophets, yet the words so often in their mouths, "The burden of the Lord," show the solemn weight with which the ministry pressed on their spirit. Those whom God calls to the work, he usually so strips and empties, so pulls down, humbles, and abases, so shows them what the ministry is, and their own unfitness for it—that they shrink back from so arduous and important a work, and can scarcely be persuaded that they are called to it. We need hardly remark how different this is from the forward, pushing, bold, if not presuming spirit which so many manifest in their ambitious aim almost to force their way into the pulpit.

2. Usually, too, there are strong and marked leadings in PROVIDENCE. A train of circumstances has been long at work, which, however obscure at the time, becomes cleared up when the moment arrives for unfolding the secret purposes of God. Hindrances of various kinds, such as business engagements, occupation or employment in life, fixed habitation where there was no door open for the work, opposition of wife or relations, repeated disappointments when the prospect seemed a little clearer, inability to move forward until the pillar and the cloud moved—these and similar hindrances are gradually or suddenly removed, and what was yesterday a mountain—becomes today a plain. All the difficulties are taken out of the way in so marked a manner, and the hand of the Lord so clearly seen, that what once seemed almost impossible is now accomplished in a moment.

3. Usually, too, it entails not only suffering, but SACRIFICE. The laborer is worthy of his hire, and those who sow spiritual things may lawfully reap material wages; but to go into the ministry for a piece of bread, to attain a respectable position in life, to feed a secret thirst for popularity and applause, to occupy a somewhat higher place in the church than a private Christian—to exchange

a wearisome, irksome employment for comparative idleness and ease, to have the pleasure of hearing himself talk, to shine as a light, and be a teacher and a preacher instead of being taught and preached to—all such base, unworthy motives stamp a man at once as a hireling. God may, after a season of suffering and sacrifice, honor his servants by giving them such a warm place in the hearts of his people, and such a high standing in the Church of Christ as shall elevate them above their original position.

Bunyan was raised from the tinker's barrow, and Huntington from the coal-barge, to an honored place in the Church of God; but we know through what sufferings, privations, and sacrifices these men of God passed in the first exercise of their ministry, and that though this honor followed, it was not their aim nor object in the first instance. Many, if not most of God's sent servants have had to come down before they went up, and to sacrifice good situations and employments, which, if not lucrative, were either likely to become so, or at any rate exceeded in value anything which they could expect from the ministry, especially in our connection, where the people are usually so poor, and the ministers so lowly paid.

4. Generally, too, where there is a call to the ministry, there will be some distinctive IMPRESSION fastened unexpectedly on the mind concerning it; or some secret, inward persuasion that it is the will of God he should stand up in his name; or some promise applied to the heart strongly looking that way; or some remarkable season experienced in prayer, when access was given to spread all his desires before the Lord, and there sprang up a humble petition to be made use of for his glory, which seemed to enter the ears of the Lord Almighty; or some intimation in hearing the word preached, or reading it in private, from the power which attended it, that a door would be opened to speak in the Lord's name; or some intense longing for the good of souls and earnest desire to be made useful to the Church of God, which seemed as if it would not fall to the ground unfulfilled.

These, and other similar impressions and intimations, are like the leaven in the meal which sets the whole mass to heave, ferment, and work. So through these peculiar impressions there will work almost day and night in the mind of one who has experienced them—exercises, desires, longings, cries, breathings, and petitions to the Lord; and mingled with them, there will be many fears of being deceived by false impressions, being deluded by Satan as an angel of light, or being impelled to so great and arduous a work by pride, ambition, lust of praise, and distinction, a name among men, or other equally base and carnal motives. But as these fears work, and the cry comes forth, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me," the soul is thus made increasingly honest and sincere, and willing to go or stay, speak or be silent, take up the burden of the Lord or leave it untouched, draw the sword in the vanguard or still tarry among the stuff in the rear.

It may be some years, perhaps, before the way is made sufficiently plain—years of anxious waiting and watching, years of delayed hope until the heart is made sick, years of disappointment and vexation, but all working to a determined end, and gradually preparing the man to become an able minister of the New Testament, and not enter the pulpit as a raw recruit, but as one who can endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered onto the saints. The Church, alas! is overrun with youths and novices who attempt to teach when they need to be taught; and if ever they learn anything or are ever of any use, learn their business as an ill-taught medical student learns at last a little of his profession—by

experimenting on men’s souls as he on their bodies, and making a hundred mistakes for one right or successful treatment.

5. There will also generally be, where the Lord has called a man to the work, an impression on the minds of the discerning part of God’s people—we say "discerning," for we take no account of the undiscerning and inexperienced who so abound in most churches—that he will one day stand up in his name. This arises sometimes from hearing his experience when he joins the church, sometimes from his peculiar gift in prayer, or his knowledge of and light upon the Scriptures, or his spirituality of mind in conversation, or his firmness in the truth, or his warmth and zeal in defending the cause of God, or his circumspect walk, his separation from the world and general devotedness of life; and all joined with that measure of mental ability which seems indispensable for a man who has to preach the word of God, to instruct the ignorant, edify the Church of Christ, and convince the gainsayer.

Perhaps none of the things which we have mentioned would be sufficient of itself, to be a call to the ministry—but the concurrence of some or many of them, like the flowing of many little rivulets to form one brook, make, by their combination, the purpose of God more plain and clear. Not that all who are truly called to the work can trace out with equal distinctness the marks and proofs of their call, but they can usually record some of those landmarks which have directed their path, and by which they have been led and encouraged to believe that it was by the hand of the Lord. But we fully believe that, besides these peculiar leadings, every true servant of God will have two witnesses to his call, without which he can never arrive at any real satisfaction that the Lord has himself appointed him to the work. These two witnesses are–

1. The witness in his own bosom.

2. The witness in the consciences of the people of God—with the blessing of God resting upon his ministry.

1. The witness in his own bosom. We lay this down, then, as necessary to a man’s being fully persuaded that God has called him to the work, that he will have, at times, the witness to it in his own bosom. The Lord will, at times, so enlarge his heart, and so open his mouth; he will find, at favored seasons, such a pouring in of gracious thoughts and feelings, and such a door of utterance to pour them out in words so suitable and so expressive, as if they were not his own, but were given him at the moment; such a power resting on his spirit to testify of what he has tasted, felt, and handled of the word of life; such a boldness to take forth the precious from the vile, that he may be as God’s mouth; such holy warmth in declaring all the counsel of God, and yet no strange fire in his censer, but coals from the brazen altar; such a firm, solemn, believing realization of the sacred truths which he is preaching, and such a sacred determination that, come what will, please or offend whom he may, he would sooner part with his life than part with the truth of God, as bring with them a sweet satisfaction that the Lord has called him to the work of the ministry. As these seasons are repeated, with greater or less power, and are contrasted by him with those, perhaps, more frequent times of darkness, when he is so shut up in his soul and the door of utterance so closed that he has scarcely a gracious thought, heavenly feeling, or suitable word—he gathers up an inward testimony that the Lord has, notwithstanding all his weakness and unworthiness, doubts and fears, called him to the work; and the very difference between himself and himself—between himself in the stocks and himself on the tower—himself shut up and himself able to come

forth—himself hacking and stammering and himself enlarged with the sweetest freedom of speech—himself full of bondage and misery and himself full of light, life, liberty, and love—this very contrast, which he so plainly feels, shows him only more clearly and distinctly when the Lord is with him and when he is not. And thus, by these very changes in his soul, these goings and comings of the Lord's presence and power on his spirit, he becomes satisfied that he is not warring at his own charges, but has been chosen to be a soldier to fight the Lord's battles. The way also in which texts are brought to his mind, opened up to his understanding, or applied to his heart; the light cast upon a passage when speaking from it, the suitable Scriptures which are brought to his memory to confirm his views upon it, and the sweet enjoyment which he has himself in or after the time of speaking from it; the secret prayer and meditation on the word which he has before he goes into the pulpit, and the holy savor which often rests on his spirit after the labors of the day; the sense which he has of the blessedness of the work, and his willingness to spend and be spent, labor and suffer, live and die in the Lord's service—these and similar experiences confirm him in the persuasion that the Lord has called him to the work, and is with him in it.

He is brought to see and feel that his very sermons are not his own, and that he cannot preach them again with that life, power, and utterance which were given him with his text; that though he may take the same passage, he cannot handle it in the same way again; that he cannot open it, or enlarge upon it, or enforce it as before; and that he cannot recover even the light which then shone through it, still less the savor which rested on his spirit in setting it forth. But we must not further enlarge on this point, though we could say much on both sides of the question, from our own long and diversified experience of it.

2. But, he must also have the witness in the hearts and consciences of the family of God. Without this testimony from others, his own will be of little avail, for "not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends." "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." (2 Corinthians 13:1) The testimony in his own bosom is the one witness; the testimony in the consciences of others is the other; and the third, we may add, is the blessing of God resting upon his ministry.

This, therefore, we may next bring forward, as stamping a broad seal on his call to the work. Where a man is really called by God to the work of the ministry, his blessing will rest, more or less, manifestly upon the word; power will attend it to the heart of sinner and saint, and the Lord will not allow it to fall to the ground as the mere word of man. There will be, at various times, marked instances of some being called out of darkness into light, of others delivered from bondage into the liberty of the gospel, of others being brought out of temptation and soul distress into a wealthy place—of others specially favored when much cast down with trials and afflictions—and of others being encouraged and strengthened to persevere courageously in their conflict with unbelief, sin, and Satan.

Besides these special testimonies there will be also a general power and savor attending his word, which will gather and keep together a living people, few, perhaps, in number, but much united to him and his ministry, who highly esteem him in love and cleave to him for his work's sake. We do not speak here of partisans and flatterers—really a man's worst and most dangerous enemies, who cry him up as much as they cry all others down; nor of those weak and silly old women, of all ages and both sexes, who have no experience, judgment, or discernment in the things of God, and

can receive almost everything in the shape of a sermon, and everybody in the shape of a minister; nor of those young people, and especially the female part of them, who admire the charms of the man, almost as much as they admire the minister. But we mean the solid, well-taught, sober-minded, tried, experienced children of God, who know what they hear, and whom they hear, and can tell the difference between chaff and wheat—letter and spirit—word and power—the noxious stench of the creature and the sweet savor of Christ. We will not, indeed, say that every called servant of God will at first, perhaps, obtain this clear witness in the consciences of the Lord's people, or to the extent which we have traced out, for, knowing what man is, and how easy the best may be deceived, they are slow to receive any minister. But, sooner or later, the Lord will establish his testimony to the call of his servant by commending it to feeling hearts, discerning spirits, and living consciences.

2. And now for a few words on the QUALIFICATIONS for the work of the ministry. All must admit that if God calls a man to the work, he will fit him for it; and if he has no such qualifications, there is no reason to believe that God has sent him. But what do we understand by qualifications for the ministry of the word? We may cast them under two simple heads—

1. Grace.

2. Gifts.

1. And first, GRACE. Nothing is more evident than that a man without the grace of God in his heart has neither part nor lot in this matter. A man dead in sin, or dead in a profession, to stand up in the name of the living God to preach to a living people—what daring presumption, what a dreadful contradiction! And yet what troops of men there are, on every side and of every sect, party, and denomination, utterly destitute of the life of God, who call themselves ministers of Christ, and would resent, with the bitterest enmity, the slightest imputation or even suspicion that they are hypocrites or impostors! But all these, whoever they be, Churchmen or Dissenters, or whatever they be, high or low, we must at once set aside as only awful intruders into a work to which they were never called, and for which they were never qualified. But a man may have the grace of God in his soul—and yet have but little divine, spiritual knowledge of the truth—and little experience of its power. Now no one, who knows what the work of the ministry is, can say that such a 'beginner' is qualified to be a minister of the gospel, and go in and out before the exercised family of God, as a leader and a teacher. We cannot, indeed, say what use God might make of him to beginners, like himself; but one would think that he had better tarry at Jericho until his beard is grown, than go up to Jerusalem with only a little fluff on his chin. "A novice" ("one newly comes to the faith," margin) is expressly excluded from the work of the ministry. As "newly come to the faith," it is assumed that he has faith; but he is not old enough yet in the way to escape being lifted up with pride, or falling into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6) And yet what beardless boys are now thrusting themselves everywhere into the ministry, and presume to teach mature grey-haired saints the way of salvation, who knew the Lord for themselves when these youths were in their newborn clothes; and, what seems worse, are hammered into shape and squared to pattern by a few lectures in Greek and grammar, or run into a mold by a course of what is termed theology, until they are stiffened into pride, and hardened in self-conceit, under what is called a preparation for the ministry. Alas! for any people when "children are their princes, and babes rule over them!" (Isaiah 3:4)

What is needed as a gracious qualification for the ministry is, an experience of the things of God—a spiritual, saving knowledge of law and gospel, sin and salvation, self and Christ, affliction and consolation, bondage and liberty, temptation and deliverance, misery and mercy, the awful depths of the fall, the wondrous height of the recovery. How can a man preach Christ who knows nothing experimentally of his Person, work, blood, righteousness, death, and resurrection? of his beauty, blessedness, suitability, grace, and glory? of his love, and some measure of its breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and of the riches of his free, sovereign, and superabounding grace? And how can he enter into and experimentally describe the trials, afflictions, temptations, sufferings, and sorrows of the poor afflicted family of God, who is himself at ease in Zion, and knows only what he knows in mere theory, notion, and opinion? A minister attempting to preach without some good experience of the things of God, would be like a pilot taking charge of a ship coming up the Channel, who does not know one headland, lighthouse, buoy, or shoal from another; or like an engine-driver who should presume to drive an express train without knowing what handle to lift of his engine, or how to read aright the instruments. But enough of this. Let us pass on to consider what qualifications are needful in the way of gifts.

2. We consider, then, that wherever God calls a man to the work of the ministry, he will qualify him for it by furnishing him with a suitable and sufficient GIFT. We do not mean mere learning, or education, or great mental ability—though when these are sanctified to the service of the sanctuary they have their place in the work, and are not to be rejected or despised. But what we want is a door of utterance, such as Paul prayed for. (Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 4:3) By this is meant not a mere flow of words, which is often but empty chatter, or that readiness and volubility of tongue which weary alike ear and heart—but that sober, solid, grave, sound speech which cannot be condemned, and by which "he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9; Titus 2:7-8) A minister should be "apt to teach," (1 Timothy 3:2) and, therefore, must have some teaching ability in him. But this requires at least such a clearness of thought and speech as shall preserve him and his hearers from being lost in a fog of confusion. The plainest, simplest language is the best; and that a man may have this in the highest degree and yet possess neither education nor learning, we have for witnesses Bunyan and Huntington—those masters of the English tongue in all its native simplicity, beauty, and strength. But he must also be well established in the truth, and he able to open it up; and, when occasion demands, defend it. Error abounds on every side; and though we do not advocate a controversial spirit in or out of the pulpit, yet a minister should be able to defend truth and expose error. And he should be able to do this in a way simple and yet forcible, so as not to weaken the force of truth, or even, as some do, make it contemptible by handling it in so confused and bungling a manner as to grieve its friends and gladden its foes. It is surprising what force and power there sometimes are in a few simple words, or even in the apt quotation of a text with but little comment upon it. What light will often shine to a hearer through it on the truth, and how before it error will fall as Dagon before the ark.

He should also have a good knowledge of the word, not only as dwelling in his memory—but in his heart and conscience, and be able to open it consistently and experimentally, that he may feed the souls of God’s people with milk and honey, meat and marrow, and give them to drink of the pure wine of the grape.

There should be also some order and variety in his ministry, which is best obtained by keeping close to his text, and seeking to open it through its breadth and length, which will much preserve him from unconnected rambling or dropping into the same round of experience, which, however good or sound in itself, becomes after a time wearisome from its very sameness and repetition.

But, above all things, there should be that flow of divine life into his soul, and that continual renewing and reviving of the power and presence of God in his heart which alone can give life to his gift, and make the wellspring of wisdom in him to be a flowing brook, watering, so to speak, both his soul and his ministry from that river of God which is full of water, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Without this water in him springing up into everlasting life, his gift would soon wither and decay. In his ministry there would be nothing new, nothing fresh, nothing sweet, savory, or acceptable to the family of God.

He may thump his Bible or the pulpit, and try by noise and bluster to make way for his word to the hearts of the people. But he can only give the head-ache, not the heart-ache—stun, weary, and confuse; but his doctrine will not drop as the rain, nor his speech distill as the dew, unless the precious things of heaven, and the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the bush comes as a blessing upon his soul. (Deuteronomy 32:2; Deuteronomy 33:13, Deuteronomy 33:16) A small gift fed with the life and power of God will not only live and last when a great gift unfed with heavenly oil will wither and decay—but will thrive and grow by exercise and use, by prayer, reading, and meditation—until it shines brighter and brighter, and gives a wider and increasing light. But our limits warn us to stay our pen. The due qualifications for the ministry is a subject which has much and long exercised our thoughts, and on which we have formed in our own mind some definite conclusions; but we would need some large space to lay them before our readers, even if we should ever venture upon a field so difficult and so delicate. Let, then, these few feeble hints for the present suffice; and sorry indeed would we be if anything which we have dropped on the subject should discourage the feeblest of the sent servants of God, or add the least weight to that "burden of the Lord," which, as his ministers, it is their highest privilege, though often their heaviest trial, to bear for is name’s sake.

01.08. Countless treasures!

Countless treasures! by J. C. Philpot

What a wonderful book is the Bible! What countless treasures of mercy and grace, wisdom and truth, are therein contained—hidden, indeed, from the natural eye, but opened up and revealed from time to time by the Blessed Spirit to the enlightened understanding of the family of God. That the word of God is a sealed book to the great mass of professed Christians—we mean by the term, those who, without any divine life in their soul, are in the habit of attending a place of worship—one or two facts will abundantly show. Though the Scriptures are in everybody's hand, and are read or heard habitually from childhood's hour to old age's lingering decay, not only are they not understood, they are not even remembered. We hesitate not to say, that you may take at a venture, a thousand people in the middle classes of society, of a good education, regular church-goers, and therefore hearing the Scriptures continually read, and you shall hardly find five out of them who could quote a text correctly, or tell you where it is to be found—at least, beyond some vague idea, gathered from the turn of expression, that it is in the Old Testament or New. Does not this show that they are heard without the least interest taken in them? Would Shakespeare, or Milton, or Byron, be read in their ears as often, and not be remembered? The words of a foolish song are learned in a few minutes, and caught up at once by every boy in the street. But who remembers the word of God, except to misuse and blaspheme it? One reading gave "Uncle Tom" a firmer place in the memory of thousands than the Bible which they have read all their lives. How little, too, do they seem to understand its meaning! A few plain texts that speak of actions to be performed they may, at first sight, seem to comprehend; but even these they rive and tear from their spiritual meaning, laying them down as duties to be done by all men, instead of fruits brought forth by the Blessed Spirit in the hearts, lips, and lives of the family of God. But this gross darkness of mind, as regards the Scriptures, is not merely a negative evil; it inevitably produces effects almost more dangerous than the very blindness itself. A blind man, as long as he sits still, may keep from stumbling. It is when he begins to move, to walk, that he tumbles about and breaks his limbs or his neck. So in religion; it is when the blind begin to move, and think they certainly will become religious, that they stumble and fall into one error after another. Without divine teaching, they cannot but go wrong; without divine light, they cannot but fall. We do not say they have not some natural light; but what is seen by them is seen from a wrong point of view; what is done by them is done from wrong motives; their faint and flickering views of right and wrong only mislead them into self-righteousness; and the very duties they try to perform only blind them more to the way of salvation by sovereign grace. Like a man lost in a wood, every seeming step out is to them, but a farther step in; or, like one benighted on a moor, or in a bog, every attempt at extrication wearies and fatigues, but only ends in deeper entanglement.

Ministers of truth are thought sometimes to speak too strongly of the dreadful state of man through the fall; but, in fact, it is impossible to exaggerate in language the blindness and darkness of the human heart; nor can pen or tongue adequately set forth the misery and utter helplessness of a condition such as the Scriptures describe in two most solemn passages—"Therefore they could

not believe, because that Elijah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them"; (John 12:39-40); "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Now, contrast with this dreadful condition, so clearly, so graphically described, the state of the soul into which the true light, what the Lord calls "the light of life," has shone. This is beautifully described in two passages of scripture, which we will quote as counterparts of those just brought forward—"Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace;" (Luke 1:78-79); "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Many sweet and simple testimonies are there in the word of truth to this work of the Spirit on the heart, whereby he enlightens it with the light of the living. "The entrance of your words gives light." "In your light shall we see light." "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." "He who believes in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Happy the man thus enlightened by the Spirit from on high. He no longer walks on in darkness and in the shadow of death. Like Moses, he now sees him who is invisible. As this light penetrates into the dark corners and recesses of the heart—the true "candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly."

It discovers to him his own case and state as a fallen sinner; and as it shines upon the holiness and justice of God, as revealed in the Scripture, it makes known the breadth and spirituality of the law, the wrath of God due to sin, and his righteous judgment on all transgressors. Nor does the blessed Spirit stop here. He goes on to enlighten the soul to see the way of salvation. His special office is to take of the things of Christ and to reveal them to the soul. He therefore casts a light upon the mercy of God as revealed in his dear Son; shows how the soul is washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness; and not only so, but applies the blood, and brings near the righteousness; and blessing him with a manifestation of Christ, and a testimony to his interest in him, leads him onward to see more and more of the beauty of his Person, the riches of his grace, the breadth, length, depth, and height of his dying love, his suitability in all his covenant characters and offices, and what he is to all who love and confide in his name. This same light, we, may further observe, spreads itself over the word of truth, as he reads from time to time the inspired page. We have often thought of the words, "Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Until this is done, the Scriptures are not understood. The eye, indeed, looks at them, but much as it looks at objects through a telescope before it gets the right focus. Everything is dim and distorted, hazy and obscure. Without Christ—the light of Christ in the understanding, and the life of Christ in the heart; without faith in his Person, hope in his mercy, or love to his name, the Scriptures are all a dark enigma. Not a doctrine can be understood, not an experience entered into, not a precept performed, not a promise believed, not an invitation accepted, not a truth enjoyed, without a living faith in the divine Revealer of them all. The Scriptures are much and widely read, it is true, but merely as a duty, a daily or weekly self-imposed task, a religious performance in which a certain amount of merit is invested. It thus becomes a mere sop for conscience in some, and in others amounts at best to a perusing with the

eye a certain quantity of words and letters, chapters and verses, unwillingly taken up, badly laid down. The beauty and blessedness, divine sweetness and inexpressible power and savor, seen and felt in the Scriptures by a believing heart are, to the unbelieving multitude unknown, untasted, unfelt, uncared for. Whatever be the subject, however solemn or weighty—and what can be so solemn and weighty as the soul's eternal happiness or misery?—the word of truth, without a divine application, absolutely makes no impression on the conscience. The threatenings produce no terror or trembling, create no fear or conviction, draw out neither sigh nor groan, no, nor raise up one faint, feeble cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The promises, the invitations, the portions that speak of Christ and his sufferings neither melt nor move, touch nor soften their conscience. The unregenerate heart responds to neither judgment nor mercy. Nothing stirs it Godwards. Hard as a stone, cold as ice, motionless as a corpse, it lies dead in trespasses and sins. But not so with the heart which the finger of God has touched. It fears, it trembles, it melts, it softens; it is lifted up, it is cast down; it sighs, it prays, it believes; it hopes, it loves; it mourns, it rejoices; it grieves, it repents—in a word, it lives the life of God, and breathes, acts, and moves just as the Blessed Spirit visits and works in it by his gracious power and influence. Under his teaching, the Scriptures become a new book, read, as it, were, with new eyes, heard with new ears, thought and pondered over with new feelings, understood with a new understanding, and felt in a new conscience. But apart from any special light which a man taught of God may have on particular passages of Scripture, such, for instance, as have been peculiarly opened up, applied, and blessed to his soul, there is what we may perhaps call a general light on the word of truth. There is harmony in God's word. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise. It would be treason against the Blessed Spirit to think there could be any real discrepancy, any positive contradiction, in the inspired page. When, then, we are favored with a spiritual, experimental knowledge of God's truth, it is putting into our hands a master-key to open cabinets closed against the wise and prudent, a clue to guide the feet amid the mazes where learned doctors and studious theologians wander and are lost, a light penetrating and pervading the hidden depths of the sanctuary, on the threshold of which the scribe and the Pharisee stumble and fall.

There is one deep mine especially in Scripture, in which an amazing amount of profitable instruction is stored up, but which, without divine light, cannot be penetrated into and explored, and its golden treasure, for "it has dust of gold," laid bare. We mean the characters of Scripture, what may be called Scripture biography, as distinct from Scripture history. And as the Bible gives us the lives and actions of sinners as well as of saints, of professors as well as possessors, Scripture biography has two phases corresponding to these characters.

Take, for instance, the character of Saul. What a mine of instruction—fearful indeed, but profitable—is laid up in his history! What a description inside and out of a professor of religion, from the beginning to the end of his course! It is the history of a man upon whom worldly honor and a prominent position in the church of God are thrust in spite of himself, wrecked and ruined for the non-possession of grace. It seems as if God would show us in him that the fairest beginnings, brightest prospects, and most signal gifts serve only to thrust a man into deeper perdition, if he has not a living principle of faith, fear, and obedience in his soul. There are in the history of Saul elements of character given, from which, without the slightest exaggeration in drawing or coloring, a full-length portrait might be painted which would make a tender-hearted child of God tremble to the very center.

Take, again, the character of David, as brought out in the same way by his words and actions, and fixing your eye on that point, steadily pursue it through all his history. God seems to have designed to give us in him the counterpart of the character of Saul, and thus to show that, as without grace nothing can save, so with grace nothing can damn. Just where Saul stumbles and falls, David stands. All things, the brightest and the fairest, tend to Saul's downfall; all things, the darkest and foulest, tend to David's rise. Victory and defeat are alike ruinous to Saul; for when he conquers Agag, he destroys himself by sparing him; and when the Philistines prevail, he falls on his own sword. Victory and defeat are alike a blessing to David. If he conquers, as when he slew Goliath, it was, as winning the confidence and affections of the people, a step towards the throne; and if he is hunted as a partridge on the mountains, it is but a wholesome discipline and a needful training him to wear more steadily the crown. Yet, in reading their history, we cannot but own that Saul is justly punished, and David justly blessed. We fully acquiesce in the sentence of each. Nothing in either shocks our moral perceptions of right and wrong. The crookedness, selfishness, hypocrisy, disobedience, murderous, revengeful disposition and conduct of Saul we see justly to draw down upon him the vengeance of God.

Yet we feel, and in this much consists the instruction contained in his miserable history, that human nature being what it is, and circumstances being what they were, he could hardly act otherwise; though, at the same time, we feel that otherwise he would have acted, had he but possessed grace. We read his end, close the book, and tremble; but does the thought rise up as if God were unjust in letting him perish so miserably? Did he not sin against the clearest directions, the strongest warnings; and when once he began to turn aside, did he not go from sin to sin, from murder to witchcraft, until mercy herself turned aside her face, unable to say a word why the stroke of justice should not fall? David, on the other hand, not merely shows the triumph of grace as a saving principle, confirming and establishing us thereby in its sovereign efficacy, but shines forth as a living evidence of what grace is as an active, influential principle. David is not borne on passively, mechanically to the throne, carried as if in a chariot from Bethlehem's sheepfolds to Hebron's court. Grace is seen not merely working in him, but worked out by him. His prayers, his tears, his faith, his obedience, his sincerity, his humility, his confiding trust, yes, and all his fears and conflicts too, are brought out; and what grace is, does, and can do is as clearly seen in him, as what nature is, does, and can do is seen in Saul.

01.09. Christian giving

Christian giving by J. C. Philpot When God bade Moses set up the tabernacle in the wilderness, as a standing type of the sacred humanity of his own dear Son, (Hebrews 8:2; Hebrews 9:11; John 2:21) he thus spoke unto him—"Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." (Exodus 25:2-8)

Thus all the children of Israel might freely bring an offering, each according to his substance, and each according to his willing mind. Being all redeemed by blood and power—the blood of the paschal lamb, and the overthrow of their enemies in the Red Sea; being all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; all eating the same spiritual food—the manna from heaven; and all drinking the same spiritual drink—the water out of the smitten Rock that followed them, which Rock was Christ, (1 Corinthians 10:2-4) they were all viewed as a holy people, (Exodus 19:6; Lev. 21:44, 45; Jeremiah 2:3) standing typically and representatively as God's elect family. (Deuteronomy 7:6)

Thus Balaam could say of them in the visions of prophecy—"He has not seen iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel. Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king among them." (Numbers 23:21) Now this was the reason why the Lord asked for and accepted their offerings for the building and service of the tabernacle. As an elect, a redeemed, and a holy people, their offerings were as if sanctified by their standing and position in the covenant made with them and their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To be allowed, then, to contribute their gifts to the tabernacle in which God was himself to dwell, was a high privilege conferred upon them.

If our readers will turn to Exodus 34:1-35 they will find a beautiful account of the offerings brought and of the willingness of the people in bringing them, accounting it so high a privilege, that God would accept their gifts for his own sanctuary and service that they had to be restrained by public proclamation from giving more than was needed for that purpose. (Exodus 36:5-7)

Now, one main beauty in the offerings thus made, and in the willingness of the people to make them, was that these gifts were measured not by their actual intrinsic value, but by the ability and willingness of each individual giver. Thus some brought onyx stones, others precious jewels; some offered gold and silver, others brass; some gave blue, and purple, and scarlet, others rams' skins dyed red or badgers' skins; some fine linen, and others goats' hair. If a man had a precious onyx stone, or a costly diamond, or a beautiful sapphire, or a choice amethyst, what an honor, what a privilege, that instead of being kept in a bag in his tent, or shining in a ring on his wife's finger, the onyx should be worn on the ephod, and the diamond or sapphire on the breastplate of judgment

when the high priest went to consult the mind of the Lord in his sanctuary. (Exodus 38:9-12; Exodus 38:15-21) To what a noble use, too, was the gold put, when instead of, like Achan's wedge, being hidden in the earth, it was made into the mercy-seat or the golden candlestick, or overlaid upon the altar of incense, and the table of showbread (Exodus 25:17-18, Exodus 25:23-25, Exodus 25:31) The very goats' hair spun by the women had an honor put upon it as wrought into one of the curtains within which the ark of the Lord dwelt. (Exodus 26:7; Exodus 35:26; 2 Samuel 7:2) When, then, the tabernacle was completed, and consecrated by the holy anointing oil put upon every part, (Exodus 30:22-29) and especially when it had been filled with the glory of the Lord, so that Moses himself could not enter into it, (Exodus 40:34-35) every portion of the sanctuary and the vessels of service used therein were equally sanctified, from the precious diamond to the spun goats' hair, from the polished onyx to the rough badgers' skin. All were equally valuable, equally acceptable, equally set apart from common uses, and dedicated permanently and unalterably to the service of the Lord.

Now for the APPLICATION of our subject, for of course we have not written all this for writing's sake, without any definite train of thought or special purpose. View the matter spiritually. Every one who has been redeemed by blood and power—the blood of the cross, and the work of the Holy Spirit in delivering him from the power of darkness, and translating him into the kingdom of God's dear Son; (Colossians 1:13) every one who has been spiritually baptized into Christ, and thus put on Christ; (Galatians 3:27) every one who has fed and is feeding on the hidden manna, (Revelation 2:17) and drinking out of Christ's fullness the water of life; (John 7:37; Revelation 22:17) every one who has been made willing in the day of Christ's power, (Psalms 110:3) is called upon and may freely offer what he has and is to the Lord's service! In fact, he is no longer his own, but is bought with a price. Therefore his body and spirit are both God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) And if so, then his time, his money, his gifts, his abilities, whether natural or spiritual, his very life—and death itself—are not his own, but the Lord's, and are to be freely given and used in his service. Not that any one of us does these things, at least as they should be done, for we are all poor, sluggish, selfish, do-nothing wretches, at our very best unprofitable servants, (Luke 17:10) and few even see or feel that they may or should do them; but it is our privilege and happiness that we are allowed to do them when there is a willing mind and an obedient spirit; and what is more blessed still is that the Lord accepts them. (Romans 12:1; Php 4:18; 1 Peter 2:5)

No, more, as in the case of the widow's two mites, it is not the costliness of the gift which measures its value, but the ability and willingness of the giver. (2 Corinthians 8:12) It is in this way, that the lock of goats' hair may be as acceptable as the diamond, and the smallest service done with a single eye to the glory of God and the good of his people—even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, (Matthew 10:42) may out-value the most princely gift.

Chapter 12

01.10. The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Work of the Holy Spirit By J. C. Philpot

Until the Blessed Spirit quickens the soul into spiritual life, we know nothing really or rightly of the truth as it is in Jesus. We may be strictly orthodox in doctrine, may abhor infidelity and error, may be shocked at profanity and irreverence, may be scrupulously attentive to every relative duty, may repeat, with undeviating regularity, our prayers and devotions; and may seem to ourselves and to others exceedingly religious; when, in the sight of a heart-searching God, we are still dead in trespasses and sins. The world is full of such exceedingly religious people. Every church and every chapel can produce samples in abundance of such "devout and honorable" men and women.

No! we may come much nearer the mark than this, for these runners are indeed a long way off the very starting-place, and yet we may still be very far from the kingdom of heaven. We may have a form of godliness in a profession of truth, may have been suckled and bred up from childhood in a sound creed, may have learned the doctrines of grace in theory and as a religious system, may be convinced in our conscience of their substantial agreement with the oracles of God, may contend for them in argument, and prove them by texts, may sit under the sound of the gospel with pleasure, or even preach it with eloquence and fervor; and yet know nothing of the truth savingly and experimentally, by divine teaching and divine testimony. Does the Scripture afford us no example of both these characters? Who more religious, more strict, scrupulous, and orthodox than the Pharisee of old? He sat in Moses' seat, as the teacher of the people; he tithed his mint, anise, and cummin with the most scrupulous care; he strained his very drink, that no gnat or unclean worm might unawares pollute him; he prayed and fasted rigidly and regularly; and seemed to himself and to others the prime favorite of heaven. But what was he really and truly? What was he in the sight of God? According to the Lord's own testimony, a hypocrite, a viper, a whited sepulcher, ripening himself for the damnation of hell! And was there no Saul among the prophets? no Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, with a "Thus says the Lord" in his mouth? (2 Chronicles 18:10) no Hananiah, with a declared message from God? (Jeremiah 28:2) Did not these men come with a profession of the truth, and claim to be servants of the Most High? And was there no Demas, nor Diotrephes, nor Alexander in the New Testament? Who were those against whom holy John, fervent Jude, and earnest Peter warned the churches so strongly? Who were those "spots in their feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear?" Who were those "clouds without water, carried about with winds;" those "trees whose fruit withered, twice dead, plucked up by the roots?"—who else but graceless professors of the truth? It is not then, the form, the letter, the mere outside, the bare shell and husk of truth, that makes or manifests the Christian; but the vital possession of it as a divinely bestowed gift and treasure. But bearing this in mind as a solemn warning against trifling with the truth of God, or being satisfied with a mere formal recognition of it, let us proceed to see what a blessing truth is when we are put into the vital possession of it.

If we look at the work of the Spirit on the heart, we shall see how, in all his sacred dealings and gracious movements, he invariably employs truth as his grand instrument. Does he pierce and wound? It is by the truth; for the "sword of the Spirit is the word of God," and that we know is "the word of truth." (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7) If he mercifully heal, if he kindly bless, it is still by means of truth; for the promise is, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." And when he thus comes, it is as a Comforter, according to those gracious words, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me." In fact, if we look at the new man of grace that the blessed Spirit begets and brings forth in the heart, we shall see that all his members and faculties are formed and adapted to a living reception of the truth. As the eye is adapted to light; as the ear to sound; as the lungs to the pure air that fills them with every breath; as the heart to the vital blood which it propels through every bounding artery, so is the new man of grace fitted and adapted to the truth of God. And as these vital organs perform their peculiar functions only as they receive the impressions which these external agents produce upon them, so the organs of the new man of grace only act as truth is impressed upon them by the power of the blessed Spirit. Has, then, the new man of grace eyes? It is to see the truth. (Ephesians 1:18-19) Has he ears? It is to hear the truth. (Isaiah 55:3; Luke 9:44) Has he hands? It is to lay hold of and embrace the truth. (Proverbs 4:13; Isaiah 27:5; Hebrews 6:18) Has he feet? It is that he may walk in the truth. (Psalms 119:45; Luke 1:6; 3 John 1:4) Has he a mouth? ("Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.") It is that he may feed upon the truth, the living truth, yes, upon His flesh who is truth itself. (John 6:35; John 14:6)

Without truth there is no regeneration; for it is by "the word of truth "that we are begotten and born again. (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23) Without truth there is no justification; for we are justified by faith, which faith consists in crediting God’s truth, and so, gives peace with God. (Romans 4:20-24; Romans 5:1) Without the truth there is no sanctification; for the Lord himself says, "Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth." And without the truth there is no salvation; for "God has chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13) And as the truth is the instrumental cause of all these blessings, the divinely-appointed means whereby they become manifested mercies, so truth enters into and is received by all the graces of the Spirit as they come forth into living exercise. Thus, without the truth, there is no faith; for the work of faith is to believe the truth. What is all the difference between faith and delusion? That faith believes God’s truth, and delusion credits Satan’s lies. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Without truth there is no hope; for the province of hope is to anchor in the truth. "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 steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." The two immutable things in which hope anchors are God’s word and God’s wrath; in other words, the pledged veracity and faithfulness of him who cannot lie. This made holy David say, "I have hoped in your word." "They that go down into the pit," said good King Hezekiah, "cannot hope for your truth." No! it is "the living, the living who praise you as I do this day." And it is "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures," that is, the consolation which the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures affords, "that we have hope." (Romans 15:4) Without truth there is no love, for it is by "the love of the truth" that the saved are distinguished from the

lost. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." And it is only as we speak "the truth in love that we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Thus "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;" and this is the Person of the Son of God, for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

How holy men of old sighed and cried for an experimental knowledge of God’s truth! "Lead me in your truth;" "Send out your light and your truth;" "O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve me." And when the Son of God came in the flesh, and thus brought down truth into visible manifestation, how those who were born of God beheld his glory, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" How dear also to God himself in his truth! Thus he is said to have "magnified his word above all his name;" that is, exalted and glorified his revealed truth above all his other attributes and perfections. Now, if truth be so precious in itself, so precious to God, so precious to all the saints of God, should it not be also precious to us? It will be so if we have the mind of Christ, and his Spirit dwell in us. But as a love of holiness necessarily includes as well as implies a hatred of, and a fleeing from sin, so will a love of truth contain in it a hatred of, and a fleeing from, error. Indifference never yet was counted a mark of love, whether human or divine. Warmth, zeal, earnestness, devotedness, are not only sure marks of love, but are so intimately interwoven with its very essence, that they cannot be separated from it.

01.11. Experimental Preaching

Experimental Preaching by J. C. Philpot A ministry without power never was, never can be, profitable or acceptable to the church of God. In what striking language does Paul declare what his own ministry was as regards this point, and the effect produced by it in the hearts of those to whom it was blessed: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." How carefully does he here distinguish between the "word" and the "power" as regards his own ministry; and, speaking of that of others, how he examines it by the same decisive test: "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

This, then, is the grand distinctive and decisive difference between the ministration of "the letter" and of "the Spirit,"—that the one is an empty sound, a mere babbling noise, and the other a life-giving power; that the one genders to bondage and death, and the other ministers grace to the hearers, and works effectually in those that believe. But if a man has never felt the power of God in his own soul, how can he minister power to others? Life and power, dew and savor, must be in a man’s heart before they can be on a man’s lips. For this special gift and grace of heaven there can be no substitute. Learning, abilities, and eloquence, are not to be despised or set aside, for they may be dedicated to the service of the sanctuary; but they are miserable substitutes for that live coal from off the altar with which God touches the lips of his sent servants. Paul, Augustine, and Luther, had all these three gifts in an eminent degree; nor did they make Paul a less able apostle, Augustine a less admirable expositor, or Luther a less intrepid or successful reformer. But far above and beyond all these natural gifts was that divine power which rested upon them and clothed their words with a heavenly influence to the souls of men.

Now, if this, to us fundamental principle, be not deeply grafted in a minister’s heart, and there kept perpetually alive by the teaching of the Spirit, he will be fully satisfied with a mere letter drift; or if for a while he seem to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," he will almost inevitably, sooner or later, be drawn aside from the path of experimental truth. This, then, is, or should be, the feeling of every servant of God, "I am nothing but by God’s making; I have nothing but by God’s giving; I know nothing but by God’s teaching; I feel nothing (aright) but by God’s inspiring; and I can do nothing but by God’s working." The deep and daily sense of his own thorough helplessness and insufficiency, combined with a living experience of the grace and strength of Christ made perfect in his weakness, will keep him on experimental ground; and as the blessed Spirit works in him fresh and fresh discoveries of sin and salvation, misery and mercy, ruin and recovery, hell and heaven, so will he give out what is given in; "his heart will teach his mouth, and add learning (the right kind of learning) to his lips."

Every trial and temptation, furnace and flood, every assault from without or within, every rising venom of indwelling sin, and every fiery dart from the artillery of hell, will only root and ground him more deeply in experimental truth, as every storm roots and grounds the oak more firmly in the soil; and every beam and ray of the Sun of Righteousness, with every drop of dew upon his branch, and every shower of rain on his root, will draw him more and more out of pride and self into the light and air of heaven. Thus, night and day, winter and summer, storm and sun, cold and heat, the lowly valley's gloom and the shining mountain top, all combine in grace, as in creation, to carry on God's work, and strengthen and ripen the tree of his right hand planting in the church of God. As long as a man is thus graciously dealt with, he will be held on experimental ground; and his soul being kept alive by the power of God, and he being in the things of which he speaks, a life, power, and freshness will accompany his word; and this will not only commend itself to the conscience of the family of God, but be conveyed with a sweetness and savor to their hearts. But let a minister of truth get into a smooth and easy path, let sin cease to vex him, Satan to plague him, the world to hate him, professors to slander him, and God to bless him, his preaching, though still on the same basis, and still dealing outwardly with the same things, from inevitable necessity will get dull and dry. This leanness of spirit and barrenness of ministry, unless wonderfully puffed up by pride and conceit, he will soon begin himself to feel. He becomes sensible by degrees of a sameness in his preaching. The supply in the tank being so often drawn upon and not fed again and again with a rising spring, gets lower and lower, and the water more vapid and tasteless, until it seems almost to breed corruption and death in himself and the hearers.

Now here is the turning point with him, whether he is all his days to be to the church of God an old, useless, worn out rain-water butt, or a flowing brook. If left still unexercised, he will soon have little else but staves and hoops; if God turn his hand a second time, and once more deal graciously with him, living water will again flow. But assume the former case. Let the rod and the kiss, the frown and the smile, the affliction and the consolation, the trial and the deliverance be alike suspended; let the Lord for his own wise purposes leave him to settle on his lees; let him remain cold, barren, and dry in his soul, such will be his ministry; and those divine realities in living experience which he once found sweetness in declaring and the people in hearing, now becoming dead and lifeless to him, it comes to this point, that either he must keep going over the same ground over and over again, until, like a tethered donkey, his teeth and hoofs have worn out every blade of grass, or he must break his tether and get something new, for his leanness rises up in his face, and his own barrenness is evidently starving the people.

Some men, either too blind to see, too dead to feel it, or too proud to confess it, resolutely hold on to the same ground. Lord's day after Lord's day, there is the same dead dry prayer, and the same dead dry sermon. Not only is the same old tale told, but in almost the same words, with nothing new but the text. Now this may be called preaching experience, and so in a sense it is; but it is a preaching which beggars the soul; and we do believe that much of the lean and miserable state of many experimental churches is owing to this feeding them on the picked and gnawed bones and the old dry crusts of a dead, worn-out experience. No wonder that such preaching as this is despised, and that people are prejudiced against experimental preaching, when this is considered experimental. But this no more resembles real experimental preaching than the manna which bred worms and stank resembled the manna which fell with the morning dew, or the dry and moldy bread of the Gibeonites was like the cake baked by the angel for Elijah, or their old shoes and

clouted were the same as the shoes of iron and brass which God put on the feet of his people.

Many mistakes are made on this point. There is a creed of experience, as there is a creed of doctrine, which may be learned exactly in the same dead and dry way; there are certain generally recognized and almost consecrated terms, a set of current phrases, which, having been used in time past by real experimental ministers, have been handed down as a religious Shibboleth, a ministerial stock in trade; and he who has learned this key and obtained these pass-words, comes forward as an experimental servant of God, and puts himself at once, or is put by others, on the roll of the divinely-sent ambassadors of heaven. But as a man does not become the Queen's ambassador to the Court of Austria because he can speak a little German, nor to the Court of France because he can gabble a little French, so it is not a set of experimental phrases which makes a man an ambassador from the King of kings to the Court of Zion. But many weak, timid children of God cannot see through words into things, and though sensible of increasing deadness and barrenness under the ministry of such men, take all the blame to themselves, reverencing, with almost abject superstition, the minister, because he is a minister, and believing his words must be words of grace because they are pronounced in a certain way, and are so familiar to their ears that they have become consecrated in their eyes with a kind of religious value. But words at best are but words; and unless there be something more than word, however consistent it be with truth, such a ministry will but make empty the soul of the hungry and cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. But it is hard to come down from the pulpit to their fit place—the pew; thus they still keep on preaching and still maintain the name and credit of being experimental ministers; and highly offended they would be if told they were more of a burden than a benefit to the church of God, and rather plundered than fed the flock of slaughter.

Perceiving this evil, seeing how dead and dry a thing experimental preaching has much become, and observing how lean and impoverished the church of God gets through it, others long to break through the narrow circle in which they have already walked. "We want," say they, "more enlarged views of God's word. Why should we be ever treading the narrow circle of doubts and fears, comforts and blessings? Why be ever tracing out marks of grace, and talking just as our poor old minister used to talk in years gone by? Why not break forth into something different from what we have heard over and over again until we are weary of the very name of experience?"

Now just as a man is in this state of mind, not held down to experimental things by inward trials, but weary and ashamed of his own leanness and the leanness of others, the letter of God's word seems to open a door out of this worn-out pasture. Some new view of doctrine, or some light upon prophecy, or some fresh discovery, as it appears, of church government, or some insight into the precept, or some entrance into the types and figures of the Mosaic dispensation—it matters not what it is, but a new light seems to break in on his mind. His views, once so narrow and contracted, become enlarged; he reads and studies the Scripture and seems to gather with every reading more and more knowledge. No, the light which thus breaks in, as he thinks, on his mind, is attended with a power which he had not for some time felt. His zeal is kindled, his mouth opened, or his pen seized, and he cannot but give vent to his views and feelings. This new view of doctrine may be but a revived heresy or a long-exploded error; his light upon prophecy may be merely borrowed from books and authors, or gathered up by himself from a comparison of parallel passages, without one word got on his knees or dropped into his soul; his principles of church government may be altogether visionary and impracticable and his insight into types and figures

partly stolen and partly fanciful; or to put it in the most favorable light, all his views may be quite sound and in accordance with the letter of Scripture. But whatever they be, they are not wrought into his soul by the power of God; they are not burnt into him in the furnace; they are not made his own by the teaching of the blessed Spirit; they are not revealed and applied to his heart, and thus made part and parcel of a living experience; nor are they received in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit. At best they are but opinions floating in the brain, views presented to the eye of an intellectual religion scanning the Scriptures as a map maker or a landscape painter scans the features of an outstretched tract of country; or a theory gathered from the word, much as a student of history gathers up facts from chronicles and gazettes, and welds them into a compact system of political narrative.

Why, the remedy is worse than the disease! While on experimental ground, he was so far safe, that if he had but little to say, that little was sound. He could coast along the bays and headlands, and knew something about where he was, though the voyage did not reach very far, and was but a going from port to port along the shore. But now he has left all his old landmarks and well-known buoys, and boldly pushed out to sea, sailing up and down the letter of the word, far, far away from the ancient track. A man thus suddenly starting forward, may think himself wonderfully advanced, a very giant compared with his former dwarfish stature and the stunted forms of others. But he has made a sad mistake in this matter. Letter is not Spirit, knowledge is not grace, light is not experience, word is not power, head is not heart, parallel passages are not applied promises. One would think that a man's own conscience would convince him that all this suddenly acquired knowledge lacks that sacred dew and heavenly unction which ever accompany the teaching of the Spirit, and that it is too rapid to be real. One would think that a man possessed of godly fear, instead of sailing along in this confident way on the letter of the word, with flowing sheet and outstretched sail, would rather tremble at every rising cloud lest it forebode a storm that might sink his ship, and shrink from the approach of every man-of-war, lest as an unlicenced sea rover and pirate, he should be summarily strung up at the yard-arm.

We speak of what we know and have felt, and are not writing upon these matters in the dark or at a distance. Did our conscience permit, we could sail along with the best of these sea rovers, hoist as high a mast, and spread as wide a sail; but we have a silent monitor within which keeps us on experimental ground—the only ground on which man or minister, preacher or writer, can safely keep. We could, if we were so minded, sail along with them on the sea of unfulfilled prophecy, explain the historical meaning of the Scriptures, fire shot and shell at all doubt or fear, dive into the mystical signification of type and figure, proverb and parable, heap text upon text and parallel passage upon passage, and skim over the surface of the letter like a revenue cutter. A very few minutes would suffice to give us all their faith and all their confidence; for we well know the men and their communication. But what would conscience say within, and what should we feel to stand up before the church of God in Saul's armor? Could we get it on, like David we should soon gladly put it off, and come to the weapons we can handle, and of which we have proved the efficacy—the sling and the stone, and the shepherd's simple garb. We look, then, at all this heap of words, and we put it at its right figure—0. A cipher will sum up its full value. Men may preach, and write, and set off their enlarged views with appeal after appeal to the written word; (text after text may stud their writings, as dew drops the grass, but if they have not learned what they preach and write in the furnace of affliction, and by the teaching of the Spirit, all such knowledge is worthless and vain.

They may think or call it what they please, but we unhesitatingly say, unless learned in the path of tribulation and through the power of God in their soul, Ichabod is its name and Tekel its value.

Bring, then, before us what you may, unless it be stamped by the power of God, we may boldly say, This is not religion; this is not gracious experience; this is not tasting and handling the word of life; nor is it a part of "the secret of the Lord," which is "with those that fear him." "But," say they, "we got quite tired of experimental preaching." Very likely. "And we saw that the people were getting tired of it too." More likely still; that is, of your preaching. "And now we are all life." Most likely of all as regards yourself; though we doubt whether the people of God are as lively under your new preaching as you. But this is no proof that the thing is of God. Ranters are lively; Mormonites are lively; and Sisters of Mercy and fresh-cloistered nuns are lively. Such is the very constitution of the human mind, that all new things sensibly affect it; and therefore new views in religion electrify it out of torpor and dulness. But this is merely a stirring up of the animal spirits, an effect produced upon the mind, the intellectual principle, as distinct from the gracious and spiritual principle. "Ah! but we preach with more power than we did; our hearts are more in it, and we are more earnest and warm." Now, suppose that you had been converted to Popery. Would not there have been the same earnestness, the same fixing of the mind on eternal things, the same warmth, and zeal, and fervor? Most probably much more; but we mention this extreme case to show the effect that any change of views produces on the mind.

We learned a lesson on this subject about 25 years ago, which has been of wonderful service to us. It was just at the time when Irvingism broke out with its gifts of tongues, miracles, etc.; and an intimate friend of ours, then a leader and preacher of name and fame, fell headlong into it. He had gone to London, witnessed what were called the "manifestations" in Mr. Irving’s chapel, and came home as confirmed a believer in the divine origin of these things as ever Irving had. But the most striking part was the visible effect produced upon him by the change. Praying and fasting day by day, reading the Scriptures incessantly, preaching and visiting the sick continually, and a most unwearied striving after inward and outward holiness, so wrought upon his mind and body, that the poor man in a few weeks was but the ghost of himself. And what produced all this? What he himself after a while renounced and denounced as a delusion of Satan. Thus being an eye-witness of what a wonderful effect new views can produce, it gave us an insight into natural religion and the deceptiveness of mere zeal, fervor, and fleshly holiness, which has helped us to read some enigmas in the professing world which might otherwise have puzzled us to decipher.

If we look for stability in any man, it is in a minister of experimental truth. He comes forward as one taught of God, as one who has tasted, felt, and handled the word of life, as one set down and established by the Holy Spirit in the truth as it is in Jesus. He stands up before the church of God as eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, as a guide, an instructor, a counselor, a friend. He is a steward of the mysteries of God, in whom it is required that he be found faithful; an ambassador of the King of kings, and as such, deeply interested in his Master’s honor; a servant of Jesus Christ, whose highest privilege is personally to know his Lord’s will and do it, and ministerially to make it known to others, for obedience of faith. For one occupying such a post, instability is, to say the least, a grievous defect. If the officer wavers, if the standard-bearer faints, what confusion it makes among the rank and file! To see a minister of truth, then, waver and show himself, like Reuben, "unstable as water," saps the very foundation of our confidence that he is taught of God, throws a discredit upon the whole of his ministry, and creates strong grounds for fear that what he

advanced before his change he learned merely in the letter, and not by the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in his soul. But what makes the instability of a minister of such consequence is, that it affects others as well as himself. Many children of God, though right at heart, are exceedingly weak in judgment; and in their eyes a minister is almost a sacred being, who cannot err. If he be possessed of apparently great spirituality of mind—a thing, by the way, easily assumed, they are overawed by his eminent sanctity; and if he can talk and argue ably and fluently, they are overwhelmed by the waterfall of words, and though really not convinced, yet are silenced into acquiescence. To our mind one of the greatest mysteries in religion is the difference between the power of truth on the natural conscience, and the power of truth on the spiritual conscience; between the faith produced in the natural mind by the letter of the word, and the faith wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God through the spirit of the word. And yet in this lies all the difference between a professor and a possessor, between the damned and the saved. Here is the rock on which thousands split; here is the grand deceit of Satan as an angel of light—that a man may have all faith, and yet be nothing. Yes; have the strongest and most unwavering faith in his natural mind, generated there by the letter of the word, and yet live and die in his sins an unpardoned criminal, an unsanctified rebel; may have the most implicit faith in Jesus Christ, and yet die out of Christ; may believe the promise, and have no interest in the promise; obey the precept, and yet be damned for disobedience. This is the grand key of the cabinet; and he who holds not this key in his hand, be he preacher or writer that attempts to describe the work of the Spirit, will but fumble, for without it he cannot unlock one secret drawer of the heart, or penetrate into any one innermost recess of nature, or of grace. Tremendous mystery, yet not more tremendous than true, that between a spiritual and a natural faith lay all the difference between David and Saul, between John and Judas, and that on it hangs life or death, heaven or hell, unutterable bliss or eternal despair!

01.12. Doctrinal Preaching

Doctrinal preachers by J. C. Philpot

Some people cannot understand why the doctrinal preachers of our day should not be as highly esteemed and as greatly blessed as the doctrinal preachers of the last century. They do not see the wide difference between receiving the truth at first hand and at second hand. When Toplady preached election, and Whitefield urged the new birth, they preached what their souls had received directly and immediately from God. It was not with them a second or third running, but the pure blood of the grape. Their souls had drunk of the wine of the kingdom; and, like the apostles on the day of Pentecost, they preached under its influence. Peter preaching Christ's resurrection at Jerusalem; Athanasius contending for the Trinity at Alexandria; Luther declaring justification by Christ's righteousness at Wittenberg; Knox thundering against Popery at St. Andrews; Whitefield pouring out his very soul in enforcing the new birth in Moorfields; Toplady urging election at Orange Street Chapel--all preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

Many ministers now preach just the same truths; but are they equally blessed? No! Why not? Because they have not received them in the same way, nor do they preach them under the same power and influence. Their thunders are mimic thunders; their preaching is rather acting than preaching. Some one asked to see the sword of Scanderbeg, a celebrated warrior against the Turks, which was preserved in a museum. "Why," exclaimed he, "there is nothing remarkable in this sword." "No," was the reply; "but you should have seen the arm which wielded it." So the doctrines of justification, as preached by Luther, and of the new birth, as urged by Whitefield, may be stated by any white-cravated youth, with a few hairs on his chin. It may be the sword of Scanderbeg; but where is the hand that made it drunk with the blood of the slain? The secret of all preaching and of all writing is the power of the Holy Spirit; and if that be denied, the tongue and pen are both those of the stage-actor!

01.13. Sanctification

Sanctification By J. C. Philpot As from the cross flows all salvation, so from the cross flows all sanctification. What have not men done, to make themselves holy; and by this means render themselves, as they have thought, acceptable to God! What tortures of body, what fastings, scourgings, self-imposed penances to sanctify their sinful nature, and conform their rebellious flesh to the holiness demanded by the law! And with what success? They have landed either in self-righteousness or despair—though at opposite points of the compass. The flesh cannot be sanctified. It is essentially and incurably corrupt; and therefore, if we are to possess that inward holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord," it must be by Christ being "of God, made unto us sanctification," as well as righteousness—sanctifying us not only "with his own blood," (Hebrews 13:13) but by his Spirit and grace. If we believe in Him, we shall love him ("unto you which believe, he is precious;") if we love him, we shall seek to please, and fear to displease him; if we believe in Him, by the gift and work of God, this divine and living faith will purify our heart, overcome the world, produce that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace, give union and communion with the Lord of life and glory; and every believing view of him, every act of faith upon him, and every visit from him, will conform us to his likeness, as the Apostle speaks: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

If, then, we are to feel an inward power sanctifying our hearts, drawing up our minds to heavenly things, subduing our sins, meekening and softening our spirit, separating us from the world, filling us with holy thoughts, gracious desires, and pure affections, and thus making us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," this inward sanctification must flow wholly and solely from the Blessed Spirit, as the gift of a risen Jesus: as he himself said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:7, John 16:14).

It is not, then, the hair-shirt, the monk’s cell, the midnight vigil, the protracted fast; no, nor the soothing strains of the swelling organ, the melodious chant of surpliced choristers, the "dim religious light" of the stained Gothic window; no, nor the terrors of the Law, the accusations of conscience, the tears, cries and resolutions of a heart that still loves sin, though professing to repent of it; no, nor gloomy looks, neglected apparel, softly uttered words, slow walk, holiness of face, manner, and gesture, hollow voice, demure countenance, a choice assortment of Scripture words and phrases on every occasion, or no occasion; no, nor all the array of piety and sanctity which Satan, transformed into an angel of light, has devised to deceive thousands, that can purge the conscience from the guilt, filth, love, power and practice of sin, or raise up that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Like the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, they may, and even that very imperfectly, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; but it is the blood of Christ, who

through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, which can alone purge the conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works, to serve the living God; and it is the work of the blessed Spirit alone which, by revealing Christ, and forming him in the heart, "the hope of glory," can create and bring forth that new man of grace which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him.

01.14. The Two Natures in a Believer

The Two Natures in a Believer By J. C. Philpot

Among those branches of divine truth which, without special teaching, we cannot enter into, is, that of the two natures in a believer. And yet, though every child of God must in all ages have been experimentally acquainted with the inward conflict between flesh and spirit, nature and grace; and though authors innumerable have written on such subjects as sanctification, the trial of faith, the strength of grace, the power of sin, the deceitfulness of the heart, the commencement and progress, decline and restoration, of the life of God in the soul, yet how few even of these really spiritual and experimental writers have laid out the truth of the case as made known in the Scriptures, and felt in the experience of the saints! How blind have many gracious writers, as, for instance, Dr. Owen, and most of the Puritan authors, been to the distinctness of flesh and spirit! In fact, as it seems to us, many good men have been afraid of the real, actual truth. Our Puritan ancestors especially, living in a day when profanity and ungodliness ran down the streets like water, and holiness, therefore, of heart and life was powerfully urged as the distinctive feature of the children of God, intuitively shrank from anything that seemed in its faintest coloring opposed to their view of gospel sanctification. They feared to believe, and dreaded to proclaim, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be." They seemed to think, if they once admitted that the flesh, the carnal mind, underwent no spiritual change; in other words, could not be sanctified; it was opening a wide and open door to the worst Antinomianism.

There is a distinction between "the flesh" and "the carnal mind." The flesh is the corrupt principle itself: the carnal mind is the breathing, moving, and acting of the corrupt principle. The flesh is, as it were, the body, the carnal mind the soul of sin; the flesh is the still atmosphere, pregnant with disease and death; the carnal mind is the same air in motion, carrying with it the noisome pestilence; the flesh is a giant, but lying down or asleep; the carnal mind is the giant awake and hurling his weapons of defiance against heaven and earth. On no one point, it may be remarked, are the minds of men professing some measure of truth so sensitive as upon that of the believer’s personal sanctification. You may be three parts an Arminian, and four-fifths of a Pharisee, and men will speak well of you and of your religion; no, many even of God’s children will think favorably of you. But be in their eyes one-tenth of an Antinomian, and they will unchristianise you in a moment, if you had the experience of Hart, the gifts of Huntington, the godly life of Romaine, and the blessed death of Toplady. Now, nothing so much exposes a man to the suspicion of secret Antinomianism as his denying the sanctification of the flesh. The cry is at once raised, "You are an enemy to holiness; you turn the grace of God into licentiousness; you allow people to live as they list; you encourage men under a profession of religion to continue in sin." Who does not know the charges which they ring on this peal of bells against all who assert that the flesh is incurably corrupt, and cannot be molded afresh, or new modeled, or sanctified, or conformed to the image of Christ, but remains to the last what it was at the first, "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts?" We may oppose to these clamorous reproaches a godly life, a gospel walk, a

spiritual mindedness, a heavenly conversation, a filial fear, a tender conscience, a separation from evil, a liberality to the poor and needy, and a deadness to the world of which our opponents profess little and manifest less; but all in vain. The very suspicion that we deny the holiness of the flesh, present or possible, makes us viewed by most of the "very religious" people of our day much as the Protestant heretic is looked upon by the staunch Papist—a kind of horrid being, who may, perhaps, by a death-bed conversion to their views, and a full recantation of his own, escape hell, but who, at present, is in a very awful and dangerous condition. But leaving these poor ignorant creatures who speak evil of things that they know not, and who are actuated by much the same principle and spirit as those of old who said of the Lord himself, "He has a devil, and is mad; why hear you him?" let us look for a few moments at a very different class of people to whom the mystery of the two natures is but little known. These are the honest and sincere, the tender in conscience and broken in heart of the children of God, who, for want of divine light on this point, are often deeply tried and perplexed, and sometimes almost at their wit's end from what they feel of the inward workings and strength of sin. They are told, and their naturally religious mind, their traditionary creed, and their unenlightened understanding, all fully fall in with what they hear enforced on their conscience, that the sanctification of the soul, without which there is no salvation, is a gradual progress from one degree of holiness to another, until, with the exception of a few insignificant "remains" of sin, which, from some unknown cause, obstinately resist the sanctifying process, the believer becomes thoroughly holy, in body, soul, and spirit. Sin, they are told, may occasionally stir up a bad thought or two, or now and then a carnal desire may most unaccountably start up; but its power is destroyed, the rebellious movement is immediately subdued, the hasty spark, which straight is cool again, is put out at once without further damage, and the process of sanctification keeps going on as harmoniously and uninterruptedly as before, until the soul is almost as fit for heaven as if it were already there.

Beautiful theory! but as deceptive and as unsubstantial as the mirage of the desert, or the summer evening cloud bathed in the golden glow of the sinking sun. And so those sincere, honest-hearted children of God find and feel when "the motions of sin which are by the law," stirred and roused from their torpid inactivity by its application, work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death. The doctrine of progressive sanctification, implying, as it does, in the mouth of its strenuous advocates, the gradual extirpation of sin and the molding of the carnal mind into the image of Christ, is to the honest and tender conscience a torturing doctrine, pregnant with guilt, bondage, and despair. To a man who merely plays with religion, all doctrines are pretty much alike. None cause him trouble, and none cause him joy. The holiness of God, the spirituality and curse of the law, the evil of sin, the helplessness of the creature, the sinfulness of the flesh, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, as long as they are mere doctrines, have no more effect upon the conscience than a narrative of the battle of Alma or an account of the fight at Inkermann. To a professor of religion dead in his unregeneracy, the fall of man is nothing like so stirring as the fall of Sebastopol; and the recovery by Christ does not give him half so much pleasure as the recovery from a bad cold. These are the men to preach progressive sanctification; and none urge it so continually, and press it so forcibly, except, perhaps, those that are living in sin, who are usually the greatest advocates for holiness, either as a mask of their practice, or on the principle of a set off, that, having none of their own, they may get as much as they can of other people's. "In for a penny, in for a pound," is the maxim of a man who runs into debt without meaning to pay. And so, if a man means to pay God nothing of the obedience and holiness which he urges upon others,

he thinks he cannot do better than get into debt as deep as he can. None set the ladder so high as the master who stops at the foot, and urges his man on to the topmost round. None lay such heavy burdens on men’s shoulders as those who themselves never touch them with one of their fingers; and none wield so unmercifully the whip as those who have never felt the end of the lash. To all such miserable taskmasters the tried and distressed in soul may well say, "What is play to you is death to us; you are in jest, but we are in earnest; you are at your ease, we are laboring to attain unto what you only talk about. The holiness that you are preaching we are striving to practice. Your flashes of exhortation are but summer lightning, and your denunciations but stage thunder; while we are at the foot of the mount that burned with fire, and where there was blackness and darkness and tempest. The sanctification of the flesh that you urge may do for you who have learned your lesson at the academy, and preach what you neither know, nor understand, nor feel—blind leaders of the blind, as you and your tutors are. Such a doctrine lies with no more weight on your conscience than the preacher’s gown upon your back, or the gold ring upon your little finger; but it is not so with us, who are daily and hourly groaning beneath a body of sin and death. It is the load of sin that so deeply tries us, and our utter inability to bring forth the holiness that you urge upon our sore and bleeding consciences. It is our base backslidings, our sins against love and blood, our barrenness and deadness; the dreadful depravity of our hearts; our getting every day worse instead of getting every day better, that so deeply tries us: and your doctrine rubs salt into our bleeding, gaping wounds." To such tried and distressed souls as these, who have been harassed almost to death by the doctrine of progressive sanctification, how reviving and encouraging it is when the mystery of the two natures is opened up to their spiritual understanding, and sealed upon their conscience by the Blessed Spirit!

01.15. Disease & Remedy

Disease & Remedy by J. C. Philpot As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no tongue can adequately express, the state of wretchedness and ruin into which sin has cast guilty, miserable man. In separating him from God, it has severed him from the only Source and fountain of all happiness and all holiness. It has ruined him, body and soul. The body it has filled with sickness and disease. The soul it has defaced, and destroyed the image of God in which it was created. It has . . .

shattered all his mental faculties;

broken his judgment,

polluted his imagination,

alienated his affections.

It has made him love sin—and hate God. It has filled him from top to toe with pride, lust, and cruelty, and has been the prolific parent of all those crimes and abominations under which earth groans, the bare recital of some of which has filled so many hearts with disgust and horror. These are the more visible fruits of the fall. But nearer home, in our own hearts—in what we are or have been, we find and feel what wreck and ruin sin has made! There can be no greater mark of alienation from God than willfully and deliberately to seek pleasure and delight in things which His holiness abhors. But who of the family of God has not been guilty here? Every movement and inclination of our natural mind, every desire and lust of our carnal heart, was, in times past, to find pleasure and gratification in something abhorrent to the will and word of the living Jehovah.

There are few of us who, in the days of our flesh, have not sought pleasure in some of its varied but deceptive forms. The theater, the race-course, the dance, the sports, the card-table, the midnight revel, "the pleasures of sin" were resorted to by some of us. Our mad, feverish, thirst after excitement—the continued cry of our wicked flesh, "Give, give!"—our miserable recklessness or headlong, daring determination to ’enjoy ourselves’, as we called it, cost what it would, plunged us again and again into the sea of sin, where, but for sovereign grace, we would have sunk to rise no more!

Or, if the ’restraints of morality’ put their check upon gross and sinful pleasures, there still was a seeking after such "allowable amusements" (as we deemed them), as change of scene and place, foreign travel, the reading of novels and works of fiction, fine dress, visiting, building up airy castles of love and romance, studying how to obtain human applause, devising plans of self-advancement and self-gratification, occupying the mind with cherished studies, and delighting ourselves in those pursuits for which we had a natural taste--as music, drawing, poetry, or, it might be, severer studies and scientific researches.

We have named these middle-class pursuits as less obvious sins--than such gross crimes as drunkenness and vile debauchery in the lower walks of life. But, viewed with a spiritual eye, all are

equally stamped with the same fatal brand of death in sin. The moral and the immoral,

the refined and the unrefined,

the polished few or the crude many,

are alike "without God and without hope in the world."

We are often met with this question, "What harm is there in this pursuit—or in that amusement?" The harm is, that the amusement is delighted in for its own sake; that it occupies the mind, and fills the thoughts, shutting God out; that it renders spiritual things distasteful; that it sets up an idol in the heart, and is made a substitute for God.

Now this we never really know nor feel, until divine light illuminates the mind, and divine life quickens the soul. We then begin to see and feel into what a miserable state sin has cast us; how all our life long we have done nothing but what God abhors; that every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts has been evil, and only evil continually; that we have brought ourselves under the stroke of God’s justice, under the curse of His righteous law, and now there appears nothing but death and destruction before our eyes, and unless we poor slaves of sin, Satan, and death were redeemed, we could not be reconciled to God. And yet, with all this misery and wretchedness, through all this remorse for the past—and dread for the future, there are raised up desires after God—the fruit and work of his grace in the heart. These are the first breathings after communion with God, the first movement of the soul quickened from above towards its Father and Friend. But whence comes this movement of the soul upward and heavenward? What is the foundation on which a sinner may venture near, yes, as brought near, may realize what holy John speaks of, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?" (1 John 1:3)

God himself has laid the foundation in the gift of his dear Son. Had Jesus not taken our nature into union with his own divine Person, there never could have been any communion of man with God. This is beautifully unfolded by the Apostle. (Hebrews 2:1-18) "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." "The children whom God had given him" were partakers of flesh and blood. But this flesh and blood had sinned, was become alienated from God, was tyrannized over by the devil, was subject to death, and the judgment that comes after death, and the fear of death held them in continual bondage. Unless these poor slaves of sin, Satan, and death were redeemed, they could not be reconciled to God, or brought near so as to have any fellowship or communion with him. But the Son of God "took on him the seed of Abraham," that is, he assumed human nature as derived from Abraham; for the Virgin Mary, of whose flesh he took, was lineally descended from Abraham; and thus was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And so "in all things being made like unto his brethren," (sin only excepted, of which he had no taint or stain,) "he became a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Without this redemption, without this reconciliation, there could be no communion. Communion means fellowship; fellowship implies mutual participation and mutual interest. It is not single, but twofold—a community of nature, or interest, or affection, in which each party gives and takes.

Thus the foundation of all communion with God is laid in this blessed truth, that the Son of God has taken our flesh; this gives him communion with man. He is himself God; this gives him communion with God. In the ladder that Jacob saw in vision, the lowest part rested on earth, the highest was lost in heaven. Thus the human nature of Christ touches earth with its sorrows, but his divine rises up to heaven with its glory; and man, poor, wretched man, may, by having communion with Christ in his sufferings, have communion with God in his love. John blessedly opens up this in his first epistle—"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." (1 John 1:1)

What had John heard from the beginning? What had he seen with his eyes? What had he looked upon, and his hands had handled of the Word of life? What but the Son of God in the flesh? His ears had heard the voice; his eyes had seen the form; his hands had handled the feet and hands of the Word of life; and not merely bodily, for that would no more have given him life than it did the Jewish officers who bound his hands, or the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross. It was the spiritual manifestation of the Word of Life to his soul, (as he himself declares—"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,") which enabled him to say, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

Now, as this divine way is opened up to our hearts, we begin to find access to God through Jesus Christ, as "the way, the truth, and the life." Until he is in some measure revealed and made known to the soul, there is no ground of access to God. Sin, guilt, and condemnation block up the path; the law curses, conscience condemns, Satan accuses, and in self there is neither help nor hope. But as Christ is revealed and made known, and the virtue and efficacy of his blood is seen and felt, faith becomes strengthened to approach the Father through him, until after many a struggle between hope and despair, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and this gives fellowship with God.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:7

Chapter 18

01.16. The depth of the fall

The depth of the fall by J. C. Philpot

Most clear and decisive are the testimonies which the Holy Spirit has given in the word of truth to the depth of the fall—so clear and decisive that the wonder is how men professing to receive the Scriptures as an inspired revelation can dispute or deny what is so plainly declared by Him who cannot be deceived and who cannot lie. In fact, the whole testimony of God from first to last—from the page which records the murder of the martyred Abel to that which writes on the heavenly city, "For outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie"—is a declaration of what man is as a fallen sinner before the eyes of infinite Purity. What man has done when left to himself, and therefore what human nature is, as a turbid and corrupt fountain, to pour forth such streams of unutterable abomination, is most vividly drawn by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:21-32.

Look at the summing up of the long catalogue of crime, enough to make the sun hide its face from such debasement of that nature created in the image of God, once so fair and beautiful, so innocent and so pure, in which not a vain thought or sensual desire ruffled the calm of that spotless heart in which the features of its glorious Creator so brightly shone. Compare man in Paradise with the brutal monster, the obscene wretch of the pagan sty thus described—"They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, disputes, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. Although they know full well God’s just sentence--that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them." (Romans 1:29-32) Can human language paint man’s portrait in darker colors? Is there one bright tint to relieve this mass of shade? one fair and beautiful quality to redeem human nature from such unqualified denunciation? But it may be said, Paul is here describing the Gentile world, and picturing the abominations practiced in his days, before Christianity had dawned upon the earth, before that mild and beneficent dispensation had shone into the dark corners of the globe, and put to flight the crimes of heathenism and idolatry. True, he is describing the depths of human depravity as then manifested in the Gentile world, the crimes practiced without remorse or shame by the polished Greek and civilized Roman; and that his description is not exaggerated is well known to every one at all acquainted with the literature of that period. But after all this deduction, the question still recurs—How did human nature come to be so outwardly vile, unless it were inwardly base? How could lips utter words, how could hands perpetrate deeds of such filth and blood, unless the heart first conceived the thoughts which brought forth such horrid fruit? Surely the fountain must be bitter, to give forth such bitter waters; the tree must be corrupt, to bear such "grapes of gall," the wine of which is "the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps." But has Christianity done so much? Has it reformed mankind and regenerated the human race? It has, thanks be to God, done much for man and more for woman; it has banished into darkness crimes once committed in the light of day; it has alleviated the horrors of war; elevated woman to the side of man, whence she

was originally taken; and spread principles of morality and kindness far and wide, which influence the minds of thousands who still live and die in all the darkness and death of unregeneracy. But beyond this outward reformation—and that most scanty and partial—the heart of man is still a fountain of evil, casting forth its wickedness. It is still corrupt to the very center, foul to the very core—a running, reeking, heaving, fermenting mass of filth and folly, full of deceit and hypocrisy, unbelief and infidelity, murmuring and blasphemy, lust and sensuality, murder and enmity, rebellion and despair, increasing in wickedness down to its lowest depths—for far, far beyond all human sight, unfathomable abysses of crime stretch themselves, which, like a volcano, only make themselves known by the boiling lava which they continually throw up.

One sentence of the Holy Spirit has often struck our mind as depicting more than any other what the heart of man really is—"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7) Enmity against God must not only include in its bosom the seeds of every other crime, but be in itself the worst of all crimes. To be an enemy to God must be a most awful position for a creature of his hand to stand in; but to be enmity itself must be the concentrated essence of sin and misery. An enemy may be reconciled, appeased, turned into a friend; but enmity, never. That dies, if die it can, fighting; that is proof against all love; that seeks only occasion by the very kindness of its benefactor to hate him more—hates him most for his goodness; that knows no pity, feels no remorse, is subject to no control, is unappeasable and irreconcilable, and would sooner bear its own inward hell of hate than enjoy a heaven of love. And when we think for a moment who and what the great and glorious God is, against whom this reptile heart bears an enmity so enduring and so wicked; when we view him by the eye of faith as filling heaven and earth with his glory, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, and yet day after day loading all his creatures with benefits, and to his people so full of the tenderest love and compassion—then to see a dying mortal, whom one frown can hurl from all the pride of health and vigor into the lowest hell of misery and woe, spewing forth, like some miserable toad, his spit and venom against the glorious King of kings and Lord of lords—well may we stand amazed at the height of that presumption and the depth of that wickedness which can so arm a ’worm of earth’ against the ’Majesty of heaven’. But worse than all, to come nearer home, to find our own heart, our own carnal mind, still what the Holy Spirit has described it, "enmity" against the God of all our mercies—that is the worst, the cruelest blow of all!

Men fight against sovereign grace; yet what but sovereign grace can meet a case so desperate as ours? What but a salvation without money and without price, what but the length and breadth, and depth, and height of the dying love of an incarnate God, and the atoning blood of a dear Redeemer can suit or save such miserable wretches! And what but the almighty power and invincible grace of the Holy Spirit can communicate to the soul, sunk so low into carnality and death, that wondrous birth from above whereby it is "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son?"

Chapter 19

01.17. The experience of a believer

The experience of a believer by J. C. Philpot

There is a striking similarity between the history of the church and the experience of a believer. Nor is this coincidence casual, but necessarily connected with their mutual position, the body and the members being affected by the same circumstances, and being dependent on the same causes of health or decay. Thus the first is as the volume of which the second is a page; the one being the history of centuries, and the other the record of a life. This similarity embraces several particulars.

1. The first and main point of coincidence lies in this—that both are dependent for their spiritual life and prosperity on the Lord their Head. The church is his body, of which individual believers are separate members; and without him neither body nor members can do anything. He is "the Way" in which both walk; "the Truth" in which both believe; and "the Life" in which both live.

2. But besides this similarity in point of dependence, there is also a striking resemblance in point of experience. Thus in the history of the church there are certain marked periods, or, as they are usually called, "epochs," of spiritual prosperity when the Lord’s presence and power were peculiarly manifested. As these seasons were wholly due to the special pouring out of the Holy Spirit, (according to the Scripture promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon you") they have been termed "effusions" of the Holy Spirit. The first of these, and the type and pattern of all succeeding, though immeasurably exceeding them in power and glory, was that most memorable one, on the day of Pentecost. The early and the latter rain spoken of in the prophets seem to represent in type and figure the beauty and blessedness of these gracious effusions.

Now, as long as these showers fell on the church, she flourished. It was generally with her a time of outward persecution and trouble; but as her afflictions abounded her consolations abounded also, and she "looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." But when these gracious effusions were withheld, like a field deprived of rain, she gradually declined in fruitfulness. Thus the history of the church presents an alternation of fruitfulness and barrenness, restoration and decline, life and death, summer and winter, resurrection and decay. Herein they experience of the church corresponds with the experience of its spiritual members.

There are few of the children of God who cannot look back to certain marked periods in their experience when the blessed Spirit worked powerfully in their hearts. Their first convictions or their first blessings—their spirit of supplication or their spirit of hearing—the sweet manifestations of Christ—the marked answers to prayer—the love they felt to the brethren—the willingness to make sacrifices and suffer persecution for the truth’s sake—these and similar bright and blessed spots in Christian experience correspond in the individual to the effusions of which we have spoken as marking certain epochs in the church. And their coldness, deadness, and barrenness, when the Spirit’s influences are withheld, correspond to the periods in the history of the church of decline

and decay.

3. A third point of similarity may be also noticed. When the church has declined into coldness and death, the Lord has at all periods preserved in her an elect remnant who sigh and cry on account of Zion's declension, and testify as faithful witnesses against the condition into which she has fallen. Here too the experience of the individual coincides with the experience of the church. In the bosom of a child of God, however low the soul may have sunk into carnality and lukewarmness, there is still a sigh and a cry on account of the abominations. The soul is inwardly sensible of its backslidings, its coldness, deadness, and declension; and conscience, as a faithful witness for God, unbribed and unbribable, unsilenced and unsilenceable, will ever and anon raise up its voice and testify against the forsaking of the Fountain of living waters, to hew out cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water.

Chapter 20

01.18. The grace of God

The grace of God by J. C. Philpot

What a view the believing soul sometimes gets of the fullness, freeness, suitability, and blessedness of the grace of God, as revealed in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Son of his love; and how it sees it reaching down, as it were, its delivering arms from heaven to earth, enfolding and sustaining in its sovereign embrace all the objects of his eternal choice. To the carnal, the profane, the worldly-minded, lovers of pleasure, anything that breathes of the holy air of heaven is hateful, as condemning their sensuality and ungodliness. They can do with precepts which they never practice, and with commandments which they never perform; but a religion that would save them from the enjoyment of the sins they so madly love, a breath from the holiness and purity of heaven that would lift them out of their darling lusts and divorce them from their beloved idols, is to them a sentence of imprisonment and death—as hateful to their vagrant minds as a prison cell to a thief, or a workhouse has to a filthy tramp.

Grace must begin a work in the heart before there can be any movement of the mind toward it; and the two-edged sword that goes out of Christ's mouth must make a wound in the conscience before the balm of free grace in his atoning blood and dying love can be revealed and applied by a divine power to the soul. But no sooner does the Blessed Spirit open up to a poor law-cursed, conscience-condemned sinner the way of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Christ—and that all is of grace from first to last, than at once his ears are opened to drink in the sweet melody of that joyful sound. There is in salvation by grace such a suitability to all his wants and woes; it is so opened up to his enlightened understanding as reconciling those conflicting claims of justice and mercy which he could not solve, and by which he was racked and torn; it is so commended to his conscience as taking away all merit from the creature, which he well knows can have none—and as giving the whole glory to God, who, he is sure, deserves it all; and it drops with such sweetness and power into his soul as a word of consolation and encouragement, that he embraces it with every tender feeling and warm affection of his heart. No language can describe the feelings of the soul when it first emerges out of darkness into light; when it passes from bondage, guilt, and condemnation into peace, liberty, and love. How different are the feelings and the language of a soul under the first shinings in of the Sun of righteousness from the scoffing recklessness of the profane worldling, the rebellion and enmity of the self-righteous Pharisee, and the hard, unfeeling, talkative presumption of the dead professor. The mere 'doctrine' of grace does nothing for the soul. As long as it is a 'mere notion or opinion', it has no more saving or sanctifying power than any other notion or opinion. A man may have an opinion that such and such water is very pure and clear, or such and such wine very choice and delicious, or such and such food very nourishing and strengthening; but if the water be still in the well, the wine in the cellar, and the food at the grocer, and neither drop nor morsel of one or the other reach his mouth, he may die of hunger and thirst in the midst of his opinions.

How many, O how many of those who sit in our chapels amid the saints of God are perishing in their sins with the Bible and hymn-book before their eyes, the sound of the gospel in their ears, the doctrine of grace in their lips, but the love of the world in their hearts! Not so with the soul under the teaching and blessing of God. GRACE is to him "a charming sound," not because the word pleases his ear or the doctrine gratifies his mind, but because its inexpressible sweetness and power have reached his inmost soul. And as grace suits the young believer, when he first tastes that the Lord is gracious, and feeds on the sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby, so in every after-stage of his experience, down to the very grave, it is made more and more suitable, and becomes more and more precious to his heart. For as he journeys onward in the path of temptation and tribulation, he has many painful lessons to learn of which the young Christian knows little or nothing. The dreadful evils of his heart, the snares laid for his feet by Satan, his continual conflicts with the unbelief and infidelity, the pride and rebellion of his fallen nature, the grievous backslidings, departures, and wanderings of his heart from the Lord, the experience he has of his own coldness, deadness, and base ingratitude—these, and a thousand other trials and temptations, make grace, in its blessed manifestations, most suitable to the saint of God who has been for any time in the strait and narrow way.

Grace is the spring of all his happiness and holiness, of all his salvation and sanctification, of all his faith and hope, love and obedience. It revives him when dead, renews him when all heavenly feeling seems lost and gone, delivers him from bondage and condemnation, comforts him in affliction and sorrow, separates him from the world, subdues his iniquities, keeps alive the fear of God in his bosom, draws out prayer and supplication, makes sin hateful and Christ precious, and gives him not only his title but his fitness for glory. And when we come to his last hours upon earth,

"When sickness and disease invade

This trembling house of clay,"

when nature sinks under a load of pain and languishing, what then can support the soul in the immediate prospect of eternity but that grace which saves from death and hell? In fact, when we have a spiritual view of the majesty and purity of God, the unbending justice of his holy law, and our own vileness and pollution, our guilt, and sin, and shame before him, our thorough emptiness of all good, our thorough fullness of all evil, there is not, there cannot be a single ray of hope for our ruined souls but what grace reveals and applies through a Savior’s blood. The grace of God plucks the brand from the burning, delivers the vessel of mercy from the power of darkness and translates it into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

01.19. Spiritual-mindedness

Spiritual-mindedness by J. C. Philpot "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6) When was there ever more worldly conformity than now? When was there ever more carnality in conversation, more backbiting, slander, idle gossip, tittle-tattling from house to house, levity and froth indulged in without scruple or shame? so that a little feeling, experimental, savory communion with the saints of God, such as profits and edifies the soul, creates and cements a spiritual union, draws the heart upwards to heaven, and makes us love Jesus and the image of Jesus in his people, is almost unknown. In ancient times, "those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him." (Malachi 3:16) Their conversation was such as the Lord could hearken to, and record in his book. But would the Lord hearken to and record the conversation of most professors now, the main object of which is to exalt themselves and depreciate others; and under a thin veil of religious phraseology, put on to blind others and deceive themselves, display little else but the pride and worldliness of their hearts? When was there more general deadness and darkness in the churches, and so little life and power in the pulpit and pew? When were experimental men of God more scarce, and more despised and depreciated; or mere ’prating ministers’, who have a gift to speak, but who give little evidence that they either know or love the truth of God, so many and so popular? But let men say what they will, or be what they may, let thousands combine to lower the sacred things of God to their own sunken level, it still stands a fixed, immutable truth, fixed as the throne of God, immutable as the great self-existent I AM, that "to be carnally-minded is death"—death total in the unregenerate, death partial when the living soul is under its power and influence. And if death total in the unregenerate, it entails all the awful penalties and punishments of death, if life from God does not eventually quicken.

Therefore no mere profession, no formal creed, no sitting under a gospel ministry, no church-membership or partaking of ordinances, no name to live while dead, will rescue from the second death, from the worm that does not die—and the fire that is not quenched, those who are carnally-minded, whatever be their profession, whether of the highest Calvinism or the most groveling Arminianism. But "to be spiritually-minded"—to live and walk under the blessed power and influence of the Holy Spirit, to have the heart and affections drawn up from this poor, vain scene to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, this is "life," the life of God in the soul, with all its present blessedness and all its future glory, and "peace," for peace and rest are alone to be found in this path of union and communion with a glorified Redeemer. In this sweet spirituality of mind—in these heavenly affections—in this communion with the Lord at his own throne of grace—the life and power of godliness much consist. Unless the heart be engaged in it, religion is heavy, dragging work. Prayer, reading, meditation, preaching, hearing, conversation with the saints, all are "a burden to the weary beast" when the power and life of God are not in them, when the heart is cold and dead, and not under some sensible influence from the courts of heaven. But when a sweet and sacred influence rests upon the soul, when there is a felt union and communion

with the Lord of life and glory, when a word from his lips, into which grace is poured, touches and softens the heart; and faith, viewing his beauty and blessedness, grace and glory, love and blood, sympathy and suitability, takes hold of his strength and says, "I will not let you go except you bless me," and he condescends to unveil his lovely face; then there is a lifting up of the heart and affections to the merciful and compassionate High Priest over the house of God. The lusts and evils which cling to the body of sin and death, as the viper to Paul's hand, then drop off into the fire of godly jealousy, "the coals whereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame" against all that God hates; pride and covetousness, fretfulness and murmuring, evil tempers and carking cares, and a thousand God-dishonoring anxieties, hide their hateful heads; unbelief and infidelity, and a whole black troop of doubts and fears are put to the rout; and the Prince of Peace reigns and rules as the soul's only rightful and loved Lord.

Sweet, seasons, but, alas! how transient; how soon fresh clouds gather, fresh storms arise, fresh lusts work, and fresh foes start up from every ambush to try faith and hope and patience, and cast a dark cloud over the soul! We trust we know, from what we have felt in our own bosom, what this sweet spiritual-mindedness is, and what are its blessed effects. It is a key to unlock the Scriptures, for then we read them under the same sacred influence, and by the same divine teaching by which they were written; it is a door of prayer, for under these calm and peaceful emotions the soul, as if instinctively and necessarily, seeks holy communion with God; it is the fruitful parent of sweet meditation, for the truth of God is then thought over, fed upon, and is found to be bread from heaven—it is the secret of all life and power in preaching, for unless the heart be engaged in, and melted and softened by the truth delivered, there will be a hardness in its delivery which will make itself sensibly felt by the living hearer. And it is the power of all spiritual conversation, for how can we talk with any unction or profit unless we are spiritually-minded, and in that frame of soul wherein the things of God are our chief element—the language of our lips, because the delight of our soul? But to be otherwise—to be carnally-minded on our knees, with the Bible open before our eyes, in the house of prayer, at the Lord's table, in the company of the family of God—what a burden to our spirit, what a condemnation to our conscience, what a parent of doubt and fear whether matters can be right between God and our own soul, when there is such a distance between him and us! And of all poor miserable wretches, felt or not felt, a carnally-minded minister must be the worst. Death in the pulpit must engender death in the pew. A minister stands there as an instrument in the hands of God to comfort and encourage the drooping hearts of his people, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, to be a means of communicating life to the dead, and reviving the living. But if dead himself, totally dead, can he communicate life to others? And if "as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed," like Miriam when struck by leprosy—a saved man sunk into carnality and death, and that not deeply felt or groaned under as a heavy load—how can he feed the church of the living God?

It is true that the most eminent saints and servants of God have their dead and dark seasons, when the life of God seems sunk to so low an ebb as to be hardly visible—so hidden is the stream by the mud-banks of their fallen nature. Still it glides onward, around them, if not through them—and sometimes a beam of light falls upon it from above, as it threads its way toward the ocean of eternal love, which manifests not only its existence but its course, and that it gives back to heaven the ray it receives from heaven. No, by these very dark and dead seasons, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from

the life of God; they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie; they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing; that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God; and that all they are, and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace, the rich, free, undeserved—yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God! They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness, and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility—that rare, yet lovely garb; cease from their own strength and wisdom, and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

We do not view spiritual-mindedness as a habitual state of the regenerated soul, but one brought forth under special influences, and therefore subject to fluctuations. The meaning of the apostle in Romans 8:6 is simply this—that the mind, the breath, the bent and inclination of the new man of grace, is "life," as its main element, and "peace," as the result and fruit of life. In other words, the new man of grace, that "spirit," (John 3:6, Romans 8:16, Ezekiel 36:26) which is born of the Spirit possesses "life" as its animating, operating principle; and as this life is from Christ and unites to Christ, it enjoys "peace" from its union and communion with him. But the apostle does not lay it down as a certain fixed principle that the soul of a believer is always spiritually-minded, and that therefore, he always enjoys life and peace. He is, on the contrary, drawing the distinction between the flesh and the spirit in a believer, and showing the essential difference between the two. The one is death, the other life; the one is enmity, the other peace; the one not subject to the law of God, the other obedient to his will and word; the one displeasing to God, the other pleasing in his sight.

Thence he argues that all men walk, that is, think, speak, live, and act, according to the one or the other; and that those who "walk after the flesh," that is, follow out its movements, desires, and dictates, are dead, at enmity with God, disobedient, and therefore displeasing to him; while those who "walk after the spirit" possess and manifest divine life, enjoy peace with God, obey his precepts, and are pleasing in his sight. But the question may occur to a sincere child of God who knows and feels much of his barrenness, darkness, and death, whether he is or can be spiritually-minded, when he is so rarely in the enjoyment of it, and is often so far from the life and peace which are its attendant fruits. Here great wisdom and holy caution are needed to give a right answer. Many a wretched, carnal, dead professor takes comfort from hearing that the real child of God has his seasons of deadness and coldness, not thinking or caring to think that it is one thing to be always dead, and another to be so sometimes; one thing to see it, and another to feel and mourn under it. How many there are in the professing church "who bless themselves in their heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." (Deuteronomy 29:19) These are they who feast with the children of God, "feeding themselves without fear," when they are but "clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." (Jude 1:12) Much wisdom, therefore, and caution are needed not to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs; on the one hand not to make the heart of the righteous sad, and on the other not to strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life when all his ways are ways of death. (Ezekiel 13:22) Have we not all much reason to lament our coming short of this sweet and blessed spirituality of mind? Yet

how can we know what it is unless we have felt it, or at least some measure of it, in our own hearts? Those dead in sin and the dead in a profession neither know it nor care to know it. It is the living family of God alone who know its blessedness and sweetness, for they alone are born of the Spirit, and therefore walk after it, mind it, and enjoy it. And yet, what life there is in it, when felt! It is the only real happiness the child of God enjoys here below; his companion in solitude, his support in affliction, his comfort in sickness, and his peace in death. For if it be "life," to have it must be an inward well of water springing up in his soul; (John 4:14) and if it be "peace," it is the enjoyment of Christ's own best gift and last legacy. In fact, in it are all the life and peace of religion, and without it religion is but a name and a notion, without present grace or future glory. How sweet, at such moments, is the word of God! What light shines upon the sacred page! what wisdom and truth appear in every line! what a fullness, blessedness, and unction drop from it, like honey from the honeycomb!

Such was Jeremiah's feeling—"Your words were found, and ate them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart—for I am called by your name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jeremiah 15:16) Such was David's experience—"How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalms 119:103) Why is this, but because we are then taught by the same Spirit under whose inspiration the Scriptures were written, and are under the same influences and the same holy anointing?

How sweet, then, is prayer! It is the language of the heart, the ascending breath of the soul, the spiritual sacrifice laid upon the golden altar, and ascends with the incense of the great and glorious Intercessor. (Revelation 8:3-4) How sweet, then, is meditation, as spiritual thoughts roll in upon the mind, spiritual feelings fill the soul, and spiritual affections warm and melt the heart. This is to delight oneself in the Lord, (Psalms 37:4, Isaiah 58:14) to feel that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, (Proverbs 3:17) to taste and see that the Lord is good, (Psalms 34:8) to find how near, dear, and precious Christ is to those who believe, (1 Peter 2:7) and to see with every look of faith more and more of his beauty and blessedness. No company is now wanted but the Lord's company; and the more the heart is drawn up towards him, the more it receives out of his fullness.

Here is life—the life of all religion, and of all ordinances, preaching, praying, hearing, reading, conversing—spiritual-mindedness is the life of them all. Without it all is death in the pulpit and in the pew. You may have eloquence, ability, sound doctrine, texts by scores, and anecdotes by handfuls; you may have voice, rant, and gesture; and all this may pass for wonderful preaching, when there is not a grain of spiritual life in the man or his ministry. And you may have admiring hearers in the pew, full of vows, promises, and tears, and yet not one grain of divine life in the heart. True religion is "a secret"—it lies between God and the soul; and this secret, which is with those who fear God, (Psalms 25:14) is having the Spirit and mind of Christ; (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:16) and thus being "one spirit" with him, as joined to him by this holy tie. (1 Corinthians 6:17) This brings "peace." Enmity and war cannot exist between friends, and the Lord says to his disciples, "you are my friends." He himself is our peace. It comes through his blood, for by it he has made peace. Spiritual-mindedness implies reconciliation, a being brought near; union and communion, and a resting on the atoning blood and finished work of the Son of God. The Lord graciously bestow upon us much of this spiritual-mindedness, and thus make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light; for without holiness, of which this is a main part, no man shall see the Lord.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

01.20. The Sovereignty of God

The Sovereignty of God by J. C. Philpot The Sovereignty of God is a great, an unfathomable depth, and needs ever to be approached by the saints and servants of the Most High with trembling steps, and looked at and into with believing, reverent eyes. "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments." "My heart stands in awe of your Word." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." Such is the frame of soul in vital experience, however in our day little known and less regarded, in which it becomes "those who are escaped of Israel" (Isaiah 4:2) to look at the sovereign good pleasure of Jehovah in "doing according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Many fight, with all the desperate enmity and rebellion of the carnal mind, against the bare idea that all men and all things are at the sovereign disposal of the great God of heaven and earth; and others, who are not thus held down hard and fast in the chains of rebellion and error, hold the doctrine of divine sovereignty, if not in unrighteousness, at least in a carnal, presumptuous spirit, which plainly shows that they never learned it feelingly and experimentally in their own souls under the teaching and unction of the Holy Spirit. It is hard, perhaps, to say which of the two is the more repulsive to the spiritual mind—the daring denial of the ’rebellious Arminian’, or the flippant boldness of the ’dead Calvinist’. Error is hateful, but truth in a hardened conscience is awful. The grand and glorious truths which are revealed in the word of God are to be received not as mere speculative doctrines into the natural judgment and reasoning mind—but into the tender heart and living conscience—as the gracious unfolding of the mind and counsel, the will and wisdom of Him who is "greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence by all of those who are about him." And surely of all truths revealed in the Scriptures none is more to be regarded with trembling awe and holy reverence than the sovereignty of Jehovah in electing some to eternal life and appointing others to eternal destruction. We believe this on the authority of Him who cannot lie; but when we look up into heaven, and see its unspeakable bliss and glory, and look down into hell and view its ever-burning flames, we may well pause and say, "Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known." (Psalms 77:19)

There are those who seem almost to exult in a carnal spirit over the destruction of the reprobate. There is, indeed, a solemn submission to, and a believing acquiescence in the sovereign will of the Judge of all the earth, knowing that he must do right, as Aaron "held his peace" when fire from the Lord went out and devoured his two sons, Nadab and Abihu. (Leviticus 10:2-3) No, more, there is a holy joy in the conquest of the Lamb over his enemies, as expressed in the words, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets; for God has avenged you on her" (Revelation 18:20) and, "So let all your enemies perish, O Lord; but let those who love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might." (Judges 5:31) But this is a very different feeling from a carnal exultation over the lost, which shows a state of mind, to say the least of it, the exact opposite of Paul’s "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for his unbelieving brethren, (Romans 9:2) and breathes a language very unlike the prayer of Moses, "Yet, now, if you will forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book which you have written." (Exodus 32:32) Who can think, without

grief and sorrow of heart, upon a dear parent, child, or husband—departed without any evidence of a work of grace upon the soul? When you awake at midnight and think of the departed one, where is your exultation over those fixed decrees which determined his eternal state? Submission there may be and should be to the will of God—but a man must be a very heathen—"without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," (Romans 1:31) who has neither sigh nor tear for his own family—at the thought of their eternal woe.

It is when we look at the sovereignty of God on what we may perhaps call its bright side—its merciful and gracious aspect, as plucking innumerable brands out of the fire, and especially when the decree of election turns its smiling face upon us, that we can rejoice in it, and admire and adore the electing love of God in delivering our souls from the bottomless pit. And not only we who have been made alive from the dead, but every regenerate soul is a living witness of the sovereignty of grace. There is not, there never was, there never will be—a manifested vessel of mercy, who is not a monument of the sovereign electing, redeeming, regenerating, and preserving love of a Triune Jehovah; and this every saint of God feels when mercy visits his heart and he is sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. "Why me? why me?" must ever be the wondering, admiring, adoring cry of every child of God when blessed with a feeling, appropriating sense of his personal saving interest in the precious blood and love of the Lamb! But there are instances which seem to shine forth with peculiar luster, and to stand out beyond the usual dealings of God as prominent examples of the sovereignty of his eternal love. As in a garden every flower may be beautiful in its kind—and all were planted by the same gardener's hand to deck and adorn his beds—but there may be some which strike the eye as more outstanding in beauty of shape and brightness of color than the other occupants of the garden—so in the church of God there are trees of his right hand planting which display more conspicuously than others—the wonders of his sovereign, distinguishing grace.

Saul of Tarsus and the thief on the cross have always struck our own mind as two of the most striking instances of sovereign grace contained in the Scriptures. Paul—the self-righteous Pharisee, imbued with all the learning and pride of the Sanhedrin, and overflowing with all the persecuting spirit of the murderers of Stephen; and the dying thief—loaded with the crimes of a life of violence and bloodshed, yet snatched from the jaws of hell at the last gasp! Reader, and admirer of the grace of God, can you strike the balance between these two monuments of electing love, and decide which was the more indebted to sovereign grace?

"Ah," but say you, "I know a greater monument of sovereign grace than either." Well, be it so; but next to yourself, can you decide whether Paul or the dying thief was the more indebted to the heights and depths, lengths and breadths of atoning blood and redeeming love? We really, for our part, cannot tell. We look at PAUL before and after his conversion, and wonder at and admire the grace of God that made out of such a pharisee, such a bigot, such a strict consistent legalist, such a bloodthirsty persecutor—a saint so rich in every grace, an apostle so endowed with every fruit and gift of the Holy Spirit. Saul on his road to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," and Paul, with the words in his heart and mouth, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" (Acts 21:13)—O what grace thus to change the lion into the lamb, the man ready to martyr—into the man ready to be martyred! But next we turn to the DYING THIEF. Listen with wondering ears and admiring heart to his believing prayer, addressed

under such circumstances and at such a moment to the Son of God, in his deepest humiliation, at his lowest point of ignominy and shame, when his very disciples all forsook him and fled, and his glory was hidden under the densest, darkest veil. A risen Jesus appeared to Paul in all the blaze of heavenly glory; a crucified Jesus was hanging before the dying thief in little less shame and degradation than himself and his twin malefactor. O, what faith at such a moment to call him, "Lord," and to believe he had a kingdom, and to desire to be made a partaker of its present grace and future glory! Has not this prayer, believing reader, been mine and yours? Have not we sought to realize the blessed Redeemer as set thus before our eyes? and while we threw all our heart and soul into the petition, breathed forth, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom?" The prayer of the dying thief shines, we must say, in our eyes as one of the greatest, if not the greatest act of faith recorded in the Scriptures, and only paralleled, we cannot say surpassed, by Abraham's sacrifice of his son. But let us not think that there are not now walking on the face of the earth similar monuments of sovereign grace. Up that court, in that garret, there is a dying Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord has cast seven devils. Down in that coal-mine there is one whom once "no man could bind, no, not with chains," "neither could any man tame him;" but he is now "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." Walking under that hedge, now weeping, now praying, now singing, now looking into his little Bible, is a returned prodigal—a base backslider whom the Lord has forgiven, but who can never forgive himself. Hiding his face in the corner of the pew is that persecutor of his poor broken-hearted wife, now in glory, whom since her death the Lord has called by his grace, and whose tears and sighs show how deeply he repents of his sins against her and Him. While the world is going on buying and selling, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, God is here and there raising up these monuments of his grace to live forever and ever in his presence, when the world and all the fashion of it shall have utterly passed away. To a spiritual mind, what sweet food for faith, what a field of holy meditation is opened up in the sovereignty of grace as thus displayed in those wonders of redeeming love which every now and then come under our own special knowledge and observation! To what praise and adoration does it give birth; what openings up of the depths of the Father's love; what views of the fullness and perfection of the Redeemer's blood and obedience; what a sight of salvation as a free, irrevocable gift; how independent of all creature works of righteousness, how distinguishing, how superabounding over all the aboundings of sin and guilt, is grace seen to be; what love and union are felt to the objects of this signal mercy; how the soul is more and more firmly established thereby in the truth of God; and that "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy!"

Dare any call the sovereignty of God in his electing love and discriminating grace "a licentious doctrine?" Ignorance coined that lie; and enmity gave it circulation. The sovereignty of grace received into a believing heart has led many a one from sin; it never, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, led one into sin. Many a poor, despairing wretch it has saved, not only from the guilt of sin that distressed his conscience, but from the power of sin that entangled his inclinations, and carried him captive. The same Christ Jesus who is made to his people "righteousness and redemption," is also made unto them "wisdom and sanctification;" (1 Corinthians 1:30) and those who are "washed and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus," are also "sanctified by the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

01.21. Personal revival of the soul

Personal revival of the soul

by J. C. Philpot

It is surprising how our minds alternately, and as if instinctively, sink or rise as various circumstances in ourselves or in others come before our view, or press with weight and power upon our conscience. A few instances on both sides of the question may illustrate this. For some days or weeks, then, it may be, our mind may have been dark and beclouded; coldness and deadness may have much chilled our heavenly affections; trials and temptations may have harassed our soul; the presence of the Lord may have been much withheld; sin and corruption may have worked within at a fearful rate; and, under a feeling sense of our vileness and sinfulness, painfully aggravated by all these circumstances, we may have cried, almost in a fit of despair, "Can ever God dwell here?" How can the soul that is alive unto God, and living, or desiring to live—continually to his honor and glory, and to walk in the light of his countenance—not but sink into a low spot when all within is so opposed to, or so far from, that peace in believing which is its element and home?

Or, if comparatively free from personal trials, some circumstances of a very painful and distressing nature may have come before our mind, or press upon our conscience, connected with others. Some gross inconsistency in a member of the church has perhaps come to light; or there has been a sad display of anger and temper at a church meeting; or two members have fallen out, and one or both have manifested a bitter, unforgiving spirit.

Or, apart from church troubles—the heaviest of all after personal afflictions, we may, in a solemn moment of prayer and meditation, have had a spiritual view of the general state of the churches of truth, as either torn with strife and division, or much sunk into barrenness and unfruitfulness. Or, to come still more closely home, to a still more tender point, a difference may have arisen between us and a beloved friend; or where we have looked for sympathy and comfort, under some trial and affliction—we may have met with just the reverse, and so have been "wounded in the house of our friends," learning thereby, in a way of personal though painful experience, the meaning of those words, "The best of them is as a brier—the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge." (Micah 7:4) Or if engaged in the work of the ministry, as is the case with some of our readers, we may have been for some time much shut up in the preaching of the word of truth, and may have felt much darkness of mind and bondage of spirit in the house of prayer; if hearers, there may have been much deadness under the preached word; nothing for a long time may have dropped with power and savor into the soul either from the prayer or the sermon; and Satan may have taken great advantage from these things to harass the mind and cast a gloomy cloud over the whole of our experience.

Under these and similar circumstances, which we need not more fully particularize, the soul possessed of the grace of God sinks at times very low; and as we are too much disposed to

measure things by our own feelings, as a dark cloud over the sun casts a gloom over the whole face of nature, we look round and begin to say, "Where is there any real religion—any vital godliness—any blessed communion with the Lord, any of that spirituality of mind in which, and in which alone, there is life and peace. Where and what am I, and where and what are others?"

We remember, perhaps, with Job, "the days of our youth, when the secret of God was upon our tabernacle," and say, "O that I were as in months past, when the candle of God shined upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness." "O that the Lord would once more appear—would remove these dark clouds, and shine into my soul, that I might delight myself in him as all my salvation and all my desire." When the believing soul is thus brought low, made to confess its sins, and look wholly and solely to the Lord, a sweet and blessed change often takes place. There is a breaking in of divine light and life—a revival of faith, and hope and love—a renewed sense of the Lord's goodness and mercy—an enjoyment of his presence and smile—a liberty, an enlargement, a coming forth in prayer and praise—a fresh view of the King in his beauty—a discovery of his grace and glory, of his love, blood, and righteousness, of his sweetness and suitability—with a pressing forward towards communion with a Lord so gracious and yet so glorious—with a Savior so exalted and yet so compassionate, with a High Priest, once on earth a bleeding sacrifice, and now in heaven such an all-prevailing Advocate and Intercessor.

"Will you not revive us again," cried the church of old, "that your people may rejoice in you?" (Psalms 85:6) This gracious revival is the answer to that longing cry, to that earnest petition, breathed out of the heart sensible of its coldness and deadness, but unable to revive itself; for as no man ever quickened, so no man keeps alive his own soul. When, then, he who gave his gracious promise, fulfills that promise, "Because I live, you shall live also," and sends down renewed blessings, for having ascended on high, "he has received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them," (Psalms 68:18) then it is with the soul a returning to the days of its youth, (Job 33:25) and these words are again sweetly realized, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land." (Song of Solomon 2:11-12) Can the soul not but rise when the Lord thus lifts it up? "You have lifted me up, and cast me down." (Psalms 102:10) He is her Head, her Husband, her All. If he frowns, must she not sink? If he withdraws, must she not mourn? If he smiles, must she not rejoice? What is religion, if there be no union with Christ? If there be union with Christ there will be the fruits as well as the feelings of that bond of spiritual communion; and though absence does not break the marriage tie—as presence does not create it—either in nature or in grace, yet the espoused soul, like the fond wife, who lives and loves, is grieved at the departure—and rejoices at the return of its wedded Lord.

Simultaneously with this personal revival of the soul after a long scene of darkness or a painful season of temptation and trial, or instrumental as a means of producing it—there may arise from without circumstances which, like a favorable breeze, speed the soul onward when she has expanded her sails to the wind. One whom we have long known and loved in the Lord is removed by death, but makes a blessed end; or some signal display of grace appears in someone near and dear to us by earthly ties; a son, a daughter, a sister-in-law becomes most unexpectedly and almost unhopedly manifested as a vessel of mercy—and the heart, is filled with wonder and admiration. Under these displays of sovereign grace, the stony heart relents, and is melted into contrition and love—tears of holy joy flow down the cheek, and blessings and praises ascend out

of the heart to the God of all our mercies for this fresh display of the lengths and breadths, depths and heights of redeeming love.

If engaged in the work of the ministry, the Lord perhaps sets his hand once more in a most conspicuous manner to the work, revives preacher and people, gives testimony to the word of his grace in sending a marked deliverance to a soul under deep distress; clothes the word with power to quicken the dead and comfort the living, and makes it fall like the dew, and distill like the rain upon the souls of the people, so that there is a flowing together of heart to heart amid the family of God.

We have particularized at some length the various causes of sinking and rising as experienced in the soul of a saint of God, to show the changes that take place within, and the ebbings and flowings, the lights and shadows of the divine life. Men dead in a profession, with hearts of adamant, and brows of brass—hardened by pride and worldliness—under a mask of religion—may ridicule these changes, and taunt us with "setting up frames and feelings, nursing doubts and fears, gloating over our corruptions, living beneath our privileges, poring over our miserable selves, dishonoring God by our unbelief, idolizing self, and making a Christ of our experience."

Swelling words of this kind, and a whole vocabulary of similar set terms, are as easily shot off from a hundred pulpits, and with about as much real execution as the guns at Portsmouth salute the Queen when she is going to Osborne. The very men who load and fire these pulpit guns, with all their noise and smoke, know no more of the experience of a saint of God than the artillery-men at Portsmouth of what the Queen is debating in the palace with her ministers; but they fire as they have been taught with the ammunition already made for them, and lying packed and handy at their feet. We are not setting up doubts and fears, or canonizing corruption—we are not raking a ash-heap for pearls to set in Jesus' crown—or putting the mutability of the creature in the place of, or side by side with, the immutability of the Son of God and his finished work. But we say of and to all, in the pulpit or out of it, who, through ignorance or enmity, oppose an experimental religion, "Because they have no changes they fear not God." And if they fear not God, they have not the beginning, much less the end of wisdom; they are not even in the lowest grade of Christ's school, much less teachers or masters. But ignorance will prate, and enmity will revile. It is our wisdom and mercy to heed neither, but "with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Who that knows the true grounds of Dissent does not smile when a young Puseyite clergyman lets off his university arguments against "the perilous sin of schism," when Popery is stamped upon every thread of his buttoned-up cassock-waistcoat, and upon every wrinkle of his long coat? Who that knows the firm foundation of the doctrines of grace does not smile when a smug youth, hot from the Academy, thinks he is demolishing in one sermon the rock on which the church is built, and scattering election to the four winds of heaven? And may we, in a similar manner, not smile, or rather sigh, when men ignorant of the life of God, destitute of all divine teaching and gracious influence, hurl their invectives or deal out their miserable, common—place arguments against the experience of the saints? But it is a miserable warfare to be engaged in. He who touches the saints touches the apple of God's eye. Rather let our tongue never more name the name of God, rather let the pen fall forever from our paralyzed fingers than our tongue or finger knowingly speak or write a word against the work of God in the soul of a saint.

01.22. The incomprehensible of God

The incomprehensible of God by J. C. Philpot

What Christ is to the Church, what the Church is to Christ, can never be really known until time gives place to eternity, faith to sight, and hope to enjoyment. Nor even then, however beyond all present conception the powers and faculties of the glorified souls and bodies of the saints may be expanded, however conformed to the glorious image of Christ, or however ravished with the discoveries of his glory and the sight of him as he is in one unclouded day—no, not even then, will the utmost stretch of creature love, or highest refinement of creature intellect, wholly embrace or fully comprehend that love of Christ, which, as in time so in eternity, "passes knowledge," as being in itself essentially incomprehensible, because infinite and divine. Who can calculate the amount of light and heat that dwell in, and are given forth by the sun that shines at this moment so gloriously in the noonday sky? We see, we feel, we enjoy its bright beams; but who can number the millions of millions of rays that it casts forth upon all the surface of the earth, diffusing light, heat, and fertility to every part? If the creature be so great, glorious, and incomprehensible—how much more great, glorious, and incomprehensible must be its divine Creator! The Scripture testimony of the saints in glory is that "when Christ shall appear they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is;" (1 John 3:2) that they shall then see the Lord "face to face, and know even as also they are known;" (1 Corinthians 13:12) that their "vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" (Php 3:21) that they shall be "conformed to his image," (Romans 8:29) and "be satisfied when they awake with his likeness;" (Psalms 17:15) that they shall be "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;" (Revelation 7:15) that "their sun shall no more go down, for the Lord shall be their everlasting light;" (Isaiah 60:20) that they shall have "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" (2 Corinthians 1:1) and shall "shine as the brightness of the skies, and as the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

But, with all this unspeakable bliss and glory, there must be in infinite Deity unfathomable depths which no creature, however highly exalted, can ever sound; heights which no finite, dependent being can ever scan. God became man, but man never can become God. He fully knows us, but we never can fully know him, for even in eternity, as in time, it may be said to the creature, "Can you fathom the depths of God or discover the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens--what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of hell--what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea." (Job 11:7-9) But if, as we believe, eternity itself can never fully or entirely reveal the heights and depths of the love of a Triune God, how little can be known of it in our present time state! And yet that little is the only balm for all sorrow, the only foundation of solid rest and peace.

Chapter 25

01.23. The love of Jesus for His people

The love of Jesus for His people By J. C. Philpot

Love is communicative. This is a part of its very nature and essence. Its delight is to give, and especially to give itself; and all it desires or asks is a return. To love and to be beloved, to enjoy and to express that ardent and mutual affection by words and deeds; this is love's delight, love's heaven. To love, and not be loved—this is love's misery, love's hell. God is love. This is his very nature, an essential attribute of his glorious being; and as he, the infinite and eternal Jehovah, exists in a Trinity of distinct Persons, though undivided Unity of Essence! there is a mutual ineffable love of the three Persons in the sacred Godhead the Scripture abundantly testifies—"The Father loves the Son;" (John 3:35) "And have loved them as you have loved me;" (John 17:23) "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) And as the Father loves the Son, so does the Son love the Father—"But that the world may know that I love the Father," are his own blessed words. (John 14:31) And that the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son is evident not only from his divine personality in the Godhead, but because he is essentially the very "Spirit of love," (Romans 15:30, 2 Timothy 1:7) and as such "sheds the love of God abroad in the heart" of the election of grace. (Romans 5:5)

Thus man was not needed by the holy and ever-blessed Trinity as an object of divine love. Sufficient, eternally and amply sufficient, to all the bliss and blessedness, perfection and glory of Jehovah was and ever would have been the mutual love and intercommunion of the three Persons in the sacred Godhead. But love—the equal and undivided love, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, flowed out beyond its original and essential being—to man; and not merely to man as man, that is to human nature as the body prepared for the Son of God to assume, but to thousands and millions of the human race, who are all loved personally and individually with all the infinite love of God as much as if that love were fixed on only one, and he were loved as God loves his dear Son. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," is spoken to each individual of the elect as much as to the whole church, viewed as the mystical Bride and Spouse of the Lamb.

Thus the love of a Triune God is not only to the nature which in due time the Son of God should assume, the flesh and blood of the children, the seed of Abraham which he should take on him, (Hebrews 2:14-16) and for this reason viewed by the Triune Jehovah with eyes of intense delight, but to that innumerable multitude of human beings who were to form the mystical body of Christ. Were Scripture less express, we might still believe that the nature which one of the sacred Trinity was to assume would be delighted in and loved by the holy Three-in-One. But we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the point, that puts it beyond all doubt or question. When, in the first creation of that nature the Holy Trinity said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and when, in pursuance of that divine council, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," God thereby uniting an immortal soul to an earthly body, this human nature was created not only in the moral image of God, (Ephesians 4:24) but after the pattern of that body which was prepared for

the Son of God by the Father. (Hebrews 10:5) The Holy Spirit, therefore, in Psalm 8, puts into the mouth of the inspired Psalmist an anthem of praise flowing from the meditations of his heart upon the grace and glory bestowed upon human nature, as exalted in the person of Christ above all the glory of the starry heavens—"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained—what is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet." (Psalms 8:3-6)

Here the Psalmist bursts forth into a rapture of admiration at beholding how man, that is, human nature, in itself so weak and fragile, so inferior in beauty and splendor to the glorious orbs that stud the midnight sky, should yet attract the mind, and be visited by the love of God; how that nature, "made a little lower than the angels" in its original constitution, yet should, by virtue of its being taken into union with the Person of the Son of God, be crowned with honor and glory, and dominion given to it over all the works of God's hands in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18. That this is the mind of the Holy Spirit is evident from the interpretation given of the Psalm by the inspired Apostle—"But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that you are mindful of him? or the son of man, that you visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crown him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:6-9)

When, then, the Son of God took our flesh into union with his own divine Person, he not only invested that nature with unspeakable glory, but by partaking of the same identical substance, the same flesh, and blood, and bones, wedded the Church unto himself. This is the true source, as it is the only real and solid foundation of all the union and communion that the Church enjoys with Christ on earth, or ever will enjoy with him in heaven. He thus became her Head, her Husband, and she became his body, his wife. Nor are these mere names, and titles, any more than husband and wife are mere names and titles in their natural relationship. The marriage relation is an unalterable tie, an indissoluble bond, giving and cementing a peculiar but substantial union, making man and wife one flesh, and investing them with an interest in each other's person and property, happiness and honor, love and affection, such as exists in no other relationship of life. Thus the assumption of human nature made the Lord Jesus Christ a real, not a nominal husband, yes, as much a husband to the Church as Adam became husband to Eve on that memorable morn in Paradise, "when the Lord God brought her unto the man" in all her original purity and innocence, (beautiful type of the Church as presented to Christ in her unfallen condition!) "and Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." (Genesis 2:23) As then in the marriage union man and wife become one flesh, (Genesis 2:24) and, God having joined them together, no man may put them asunder, (Matthew 19:5) so when the Lord Jesus Christ, in the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," betrothed the church unto himself, they became before the face of heaven one in indissoluble ties. As he undertook in "the fullness of time" to be "made of a woman," she became one with him in body by virtue of a common nature; and becomes one with him in spirit when, as each individual

member comes forth into a time state, the blessed Spirit unites it to him by regenerating grace. Such is the testimony of the word of truth. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" (Ephesians 5:30). "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:17) Her union, therefore, with his flesh ensures to her body conformity in the resurrection morn to the glorified body of Jesus; and her union with his spirit ensures to her soul an eternity of bliss in the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and love. Thus the union of the church with Christ commenced in the councils of eternal wisdom and love, is made known upon earth by regenerating grace, and is perfected in heaven in the fullness of glory. The church, it is true, fell in Adam from that state of innocence and purity in which she was originally created. But how the Adam fall, in all its miserable consequences, instead of canceling the bond and disannulling the everlasting covenant, only served more fully and gloriously to reveal and make known the love of Christ to his chosen bride in all its breadth and length and depth and height! She fell, it is true, into unspeakable, unfathomable depths of sin and misery, guilt and crime. But she never fell out of his heart or out of his arms! Yet what without the fall would have been known of dying love or of the mystery of the cross? Where would have been the song of the redeemed, "Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Where the victory over death and hell, or the triumphs of superabounding grace over the aboundings of sin, guilt, and despair? Where would have been the "leading captivity captive," the "spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself?" What would have been known of that most precious attribute of God—mercy? What of his forbearance and longsuffering; what of his pitiful compassion to the poor lost children of men? As then the church’s head and husband could not and would not dissolve the union, break the covenant, or alter the thing that had gone out of his lips, and yet could not take her openly unto himself in all her filth, and guilt, and shame, he had to redeem her with his own heart’s blood, with agonies and sufferings such as earth or heaven never before witnessed, with those dolorous cries under the hidings of his Father’s face, which made the earth to quake, the rocks to rend, and the sun to withdraw its light. But his love was strong as death, and he endured the cross, despising the shame, bearing her sins in his own body on the tree, and thus suffering the penalty due to her crimes, reconciled her unto God "in the body of his flesh, through death, to present her holy, and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." (Colossians 1:22)

Having thus reconciled her unto God, as she comes forth from the womb of time, he visits member after member of his mystical body with his regenerating grace, that "he may sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and thus eventually "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephesians 5:26-27) Communion with Christ, therefore begins below, in our time state. It is here that the mystery of the marriage union is first made known; here the espousals entered into; (Jeremiah 2:2, 2 Corinthians 11:2) here the first kiss of betrothed love given. (Song of Solomon 1:2) The celebration of the marriage is to come; (Revelation 19:7-9) but the original betrothal in heaven and the spiritual espousals on earth make Christ and the church eternally one. As then the husband, when he becomes united to his wife in marriage ties, engages thereby to love her, cherish her, feed her, clothe her, count her interests his interests, her honor his honor, and her happiness his happiness, so the blessed Jesus, when in the councils of eternity, he betrothed the Church to himself, undertook to be to her and do for her everything that should be for her happiness and honor, perfection and glory. His own words are, "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies—I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness; and you

shall know the Lord." (Hosea 2:19-20) And again, "For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." (Isaiah 54:5) "For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." (Isaiah 62:5)

There must be union before communion, marriage before possession, membership before abiding in Christ and he in us, a being in the vine before a branch issuing from the stem. It is the Spirit who quickens us to feel our need of him; to seek all our supplies in him and from him; to believe in him unto everlasting life, and thus live a life of faith upon him. By his secret teachings, inward touches, gracious smiles, soft whispers, sweet promises, and more especially by manifestations of his glorious Person, finished work, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, agonizing sufferings, and dying love, he draws the heart up to himself. He thus wins our affections, and setting himself before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely," draws out that love and affection towards himself which puts the world under our feet.

What is religion without a living faith in, and a living love to the Lord Jesus Christ? How dull and dragging, how dry and heavy, what a burden to the mind, and a weariness to the flesh, is a round of forms where the heart is not engaged and the affections not drawn forth! Reading, hearing, praying, meditation, conversation with the people of God—what cold, what heartless work where Jesus is not! But let him appear, let his presence and grace be felt, and his blessed Spirit move upon the heart, then there is a holy sweetness, a sacred blessedness in the worship of God and in communion with the Lord Jesus that makes, while it lasts, a little heaven on earth. Means are to be attended to, ordinances to be prized, the Bible to be read, preaching to be heard, the throne of grace to be resorted to, the company of Christian friends to be sought. But what are all these unless we find Christ in them? It is He who puts life and blessedness into all means and ordinances, into all prayer, preaching, hearing, reading, conversing, and everything that bears the name of religion. Without him all is dark and dead, cold and dreary, barren and bare. Wandering thoughts at the throne, unbelief at the ordinance, deadness under the word, formality and lip service in family worship, carelessness over the open Bible, carnality in conversation, and a general coldness and stupidity over the whole frame—such is the state of the soul when Jesus does not appear, and when he leaves us to prove what we are, and what we can do without him.

He is our sun, and without him all is darkness; he is our life, and without him all is death; he is the beginner and finisher of our faith, the substance of our hope, and the object of our love. All religion flows from his Spirit and grace, presence and power. Where he is, be it barn or hovel, field or hedge, closet or fireside, there is a believing soul, a praying spirit, a tender conscience, a humble mind, a broken heart, and a confessing tongue. Where he is not, be it parlour or chapel, public worship or private prayer, hearing the word or reading the Bible, all is alike empty and forlorn to a living soul, pregnant with dissatisfaction and loaded with self-condemnation.

It is this inward sense of the blessedness of his presence, and the misery of his absence—the heaven of his smile and the hell of his frown—that makes the sheep of Christ seek communion with Him. He has won their heart to himself by discovering to them his beauty and his love, and they having once seen the glory of his Person, heard the sweetness of his voice, and tasted the grace of his lips, follow him wherever he goes, seeking to know him and the power of his resurrection, and counting all things rubbish and loss that they may win him, and have some

manifestation of his love. What is to support the soul under those trials and temptations that at times press it so sore, relieve those cruel doubts which so disquiet, take away those fears of death which so alarm, subdue that rebelliousness which so condemns, wean from the world which so allures, and make it look beyond life and time, the cares of the passing hour, and the events of the fleeting day, to a solemn and blessed eternity—but those visitations of the Blessed Lord to the soul which give it communion with himself? Thus were the saints of God led and taught in days of old, as the Holy Spirit has recorded their experience in the word of truth. Remembering the past, one says, "Your visitation has preserved my spirit" (Job 10:12) Longing for a renewal, another cries, "O when will you come unto me?" (Psalms 101:2) and under the enjoyment of his presence the church speaks, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." (Song of Solomon 2:4)

We are, most of us, so fettered down . . .

by the chains of time and sense,

by the cares of life and daily business,

by the weakness of our earthly frame,

by the distracting claims of a family,

by the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen

nature, that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

We can take no pleasure in the world, nor mix with a good conscience in its pursuits and amusements; we are many of us poor, moping, dejected creatures, from a variety of trials and afflictions; we have a daily cross and the continual plague of an evil heart; get little consolation from the family of God or the outward means of grace; know enough of ourselves to know that in self there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart, or to be able to do tomorrow what we cannot do today. As then the weary man seeks rest, the hungry food, the thirsty drink, and the sick health, so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with him. From him come both prayer and answer, both hunger and food, both desire and the tree of life. He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in his bleeding wounds and pierced side; makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God’s wrath, that we may hide ourselves under his justifying robe; puts gall and wormwood into the world’s choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from him; keeps us long fasting to endear a crumb, and long waiting to make a word precious. He wants the whole heart, and will take no less; and as this we cannot give, he takes it to himself by ravishing it with one of his eyes, with one chain of his neck. If we love him it is because he first loved us; and if we seek communion with him, it is because he will manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world. Would we see what the Holy Spirit has revealed of the nature of this communion, we shall find it most clearly and experimentally unfolded in the Song of Solomon. From the first verse of that divine book, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," to the last expressed desire of the loving bride, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe, or like to a young deer upon the mountains of spices," all is a "song of loves," (Psalms 45:1) all a divine revelation of the communion that is carried on upon earth

between Christ and the Church. She "comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved," while "his left hand is under her head, and his right hand embraces her." She says, "Look not upon me because I am black;" but he answers, "You are all fair, my love, there is no spot in you." At one moment she says, "By night, on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not;" and then again she cries, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." (Song of Solomon 3:4) Comings and goings; sighs and songs; vain excuses and cutting self-reflections; (Song of Solomon 5:3-6) complaints of self and praises of him; (Song of Solomon 5:7-16) the breathings of love, and the flames of jealousy; (Song of Solomon 8:6) the tender affections of a virgin heart, and the condescending embraces of a royal spouse; (Song of Solomon 1:7; Song of Solomon 2:3-7)—such is the experience of the Church in seeking or enjoying communion with Christ as described in this divine book.

O that we could walk more in these gracious footsteps! Whatever be our state and case, if it can truly be said of us what the angel said to the women at the sepulcher, "I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified," we have a divine warrant to believe that, "he is gone before us into Galilee. There shall we see him." He is risen; he has ascended up on high, and "has received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He is now upon the mercy seat, and he invites and draws poor needy sinners to himself. He says, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He allows us, he invites us to pour out our heart before him, to show before him our trouble, to spread our desires at his feet, as Hezekiah spread the letter in the temple.

If we seek communion with him, we may and shall tell him how deeply we need him, that without him it is not life to live, and with him not death to die. We shall beg of him to heal our backslidings; to manifest his love and blood to our conscience; to show us the evil of sin; to bless us with godly sorrow for our slips and falls; to keep us from evil that it may not grieve us; to lead us into his sacred truth; to preserve us from all error; to plant his fear deep in our heart; to apply some precious promise to our soul; to be with us in all our ways; to watch over us in all our goings out and comings in; to preserve us from pride, self-deception, and self-righteousness; to give us renewed tokens of our saving interest in his finished work; to subdue our iniquities; to make and keep our conscience tender; and work in us everything which is pleasing in his sight.

What is communion but mutual giving and receiving, the flowing together of two hearts, the melting into one of two wills, the exchange of two loves—each party maintaining its distinct identity, yet being to the other an object of affection and delight? Have we nothing then to give Christ? Yes--our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, our trials, and above all the salvation and sanctification of our souls. And what has he to give us? What? Why, everything worth having, everything worth a moment's anxious thought, everything for time and eternity!

Chapter 26

01.24. The love of Jesus for His people

The treasures of Divine truth by J. C. Philpot

How little do we, for the most part, realize, and daily, hourly, live and feed upon those divine and heavenly truths which we, as Christians, profess to believe!

Take, for instance, that great, that astonishing truth—the incarnation of the Son of God, in its various fruits and consequences, such as his holy life on earth, his sufferings in the garden and on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to the right hand of God. This, the foundation of all our faith, hope, ands love, our only refuge in life and death, our only source of consolation here and of bliss hereafter, how little is it realized proportionately to its divine blessedness! To say we do not realize it, is to say we are unbelievers; for, if faith be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," to say we do not feel a substance in the incarnation of God's dear Son, is to say we have no faith in it or in Him! On the contrary, it is only as we do realize in our own souls the felt blessedness of having a Jesus who suffered, a Jesus who bled, a Jesus who died, a Jesus who was buried and rose again, a Jesus now at God's right hand for us as "the great High Priest over the house of God," that we ever feel anything worth feeling, receive anything worth receiving, or enjoy anything worth enjoying. No, further, it is only as we do realize this blessed truth that the Son of God is in our nature at the right hand of the Father, "able (and willing) to save to the uttermost all than come unto God by him," that we ever pray with any faith or acceptance, find any access or sweetness in approaching the throne of grace, or receive any answer to our petitions. The more deeply our soul is penetrated with "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," the more strongly that our faith embraces, our hope anchors in, and our love flows towards a once crucified, but now risen and glorified Immanuel, the more prayerful, watchful, humble, tender-hearted, contrite, and spiritually-minded shall we be, and the more will every gracious fruit appear and abound in our hearts, lips, and lives. No man, therefore, is worthy the name of a Christian who does not believe in, and spiritually realize in his own soul, who and what the Lord Jesus is as God's dear Son in our flesh; and the more he believes in him as such, and the more he receives out of his fullness "in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell," the more he glorifies him, and is conformed to his image. And yet it is, for the most part, only at times and seasons that we so realize who and what Jesus its as to obtain any sensible victory over the evils of our heart, the strength of sin, the snares of the world, or the assaults of Satan. Faith, it is true, never dies out of the heart when once it has been implanted there by the hand of God; but in its actings it often seems latent or asleep. Yet as the babe slumbering in the cradle is as much a living child as when pressed to the mother's bosom it receives nutriment from her bosom, so faith is as much a living faith when it slumbers as when it receives out of Christ's fullness grace for grace, and sucks the breasts of consolation.

Still we revert to our starting point—that compared with what is to be believed, known, and felt, we feel and realize comparatively little of the incarnation of the Son of God. How earnestly did Paul desire that he "might know Him, and the power of his resurrection," as if all he knew was but a

drop compared with the ocean; and how fervently he prayed for his beloved Ephesians, that "they might comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and might know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God." That he, who is the Father's co-equal and co-eternal Son, did really lie a babe in Bethlehem's manger, that he really did walk on this polluted earth, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," that he hungered, thirsted, groaned, wept, sweat great drops of blood,

"Bore all incarnate God could bear

With strength enough, and none to spare,"

and then, when by his blood-shedding on the cross, he had offered one, and the only one sacrifice for sin, meekly laid down his life, that he might take it again—can we, can any of us, say that we realize in this suffering and risen God-man, the thousandth or millionth part of the grace and glory, bliss and blessedness, peace and joy, liberty and love, treasured in, and flowing out of him? Consider for a moment, what fruits have already flowed into the hearts of the saints from a risen Immanuel. By faith in him, as the incarnate God, martyrs have faced death in its most appalling forms, and patiently, no, joyfully, endured the most exquisite torments which the most fiendish malice in hell, or out of hell, could devise; by faith in Him as God-man, thousands of despairing sinners have found pardon and peace. The bed of languishing and pain, the lonely garret of poverty and want, the cancer ward of a hospital, the walls of the union workhouse, have all been illuminated by the rays of the cross, so that sickness had no sorrow, death no sting, and the grave no terror. In the beautiful and experimental language of Kelly—

"The Cross, it takes our guilt away;

It holds the fainting spirit up;

It cheers with hope the gloomy day;

And sweetens every bitter cup.

"It makes the coward spirit brave;

And nerves the feeble arm for fight;

It takes its terror from the grave;

And gilds the bed of death with light."

There are two most blessed subjects of spiritual contemplation as revealed to us in the word of truth. The one is, the Son of God in our flesh—suffering on earth, glorified in heaven. The other is the Church of Christ viewed in her relationship to this once suffering, now glorified Immanuel. What blessed subjects for meditation, searching the Scriptures, believing views of, and sweet experimental realization!

We do feel that whatever leads us to search the Scriptures, to penetrate beyond the mere surface into the treasures of Divine truth therein laid up, and above all, to feel the power and blessedness and to realize by a living faith the present grace and future glory of oneness with Christ, is indeed most profitable.

Here we feel there is in our day a great deficiency with most that fear God. They have a few hopes and many fears; a sense of their ruin and misery, and at times sweet glimpses and glances of the sufficiency and suitability, the blood, grace, and love of the Lord Jesus; but they do not seem to realize, or even seek to realize, what he is in himself to those that believe in his name. To search the Scriptures, as for hidden treasure, because they testify of him; to ply a throne of grace for a revelation of this Divine Savior to their hearts; to seek an entrance by living faith into the mystery of his glorious Deity and suffering humanity, so as to have them brought by the blessed Spirit before their eyes, and into their very souls; to resort unto Him as unto an ever-living, ever-loving Mediator and Advocate at the right hand of the Father, so as to receive supplies of strength and comfort out of his fullness—how short most seem here to come!

If a wealthy and liberal friend were to put into a banker’s hands a large sum of money for us, how eager should we be to draw for what our needs required. Alas! how slow and backward, how unbelieving, and, at times, almost unwilling to resort to the only storehouse of grace and strength, our only hope and help, for the supply of our spiritual needs. Surely, it must be grace and grace alone which can make us feel our need; show us in whom is the supply; draw forth prayer and desire after it, and then bestow what is needed!

Men deny the truth, trifle with it, or are indifferent to it, because they feel no urgent personal need of it!

Now look at the Deity of Christ as a truth which the Holy Spirit has to reveal; and indeed "no man can call Jesus Lord," that is, believe in and worship him as God, "but by the Holy Spirit." Assume, then, all the objections that reason and infidelity combined may urge against it; and if a man has not been tempted and exercised in this point, he has no idea how powerful, how insuperable by all human argument these objections are. But let them be mountains high, and oceans deep, let a deep sense of need be once felt in the soul, and how soon are they swept away, or, at least, their power broken. Lying in yonder bed, in the still season of the night, see that wretched sinner, pressed down almost to despair by a guilty conscience. Look at him writhing and trembling under the wrath of God.

What shall pacify this guilty conscience? Search and examine all the host of duties, rites, forms, and ceremonies. Can any, can all raise up this trembling sinner or speak peace to this troubled conscience? How shall pardon, mercy, acceptance, reconciliation come into it? One drop of the wrath of God, one pang of hell in the conscience, has silenced in a moment all the cavils of reason, all the arguments of infidelity. A sinner truly convinced of sin by the blessed Spirit does not doubt the deity of Christ. We do not say that no fiery darts may glance across his soul, for Satan will harass such a one with all the artillery of hell. But take him in his moments of spiritual distress; though he may seem to himself to have no faith, yet he is a solid believer in the deity of the Son of God. For what he wants, is what Christ only, as the Son of God, can give—deliverance from guilt and despair—hell taken out of his conscience, and heaven brought in.

How earnestly such a trembling sinner calls on Jesus, as the Son of God, to save and deliver him! How he longs for the application of his atoning blood and the manifestations of his justifying righteousness! Where now are the infidel doubts that once perhaps he entertained? Where now any caviling about his being the Son of God? Lying on his bed or walking up and down his room, in real distress, how earnestly, how sincerely, how believingly he now looks up to Christ at the right

hand of the Father, as though he would send forth his desires and petitions into the very heaven of heavens, and bring down an answer from the mouth of the incarnate Son of God. Is not the Deity of Christ expressed or implied by all and every one of these fervent desires? Who but God can hear prayer? Who but God can answer prayer? Who but God can read the thoughts and desires of the heart? With every supplicating breath, with every laying bare of the naked heart before him, Christ is acknowledged and looked unto as God. What a fulfillment is there in this poor sinner's lookings and longings of that gracious invitation, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

Now, what to such a condemned and guilty sinner would be the blood of Christ, if the blood of a mere man? What value, what efficacy, what merit or worth could there be in it to satisfy or save? We say it with all reverence, if Christ be merely a man, his blood could no more cleanse from sin than the blood of the malefactors shed at his side. But being the Son of God and God, no, God because he is the Son of God, infinite merit, the very value and efficacy of Deity, was in and upon that blood, and therefore it "cleanses from all sin." It is true that God can neither suffer, bleed, nor die; but the human nature, assumed into intimate union with the Person of God's co-equal Son, could and did; and the actings, sufferings, sacrifice, blood shedding, and death, being, through this assumption, virtually the sufferings and sacrifice of the Son of God, the merits of Deity were, so to speak, in every drop of that precious blood, and enriched it with the virtue and validity of Godhead. If this be not so, where is our hope?

If sin, in its very nature and essence, be such a violation of the justice of God, that it cannot be pardoned unless that justice be satisfied, search and see what can make this atonement to offended justice? All the obedience of a creature, say of the most exalted creature, a Gabriel or a Michael, is due to his Creator, and cannot possibly be transferred to any other creature, and of all least to a sinful creature. If, therefore, we deny the Deity of the Son of God, we cut off every ray of hope. Atonement for sin stands or falls with the Deity of Christ. If we deny his Deity, we must deny the atonement, for what value or merit can there be in the blood of a mere man that God, for its sake, should pardon millions of sins? This the Socinians clearly see, and therefore deny the atonement altogether. But if there be no atonement, no sacrifice, no propitiation for sin, where can we look for pardon and peace? Whichever way we turn our eyes is despair, and we might well take up the language of the fallen angel:

"Me miserable! Which way shall I fly

Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?

Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell!

And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep

Still threatening to devour me opens wide,

To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven." But when by the eye of faith we see the Son of God obeying the law, rendering, by doing and dying, acting and suffering, a satisfaction to the violated justice of the Most High, and offering a sacrifice for sin, then we see such a glory and such a value breathing through every thought, word, and action of his suffering humanity, that we embrace Him and all that he is and has, with every desire and affection of our regenerated soul. All our religion

lies here; all our faith, hope, and love flow unto, and are, as it were, fixed and concentrated in Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and without a measure of this in our heart and conscience, we have no religion worth the name, nothing that either saves or sanctifies, nothing that delivers from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin, nothing that supports in life, comforts in death, or fits for eternity. The way, then, whereby we come to a knowledge of, and a faith in, the Deity of Christ is, first by feeling a need of all that he is as a Savior, and a great one, and then having a manifestation of him by the blessed Spirit to our soul. When he is thus revealed and brought near, we see, by the eye of faith, his pure and perfect humanity and his eternal Deity; and these two distinct natures we see combined, but not intermingled, in one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us. Until thus favored we may see the Deity of Christ in the Scripture, and have so far a belief in it, but we have not that personal appropriating faith whereby, with Thomas, we can say, "My Lord and my God." May the Lord, in tender mercy, enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may see more and more beauty and blessedness in the Son of God, live a life of faith upon him, cleave to him with more purpose of heart, spend the remainder of our days more to his glory, and when death comes, welcome its stroke as carrying our souls to see him face to face, and to be with him forever!

"Dry doctrine cannot save us,

Blind zeal or false devotion;

The feeblest prayer, if faith be there,

Exceeds all empty notion."

01.25. Before we can read to our soul's profit

Before we can read to our soul’s profit by J. C. Philpot The only real knowledge which we can possess of the truth of God, or of any one branch of that truth, is from a vital, experimental, heartfelt acquaintance with it through the teaching of the Holy Spirit! Men, learned or unlearned, priest or people, may theorize and speculate, may think they see and understand, may reason and argue, preach and prate, talk and write, wisely and well upon this and that point of doctrine, or upon this or that portion of scripture; but unless the sacred truth of God is made known to our hearts by a divine power, and laid hold of by a living faith, we have no true knowledge of, as we have no saving interest in it. How true are those words of the apostle—"And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Corinthians 8:2) To think that we know a thing, and to know that we know a thing, are two very different things. We must have done with thinking and come to knowing; and this we never can do until the Blessed Spirit seals the truth of God home upon our heart and conscience. The Bible is plain enough. The way of salvation is written in its sacred pages as with a ray of light, and every truth that is for the soul’s good, or the Lord’s glory, is so traced in the inspired volume, that he who runs may read. This the Lord himself declares—"All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge." (Proverbs 8:8-9.) But before we can read to our soul’s profit these words of truth and righteousness, the veil of unbelief must be taken off our heart, (2 Corinthians 3:14-16) that we may see light in God’s light. The truths of the Gospel, if not broken up by a divine hand, lie upon many an understanding as clods of marl upon a field which they encumber but do not fertilize; or, to use a more scriptural figure, as the seed, scattered by the hand of the sower, lies on the hard, beaten wayside, until trodden into dust by the foot of the traveler, or devoured by the hungry fowl of the air. What good will the purest, clearest, soundest doctrines, even if preached by an apostle, do us unless there be that living principle of divine faith in our hearts which mixes with the word, and so profits the soul? The lack of this was the ruin of those ancient infidels who ate of the manna and drank of the rock, but whose carcasses fell in the wilderness—"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them—but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Hebrews 4:2)

We hold in our hands the divine Gospel of John; we read with wonder and admiration, and sometimes with some little feeling and savor, the sixth chapter; and as we read we see grace and truth stamped upon every line of that sacred discourse where the Lord speaks with such solemn weight and power about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. But what effect did this sacred sermon—the perfection of spiritual and experimental truth, to us pervaded with such a spirit of holiness, to us so weighty and solemn that life or death seems to hang upon every word—what effect did these words of Him who cannot lie produce upon those who heard them drop from his gracious lips? Did it awaken, quicken, regenerate, save, or sanctify them? So far from that, the Lord not seeing good to apply it to their consciences by his Blessed Spirit, it only stirred up their rebellion and infidelity. Their only reply to its heavenly language was, "How can this man give us

his flesh to eat?"

We see, then, that it is not truth—the purest and clearest, even when uttered by the Redeemer's own lips, that can save the soul unless applied to the heart by the special power of God. This the Lord plainly showed by the parable of the Sower, where the seed being the same but the soil different, that only which fell into good ground brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Thus, whoever be the sower, it is only when the seed of divine truth enters into the broken soil of a good and honest heart, made so by grace, that it takes that firm and deep root downward which enables it to spring, and grow, and bear fruit upward, to the praise and glory of God. But when the truth of God is made known to the heart by divine teaching and divine testimony, what a holy sweetness and heavenly savor are then tasted, felt, and realized in it! When thus favored to sit down under the shadow of its Beloved, and find his fruit sweet to its taste, the soul says, with Jeremiah, "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jeremiah 15:16) The ineffable mystery of a Triune Jehovah; the essential Deity and eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus; the sorrows and sufferings of his agonizing humanity in the days of his flesh; the unutterable glory of his divine Person as Immanuel God with us at the right hand of the Father; the efficacy of his atoning blood; the beauty and blessedness of his all-spotless righteousness; the sweetness of his dying love, that passes knowledge; the fullness of grace that dwells in him as the covenant head of the Church; the stability of the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the firmness of the promises; the holiness of the precepts; the force of Jesus' example; the support of his presence; the whispers of his voice; the sympathy and compassion of his tender heart—how can these blessed realities, in the experimental realization of which the life and power of godliness mainly consist, enter into us, or we enter into them without the unction of the Holy Spirit resting on and bedewing them, and through them resting on and bedewing us?

It is not only utterly useless, but it is highly dangerous, to make ourselves or others wise in the letter of truth when the heart remains utterly destitute of its power. Lace and lawn round the face of a corpse will neither give life nor preserve from putrefaction. The soundest doctrines may be made into grave-clothes for the dead; but "Lazarus, come forth!" may never be spoken to it by the voice of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Let us beware, then, of unsanctified knowledge, or unapplied truth; for such "knowledge puffs up;" and well may our ears tingle at the solemn warning of the apostle—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

If we have any inward witness that we may fear God; if any faith in his dear Son; if any sense of our sinfulness and ignorance, our earnest, our unceasing desire should be to be led into the truth of God by God himself. "Open you mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law;" "Lead me into your truth and teach me; on you do I wait all the day;" "What I know not, teach you me;" "Give me understanding, and I shall live"—such and similar petitions should be continually rising up out of our hearts and lips, and ascending to the courts of heaven perfumed by the prevailing intercession of the great High Priest over the house of God. The word of promise encourages us to present those supplications unceasingly before the throne. "If any of you lack wisdom," it says for our encouragement, "let him ask of God, that gives to all liberally and upbraids

not; and it shall be given him." And what can be more encouraging for the poor and needy petitioner, waiting at wisdom’s door-posts, than the words of the Lord himself—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened."

01.26. In this world of ours

In this world of ours By J. C. Philpot In this world of ours, just now so bright and beautiful, as the golden grain falls under the reaper’s sickle, the Lord himself giving us a fruitful season to fill our hearts with joy and gladness, nothing meets the eye but what is of time and sense. Wherever our lot be cast, or whatever be the place of our temporary sojourn; whether the crowded streets of the huge metropolis, or the busy northern towns, where the untiring giant of steam ever vomits forth his pitchy clouds, and whirls unceasingly round and round his million spindles; or the lonely seashore, where no sound meets the ear but the murmur of the waves against the shingly beach; or the quiet, secluded country village, where, lost amid shady lanes, we may roam and meditate, as if we were alone in the midst of creation; wherever our foot treads, or our eye rests, the world, and nothing but the world, meets our view. The men and women that we meet on every hand, whether fluttering in the gay robes of wealth and fashion, or the sons and daughters of toil, with poverty and care written on every feature of their face, and stamped on every thread of their dress, all, as they come trooping onward, however they vary in their million points of difference, resemble each other in this, that they live as much for time, sense, and self, as the ox that grazes in the field, or the bird that makes its nest in the bush. As far as we can judge from their words and actions, God is no more in all their thoughts, is no more looked up to, feared, loved, or adored by them, than he is by the swallow that chases the gnats in the evening breeze, or the butterfly that poises its wings over a flower in the noon-day sun. No, worse than this, "all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the seas," all these, though by first creation put under man’s feet, continue to glorify God, by still showing forth the wonders of his creative hand. "They continue this day according to his ordinances, for all are his servants." (Psalms 119:91) But man, their original master, man their primitive head, has debased and degraded his nature far below theirs, for he has defiled it to the lowest depths of infamy and shame, and sunk himself and it into a loathsome abyss of pollution and crime, to which the brute creation present no parallel. Listen to that thrush on the topmost bough of yon quivering aspen tree, hailing the morning sun with his tuneful throat. He knows neither sin nor shame; he glorifies the great Author of his being, and is even now singing a morning anthem to his praise. But that miserable creature of a man, who, all bloated with gin and begrimed with filth, is staggering out of the ale-house, who cannot speak but with a voice hoarse with oaths and strong drink; or that wretch of a woman who, alike polluting and polluted, infests the public street—do we say that the thrush is a nobler creature than these sons and daughters of crime? Why, the very toad that lurks under the bush in the garden, is not only a nobler being, but more glorifies God than this miserable drunkard, and that wretched prostitute. The bird of the air and the reptile of the ground are what God has made them; in them there is no sin, for them there is no hell. No blasphemy has defiled their mouth; no crime has sullied their feet. The eye of God does not hate them; the hand of God will not smite them. When they have lived their little day they will pass away, and be no more; but the wicked will be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

Yet under this seething world of sin and crime hidden by the veil which time and sense cast over all external objects, there are transactions going forward, which are divine and heavenly, daily plucking out of this sea of confusion predestinated individuals, elect men and women, delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. The Son of God has a kingdom given to him by his Father before the foundation of the world, and of which he took possession when he rose from the dead, ascended up to heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Of this present evil world Satan is the god and king, for the whole "course of this world" is "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." But Jesus, King Jesus, is meanwhile administering his own kingdom of grace here below, and as such, is continually plucking out of Satan’s domain the members of his mystical body, the objects of his eternal love, the sheep of his pasture, and the purchase of his blood. But this kingdom "comes not with observation," or "outward show." (Luke 17:20) It is a secret kingdom, a treasure hidden in a field; and the favored subjects of this kingdom, the partakers of its grace, and the heirs of its glory, are, like their once suffering but now glorified Lord, despised by a world of which they are the salt, hated by a world which is not worthy of their sojourning feet.

Chapter 29

01A.00. Jesus the Great High Priest

Jesus the Great High Priest by J. C. Philpot

01A.01. Chapter 1

Chapter I.

"My meditation of him shall be sweet," was the gracious experience and expressive language of the inspired Psalmist of Israel, when he had been favored with a view by faith of the grace and glory of the Lord; (Psalms 104:34;) and since to those who believe, Jesus is "precious," "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one" to all whose eyes have been divinely opened to see the King in his beauty, our meditation of him will be sweet too, if we are indulged with the same discovery of his beauty and blessedness, and are led by the same blessed Spirit into a similar train of holy contemplation. The Lord, in his infinite mercy and goodness, has provided his believing people with various means of renewing their strength, refreshing their spirit, feeding their soul, comforting their heart, and instructing their understanding, as they journey through this waste, howling wilderness. These are "the wells" in the "valley of Baca," "the pools" at which the pilgrims drink when "the rain" from heaven "fills" them. (Psalms 84:6.)

Such are hearing the preached gospel, searching the Scriptures, prayer in the closet, in the family, and in the assembly of the saints, the ordinances of God’s house, Christian conversation, and secret meditation upon the divine realities revealed in the word of truth. Without the spiritual and continual use of these divinely appointed channels of communication, the soul cannot be kept alive and lively in the things of God. They are as necessary to its health, its growth, its continuance in every good word and work—as food and drink, warmth and shelter, are indispensable to the sustenance of the natural body.

Now, of these means of grace, as they are frequently termed, one of the most edifying, and yet perhaps the least practiced, is that of spiritual meditation. The reason of this neglect of one of the choicest means of grace is evident. It is the most spiritual of them all, and, therefore, the most difficult, the most opposed to the carnal mind, and most needing the immediate power and presence of God. In hearing preaching, we have chiefly to listen. It does not necessarily require the direct and immediate exercise of the spiritual faculties of the new man of grace. It needs, indeed, faith, for unless that be mixed with the word, it cannot profit; (Hebrews 4:2;) but it is rather passive faith than active, a faith that rather feeds upon the bread which Boaz reaches to it, than which goes forth to glean for itself in the field, a faith equally the sovereign and efficacious gift and work of God, but one which rather stays at home to divide the spoil than, like the merchants’ ships, brings its food from afar. So also with prayer. Though a most blessed means of grace, a living channel of communication between the exalted Head and the suffering members, yet many of us know, from painful experience, how much there may be in it of the form and how little of the power. So also with reading the Scriptures, Christian conversation, sitting down at the ordinance—these may be all duly and regularly attended to, and yet little life or power, faith or feeling, be in active exercise upon the Lord of life and glory. But spiritual meditation, especially if its object be the Person and work of the blessed Lord, so needs the immediate and sustained help and power of the blessed Spirit, that it can be neither begun nor carried on without him. In spiritual meditation,

the soul is not as a fish in a pool, which may alike swim or sleep without any sensible difference, but like the bird in the air, which, unless its flight be continually sustained by the exertion of its wings, at once drops to the ground. Some, however, of the Lord's family seem almost incapable of spiritual meditation, at least to any extent. Like a bird with wounded wing, they cannot rise. A wandering mind, an inability to fix their thoughts on divine things, hinders some; powerful temptations prevent others. Darkness, unbelief, infidel suggestions, blasphemous imaginations, doubts and fears of their own interest in the Lord Jesus, hardness of heart, the strong opposition of their carnal mind to everything spiritual and holy—all these besetments work to the same end, to grievously hinder if not wholly disable many who truly fear God, from sweet meditation on those heavenly mysteries which are the food of every regenerate soul. But may not some help be afforded to those who thus feel their inability to meditate themselves upon the precious truth of God? May not the blessed Spirit employ the thoughts of others to aid those who cannot, from various causes, exercise their own? As in the ministry of the word the preacher breaks the bread of life on which the people feed, who perhaps could not break it for themselves, so may a writer upon the things of God afford a means of meditation to those who cannot well meditate for themselves, by bringing before them his thoughts upon the mysteries of the kingdom. This we attempted to do in our "Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer;" and as we have reason to believe that a blessing rested on our feeble attempts to set that subject forth in these pages, we have felt led to commence, with the Lord's help and blessing, a similar series upon the office characters of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will form, we trust, an appropriate sequel to our papers, first on the Eternal Sonship, and then on the Sacred Humanity of our blessed Lord. In the one we viewed him as the Son of God, in the other as the Son of man; now we shall have to view him in his complex Person as the great and glorious God-Man, Immanuel, God with us. Not that we should ever view him purely as the Son of God, distinct from that humanity which he was to assume, nor purely as the Son of man distinct from his eternal Sonship and Deity; but as these two natures are really distinct, it may tend to clearness of understanding, and be a help to faith to view them sometimes, as we have done, separate from each other. But in these office characters which he sustains in behalf of his Church, there is no such necessity for viewing his two natures separately; on the contrary, to do so would much mar those spiritual views of him which are so full of blessedness to a believing heart.

We have called them the "Office characters" of the Lord Jesus Christ, meaning thereby those peculiar relationships which he sustains to the church of God as Priest, King, Prophet, Head, Husband, etc. And as of these office characters, that of the Priest is the most important, and that which laid a foundation for all the rest, we shall commence the present series by giving it the first and most prominent place. It will be necessary in so doing to bring forward much doctrinal truth; but as our object is not so much to furnish our readers' heads—as to edify and profit their hearts, we shall seek to blend instruction with experience, and as the Lord may enable, so to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ in his beauty and blessedness, grace and glory, that our faith may be strengthened, our hope enlarged, and our love drawn forth, and that thus our meditation of him may be sweet. An objection has been taken by some good men to the word "office" as applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, as if the term rather lowered the dignity of his heavenly Majesty. The Lord ever keep us from using any term that may seem derogatory to the glory and honor of Him whose name is above every name; but if it was no degradation to him to "take upon him the form of a servant," (Php 2:7,) and if the Father himself said to him in prophecy, "Behold my Servant whom I

uphold," (Isaiah 42:1,) it cannot be degrading to him if we speak of his "offices," as understanding thereby the part which he undertook to fulfill for, and the relation which he sustains unto, the church of God. But we have chosen rather to adopt the expression, "Office characters," as embodying a fuller and wider idea than the simple term, "office," and thus more completely embracing what the Lord Jesus Christ is as the great and glorious Mediator between God and man. The High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is so wide and deep a subject that we can only hope at the best to bring forth a small measure of the treasures of mercy and grace which are stored up in it. But in order to prevent losing ourselves in so wide a field, we shall, the Lord enabling, endeavor to treat the subject as clearly as we can. We shall therefore consider, I. The Origin and Nature of Priesthood generally.

II. The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus, as completely filling up all the requisites of that office.

III. The bearing which this has on the experience of a Christian. The ORIGIN of priesthood lay in the mind of God from all eternity, for the whole of the Levitical priesthood, from which we gather our truest ideas of the priestly office, was but a type and figure of Him to whom God said, "You are a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek," (Psalms 110:4,) and who was "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8.) But as regards its institution, which, as regards time, we may call its origin, when these hidden purposes of God first came to light, we may assign the garden of Eden as the place wherein, and the fall of man as the epoch when the office of priesthood was instituted. It was, in fact, virtually announced in the first promise; for "the seed of the woman" pointed to the sacred humanity of Jesus, as the bruised "heel" predicted his sufferings, and as the bruised "head" of the serpent proclaimed the victory gained thereby over sin and Satan.

Sacrifices are essential to priesthood—so essential that it is an acknowledged principle that where there is no sacrifice there is no priest. Thus the Apostle argues: "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." (Hebrews 8:3.) Sacrifices meet us immediately after the fall as the only acceptable way of worshiping God; and as independently of a divine institution, there is no necessary or natural connection between sacrifice and worship, it is evident that they must be of divine appointment. But where can we so well place their institution as after the fall in Paradise? For why did "the Lord God make coats of skins" to clothe our first parents, except to show them the necessity and nature of a covering from his wrath by the righteousness of his dear Son? And as animal food was prohibited until after the flood, why were the beasts killed but as a sacrifice? We find, therefore, Abel offering sacrifice when he brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof—the fat being that part of the sacrifice which was always burnt on the altar. And that this offering of Abel was not a mere tribute of thankfulness, but a real slaughtered sacrifice, is clear from the words of the Apostle, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." (Hebrews 11:4.) We need not stay to enumerate the sacrifices offered by Noah, (Genesis 8:20,) by Abraham, (Genesis 15:9-10; Genesis 22:13,) by Jacob, (Genesis 31:54; Genesis 46:1,) except as clearly establishing two facts—1, that sacrifices were still the appointed means of approaching God; and, 2, that the head of the family was, antecedently to the Levitical dispensation, the sacrificing priest. The NATURE of these sacrifices we shall not now dwell upon, at least at any length, as we shall have occasion to consider them more fully when we approach that part of our subject in which we shall hope to show how the blessed Lord fulfilled them all by the sacrifice and offering of himself.

Still we may drop a few words of explanation upon the difference between what were sacrifices in the true sense of the term, and, what were more strictly offerings. This difference is expressed by the Apostle in the words—"Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices." (Hebrews 8:3.) He here draws a distinction between what are called the unbloody offerings, such as those of corn, oil, meats, and drinks, which he terms "gifts"—and the the true "sacrifices," in which the victim was killed, and its blood shed at the foot of the altar. Taking, then, a general view of both the sacrifices and offerings which were made by the high priest, we may divide them into three distinct kinds, according to the places where they were each offered—

1. Those of the court, or the brazen altar, by blood and fire.

2. Those of the sanctuary, at the altar of incense and table of show-bread.

3. Those of the most holy place, before the ark of the covenant within the veil. The first, being truly and properly sacrifices wherein blood was shed and the victim wholly or partially burnt by fire, represented the death of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross; the second, being the burning of incense on the golden altar morning and evening, and the offering of the show-bread weekly upon the table, figured his present intercession in heaven; and the third, or the carrying in of the blood of the bullock and the goat, and the incense beaten small, into the most holy place, represented the effect of both in atonement and reconciliation, and those divine transactions which are still now being carried on by our exalted High Priest, as our advocate with the Father in the courts of bliss.

It is, however, with the sacrifices offered upon the brazen altar that we have at present chiefly to do, and these may be divided into six kinds, as enumerated Leviticus 7:37—1. Burnt offerings; 2. Meat offerings; 3. Sin offerings; 4. Trespass offerings; 5. Consecrations; 6. Peace offerings. These were distinguished by two circumstances from all the other offerings—1, in that they were all "fire offerings," being wholly or partially burnt; and, were, 2, "most holy." They were thus distinguished from the "heave offerings" and "wave offerings," which were not burnt with fire, and were not "most holy," but, as the term may be rendered, wore called "holy praises," being, for the most part, voluntary thank offerings. The substance of these sacrifices was of two sorts—1. Beasts; 2. Fowls or birds. Of beasts there were three sorts offered in sacrifice—one of the herds, that is, bullocks, and two of the flocks, that is, sheep and goats. Of birds were used two sorts—1, turtle-doves; 2, pigeons; and 3, in one case, that of cleansing the leper, (Leviticus 14:4) sparrows. In all these sacrificial victims there were two necessary requisites—1, that they should be males, except in the sin and trespass offering; and 2, should be without blemish, figuring thereby the ability and the spotlessness of the Lord Jesus, both as the Priest and as the Victim.

These minute details may appear to some of our readers uninteresting and almost unnecessary, and indeed would be so were it not for their reference to the blessed Lord, and the food which they afford to a living faith, as seeing in them all a representation of the sacrifice and blood-shedding of the Son of God. To a believing heart nothing can be unnecessary, nothing uninteresting which points to him, and which tends in any way to shed a sacred light on the Person, work, sacrifice, and sufferings of our great High Priest. By these rites and sacrifices he was represented to the faith of the Old Testament church; and since the substance being come, these shadows have now no place in our worship, yet can a living faith look back to them and see them illuminated by a divine glory, as testifying of Jesus, and of salvation by his blood and righteousness. The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus. But having thus cast a glance at these "shadows of good things to

come," we may now pass on to consider the Lord Jesus Christ under that blessed character which, as we said before, lies at the foundation of all his other covenant relationships, and shall therefore proceed to view him as the great High Priest over the house of God.

Several important considerations here at once meet our view, as, i. What is the true nature of priesthood, what is its foundation, and whence did it take its rise and origin?

1. The essential office of a priest is to offer sacrifice. But sacrifice implies three things—1, the just desert of a sinner—death; 2, the substitution of a victim in his place; 3, the acceptance of the substitute by the offended Judge. There is no natural or necessary connection between sacrifice and forgiveness. To take an innocent lamb, cut its throat, sprinkle its blood, and burn its fat on an altar, as an act of divine worship, would rather, of itself, aggravate sin than atone for it, unless this mode of worship had been instituted by God himself, with an immediate and special reference to an atonement of his own providing. "It is not possible that the blood of bullocks and of goats should take away sins;" (Hebrews 10:4;) and thus sacrifice has neither validity nor significancy apart from the offering up of the Son of God as an atoning sacrifice for sin. But a sacrifice requires a priest. We see this most clearly in the Levitical law, for in that no sacrifice was allowed to be offered but by a priest of the family of Aaron. It is true that the offerer might bring the victim to the altar and kill it, though this was usually done by the Levites, (2 Chronicles 30:16-17; 2 Chronicles 35:11,) yet none but the priest could offer the sacrifice, by taking the blood and sprinkling it round about then altar. (Leviticus 1:1-5.) But priest, as well as sacrifice, must be of divine appointment. This the Apostle expressly lays down—"And no man takes this honor unto himself, but he who is called of God, as was Aaron." (Hebrews 5:4.) Moses, though "the man of God," unto whom alone "the Lord spoke face to face," did not take upon himself the office of priesthood. God chose his brother Aaron for the priesthood, as a sovereign act of his good pleasure—and fixed the priesthood in him and his family. (Exodus 28:1.) Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ did not choose or appoint himself to the office of High Priest, as the Apostle declares—"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest; but he who said unto him, "You are my son; today have I begotten you." (Hebrews 5:5.) We are thus at once led up to the spring-head, the original source and fountain, of our Lord's priesthood. He was appointed and constituted a high priest by the express will of the Father; for he "glorified not himself to be made a high priest;" that is, he did not take to himself that glorious office of his own mind and will, without the express designation and appointment of his heavenly Father. But when was he thus solemnly and divinely appointed? Surely in eternity. Time had neither place nor name, for as then it had neither birth nor being, in the eternal counsels of heaven. It has witnessed, it daily witnesses, their development, but it was not present at their conception. But without seeking to pry with too curious an eye into those solemn transactions in a dateless eternity wherein and whereby our blessed Lord was appointed to the office, and assumed the relationship of a High Priest to the house of God, we may perhaps draw a distinction between the counsels themselves and the open declaration of them. Prior to the open declaration of the Father to the Son—prior to the word of the oath, "You are a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek," Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the eternal Three-in-One Jehovah, took solemn counsel concerning the salvation of the church. Her miserable condition, as sunk and ruined in the Adam fall, was foreseen, and a plan devised in the eternal mind to save her from her destructions. This was "the counsel of peace," (Zechariah 6:13,) the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," (2 Samuel 23:5,) in which the Father proposed, the Son accepted, and the Holy Spirit ratified that

solemn compact, whereby the Son of God undertook to become the Head, Husband, Advocate, Mediator, and Redeemer of that innumerable multitude which the Father gave him to be his people, that in them he might be eternally glorified. Now, it was when this covenant had been entered into and firmly ratified and sealed by mutual compact, that the Father "spoke in vision to his Holy One—I have laid help upon One that is mighty." Then was the Son of God consecrated to the high priesthood, and all that he subsequently did and suffered in the execution of that office was but the fulfilling of what he then undertook in harmony with the will of God. ii. But let us now see his fitness for that sacred office. The infinitely wise God would not have chosen him for the work unless he had been perfectly qualified to fulfill it. For what a work it was—a work in which the glory of God, the salvation of millions of sinners, the utter defeat and overthrow of Satan, and the destruction of sin, were all to be accomplished; and that through seas of suffering, agony, shame, ignominy, and temptation, to be waded through and overcome by the Son of God in the flesh! But God knew both work and workman; what was to be done and who alone could do it; what was to be suffered and who alone could endure it. He knew that it was a work suitable for his own dear Son to accomplish, and that he alone was qualified for the work and the work alone qualified for him. Thus the dear Redeemer, with holy joy in the sweet consciousness of his Father’s approving smile, could look up just before he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and say, "I have finished the work which you gave me to do." (John 17:4.)

1. In looking, then, at his qualifications for the work, lot us first take a glance at his divine Person, as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. None but a Person can mediate. This at once overthrows the Sabellian heresy, which denies the three distinct Persons in the Godhead. A name, a relationship, an airy nothing, cannot interpose between the Person of God and his guilty creatures. That he then should be a distinct and divine Person was absolutely necessary, or how could he mediate between God and us? And to give him power and authority to mediate he must be also a divine Person. A creature, the highest creature, the loftiest and brightest of the burning seraphim, the noblest angel, such as Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, (Luke 1:19,) had not, could not have sufficient dignity to mediate between God and man. The seraph veiled his face with his wings before the Majesty of God when his glory filled the temple. (Isaiah 6:2.) Could he then mediate on equal terms with the great and glorious self-existent I AM? One was needed who, as Job speaks, as a "arbitrator," or umpire, "could lay his hand upon us both;" (Job 9:33;) that is, one who, as God, could be equal with God, and as man be equal with man, laying one hand upon God in the fullness of Deity and the other hand upon man in the identity of his humanity—near to the Father as the Son of God; near to man as the Son of man. But this wondrous arbitrator could only be found in him who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with h God," (Php 2:6)—in him who "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," (John 1:1)—in him who is God’s "fellow," or equal, (Zechariah 13:7,) as being the Son of the Father in truth and love.

2. We say it, then, not to stir up controversy, but as a part of divine truth, that his being the true, proper, and eternal Son of God gave him an additional and most special fitness thus to mediate between God and man. Who so suitable to plead with the Father as his only-begotten Son? Who, as ever lying in his bosom, so acquainted with his mind and will? Who so fit to come forth into visible manifestation as the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his Person? Who so able to reveal in his own Person the love, the pity, the mercy, the compassion, the grace

of the Father? We may add, who so able to manifest his holiness, his purity, his hatred of sin, and all those glorious perfections of the divine character which, hidden from the sons of men in the blaze of that light which no man can approach unto, were all brought to light in the Person of Immanuel? As, then, we view by faith the Person of the Son of God, we see how suitable he was to undertake and execute the office of a high priest. This intrinsic and eternal dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the foundation of his priesthood, as the Apostle argues in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

We have laid thus far the foundation of the Lord's priesthood in his eternal Deity and divine Sonship, and shall hope, with God's help and blessing, to pursue our subject in the next chapter.

01A.02. Chapter 2

Chapter II. In resuming our Meditations on the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we feel our need of that anointing "which teaches of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," (1 John 2:27,) and without which, as resting upon the lips or the pen, no preaching, however eloquent or powerful, no writing, however clear, fluent, or argumentative, can be of any spiritual profit or of any abiding benefit to the Church of God. But if this "unction from the Holy One" be necessary to the gracious understanding and experimental unfolding of every part of the truth of God, so indispensable to all true light upon and life from every portion of holy writ, that without it all is darkness and death, how much more is it needed when we have to meditate upon the Person and work of the blessed Lord, and to lead up the thoughts and affections of the living family to him who is now seated on his throne of grace and glory as the great High Priest over the house of God! The special work and office of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Jesus, (John 15:26,) to glorify him, to take of the things that are his, and to show them to the soul; (John 16:14;) and therefore without these teachings and testimonies of the Holy Spirit we have no true, no saving knowledge of him, no living faith in him, no sweet communion with him, no tender and affectionate love toward him. And are not these the marks which peculiarly distinguish the living family of God, from the dead in sin and the dead in profession? A bare knowledge of the letter of truth can communicate no such gracious affections as warm, soften, melt, and animate the soul of a child of God, under the felt power and influence of the Holy Spirit; can create no such faith as gives him manifest union with Jesus; can inspire no such hope as carries every desire of his heart within the veil; can produce no such godly sorrow for sin as makes him loathe and abhor himself in dust and ashes; can shed abroad no such love as makes him love the Lord with a pure heart fervently. But let us not be misunderstood. The same blessed and holy Teacher who takes of the things that are Christ’s and reveals them to the soul, thus raising up faith, hope, and love, and bringing into living exercise every other spiritual gift and grace, first prepares the heart to receive him in all his gracious characters and covenant relationships by deeply and powerfully convincing us of our need of him as our all in all. Is he a Priest? We need his atoning blood and his all-prevailing intercession that we may have peace with God, and that our prayers and supplications may rise up with acceptance into his ears. Is he a Prophet? We need his heavenly instruction, that we may sit at his feet and hear his word, so as to believe his promises and obey his precepts. Is he a King? We need his powerful and peaceful scepter to subdue every foe, calm every fear, subdue every lust, crucify the whole body of sin, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. But it may well be said of the present day, as recorded in the roll of ancient prophecy as indicating "the time of the end," "Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased." Is not this true of the professing Church as well as of the profane world?—as much fulfilled in the pulpit and the pew as in the railway train, the electric telegraph, and the scientific lecture room? From book to book, from chapel to chapel, from preacher to preacher many run, and by this increase their knowledge of Gospel truth; but how few run so as to obtain that spiritual and experimental knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent which is eternal life! The truths of the Gospel are widely spread; the Person and work of the Lord Jesus are proclaimed from many pulpits; but it is still now as true as

ever it was, that "many are called but few chosen;" that "strait is the gate and narrow the way which leads unto life, and few there be that find it;" that "no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;" and that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit."

It is not, then, the increase of knowledge—that knowledge which "puffs up," that either makes or manifests a true believer in Jesus. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are still hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes; and however plainly they may be set forth in the word of truth, or enforced by the lips of men, it still remains true—that only trembling hearts and wounded consciences know them in their saving power. For such we write, and if any word drop from our pen which may comfort and encourage such, we shall little heed the cavils of those who are settled on their lees and are at ease in Zion.

We attempted in our last chapter to show that the intrinsic and eternal dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the foundation of his priesthood; and we may further add that the Person of our blessed Lord is so intimately connected with his office characters that without a gracious and experimental knowledge of his Deity and Sonship we cannot have any true or saving experience of his love and blood. We insist upon this, not in a spirit of controversy, nor with a view directly or indirectly to be over pertinaciously bringing forward a disputed doctrine, whether necessary or not for the maintenance of our point or the elucidation of truth—but from a deep and solemn conviction of its truth, and that upon it, as the only firm basis, the priestly as well as every other office of our blessed Lord rests.

Among the devices of Satan to obscure the truth of God, this is not the least or last—first to raise up opponents to it, and then, when controversy arises, with its usual attendant warmth, to try and persuade the defenders of truth to soften down their statements, to keep back their views, or even quietly drop them altogether, lest further confusion should arise among churches, or weak brethren be stumbled. Apply this to the present case. The true, proper, and eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord lies at the very foundation of his priestly office. Because he is a Son, and only because he is God’s true and proper Son, is he qualified to mediate between God and us. His true and real Sonship, therefore, is as necessary, as indispensable to his assuming that office as his Deity. The grace and glory of this present dispensation, as unfolded by Paul, (Hebrews 1:1-14) is that, whereas "Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he made the universe and everything in it. The Son reflects God’s own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly. He sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command. After he died to cleanse us from the stain of sin, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God of heaven. This shows that God’s Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is far greater than their names." Hebrews 1:1-4

Thus, according to the Apostle’s testimony, that Jesus is and ever was the Son of God, that as such he is and ever was "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person," and that "by him," as his Son, and therefore before his incarnation, "he made the worlds," is the distinguishing grace and glory of this present dispensation as a covenant of mercy and peace. He could not otherwise "by himself have purged our sins," nor could he have been "made so much

better than the angels," unless, as the eternal Son of the Father, he had "by inheritance,"—his lawful inheritance as his true and only-begotten Son, obtained a more excellent name,"—the name because the nature of a Son, "than they." His name, his nature, his inheritance, all, therefore, necessarily preceded his covenant engagements, and were the foundation of them all. Nor is he the eternal Son of God because his people were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world, as if eternal love to the Church were the foundation of his Sonship, but because such is the natural and necessary mode of his divine Personality as a Person in the ever blessed Trinity. But having thus far seen his blessed fitness for the office of Priest as the true and proper Son of God, we may now direct our thoughts to a consideration of the office character which he thus assumed. In attempting to do this, it will perhaps be desirable to obtain a clear view of the nature of that office. A priest implies a sacrifice, and a sacrifice implies three parties—1, a guilty transgressor, for whom the sacrifice is offered; 2, a holy God, to whom the atonement is made; 3, a priest, who shall stand as a mediator between God and the sinner, and who shall offer the sacrifice required.

We see all this strikingly shown when the children of Israel sinned in murmuring against the Lord for his destroying Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The children of Israel were the guilty transgressors; the Lord God of Israel was he against whom they had sinned; Aaron, offering incense and making an atonement for the people, was the priest, the typical Mediator. As such he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. (Numbers 16:48.) Thus we, as we know by painful experience, are guilty sinners before God; he, in all the perfections of his justice, purity, and holiness, his wrath against sin, and his inflexible determination by no means to clear the guilty, is our most just and righteous Judge; our adorable Lord, the Son of God in our nature, Immanuel, God with us, is the Mediator, the only Mediator between God and us; and he, as our High Priest, has offered a sacrifice, even himself, as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

We should, however, carefully observe that there is no necessary or natural connection between sin and sacrifice, or that God is at all bound by his moral perfections to pardon sin. It is wholly owing to the all-wise and all-gracious will of God that any pardon should be extended to any sinner, that any grace should be shown to him, or that any way should have been devised and executed to open a way of escape from the wrath justly due to his transgressions. It pleased God, in the depths of his infinite wisdom and mercy, that a way of salvation should be provided for the lost; but as justice must be amply satisfied, as the righteous law of God could not be violated with impunity, as his infinite purity and holiness could not be tarnished by passing by iniquity as if it were a slight thing for man to deface the image of God, and, by listening to Satan, to defy the authority of his Maker, this could only be accomplished through a sacrifice of God’s own providing, which was no less than that of his dear Son, that "he should be made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." But here let us for a moment pause to apply these thoughts to our own consciences, and to examine our spiritual and experimental acquaintance with them; for however clearly we may seem to see, or however boldly acknowledge these as important truths, however they may form a part of the creed for which we contend, yet what is all this short of their experimental power? And how deeply do we need that they should not only be at first made known to us by divine manifestation, but that they should be kept warm, fresh, and alive in our bosom as every-day realities for our faith, hope, and love to be actively engaged upon as the very life of our soul. We therefore need on all these points the special teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, not only to lead us feelingly and experimentally into them

under the first convictions of sin and the early suings for mercy, but to seal them daily upon our consciences as living realities, so as to live continually under their power and influence. The great mark of divine life in the soul is, that it makes itself manifest by its internal movements, and that all these movements, whether up or down, in or out, all really tend upward to the Fountain of life, who said, "Because I live, you shall live also." "I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." If I have no daily sight or sense of sin, no deep and abiding conviction of my state by nature before God as a most miserable transgressor, a guilty criminal of no common dye, I shall certainly neither know nor care to know anything experimentally and savingly of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, again, if I have no spiritual view of that just, holy, and righteous God with whom I have to do, who in himself is "a consuming fire," and whose indignation as such burns to the lowest hell, what sense can I have of needing a sacrifice for my sins, and that that sacrifice should have been consummated by nothing less than the blood shedding, sufferings, and death of his co-equal, coeternal Son? And further, unless I have some spiritual knowledge of and faith in the only-begotten Son of God—what can I know of his having shed his precious blood to redeem my soul from the lowest hell? Or again, whatever may be my views and feelings upon these points, how can I spiritually apprehend them, or live from day to day upon them, except the blessed Spirit be continually opening them up and applying them to my heart? But we are rather anticipating our proposed intention of showing the peculiar bearing which the priesthood of the Lord Jesus has upon the experience of the saint of God, and shall therefore pursue no further this train of thought. Our present object is rather first to establish its truth on a firm, scriptural basis, and open up its nature and character, its end and object, before we enter upon the experience of its benefits and blessings as made known by a divine power to the soul.

Having, then, seen that the original and eternal dignity of the Son of God, as a Person in the glorious Trinity, is essential to his Priesthood, and that his being God the Son fitted him in a manner, full beyond all conception of ineffable grace and glory, to sustain that office, we may now look at what was further necessary that he might execute it according to the will of God, and in perfect harmony with "the counsel of peace which was between them both." (Hebrews 10:9; Zechariah 6:13.)

One main object of our blessed Lord’s assuming, according to the will of his heavenly Father, the office of a Priest was that he might "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26.) To offer sacrifice, we know, was one chief part of the priestly office, for priesthood and sacrifice are so indissolubly connected that it is a received axiom, that where there is no priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no sacrifice there is no priest. Sin could not be put away without a sacrifice, and this sacrifice must be no less than the obedience, blood shedding, sufferings, and death of the Son of God, wherein and whereby he offered up himself as an atoning sacrifice to put away the wrath of God; for "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." (Hebrews 10:4.)

Sin being such an abominable thing in the sight of God, such a violation of his word and will, such a daring rebellion against his majesty and glory, such a casting aside of his righteous government and authority, rendering the sinner so polluted and unclean, so filling him with a teeming mass of ungodliness, and so making body and soul a very temple of Satan—it could not be forgiven and

put away without a sacrifice in some way commensurate to its flagrant and hideous enormity. That sin should be visibly and effectually punished, the righteous character of God be fully and openly cleared, the claims of his holy law be thoroughly satisfied, his truth and justice be amply vindicated, his wrath be wholly appeased, and yet that his mercy and love might be displayed in all their gracious and eternal fullness in the complete salvation of an innumerable company of chosen sinners—this was the grand mystery of infinite wisdom, infinite love, and infinite power, to be accomplished and revealed in the Person and work of the Son of God, as "giving himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." (Ephesians 5:2.) But this sacrifice of himself he could not offer unless he took a body capable of doing and suffering the whole will of God. Deity, as pure Deity, can neither obey nor suffer. The Son of God, as the true and proper Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, could neither obey, nor bleed, nor die. And yet without obedience, the law cannot be fulfilled; without blood, sin cannot be remitted; without death, the sacrifice cannot be completed. Yet must it be obedience without failure, blood without blemish, and death without desert. A Lamb, therefore, was needed "without blemish and without spot;" (1 Peter 1:19;) a Lamb "slain," in the purposes of God, "from the foundation of the world;" (Revelation 13:8;) and that Lamb one which God had "provided for himself," as Abraham prophetically assured Isaac he would do. (Genesis 22:8.)

Here, then, we see, in some measure, the beauty and blessedness, the grace and glory of that pure and sacred humanity which the Son of God took in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing power and operations of the Holy Spirit, and whereby he became "Immanuel, God with us." This was "the body" which his heavenly Father "prepared" for him, and which was "curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," (Psalms 139:15,) when at one and the same instant the divine Person of the Son of God took a pure and perfect human body and a pure and perfect human soul in the womb of the Virgin. Then could he say, "Lo, I come to do your will, O God. Sacrifice and offering (that is, such as are offered by the law) you would not, but a body have you prepared me. (Hebrews 10:5.) But the question may now arise, When did our gracious Lord more particularly enter upon the discharge of his priestly office? Was he a priest from the moment of his assumption of the body prepared for him, or did he enter upon his priestly office at any subsequent period? To answer this question we must draw a distinction between his virtual—and his actual taking up of his covenant offices. The Lord Jesus Christ was invested with all his offices from the moment of his conception and birth. He became, therefore, virtually the Priest, Prophet, and King of his Church and people when his human nature, as "the holy thing," was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, for he received all his offices, at one and the same moment by the unction of the Holy Spirit communicated to him in all its fullness. He was therefore "born Christ the Lord," (Luke 2:11,) and was consequently Prophet, Priest, and King at his birth; for as under the law prophets, (1 Kings 19:16,) kings, (1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 16:13,) and priests, (Exodus 29:7,) were consecrated to their office by being anointed with oil—so our blessed Lord, when anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, in the womb of the Virgin, received in that unction of the Holy Spirit all those graces, gifts, and abilities, and all that right and authority which qualified and entitled him to the discharge of all his covenant offices. And yet there was a space between his virtual and his actual entering upon his offices as regards their discharge.

We believe, then, that though he assumed the body prepared for him at the moment of his incarnation, and thus virtually took upon him the office of priesthood under the unction of the Holy

Spirit, yet that strictly speaking he did not then actually enter upon his priestly office. There were, so to speak, degrees in his assumption of it. 1. There was first his taking up of it with his other offices at his incarnation. 2. There was, secondly, his visible and declarative anointing at his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove and filled him with all his graces and gifts. 3. And there was, thirdly, his especial dedication and consecration of himself to his work of suffering and dying when he said, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself;" (John 17:19;) that is, I dedicate and consecrate myself as a sacrificer and as a sacrifice.

Thus we may place the time when the Lord Jesus Christ more especially entered upon the execution of his priestly office in that intercessory prayer which he offered up John 17:1-26. It is true that he assumed it initially when he became the Lamb of God that bore the sins of the world; but as he did not enter upon his prophetical office until after his baptism, nor upon his kingly office until after his resurrection, so he did not enter upon his priestly office, that is, fully—until just prior to his crucifixion. But as the distinction may not be immediately seen by all our readers, let us explain the difference between entering upon an office initially and completely. When he was yet a child of twelve years old, Jesus was found by his parents "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." (Luke 2:46.) There Jesus was entering initially into his prophetical office, though he did not really and fully enter upon it until he returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee after his temptation in the wilderness, and "taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." So when he cast out devils, fed hungry multitudes, bade stormy winds and waves cease and be still, he was executing initially his kingly office. Yes, even when he stood before Pilate, and answering his question, "Are you a king, then?" replied, according to the Jewish mode of affirmation, "You say (that is, 'You say truly') that I am a king," he claimed then and there, even in the hour of his lowest humiliation, his regal dignity. Pilate, therefore, wrote a title which he put upon the cross, and which he would not alter for all the loud clamor of the chief priests, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." And yet he did not fully assume the kingly office until after his resurrection, when he said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Thus we see that entering upon an office initially differs from, and yet is perfectly consistent with, taking it fully and completely. So, therefore, in the priestly office, which our Lord assumed according to the will of God, he entered upon it initially before he fully and completely entered upon its discharge. He was, in a sense, bearing sin from the moment of his conception. His life was a life of suffering; he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and he was always perfectly obeying the law in thought, word, and action, and thus working out a robe of righteousness for the justification of his people. But this was not precisely the same thing as offering himself a sacrifice for sin on the cross.

We may illustrate this by the type of the paschal lamb; the lamb was to be taken on the tenth day of the month Abib, and kept up until the fourteenth day. When then it was taken out of the fold and kept apart by itself for four days, it was initially a victim, but it was not killed until the evening of the fourteenth day. So our Lord from his first separation unto the office was a Priest, and from his incarnation was a Lamb without blemish, but as a Priest he did not offer the sacrifice until the blood of his pure humanity was shed on the cross. But he more especially consecrated and dedicated himself as the Priest, when, as if anticipating that part of his priestly office which he now carries on in the courts of heaven, he offered up the intercessory prayer recorded in John 17:1-26. With the Lord's help and blessing, we shall attempt to show in our next paper the nature of this

sacrifice, and that indeed it was an atoning sacrifice for sin.

01A.03. Chapter 3

Chapter III.

"How can a man be just before God?" (Job 9:2) always has been, ever must be, a matter of deep and anxious inquiry when the mind is once enlightened to see, and the conscience awakened to feel the awful state of condemnation into which we are sunk by sin—before Him who, in his eternal purity, spotless holiness, and inflexible justice, is indeed "a consuming fire." But if even from natural convictions, the conscience, as if necessarily and distinctively, trembles under a sight and sense of sin before the great and glorious Majesty of heaven, how much more keenly and deeply must it feel these pangs of guilt and shame when the Holy Spirit, by his quickening operations on the heart, "judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet;" when "the hail" of God's manifested anger against all transgression "sweeps away the refuge of lies" in which self-righteousness has vainly endeavored to intrench itself, and the rising "waters" of his felt displeasure "overflow the hiding-place" of good works and good resolutions in which the convinced sinner has sought a temporary but most unavailing shelter!

"What shall I do to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy his justice, to fulfill the demands of his righteous law, to conciliate his favor, to escape hell, and win heaven?"—however in minuter features the beginnings of a work of grace may vary, such solemn searchings of heart, such eager and anxious inquiries from the lips must always attend the first operations of the Spirit of God upon the conscience. For where does grace always find us? In sin—if not in open yet in secret transgression. If a condemning law does not arrest us as plainly and manifestly guilty of vile, flagrant acts of iniquity, yet it comes upon us in its accusing sentence as "walking in the vanity of our mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart." Being, then, convinced of sin by the quickening operations of the Holy Spirit, the alarmed sinner looks out to find some way of escape from the wrath to come, some refuge wherein his guilty soul may find safety and shelter.

Now to such a poor self-condemned wretch, to such a guilty criminal, the atoning blood and justifying obedience of the Son of God, as revealed to his heart by the Holy Spirit, becomes the only refuge of his weary soul, the only way of salvation from the wrath to come, the only door of hope opened to him in the valley of Achor. To him, therefore, as faith hears and receives the joyful sound, it is glad tidings, good news, that the Lord Jesus "now once in the end of the world has appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26.) The convincing operations of the Holy Spirit on his conscience have been those "preparations of the heart" which "are of the Lord;" and which, by breaking it up, give it that "deepness of earth," (Matthew 13:5,) without which there is no proper seed-bed for the word of life to germinate in and grow; for until the fallow ground of the heart be broken up by the ploughshare of the law, it is but a sowing among thorns to receive the mere doctrine of the atonement into the judgment. There being no living faith in a heart destitute of grace, there can be no spiritual view of the blood of the cross; no sight of the groaning, agonizing Son of God; no secret, sacred entrance into his sorrows, no holy fellowship of his

sufferings, no inward conformity to his death. But where the Holy Spirit has convinced the soul of sin, and thus prepared the heart for the reception of atoning blood and dying love, he sooner or later reveals the Son of God as the Mediator—the only Mediator, between God and men, and especially in his character of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8.) As this train of thought at once leads us to the subject of the sacrifice offered upon the cross by the suffering Son of God, and as we proposed to show, with the Lord's help and blessing, the nature of that sacrifice, and that it indeed was an atoning sacrifice for sin, we shall here resume the thread of our Meditations upon the blessed Lord as the great High Priest over the house of God. Our readers will doubtless recollect that we have sought carefully to distinguish between the past and the present work of our great High Priest. Before "he gave up the spirit," and thus laid down him previous life as the last and crowning act of his suffering obedience, our gracious Lord cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished." (Matthew 27:50; John 19:30.) The sacrifice, therefore, according to his own testimony, was complete in and by the death of the sacred Victim. As the high priest could not enter within the veil on the solemn day of atonement until he could carry in the blood of the slain bullock, so his Antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ, could not enter into the courts above until he had first bled and died below. To constitute an efficient sacrifice several things worn required:

1. The whole must be according to the Sovereign will of God. The victim must be of his choice, and the whole arrangement at his supreme disposal. This we see most clearly intimated in the minute directions given as to the Levitical sacrifices to which we small have occasion presently more fully to refer.

2. The blood of the victim must be shed, for "the blood is the life;" (Genesis 9:4;) "it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul;" (Leviticus 17:11;) and "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22.)

3. The victim must die. As death was the original penalty for disobedience, ("In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die," Genesis 2:17,) so the sacrifice cannot be complete without the death of the victim. Thus Jesus "became obedient unto death," (Php 2:8,) "poured out his soul unto death," (Isaiah 53:12,) and gave his life for the sheep. (John 10:11.)

4. The victim must also be without spot or blemish, in most cases be a male, and in one—the paschal lamb, a male of the first year. (Exodus 12:5.) The stronger sex typified strength, the ripe age maturity, and the freedom from blemish spotless purity; all which three marks blessedly met in the Christ of God; for as strong, he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; as mature, he was made perfect through suffering; and as a Lamb without blemish and without spot, he was the Holy One of Israel.

We have already alluded to the sacrifices offered under the law, and intimated that we would have occasion to consider them more fully when we approached the present part of our subject. This, therefore, we shall now, with the Lord's help and blessing, attempt to do, as hoping thereby to throw some light upon the only true Sacrifice which Jesus offered upon the cross of Calvary.

It is to the early chapters of the book of Leviticus that we must chiefly turn to examine the sacrifices which were appointed by God as types and representatives of this great, this all-atoning Sacrifice.

1. The first sacrifice which there meets our view is "the Burnt offering," the nature and emblematic intention of which we shall now therefore consider. "The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any of you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock. " 'If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the Lord." (Leviticus 1:1-3.) Our space will not admit of our bestowing upon this remarkable sacrifice all the attention that its importance demands; it must suffice, therefore, to furnish our readers with some hints for their own profitable meditation. The "burnt offering" was one of the earliest modes of sacrifice. The first recorded instance of its firing offered was by Noah, after the flood:* "And Noah built an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." (Genesis 8:20.) This was doubtless typical of the sacrifice offered up on the cross by the Lord Jesus, for we read that "the Lord smelt a sweet savor;" (or "savor of rest," margin;) for did not Christ give himself "for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savor?" (Ephesians 5:2;) and does not the Father "rest" with ineffable complacency and delight upon the sacrifice thus offered to offended Justice by his only-begotten Son?

*We do not instance Abel's offering, of whom it is recorded that "he brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof," (Genesis 3:4,) as the express mention of "the fat" seems to indicate that the fat only, and not the whole victim was burnt on the altar. The next instance, we believe, of this mode of sacrifice is when God commanded Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him for a burnt offering upon Mount Moriah; (Genesis 22:2;) and though the sacrifice of Isaac himself was arrested by the voice of the Lord out of heaven, yet Abraham offered up the ram caught in a thicket by his horns—(type of Jesus, caught, as it were, in the thicket of our sins,) as a burnt offering in the stead of his son. Other instances previously to the giving of the law, are those in Job, (Job 1:5; Job 42:8) and of Jethro, (Exodus 18:12,) but as they convey no peculiar instruction, we need not here dwell upon them.

It is sufficiently evident from the two instances of Noah and Abraham that the rite of burnt offering existed, and no doubt by God's own appointment, before the setting up of the tabernacle in the wilderness. The ceremonial law then instituted only gave it a peculiar and additional sanction, put it, as it were, on a fresh basis, and furnished its offerer with more specific and minute directions, that the type might be more complete. Its distinctive feature was that it was wholly burnt; which was typical of two things—1, of the anger of God, as a consuming fire, wholly burning up the victim, as it will burn body and soul in hell; 2, as we shall presently more fully show, of the flames of self-sacrificing love, in which the body and soul of Jesus were as if wholly consumed in the devotedness of his heart.

1. But as we have proposed to direct our attention chiefly to the opening chapters of Leviticus, we shall name a prior feature, that is, that it was wholly voluntary. "He shall offer it of his own voluntary will." It was not like the sin offering or the trespass offering, a sacrifice specially offered for some particular sin, wrung from him, as it were, by guilt of conscience, but it was brought willingly of the man's own accord. Now this peculiar feature of the burnt offering, which, it will be observed, well harmonizes in that point with the voluntary burnt offerings offered by Job for his sons, (Job 1:5,) points to that marked character of the sacrifice offered by our great High Priest that it was on his part wholly a voluntary act—"Lo! I come to do your will," was the language of the

Son of God in taking the body which the Father had prepared for him. The eternal love with which the Son of God loved the Church before he gave himself for it; (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:25;) his covenant engagements on her behalf; (Psalms 89:19; Psalms 89:35-36;) his anticipation of the time of his incarnation by his various appearances in a human form under the Old Testament, were all so many marks and indications of the holy eagerness with which he undertook the work which the Father gave him to do. As the Son of the Father in truth and love, as lying from all eternity, as his only-begotten Son, in his bosom, he knew the will of the Father, for he and the Father are one—one in essence, one in nature, one in will. (2 John 1:3; John 1:18; John 10:30.) The will of the Father was that he should take a body which the Father, in his infinite wisdom and grace, had prepared for him, and offer it up as a sacrifice, and thus redeem and sanctify the Church with his precious blood. The whole of his suffering and obedient life was a doing of the will of God, for he could ever say, "I do always those things that please him;" (John 8:29;) but, as we have already pointed out, it was more particularly when he sanctified or consecrated himself as the High Priest in his intercessory prayer, (John 17:19,) that he did the will of God by forever perfecting by one offering those who are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14.) His whole heart, therefore, panted to do that will.

Thus, on his last journey, after he had passed through Jericho, we read that he "went before" his disciples as they were in the way ascending up to Jerusalem, (Luke 19:28,) as if he would reprove their lagging footsteps, and go before them, not only to show them the way to the cross, but as himself advancing with all holy eagerness to meet it. In this spirit he said, on a previous occasion, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how and straitened (’pained,’ margin) until it be accomplished." (Luke 12:50.) This baptism was the baptism of suffering and blood in which he was to be immersed when all the waves and billows of God’s wrath went over him; but his holy soul was straitened, or as if drawn together with the cords of love, and "pained" with the delay, time itself moving on with pace too slow for his ardent desire to do and suffer the whole will of God. This voluntary offering, then, of himself to be wholly offered up to God, as the burnt offering was entirely consumed, is a most blessed feature of the sacrifice consummated on the cross by "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." (Hebrews 3:1.) As "the Apostle," or messenger of God, bringing in his heart and hands a message of mercy, he came forth from the Father’s bosom in self-sacrificing love. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" (John 15:13;) "Who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20.) Whatever amount, therefore, of sorrow or suffering he had to endure, Jesus could still say, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book," (the book of God’s eternal counsels and fixed decrees,) "it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is in my heart." (Psalms 40:7-8.)

Thus "he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7.) The whole of his obedient and suffering life was a voluntary offering up of himself to do and suffer the will of God; but it is in its last acts, as offering himself in sacrifice, that we see it especially manifested. In this spirit, as we have already pointed out, he comes up to Jerusalem, for there must he die, as he himself said, "Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke 13:33.) In this spirit, he entered Jerusalem, in meek yet holy triumph, sitting on an donkey’s colt. (John 12:15.) In this spirit, he sat down with his disciples at the paschal supper, when he said unto them, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

(Luke 22:15.) And in the same spirit, he freely, voluntarily laid down his life as the last act of his willing, suffering obedience, according to his own words, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment, (that is, this enjoined part of my priestly office—for he is here speaking not of his essential, but of his mediatorial life) have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18.)

2. But let us now view another feature, indeed what may be considered the leading and main characteristic of the burnt sacrifice. It was to bo wholly burnt. "The priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord." (Leviticus 1:9.) In the other sacrifices only the fat, (that is, the internal fat,) the kidneys and the liver were burnt upon the altar, for that was "the food of the offering made by fire, for a sweet savor, and was the Lord's;" (Leviticus 3:16;) but the burnt sacrifice was wholly burnt. The burnt sacrifice, therefore, represents the offering up of the pure humanity of Christ, not only in the flames of the anger of God against sin, without which it would not have been a sacrifice at all, but also in the pure and holy flames of filial love and devotedness to the Father's will.

It did not, therefore, so much represent the atonement made for sin by the sacrifice of Christ in its aspect towards man, for that was more fully typified in the sin and trespass offerings, and especially in the sacrifice of the bullock and the goat offered on the great day of atonement, as it represented the atonement in its aspect towards God. There were certain actings of ineffable love between the Father and the Son, when Jesus was doing and suffering the will of God upon earth, of which we get only faint glimpses in the word of truth; but these actings were, in a mysterious and inscrutable manner, connected with the obedience unto death of the Son of God. Thus, the Lord himself said, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." (John 10:17.) Here we have the love of the Father connected with the obedience of the Son—a love not distinct from, not independent of, the eternal love with which the Father ever loved him as his only-begotten Son, but a love to him as the God-man Mediator, a delighting in his obedience as his own sent servant—"Behold my servant whom I uphold; my elect"—the elect Head of the church, "in whom my soul delights." (Isaiah 42:1.) The patience, the meekness, the submission, the resignation, the faith, hope, and love, the humility, the brokenness of heart, the pure and holy, unswerving, unshrinking obedience of Jesus in his sacred humanity were ineffably delighted in by his approving and accepting God and Father. His eternal love to him as his only-begotten Son, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person, was thus drawn as it were, into a new stream of ineffable complacency and delight. Thus, as the eternal Father looked down from heaven upon the Son of his eternal love with ineffable delight and complacency when baptized in Jordan, as thus fulfilling all righteousness, (Matthew 3:15,) and showing forth in type and figure his future baptism of suffering and blood, and gave audible expression to that delight by a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matthew 3:17,) so as Jesus hung upon the cross, consumed in the flames of his own self-sacrificing obedience and love, it was an offering of sweet savor to his heavenly Father; not that the Father took delight in the sorrows and sufferings of his co-equal, co-eternal Son, viewed in themselves, but as doing his will and thus glorifying him. How solemn are the words when Jesus consecrated himself as the High Priest, in the opening of his intercessory prayer, and what a holy and sacred light do they cast on those transactions between the Father and the Son, to which we

have called our readers' attention! "Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son that your Son also may glorify you." (John 17:1.) The burnt sacrifice, therefore, represents rather what Jesus on the cross was to his heavenly Father than what he was for and unto man. The cross of our blessed and suffering Lord has thus, as it were, two aspects, one turned towards God, the other turned towards man. "I do always those things that please him;" (John 8:29;) "Father, glorify your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;" (John 12:28;) "Put up your sword into the sheath—the cup which my Father gives me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11.) These passages give us as it were a glance into those deep and mysterious yet blessed transactions between the Father and the Son, wherein and whereby the Son glorified the Father by becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," (Php 2:3,) and the Father glorified the Son by first accepting his obedience on behalf of the Church, and then as a declaration of his divine Sonship, (Romans 1:4,) and that he might be a partaker of his throne, (Revelation 3:21,) raising him from the dead, and highly exalting him to his own right hand and giving him a name which is above every name. (Php 2:9.) Thus the burnt sacrifice represented two things—1, the offering of Jesus for sin in the flames of divine wrath; 2, the offering of his obedient body and soul in the flames of self-sacrificing devotedness to the will of the Father. This latter aspect of the cross is, we think, not sufficiently borne in mind by the people of God. We naturally view the sacrifice of Jesus, the atoning blood and finished work of the Son of God on the cross, more as regards our own personal, individual salvation than as it regards the honor and glory of God. But there is in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ something far deeper and higher than the mere salvation of the Church from the ruins of the fall. Though in most complete and blessed harmony with every divine perfection of Jehovah, though in it are treasured up, not only the exceeding riches of his grace, but infinite depths of manifold wisdom, (Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 3:10,) yet the salvation of the Church was in the mind of God but secondary to the manifestation of his own glory. That must ever be the supreme and ultimate end of all his counsels and purposes, of all his ways and works. "Glory to God in the highest," was the first note in the angelic song, and preceded "on earth peace, good will toward men;" (Luke 2:14;) "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord;" (Numbers 14:21;) "To the praise of the glory of his grace;" (Ephesians 1:6;) "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory. Amen." (Romans 11:36.) Thus speaks the Holy Spirit in the word of truth.

Sin broke in upon the original glory of God, as manifested in the creation of man in his own image, after his likeness. "Behold, it was very good," (Genesis 1:31,) was God's own testimony to his glory in creation. But the entrance of sin marred and defaced it in marring and defacing the image of God in man. Thus, by the entrance of sin the justice of God was outraged, his work defaced, his command trampled under foot, his holiness insulted, and Paradise, his own garden, wherein dwelt peace and happiness, purity and innocence, polluted by the poison of the serpent. When, therefore, the Son of God undertook, in the solemn counsels of eternity, by his own obedience unto death, as the suffering Surety, to vindicate the honor of his Father, to fulfill his broken law, to glorify his justice, and at the same time, and by the same way, to manifest his mercy and reveal his grace—attributes of Jehovah hitherto undiscovered to angelic minds, (1 Peter 1:12,) the glory of God was his chief end and aim. But this could only be accomplished by the cross, for that is "the wisdom of God" as well as "the power of God;" (1 Corinthians 1:24;) and by that alone, could all the glorious perfections of Jehovah, such as his justice and his mercy, his holiness and his grace, be fully harmonized. (Psalms 85:10-11; Romans 3:26.)

When, then, the suffering Son of God "offered himself without spot to God," in the flames of the intensest love and devotedness to the will of his heavenly Father, seeking his glory, not his own, in the moment of, and through his own deepest and lowest humiliation, even when burning in the flames of his anger against sin, and crying out under the hidings of his countenance—then it was that the eyes of the Father rested with ineffable complacency and delight on the Son of his love. What eye but the Father's could read his heart, melting in the flames of wrath like wax, and yet melted into the intensest devotedness and love? (Psalms 22:14.) Who else could mark his perfect and unswerving obedience to the Father's will in drinking the cup put into his hand to the last and lowest dregs? Whose but the Father's all-searching eye could read the zeal for his honor and glory which even then, in the flames of self-devoting love, was eating him up? (Psalms 69:9.) As the blessed Lord hung upon the cross, what angelic, still less what human eye marked the breadths, and lengths, and depths and heights of that love which passes knowledge? (Ephesians 3:18-19.) Who could view this amazing scene of sorrow and of obedience even unto death, so as to read fully the very depths of the heart of Christ, but the all-seeing God? Where were the disciples? Fled. Where his Virgin mother? Weeping and lamenting at the foot of the cross, a sword piercing through her own soul also. (Luke 2:35; John 19:25.) Where the angels? Wondering in silent awe, as they bent down to see the solemn mystery. Where his foes? Triumphing in mockery and scorn, for their short-lived hour and of the power of darkness was come. Where was the very sun? Hiding his face, as if shocked to see his Maker die. Where the solid earth? Rocking to its very base, as if unable to bear the weight of the suffering Son of God. Where the rocks; cleaving to their center, as if they could no longer hold the bodies of the saints committed to their charge, but must let them forth to witness the death of their Lord. What eye, then, but the eye of the Father, saw the suffering Son of God in all the depths and fullness of his bleeding, dying love, in all the intensity of his self-sacrifice devotedness, and in the most resigned filial submission unto, as well as perfect execution of his sovereign will?

3. But we must now mention another distinctive feature in the burnt sacrifice, in which, doubtless, is typically couched some gracious instruction for the Church of God—"And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into its pieces." (Leviticus 1:6.) The flaying of the burnt offering, or removing the outer skin, would necessarily lay bare the inner flesh with all the muscles and joints of the body, and thus bring to view two things—1, the exquisite cleanness of the inner flesh; and, 2, the nature and strength of its moving parts; for we know how clean is the flesh in a flayed animal as the skin is stripped off, and how plain are the muscles and joints when divested of their outward covering. Thus the flaying of the burnt sacrifice seems typically to represent—1, the purity of the inner flesh of Jesus, for his sacred humanity was inwardly as well as outwardly, in soul as well as in body, "a holy thing;" (Luke 1:35;) and, 2, the purity and strength of all his motives. Could we bear to be stripped of our skins—our external life, our outward and visible profession of godliness? Should we be found clean were all this flayed away? The secret joints and muscles of our nature, the hidden motives of many of our words and actions could not bear to have the skin of profession stripped off them; but the holy flesh of Jesus, and all the joints and muscles of his pure humanity, the secret motives of all his words and works, could bear to be looked at and into by the all-seeing eye of God, and viewed with ineffable complacency in all their purity and all their strength.

Among the sons of men, some, like Joseph and Daniel, may seem almost without spot or blemish; but what are they within? What would they be were they flayed, were all the skin of their profession

thoroughly stripped off? But God desires truth in the inward parts; (Psalms 51:6;) for he, as well as his word, "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened* unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13.) But the pure heart of Jesus could bear this all-seeing scrutiny. Beneath his holy external life and walk lay concealed from man the spotless purity of his holy soul, whereby he was internally as well as externally a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

* Literally, "necked," that is, the neck and throat exposed to view, as was the case with the sacrifices when they were flayed and laid upon the altar with their neck cut through and laid open.

4. The cutting of the burnt sacrifice into pieces was typical of the sufferings of Jesus in the garden and on the cross. Thus, "the sweet incense" which the high priest, on the solemn day of atonement, carried within the veil, for a similar reason, was "beaten small," (Leviticus 16:12,) that it might indicate the broken heart, the bruised soul of Jesus. As, then, the cut pieces of the burnt sacrifice lay on the altar, so the bruised body and soul of the Lamb of God lay on the cross; and as, when those pieces were burnt on the brazen altar, a smoke ascended from them heavenwards, so, when Jesus gave himself for us, "an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor," (Ephesians 5:2,) the smoke of his meritorious obedience and death rose up with acceptance before the face of his heavenly Father.

5. Another mark we must briefly dwell upon—"The inwards and legs" of the burnt sacrifice were to be "washed in water." Water, we know, was typical of the purifying, sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. Our blessed Lord did not need the purifying operations of the Holy Spirit, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled;" (Hebrews 7:26;) but as his sacred humanity was formed under the overshadowing influences and operations of the Holy Spirit, so was it anointed by him with all his gifts and graces for his mediatorial work; (Isaiah 41:1-3; Isaiah 42:1;) and in an especial way sanctified for his atoning sacrifice. Thus we seem to have a typical representation of the power and grace of the Holy Spirit as connected with the sacrifice of Jesus. Upon his sacred humanity the Holy Spirit rested in all the fullness of his gifts and graces. We therefore read of Jesus that he "through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God." (Hebrews 9:14.) As in the burnt sacrifice the inward parts and legs were washed with water, and thus were typically sanctified, so the heart of Jesus, as well as the actions of Jesus, were as if consecrated by the unction of the Holy Spirit, and thus presented holy and acceptable to God upon the altar of the cross. But here our limits admonish us to pause. We intended to consider in our present paper the sin offering and the trespass offering, and the sacrifice of the bullock and the goat on the great day of atonement; but these and other points tending to throw light upon the sacrifice of our great High Priest we must now defer to a future opportunity.

01A.04. Chapter 4

Chapter IV. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ divides itself into two distinct branches, corresponding to those two mighty works of grace and love of which one was finished by him upon earth, and the other is now being carried on by him in heaven. These two distinct works were, 1, to offer sacrifice for sin; 2, to make intercession for his people. We have termed them distinct works, rather with a view to help our conceptions than with any intention really to separate them; for, in point of fact, they are most closely and intimately connected with each other and in a measure blended together, for when our blessed Lord offered himself without spot to God he made intercession by his blood, and now that he is in heaven the merits of that blood are still pleading before the throne. Thus we find the prophet connecting together the bearing of sin with intercession for sinners, in those striking words, "He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors," (Isaiah 53:17,)—his intercession for transgressors being made at the time and by the very means of his bearing their sin. "Father, forgive them," was his interceding breath at the very time when he was bearing sin in his own body on the tree. (Luke 23:34.)

So, in type and figure, on the great day of atonement, the high priest took of the blood of the sin offering within the veil and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat, thus connecting together the sacrifice at the altar without, with the intercession in the most holy place within. When we approach that part of our subject in which we shall have to contemplate our gracious Lord as even now at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us, (Romans 8:34,) we shall endeavor, with God’s help and blessing, to enter more fully into the connection between his bearing sin on the cross and his interceding in heaven; but our chief object at present is to open up the mystery of dying love and atoning blood which was consummated in the garden and on the cross. As the Levitical sacrifices throw much light on the one offering whereby Jesus perfected forever them that are sanctified, we have already made much use of them, and if our limits admitted should be glad to enter still more largely into their nature and spiritual interpretation; but, as our space is necessarily restricted, we think it best to confine ourselves to two offerings prescribed under the law—the burnt offering and the sin offering. These were not only the two most important sacrifices of the Levitical dispensation, and are therefore specially named, Psalms 40:6, "Burnt offering and sin offering have you not required," but have an especial claim upon our attention as representing our suffering High Priest under two distinct aspects, yet each full of grace and glory. The burnt offering, as we have already pointed out, represents him chiefly as he was to God; the sin offering as he is to man. In both he was represented as a sin-bearer, for in both of these sacrifices a transference was made of sin by the priest laying his hand on the head of the victim; (Leviticus 1:4; Leviticus 4:4;) in both the blood of the victim was shed and sprinkled; (Leviticus 1:5; Leviticus 4:4-6;) in both atonement was made for sin; (Leviticus 1:4; Leviticus 4:20;) and both were burnt either wholly or in part upon the altar. (Leviticus 1:9; Leviticus 4:9-10.) Those were their points of union sufficiently close to show that they corresponded in representing the sacrifice offered by our great high Priest on the cross. But there were distinctive differences between them of a character sufficiently marked to show that they represented this sacrifice under different aspects. Thus the

burnt offering was voluntary, the sin offering was compulsory; the burnt offering was flayed, cut into pieces, and the inwards and legs washed in water; but not one of these three things was required in the sin offering; the blood of the burnt offering was merely sprinkled round about upon the altar, (Leviticus 1:11,) but the blood of the sin offering was put upon the horns of the altar, sprinkled seven times before the Lord before the veil of the sanctuary, and poured out at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering; (Leviticus 4:6-7;) the whole of the burnt offering was burnt upon the altar, (Leviticus 1:13,) but the fat only of the sin offering, that is the internal fat which covers the kidneys, was burnt on the altar; for the skin and flesh, even the whole of the bullock, was to be carried forth without the camp, into a clean place, and there burnt on the wood with fire. (Leviticus 4:11-12.) We see, therefore, that though in some points the burnt offering and the sin offering resembled each other, yet that in others they widely differed; and as we may be sure that the Holy Spirit intended to convey instruction by these differences, we may, with his help and blessing, attempt now to enter on their mystical and spiritual meaning.

1. The burnt offering was wholly voluntary. This was one of its most distinctive features. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish—he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord." (Leviticus 1:2-3.) But the sin offering was compulsory. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them; if the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people, then let him bring for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering." (Leviticus 4:2-3.) When the sin was discovered, no choice was given whether atonement should be made for it, but it was imperatively required that the sin offering should be made. It is called indeed a sin of ignorance, but much more was intended, both by that expression and by the sin offering made for it, than at first sight might appear. We shall therefore attempt to explain by-and-by what was intended by "sins of ignorance;" but at present our object is to show the distinction between the burnt offering and the sin offering, in that the former was voluntary and the latter compulsory. In one sense the sacrifice of the blessed Lord was voluntary, in another compulsory; and thus the two kinds of offering represent these two distinct features of the one propitiation for sin which he offered upon the cross. The word of truth brings before us, very vividly and clearly, in various passages, both these aspects of our suffering High Priest. Thus we read that Jesus "loved the church and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25.) "Who loved me," says the Apostle, "and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20.) "As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:15; John 10:17-18.) In these passages our blessed Lord is represented as freely loving and freely giving himself for his Church and people, as freely and voluntarily laying down his life for his sheep, and freely taking it again. No compulsion is here. As Judah freely offered himself to his father Jacob, to become surety for Benjamin, (Genesis 43:9,) so Jesus freely offered himself to his heavenly Father, to become Surety for his brethren. He could therefore say, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your wills O my God; yes, your law is within my heart." (Psalms 40:7-8.) In this voluntary offering of himself to

do the Father’s will, in these promptings of love to give himself for the Church, in these actings of pure mercy to come forth from the Father’s bosom to take the sinner’s place, and, as the suffering Surety of his people, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is signally displayed. Where is love equal to his love? Where was sorrow equal to his sorrow? These promptings and actings of pure, free, and voluntary love, as apprehended by a living faith, and realized in sweet experience, make the Lord Jesus Christ unspeakably precious to believing hearts. "You know," says the Apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9.) "We love him," says holy John, "because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19.) This pure, unmerited love of Jesus, to become an atoning sacrifice for our sins, as shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, constrains redeemed and regenerated sinners to love him, and to live to his praise, as one testified, to whom it was given not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake, "For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead—and that he died for all, that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15.) In our contemplations, therefore, of Jesus as the High Priest, we must fix our eye steadily on the free and voluntary character of his undertaking, when, in the councils of the eternal covenant, he graciously undertook to become the Father’s servant; and though he was a Son, an eternal, a true, and real Son, to learn obedience by the things that he would suffer. This phase of our blessed Redeemer’s character is beautifully typified by the sacrifice of the burnt offering.

But, when in the councils of eternity, ratified by the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, he had undertaken to become Surety, then what was before purely free and voluntary became in a sense compulsory. There is a sense, a gracious sense, in which the word compulsion may even be used of God himself. For instance, when he had sworn by himself to bless Abraham, (Genesis 22:16-17,) he was bound, so to speak, by his own oath to perform what he had promised; and therefore the Apostle tells us it was to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. Moses, therefore, when he pleaded with the Lord on behalf of the people who had worshiped the golden calf, urged this oath as his most prevailing plea—"Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." (Exodus 32:13.)

As, then, when God had bound himself by oath to bless Abraham, he was, so to speak, tied by his own oath; so, when our blessed Lord had once bound himself by covenant engagements to stand in his people’s place and stead, he was no longer free. He had become like the Hebrew servant, who, though free to go out in the seventh year, yet if he said, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free;" and if, in pursuance of this free determination, his master had bored his ear to the door-post, was then free no longer. So, when our blessed Lord said to his heavenly Father, "My ears have you opened," (margin, "dug," in especial reference to this voluntary servitude of the Hebrew bondman), he was no longer free. He was now God’s "servant, whom he upheld, his elect in whom his soul delighted;" (Isaiah 42:1;) his servant in whom he would be glorified, given as a light to the Gentiles, that he might be his salvation unto the ends of the earth. (Isaiah 49:3; Isaiah 49:6.) Not that he wished to be free, not that he repented of his eternal engagements; on the contrary, he could say, in the days of his flesh, "I have a baptism to be

baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." (Luke 12:50.) But we find, from various passages, which give us, as it were, a view into the depths of his suffering experience, that there were shrinkings in his holy soul from the cup which he had undertaken to drink. Thus, even before the hour of Gethsemane's suffering, as if in anticipation it even then cast its gloomy shade over him, he said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour;" (John 12:27.) "Father, save me from this hour;" there is the shrinking of the victim. "But for this cause came I unto this hour;" there is the holy resignation to the Father's will. And when he came into that overwhelming trouble of soul, of which he says, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me;" (Psalms 69:2;) when in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, he was "in an agony, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground;" (Luke 22:44;) when before the chief priests and elders, and all the council, "he held his peace," (Matthew 26:63,) and in the presence of Pontius Pilate "answered him not a word," (Matthew 27:14,) fulfilling thereby the prophetic declaration, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth;" (Isaiah 53:7;) and more especially on the cross, when, as the bitterest ingredient in his cup of suffering, his Father hid his face from him—in all these circumstances of sorrow, shame, and ignominy, we see not only what the blessed Lord suffered as bearing the weight of sin, but why his holy soul shrank in the prospect of bearing the load. That he voluntarily undertook to suffer did not make the sufferings less. No, the weight of the suffering enhanced the freeness of his grace. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," was but the utterance of the agony of his holy soul in the first tasting of the Father's wrath, when, bowed down with grief and sorrow, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him who was able to save him from death. (Hebrews 6:7.) But he had undertaken, and must go through. The word had gone forth, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." (Psalms 118:27.) The sin offering was now to be sacrificed. As the burnt offering, Jesus had voluntarily yielded himself up to be wholly consumed in the flames of divine wrath, yet of self-sacrificing love. But now he stands as a sin offering by the altar; for God "made him to be sin for us who knew no sin;" (2 Corinthians 5:21;) and as the literal victim was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, that its struggles might be restrained while its blood was being shed, so was its Antitype, the holy Lamb of God, spiritually bound to the horns of the altar, not only by the cords of his own loving heart, not only by the firm cords of the fixed, immutable will of his heavenly Father, but by the no less strong cords also of his own eternal covenant engagements. He had promised, and must perform. Thus, though free, he was bound. This union of perfect freedom and self-imposed bondage we see not only in the case of the Hebrew servant which we have already adduced—but as a matter of continual experience in human affairs. Thus I may be asked to become surety for a person. I am free to accept the request—or free to decline it. But if I accept it, and become his surety, I am free no longer, but am bound by my engagement, and the still stronger ties of the law. Or if a friend needs my help, I am free to give it, or to withhold it. But if I once promise to grant his petition, I am no longer a free agent, but am bound to perform my promise. "Pay that which you have vowed. Better is it that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay." (Ecclesiastes 5:5.) Jesus, therefore, was bound by his own engagements to finish the work which the Father had given him to do. Justice arrested him, as standing in the sinner's place. Being "made under the law," (Galatians 4:4,) the curse of the law fell upon him, for he was made a curse for us; (Galatians 3:131;) and having become Surety for his brethren, as they could not pay the weighty debt, he

groaned (Proverbs 11:15) under it, that he might discharge it to the utmost fraction.

2. And this leads us to another feature of the sin offering, in which this substitution of Christ in the sinner's place is more clearly and distinctly typified. Before he slaughtered the victim, the sacrificing priest laid his hand on its head. "If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the Lord a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. He is to present the bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the Lord." (Leviticus 4:3-4.) This act represented the transference of sin from the transgressor to the victim. It identified, as it were, the one with the other. It typified the substitution of the victim for the transgressor, and declared by a visible sign that it bore his sins and endured their penalty, which was suffering and death. Watts has well expressed the feelings of a believing heart, as realizing this substitution, when he writes, "My faith would lay her hand On that dear head of yours;

While, like a penitent, I stand, And there confess my sin." But as this transference of sin was more fully and completely brought out in the case of the scapegoat, we shall direct our readers' attention to that solemn transaction on the great day of atonement. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness." (Leviticus 16:21.) How striking is the figure whereby Aaron is represented as laying "both his hands," as if they were filled with the sins of Israel, upon the head of the live goat, and confessing "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat." How we see by faith all the iniquities of the children of God and all their transgressions with all their sad slips and falls, all their base backslidings, and all the horrid crimes which have lain with such guilt and weight upon their bleeding consciences, put upon the sacred head of Jesus; "made to meet," as the prophet speaks, (Isaiah 53:6, margin,) like a mighty flood rushing upon him from a thousand confluent streams. Jesus was, from his first entrance into this evil world, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. As the Lamb of God, he was bearing the sin of the world, (John 1:29, margin,) at the very time when John the Baptist bore testimony of him in the wilderness. When yet going about doing good to the bodies and souls of men during the exercise of his public ministry, he was by imputation taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses. (Matthew 8:17.) But it was in the garden and on the cross that the Lamb of God chiefly bore the weight of imputed sin. As Berridge says, "The garden scene begins his woes"—not that they had not begun before, but hitherto he had but tasted the bitter cup which there he drank to the very dregs. This commencement of the hour of suffering made him say in the opening of his intercessory prayer, when, as we have before shown, he entered more fully on his priestly office—"Father, the hour has come." (John 17:1.) What hour was this but the hour of agonizing suffering, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and yet the hour for which he came into the world; (John 12:27;) the hour of ungodly men and of the power of darkness; (Luke 22:53;) the hour when the Father cried aloud, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow, says the Lord Almighty." (Zechariah 13:7.) Would we, then, see, feel, and realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is not by viewing the lightnings and hearing the thunders of Sinai's fiery top, but in seeing the agony and bloody sweat, and hearing the groans and cries of the suffering Son of God, as made sin for us, in the garden and upon the cross. To look upon him

whom we have pierced will fill heart and eyes with godly sorrow for sin, and a holy mourning for and over a martyred, injured Lord. (Zechariah 13:10.) To see, by the eye of faith, as revealed to the soul by the power of God, the darling Son of God bound, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, mocked, and then, as the climax of cruel scorn and infernal cruelty, crucified between two thieves—this believing sight, this fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, will melt the hardest heart into contrition and repentance. But when we see, by the eye of faith, that this was the smallest part of his sufferings, that there were depths of soul trouble and of intolerable distress and agony from the hand of God as a consuming fire, as of inflexible justice and righteous indignation against sin wherever and in whomever found, and that our blessed Lord had to endure the wrath of God until he was poured out like water, and his soft, tender heart in the flames of indignation became like wax, and melted within him, (Psalms 22:14,)—then we can in some measure conceive what he undertook in becoming a sin offering. For as all the sins of his people were put upon him, the wrath of God due to them fell upon him! As when Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack, the penalty of the transgression fell upon the guilty one, who might have said, "Then I restored that which I took not away," so, when the sins of the elect were found on the head of Christ, really innocent—though by imputation guilty, justice viewed him and treated him as the guilty criminal. Separation from God, under a sense of his terrible displeasure, and that on account of sin, that abominable thing which his holy soul hates—is not this hell? This, then, was the hell experienced by the suffering Redeemer when the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. (Isaiah 53:6.) What heart can conceive or tongue express what must have been the feelings of the Redeemer's soul when he, the beloved Son of God, when he who had lain in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, he whose whole joy was in their mutual love and fellowship, whose ineffable bliss it was to be ever "by him as one brought up with him, and to be daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," when he, the Father's only begotten Son, was as if put away from his bosom as, by imputation, a sinner. In proportion to his love to the Father were his distress and agony at his displeasure; in proportion to his intense holiness was his grief at being treated as a transgressor. The prophet, speaking to the afflicted Church of God, says, "For the Lord has called you back from your grief—as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband." (Isaiah 54:6.) What so grievous to the spirit of a loving wife, one who had been married in all the warmth and affection of youth, as to be forsaken of her husband, and that all her advances to reconciliation should be refused? But what is her grief of spirit, what are all her deep wounds of suffering love compared to the grief of spirit felt by the Son of God when his Father, his own Father, hid his face from him? This brought into his bosom the pangs of hell; for let us ever bear in mind that there was a solemn and dreadful reality in the wrath of God as felt in the heart of Jesus. Was not the bodily suffering of the cross real? Did not the nails really pierce the tender hands and feet, while every nerve of the agonized body was wrought up to the most exquisite and excruciating height of pain? No less real, and far more severe, were the agonies of his soul, for the wrath of God in the Redeemer's heart was as real as the nails that pierced his hands and feet!

What is bodily pain compared with mental anguish? Under the heaviest bodily pain martyrs have rejoiced in the flames; but a wounded spirit who can bear? Of all trouble—soul-trouble is the heaviest; and of all soul-trouble, what is to be compared with a sense of God's wrath drinking up the very spirit, and burning in the conscience to the lowest hell? Yet the depths of this trouble-depths in which he himself as man could not have stood, but from the sustaining energy of his own indwelling Deity and the gracious support of the eternal Spirit, Jesus sustained when he

bore our sins in his own body on the tree. We have still several other points of the sin offering to consider, but as these contain in them much spiritual instruction, we shall defer their consideration to our next chapter, when we hope to close our meditations on the Priesthood of Jesus.

01A.05. Chapter 5

Chapter V. In dwelling so much upon the typical character of the two principal sacrifices of the Levitical dispensation, the burnt offering and the sin offering, our object has been not so much to open up their spiritual meaning in all its minute details, as to seize those prominent features in them which cast a light upon that one great and all-sufficient sacrifice, whereby, by the offering of himself without spot to God, Jesus perfected forever those who are sanctified. Pursuing, then, this intention, we have still to consider two or three remaining features of the sin offering, before we proceed to direct the thoughts of our readers to that part of his priestly office which Jesus, as ascended on high, now executes at the right hand of the Father.

3. The sin offering, it will be borne in mind, was expressly for sins of ignorance. (Leviticus 4:2.) To understand why an atonement was provided for sins of this nature, we must bear in mind the distinction made both in the Old Testament and the New between sins pardonable and unpardonable. There were sins under the Old Testament dispensation for which no atonement was provided, such as blasphemy, (Leviticus 24:15-16,) witchcraft, (Exodus 22:18,) willful murder. (Exodus 21:14.) These were "presumptuous sins," for which no sacrifice was provided. So, under the New Testament dispensation, there is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which John calls "the sin unto death," (1 John 5:16,) and which the Lord himself declares is absolutely unpardonable. (Matthew 12:32.) By "sins of ignorance," then, we understand not merely sins of inadvertence, such, for instance, as accidentally eating unclean meats, but, to use the language of the Holy Spirit in express reference to this very sacrifice, those sins "against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done," (Leviticus 4:2,) into which a man might fall without being guilty of willful presumption. To illustrate the distinction between pardonable and unpardonable sin, compare the case of Paul with that of the blaspheming scribes and pharisees. (Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:22.) Speaking of himself and of his sin in the persecution of the saints, Paul says, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious—but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Timothy 1:13.) He sinned with his eyes shut; but they with their eyes open. It was in him headlong zeal and blind fury; in them enlightened, deliberate malice, for they had both seen the Lord’s miracles and heard his discourses, and yet they ascribed his wondrous works of mercy and love, and his words full of grace and truth, to his possessing "an unclean spirit." There was, therefore, an atonement for Paul’s sin as a sin of ignorance, but none for theirs, as being blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. (Mark 3:30.) Paul, it is true, persecuted Jesus in his members; (Acts 9:4;) but he did not tread the Son of God under foot, nor did he count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, nor did he do despite unto the Spirit of grace. (Hebrews 10:29.) But as the wide range which we have given to the "sins of ignorance," for which the sin offering was provided, may not appear, at first sight, sufficiently grounded on scriptural truth, we shall offer several reasons to substantiate our opinion.

It is evident that our blessed Lord offered a real and actual sacrifice to put away the sins of his people; for this is the express testimony of the Holy Spirit—"Now once in the end of the world has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26.) "But this man, after he

had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12.) "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" (1 Peter 2:24;) and thus "washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Revelation 1:5.) As, then, the sacrifices under the law were "examples and shadows of heavenly things," (Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 10:1,) we may well ask—What were the precise offerings under the Old Testament which were meant to be the standing types of that one great sacrifice which Jesus offered when he, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God? (Hebrews 9:14.) The burnt offering certainly was one, and the sin offering another. The typical character of the former we have already explained, and have shown that it represented the sacrifice of our great High Priest in its peculiar aspect to God. But we need a type also to show him as bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, as bleeding and dying in our room and stead, as putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and thus representing him in his peculiar aspect to man. Now where shall we find this type but in the sin offering? If we exclude the sin offering from being a typical representation of the sacrifice offered by our blessed Lord for all manner of sin, as being appointed only for sins of ignorance, where shall we find another sacrifice under the law to represent it? The "meat offering" was an unbloody offering, and therefore not a type of atoning blood at all; and the "peace offering," as being eaten by the worshiper, represented the effects of the sacrifice of Jesus in the sweet experience of feeding on his flesh by faith, and so finding peace, rather than was a type of the sacrifice itself. The "trespass offering" (Leviticus 5:1-19, Leviticus 6:1-30;) is so similar to the sin offering that, as a type, it may be considered almost identical, and therefore does not come under present consideration. That this view of the typical nature of the sin offering is not mere conjecture or a plausible guess, but is grounded on sound Scripture testimony, is evident from two passages in the New Testament—"For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" (2 Corinthians 5:21;) and again, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans 8:3.) In both these passages express reference is made to the sin offering, for in both the same term is used as in the Hebrew, with this difference, that in the first the exact Hebrew word is used in a translated form, in the second the Greek version of it,* as continually found in the Septuagint.

* The Hebrew word (Leviticus 4:1-35, &c.) translated "sin offering," is literally, "sin," and is so rendered, Deuteronomy 9:21, Proverbs 10:16; Proverbs 10:21. In the Septuagint, or ancient Greek translation, as we have before pointed out, the Hebrew word "sin offering," or "sin," is rendered, "for sin," which is the exact expression used by the Apostle, Romans 8:3, which may be also translated, as in the margin, by "a sacrifice for sin," or, "on account of sin." But there is another still stronger argument to show that the sin offering was the peculiar type and representation of the sacrifice of Christ, which he offered upon the cross when he once "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18.) It was the offering made on the great day of atonement. On that solemn day Aaron was to offer for himself and his house a bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He was also to take two goats for the people, one for a sin offering, on which the Lord’s lot fell, and the other for a scape goat. Here we have evidently the sin offering as the chief typical sacrifice, for it was the blood of the bullock and of the goat which was to be taken within the veil, and sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat.

4. But this leads us to another feature of the sin offering, to which we shall briefly refer before we enter upon the typical meaning of the taking of the blood within the veil, as was done by the high priest on the solemn day of atonement. The blood of the burnt offering was merely sprinkled round about upon the altar; (Leviticus 1:11;) but the blood of the sin offering, in ordinary cases, that is, when not taken within the veil, was partly sprinkled seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary, and partly put upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense, and all the rest poured out at the foot of the altar of the burnt offering, that is, the brazen altar. (Leviticus 4:6-7.) The meaning of the sprinkling of the blood we shall presently explain; the point to which we would direct present attention is the pouring out of the blood at the foot of the brazen altar. This represents what the prophet calls "the pouring out of his soul unto death," when our suffering High Priest laid down his life for the sheep. (Isaiah 53:12; John 10:11.) The life is in the blood. (Genesis 9:4.) There was, therefore, a necessity that the blessed Redeemer should pour out his life with his blood. Two things were indispensable to a sacrifice offered as an atonement for sin—1, that the victim should die; 2, that the victim should bleed, and thus die a bloody death. If our blessed Lord, therefore, had died without blood shedding, for instance, had he been stoned to death like Stephen, there would have been no atonement for sin by such a death, for "it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul," (Leviticus 17:11,) and "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22.) And again, had he shed his blood without dying, as at his circumcision; or had he been scourged and then released, as Pilate suggested, (Luke 23:22,) in that case there would have been also no redemption, for death being the penalty of disobedience, (Genesis 2:1.7,) there could have been no ransom price but by obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. (Php 2:8.) Thus that wondrous scheme of eternal wisdom, that our divine Redeemer should die upon the cross, secured the two indispensable requisites to an atonement for sin—blood-shedding, and death. And yet no bone was broken, (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalms 34:20; John 19:36,) which would have been derogatory to the pure humanity, as well as unbecoming his resurrection from the dead on the third day.

There was something also very significant in the pouring out of the blood at the bottom of the brazen altar. That altar was typical of Christ, and the fire ever burning upon it of the ever-burning anger of God against sin. At the foot, then, of this altar, was the blood of the sin offering fully and freely poured out; for here full reconciliation was effected, here thorough atonement made, here the debt wholly paid. Thus, as the worshiper stood at the brazen altar, himself a guilty sinner, and yet with his hand on the head of the victim, his eyes now fixed upon the fat rising as with a sweet savor unto heaven, and now on the atoning blood partly sprinkled on the horns of the altar, and the rest poured out at its foot, he might, as blessed with a living faith in the Son of God, at the same time tremble and rejoice—tremble at the majesty and holiness of God as a consuming fire, and yet rejoice at the putting away of all his sins by the blood of the Lamb.

5. One point more in the sin offering demands a few moments' attention, before we proceed to the special application of the blood as carried within the veil on the great day of atonement. After the fat had been burnt on the brazen altar (Leviticus 4:9-10)—significant emblem of the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus as a sweet-smelling savor, the skin, head, legs, inwards, etc., of the bullock were to be carried outside the camp, into a clean place, and there burnt on the wood with fire. (Leviticus 4:11-12.) This carrying forth of the body of the sin offering was significant of two things—1. That Jesus suffered outside the camp, as the Apostle speaks—"For the bodies of those

beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate." (Hebrews 13:11-12.) He was to be despised and rejected of Israel, and therefore was not crucified within the walls of Jerusalem, but "near to the city," (John 19:20,) or, as Paul testifies, "outside the gate." Jerusalem was considered "the holy city," (Matthew 27:53,) as through the temple bearing the same sacred relation to God as the camp of Israel of old through the tabernacle. (Deuteronomy 23:14.) Jesus, therefore, as a condemned criminal, was cast out of the city as unclean, as afterwards they cast Stephen out of the city before they stoned him, (Acts 7:58,) no execution being permitted within the city, as defiling its holiness.

6. But the carrying of the sin offering outside the camp, there to be burnt in a clean place, has a reference also to the spiritual position of those that believe in the crucified Son of God. Their place in worship is where his place was in suffering—clean, though outside the camp. Thus the Apostle says, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him outside the camp, bearing his reproach." (Hebrews 13:13.) Jesus was despised, hated, and cast out by the professing Church of his day. It was not the mass of the people, though their fickle minds were wrought upon to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" who a day or two before had cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" but it was the chief priests and scribes and pharisees, who conspired to put him to death. And as the disciple is not above his master, we must drink in our appointed measure of the same cup. The Holy One of Israel was cast out of the professing Church, crucified outside the gate as a malefactor whose very death within the walls would pollute the holy city. Where is our place, then, as believers in the crucified Son of God, but where he suffered, bled, and died? In the camp are the scribes and pharisees, the chief priests and the elders, and all who cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we;" holding the form, but denying the power; wrapped up in the letter, but destitute of the Spirit; satisfied with a name to live while dead in sin; professing the gospel, but the veil of ignorance and unbelief upon the heart. Must we not leave all such, come out from among them, and be separate; and go forth unto Jesus outside the camp, bearing his reproach? But before we pass on to look at the next point which meets our view, that is, the sprinkling of the blood of the sin offering on and before the mercy seat, we wish to impress one point deeply on our own and on our readers' hearts—the reality and the greatness of the sacrifice which Jesus offered when he died the just for the unjust, and by laying down his life upon the cross, offered himself without spot to God. And why do we wish to view with believing eyes, and to realize in our hearts the greatness of this sacrifice, with all the grace, mercy, and love which shine forth in and through it, but because all salvation is wrapped in it? By the blood-shedding and death of the Son of God, all our horrible filth and defilement, however black, monstrous, aggravated, and abominable, however deep and dreadful, was thoroughly and forever put away, cast behind God's back, blotted out as a cloud, yes, a thick cloud, and drowned in the depths of the sea. In the pierced hands, and feet, and side of Immanuel a fountain was opened for all sin and uncleanness; (Zechariah 13:1;) and the iniquity of the land removed in one day. (Zechariah 3:9.) At the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ justice and mercy met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; yes, mercy rejoiced over judgment, and where sin abounded there grace did much more abound. (Psalms 85:10; James 2:13; Romans 5:20.) By the blood-shedding and death of our great High Priest, justice, with all its inflexible requisitions, was thoroughly satisfied; the law, with all its holy, unbending demands, fully magnified; every perfection of God eternally glorified; every apparently barring attribute entirely harmonized; so that Jehovah, in all the blaze of ineffable purity, majesty, power, and holiness, can

now be just, infinitely just, and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. (Romans 3:26.)

Here, then, at the foot of the cross, is pardon and peace for guilty criminals; here is thorough justification for the self-condemned and self-abhorred; here is salvation, complete and everlasting, for all the redeemed family of God; here is a fountain, ever open, full, and free; here is a robe, in which the spouse of Jesus stands without blemish and without spot before the throne of God; here mercy is magnified forever; here dying love displays itself in all its breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and here grace, all-glorious, all-triumphant grace, reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. To know, to realize, to experience, and to enjoy these heavenly mysteries of the cross of Christ in sweet manifestation and divine revelation, by the work and witness, teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, is the sum and substance of all vital godliness. A persuasion of this made Paul "determined to know nothing among" the saints of God, "except Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" (1 Corinthians 2:2;) this was the gospel which he preached, "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect;" as well knowing that "the preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness, but unto those which are saved the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:17-18.) For a knowledge of Christ and him crucified he had suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but rubbish, that he might "win and be found in him;" yes, the whole desire of his soul was to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Happy are those who, taught by the same Spirit, have the same faith, and hope, and love, and are pressing toward the same mark, "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Php 3:8-10; Php 3:14.)

II. But we now approach that part of our subject where we have to view our great High Priest as executing his priestly office in the courts above. We have several times called the attention of our readers to this point, that our gracious Lord is still the great High Priest over the house of God. As the Apostle speaks, "Here is the main point: Our High Priest sat down in the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. There he ministers in the sacred tent, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands." (Hebrews 8:1-2.) To offer sacrifice was but a part of the priestly work. He was to be a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek; and therefore his office did not cease when he said with expiring breath, "It is finished," and laid down his life that he might take it again.

It is sweet to view our great High Priest offering himself without spot to God; sweet yet sorrowful to see the atoning blood flow from his pierced hands and feet and side; sweet to enjoy pardon and peace as the fruit of his sufferings and death. But we must not ever tarry at the cross or the sepulcher; for he tarried not there, but rose from the dead, ascended on high, and entered into the immediate presence of the Father, there to be a ministering High Priest at the right hand of God; for after the similitude of Melchisedek, he was "made not after the law of a carnal commandment," as was the high priest under the Levitical dispensation, "but after the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:15-16.) This is beautifully stated by the Apostle in that glorious epistle in which the High Priesthood of Jesus is, as it were, the illuminating sun, casting light and glory on every page. "Another difference is that there were many priests under the old system. When one priest died, another had to take his place. But Jesus remains a priest forever; his priesthood will never end. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save everyone who comes to God through him. He lives forever to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:23-25.) But let us now trace the connection

between the sacrifice offered by our great High Priest on earth and the present exercise of his priestly office in heaven. There is the closest and most intimate connection between those two parts of the priestly office of our divine Redeemer; and their union and harmony were beautifully shown in type and figure by the entrance of the high priest within the veil on the great day of atonement. The veil, we need not remark, separated the holy from the most holy place. Into the most holy place, sometimes called "the holy of holies," the high priest was permitted to enter but once a year. "The Lord said to Moses—Warn your brother Aaron not to enter the Most Holy Place behind the inner curtain whenever he chooses; the penalty for intrusion is death. For the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—is there, and I myself am present in the cloud over the atonement cover." (Leviticus 16:2.)

Now when the high priest entered once a year on the solemn day of atonement within the veil into the most holy place, he took in the blood of the bullock and afterwards that of the goat, which he had previously sacrificed as sin offerings, the one for himself and his house, and the other for his people, and sprinkled each upon and before the mercy seat. This was a typical representation of Jesus as the great High Priest entering the court of heaven, represented by the most holy place, with his own blood, which in a mystical and spiritual sense, he sprinkled before and upon the throne of God. And thus the Apostle speaks, "So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that great, perfect sanctuary in heaven, not made by human hands and not part of this created world. Once for all time he took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it he secured eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:11-12.)

There are several things, however, in this entrance of the high priest within the veil on the great day of atonement which demand our earnest attention.

1. Let us then first observe the priestly vestments which he wore on that day. These were all pure linen, and were called "holy garments;" and it is added, that there might be cleanness underneath as well as outside, "Therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on." (Leviticus 16:4.) These holy garments thus washed, and therefore clean flesh, typified the pure and holy humanity of our blessed Lord, with which, in all its integral perfection, he entered the immediate presence of God and sat down at his right hand, there to make intercession for us. (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25.)

2. But the high priest was directed to enter the most holy place with a cloud of incense. "He will fill an incense burner with burning coals from the altar that stands before the Lord. Then, after filling both his hands with fragrant incense, he will carry the burner and finely-ground incense behind the inner curtain. There in the Lord's presence, he will put the incense on the burning coals so that a cloud of incense will rise over the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—that rests on the Ark of the Covenant. If he follows these instructions, he will not die." (Leviticus 16:12-13.) There is much here, though veiled in type and figure, of blessed significancy. The burning coals of fire from off the brazen altar typified the burning wrath of God; "the finely-ground incense" represented the bruised body and soul of the suffering Redeemer; the "cloud of incense" rising up from the burning coals and covering the mercy seat typified the merits of the sufferings and sacrifice of the Son of God as propitiating divine wrath, and filling the court of heaven with the sweet smell of his blood and obedience when "he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling

savor." (Ephesians 5:2.)

Thus, as the typical high priest entered the most holy place in the holy garments, so Jesus entered heaven in his pure and holy humanity; as the cloud of incense lighted by the burning coals filled the most holy place and covered the mercy seat, so the merits of Jesus, rising up from his sufferings under the wrath of God and his obedience unto death, filled and ever fills the courts of heaven with the grateful odor of his finished work. And thus there is a sweet and blessed connection and harmony between the sacrifice below and the incense above.

3. But this harmonious connection of the two parts of the Lord's High Priesthood is still more clearly seen in the special directions given to the typical high priest about sprinkling the blood of the sin offering when he had taken it within the veil—"Then he must dip his finger into the blood of the bull and sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover and then seven times against the front of the Ark. Then Aaron must slaughter the goat as a sin offering for the people and bring its blood behind the inner curtain. There he will sprinkle the blood on the atonement cover and against the front of the Ark, just as he did with the bull's blood." (Leviticus 16:14-15.) The blood of the bullock, as a sin offering for himself and his house, and the blood of the goat, as a sin offering for the people, were alike to be sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat. What a striking and beautiful type was this of the carrying, as it were, of the blood of Christ into the very presence of God, that, being mystically, not really, sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat, the throne of grace, it might ever plead, ever be present before the eyes of the Father. Seven times was it sprinkled—a perfect number, to show the perfection of that blood of sprinkling. It was sprinkled before the mercy seat, as the actual blood of Jesus was shed upon the cross; and it was sprinkled upon the mercy seat that there might be enduring marks of it from year to year.

Thus we see a blessed connection between the past and the present work of our great High Priest. He came down from heaven to earth to do the will of his Father, which will was, that he should by one offering perfect forever those who are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:10-14.) Having accomplished this will, and finished the work thus given him to do, (John 17:4,) he has gone up on high, and has sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool; for this was the ancient promise given unto him when he was made a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." (Psalms 110:1; Hebrews 10:12-13.)

III. But we now come to the spiritual bearing and gracious influence which the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ has on the experience of a Christian. This, indeed, is to us personally of the deepest importance, for only so far as we have, in our own bosoms, some vital experience of the High Priesthood of Jesus, have we any real, any saving knowledge of those heavenly truths connected with and flowing out of it which have thus far engaged our attention. This experience, however, divides itself into two leading branches, corresponding to the two parts of the Lord's priesthood, though, as is the case with it, a close and intimate union and harmony connect them with each other.

1. First, then, view the sufferings, blood-shedding, obedience, and death of the Lord Jesus as suitable to our state and case as sinners before God. We commence with this, for here and here alone the cross meets us in our deep and desperate necessity, in our utterly ruined and lost condition.

"To be healed before we're wounded, To be saved before we're lost," is neither law nor gospel, neither Scripture nor common sense. But until we are quickened into spiritual life, and the conscience is aroused and alarmed by the entrance of the word with power, we neither know nor indeed care to know, anything of atoning blood or justifying righteousness. The cross of Jesus is to us what it was to the unbelieving Jew and to the infidel Greek—a stumbling block and foolishness. Dead in sin, or dead in a profession, whatever be our religion—it is not that of the life of God, or the fruit of the teaching of the Spirit. But when we are made alive unto God by quickening grace, we are taught in his light to see, and in his life to feel our lost and desperate case as poor, vile, guilty sinners, condemned by the law and by our own conscience. The curse of the law effectually backed by the verdict of our own guilty conscience, slays outright all our own goodness, turns all our loveliness into corruption, reveals the wrath of God against sin, and thus cuts off all help and hope of salvation by our own righteousness.

Here, then, we are, in all our sin and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God as a consuming fire. Where now is any help or hope in self, or in any wisdom, strength, or righteousness of our own? But this very state of condemnation prepares the soul to receive the atonement, (Romans 5:11,) or the reconciliation effected by the blood shedding and death of our great High Priest. As, then, the gospel comes near, proclaiming salvation by the blood of the Lamb, the eyes of the enlightened understanding are turned towards the light which shines around and from the cross; and as its words of truth and grace fall upon the ear and are applied to the heart, a measure of faith is raised up in the soul, whereby it looks unto Jesus hanging there, and bearing all its sins in his own body on the tree. This is the first real act of faith upon Jesus as our High Priest, putting away sin by the blood of the cross. But when, after many conflicts, many ups and downs, many doubts and fears, many prayers, tears and supplications, and many deep searchings of heart, he is more fully and blessedly revealed to the soul by the power of God, and his blood more manifestly sprinkled on the conscience by the work and witness of the Holy Spirit, this gives deeper and clearer union and communion with a suffering, bleeding Lord; and as faith embraces him in his dying love, his precious blood more fully purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. But all the living family of God are not so highly favored as to enjoy this sweet communion with the Lord Jesus, and yet there may be a measure of faith in him short of this clear manifestation. There may be true faith, and yet many doubts and fears, many exercises, many temptations to unbelief and infidelity. There may be a faith of adherence where there is not a faith of assurance, a faith able to rely though not able to realize. Guilt may press very hard; sin lie with almost crushing weight on the soul; lusts and corruptions be very strong; Satan grievously buffet; the conflict be very long, and victory at times seem very doubtful. All this is the trial of faith whereby it is tried like gold in the fire. But be the faith weak or strong, be the conflict brief or prolonged, all whose eyes are divinely enlightened to see, and hearts graciously touched to feel, are eyeing the atoning blood of the Lamb—even where much darkness pervades the mind and much doubt and fear possess the soul.

There is in all believers a looking, a longing, a seeking, a desiring, a sighing and groaning, a suing and a begging, a watching and expecting of salvation through atoning blood, even where there is not a sweet assurance of interest in it, or a blessed enjoyment of a bleeding, dying, loving Jesus. It is most desirable to enjoy a sweet sense of his atoning blood applied to the conscience, and his dying love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Indeed there is no real peace of conscience

or assurance of salvation without it. But it is his own free gift, bestowed as, when, how, and to whom he will; and we are not to cut off those as unbelievers whose faith though real is weak, whose hope though good is feeble, and whose love though sincere is often damped by doubt and fear. For these doubts and fears, by which so many are deeply tried, are not as to the foundation, not as to the Person, work, blood, grace, and suitability of the Lord Jesus, but as to their own interest in the atoning sacrifice. But if Jesus by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified, any measure of the sanctifying work and influence of the Holy Spirit secures a manifested interest in that one offering. Thus the very sighings of the quickened soul under the guilt of sin, its earnest and genuine repentance, its looking and longing for manifested mercy, its separation from the evil of this ungodly world, with every gleam of hope, every ray of light, every act of faith, every word of encouragement, every token for good, every prospect of approaching deliverance, every stretching forth of eyes and ears after the Lord that it may see his atoning blood and hear his pardoning voice—are evidences of the soul's having received the Spirit of holiness; for these feelings spring from his secret and sacred influences. But while these evidences are good, to rest in them is not good. The soul should press forward after communion with Jesus as its suffering Lord; after a sweet experience of his bleeding, dying love, even of that perfect love which casts out all fear that has torment, and should never rest satisfied until, embraced in the arms of a loving Lord, it can look up with adoring eyes, and say, "You have loved me—and gave yourself for me."

2. But there is also an experience of the present work of Jesus at the right hand of God. Here faith is especially alive as drawn forth by the power of God. In all our approaches to the footstool of mercy we feel our need of such a Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor as Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. He ever lives to make intercession for us; not, indeed, by vocal prayer, but by the merits of his blood filling heaven as with sweet and acceptable incense. He has gone before to prepare a place for us; he sits at God's right hand as our ever-living Mediator, through whom, by one Spirit, we have access unto the Father. The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is the great object of faith. In all our approaches, then, to the Father of all mercies and the God of all grace, we only draw near acceptably as we come to him through Jesus Christ, for he is the way, the truth, and the life—and no man comes unto the Father but by him. He is the Mediator, the only Mediator between God and men; (1 Timothy 2:5;) but only so as High Priest, for in that character only is he "the Mediator of the New Covenant." (Hebrews 12:24.) The office, then, of faith is to view him as "sitting on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" (Hebrews 8:1;) and in all our approaches to God to look to him alone as our Advocate with the Father. This believing view of Jesus, as ever making intercession for us, will encourage and embolden us from time to time to come before the throne, and there spread all our wants and woes. Our blessed Lord has said, to encourage us thus to pray, "And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13.) And again—"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7.) Faith hangs upon these and similar promises, knowing that they are all Yes and Amen in Christ Jesus; and every gracious answer encourages it more and more still to plead in his all-prevailing name. "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" (Hebrews 11:6;) and he who lacks wisdom, and asks of God, who gives to all liberally and upbraids not, must ask in faith, nothing wavering. (James 1:5-6.) But this faith will eye not self—but Jesus, as the Mediator ever making intercession for his people, and presenting their prayers and supplications as perfumed by the incense of his own blood and

obedience. Thus we see what an abiding influence the present intercession of Jesus has on the experience of every believer, for he cannot, even for the relief of his own necessities, pray acceptably without it. He having by his own blood entered in once into the holy place, gives his people power and privilege to enter spiritually and experimentally where he himself had gone actually. The Apostle, therefore, says, "And so, dear friends, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s people, let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19-22.)

We in ourselves are, and always shall be while here, poor sinful creatures, fickle in feeling, mutable in frame, changing and changeable in affection, from day to day and from hour to hour. Whence, then, can we gather up any strength or encouragement but from the sweet persuasion that it is not our sins and backslidings that the Father regards, no, nor our prayers and supplications for what they are in themselves, but is ever looking upon his dear Son at his own right hand, and accepts us in him? But O how apt are we to lose sight of this Mediator and Intercessor, ever presenting the merits of his blood-shedding and death before the throne; and getting again and again entangled in unbelief, or doubt and fear, how little and how rarely do we realize the blessed truth that "if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and that he is the "atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 2:1-2.) Our limits warn us to draw our "Meditations" to a close, or we would much desire to show also the influence which a gracious experience of the high priesthood of Jesus has on the life, conduct, and conversation of a true believer. The tree is known by its fruit; and those branches alone which bring forth fruit unto God, are in manifest union with the only true Vine. (John 15:5.) The love of Christ is the constraining principle of all holy obedience. "If you love me, keep my commandments," was his dying injunction to his disciples. As, then, his bleeding love is experimentally known, there will be a conformity to his image, an obedience to his will, a walking in his footsteps. And as his dying love produces motive, so his risen life secures power, for he has said, "Because I live you shall live also." Having gone up on high, he has led captivity captive and received gifts for men; and thus, by sending forth the blessed Spirit as the fruit of his former sufferings and present intercession, he makes his people willing in the day of his power, and works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Here, then, we close our Meditations on the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and may the God of all grace smile on our feeble attempt to set forth that name which is above every name. And to him in his Trinity of Persons and Unity of Essence, be ascribed all power and glory, majesty and dominion, forever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 35

02.00. Jesus the Great Prophet to His People

Jesus the Great Prophet to His People by J. C. Philpot

We are now considering the prophetical office of Jesus, and hope, with God's help and blessing, to show that it is one of peculiar grace, and full of divine blessedness to his believing people. May the Spirit guide our thoughts and direct our pen in our Meditations on the grace and glory of Jesus as the Prophet of his Church, that he may make himself very dear, near, and precious to both writer and reader, and that, preserved from all error and led into all truth, we may exalt his great and glorious name, as we sit at his feet hearing his word and looking up to him for that heavenly instruction which is so blessed a feature of his prophetical office to communicate. In unfolding this subject, as some degree of order is necessary to clearness, we shall endeavor to show, I. The essential nature of the prophetic office.

II. The peculiar qualifications of Jesus to sustain his prophetic office.

III. Jesus executing his prophetic office upon earth.

IV. The present mode of sustaining his prophetic office in heaven.

V. The spiritual bearing which his prophetic office has on the experience of his believing people.

02.01. The Essential Nature of Prophetic Office

The essential nature of the prophetic office. The peculiar, and what we may call the primary and essential character of the prophetical office, is sometimes, we think, not clearly understood. The leading idea of a prophet is usually considered to be that he is one who predicts future events. This certainly is one part, and a very important part, of the prophetical office; but it is by no means the primary or essential feature--and indeed, as regards that office as sustained by the Lord himself, it was quite a subordinate feature. The primary and essential character of a prophet is that he SPEAKS for God. He is as God's mouth, (Jeremiah 15:19,) to speak God's words. This is plain, not only from the derivation of the word in both the Hebrew and Greek languages, but from several passages in the word of truth. Take for instance the following Scriptures—"Then the Lord said to Moses— See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country." (Exodus 7:1-2.) We point out the parallel expression, which so fully proves the truth of our assertion that the primary and essential idea of a prophet is that he speaks for God—"You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him." (Exodus 4:15-16.) The Lord's words to Jeremiah, when he called him to the prophetical office, bear most closely also on the same point—"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child, for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you you shall speak." (Jeremiah 1:4-7.) The distinguishing feature of Jeremiah's call to the prophetical office was that the Lord "put his words in his mouth." These words were words of authority and power; and thus by them he instrumentally rooted out, and pulled down, and destroyed, and threw down the enemies of God and godliness, and built and planted the Lord's own peculiar people. This was surely a much wider and more authoritative commission than if he had been sent merely to predict future events. It is perfectly true that he predicted the seventy years' captivity, the destruction of Babylon, and the return of the children of Judah to their own land, with other prophecies, some of which are still unfulfilled--but this was only a part of his prophetical mission.

Similarly, when the Lord called Ezekiel to the prophetical office, he said to him, "You shall speak my words unto then, whether they will hear or forbear." (Ezekiel 2:7.) And again, "And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. Go now to your countrymen in exile and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says,' whether they listen or fail to listen." (Ezekiel 3:10-11.) The leading, the characteristic feature of a prophet, then, was that he came to the people with a "Thus says the Lord" in his mouth; that his words were not his own words, but God's words, and his message the express message of the Lord of hosts. This view of the fundamental character and position of a prophet may prepare us to see a little more clearly into the peculiar suitability of such an office, and the wisdom and mercy of

God in providing such a means of speaking to the children of men. Man, being created in the image and after the likeness of God, was, from the very constitution of his intelligent being, made capable of receiving direct communications of the will and good pleasure of his heavenly Creator. Thus, in Paradise God walked and talked with Adam, instructed him into the knowledge of his will, and set before him a precept what to do, and a prohibition what to shun. (Genesis 2:16-17.) In this state of innocence and happiness there was no need of a prophet to speak for God to man, as the Lord himself communed directly and immediately with him as the pure and intelligent creature of his hand. But when Adam sinned and fell, this mode of direct and immediate communion of man with his Maker was at once cut off. Man, stripped of his native purity and innocence, felt his nakedness and shame, and, full of guilt and terror, fled from the voice of the Lord which he once had heard with delight, to shelter himself from the indignant eye of Justice amid the trees of the garden. But O, the unparalleled mercy and goodness of the Lord! Where sin had thus abounded--there did grace much more abound; for in the very garden where man had so awfully and wilfully sinned and fallen, there mercy was revealed, and the very trees which had been witnesses of the fall, and had in vain sheltered guilty Adam from the wrath of his justly incensed Creator, now witnessed the first promise of redemption by a Mediator of God's own providing, one no less than his own Son, in due time to be made of a woman—of the seed of that very woman who had first sinned and then dragged the man down with her into the pit wherein she had herself fallen. The former way, then, of direct and immediate communication between God and man being cut off by sin, the glorious plan of redemption, which had lain from all eternity in the bosom of God, now provided a new way whereby God could once more commune with man. A Mediator having been provided, and a ransom found through and by his blood, a way was made whereby, no longer as before, immediately--but mediately, communion might be re-opened on a different footing, and resting on a surer and more blessed basis. This, then, is the foundation of the prophetical office, first in the Person of the Mediator, and then in inspired men sent of God as witnesses of him.

We like to trace truth up to its eternal source, and to show the strong foundations on which the ordinances and appointments of God rest. There is in all the ways and works of God unspeakable wisdom; and when we can see this wisdom not only, as in creation, full of harmony and beauty, but as in the covenant of grace, replete with love and mercy, it has a blessed tendency to satisfy the mind with the fullest persuasion of the certainty of revealed truth, and to draw up the heart and affections to the Lord in the spiritual enjoyment of it. This must plead our excuse if we seem to any of our readers to have at all wandered from our subject.

Now no sooner was the covenant of grace brought to light in the first promise, than it was acted upon, at first indeed dimly and obscurely, but ever with increasing clearness, until fully revealed in the Person and work of the Son of God, when, by appearing in the flesh, he brought life and immortality to life. Thus, in a sense, Abel, the first martyr, was also the first prophet, for he testified for God and for the way of salvation through the atoning blood of the promised Mediator, when he "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." The Apostle therefore says of him, "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts—and by it he being dead yet speaks." (Hebrews 11:4.) "He being dead yet speaks." He spoke for God, as a prophet of the future, when he offered unto him a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; and "he yet speaks" for him as a prophet of the past, for

his testimony being recorded in the sacred page, it still utters its voice as a witness for the way of salvation through the blood of the Lamb, wherever the word of truth is borne. Thus, as there is no speech nor language where the silent voice of the starry heavens is not heard, (Psalms 19:3,) so wherever, in the providence of God, the Bible is carried, in every tongue and to every nation, does Abel still speak as a silent prophet, and as one who sealed his testimony with his blood, to those who have ears to hear his voice. But if the instance of Abel be somewhat obscure, the next that we shall adduce is stamped clearly enough by God's own testimony.

Enoch, certainly, was a prophet of the Lord, as Jude plainly testifies, and one of his prophecies, as yet unfulfilled, is preserved for us in the word of truth. He walked with God, and he spoke for God. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his holy ones." (Jude 1:14.) What a clear view was given him of the second coming of the Lord Jesus in all the glory of the Father, attended with ten thousand of his holy ones, "to execute judgment upon all;" and how distinctly he saw the character and predicted the end of all those base creatures which, under the cloak of a profession, have ever infested, and will in the last days still more awfully infest, the Church of God.

Noah was the next prophet recorded in the word of truth, for he was "a preacher of righteousness;" (2 Peter 2:5;) and the blessed Lord himself spoke in him by his Spirit when he preached by him unto the spirits now shut up in their awful prison, awaiting the judgment of the great day, even those rebellious and disobedient antediluvians against whom Noah testified, both by word and deed, when he prepared the ark to the saving of his house. (1 Peter 3:18-20; Hebrews 11:7.) But time and space will not admit of our pursuing further this subject, or to trace out the stream of prophecy from its original source down to the close of the canon of the Old Testament. Let these two observations on the general character of prophecy suffice:

1. It pleased God to choose a people for himself in the seed of Abraham, to whom he might make known his will, and he therefore raised up a succession of prophets among them to be as his mouth, to speak to them in his name. As they, in thus testifying of him, had continually to predict coming judgments or to promise future blessings, the idea naturally attached itself to the office of a prophet, that he was one sent to foretell future events--but always in connection with the primary feature of his character--that he was specially sent by God, and spoke in his name and by his special authority. To foretell the future was indeed necessary to their office, and the fulfillment of their predictions was a proof of God's speaking in and by them. The following words of Moses throw the clearest light on the whole subject—"But any prophet who claims to give a message from another god or who falsely claims to speak for me must die. You may wonder, 'How will we know whether the prophecy is from the Lord or not?' If the prophet predicts something in the Lord's name and it does not happen, the Lord did not give the message. That prophet has spoken on his own and need not be feared." (Deuteronomy 18:20-22.)

2. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," (Revelation 19:10,) both in the Old Testament and the New, and thus the whole series of prophets testified to the Person and work, grace and glory of the Son of God. To testify of him was the delight of their heart and the theme of their tongue. They themselves indeed did not fully understand the full import of their own prophecies--but they know that salvation by the promised Messiah was the theme of them all, as the Apostle Peter declares—"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that

was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things." (1 Peter 1:10-12.) In similar language he testified to the same truth when, almost immediately after the day of Pentecost, he spoke unto the people in the porch of the temple—"Starting with Samuel, every prophet spoke about what is happening today. You are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, 'Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed.'" (Acts 3:24-25.) Thus, too, our blessed Lord reproved the two disciples journeying to Emmaus with the slowness of their heart in not seeing and believing that which the prophets had testified of him. "You are such foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted by the prophets that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his time of glory? Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining what all the Scriptures said about himself." (Luke 24:25-27.)

Blessed Interpreter! blessed interpretation! O that he would do to us by his Spirit and grace what he afterwards did to all his disciples just before he was parted from them and carried up into heaven! that he, even he, would open our understanding that we might understand the Scriptures, and under his divine teaching, as the Prophet of his Church, might sit at his feet and hear his words, and know in sweet experience that they are Spirit and they are life to our soul.

Chapter 37

02.02. The QUALIFICATIONS of the Lord Jesus to sustain the office of Prophet to his people

The QUALIFICATIONS of the Lord Jesus to sustain the office of Prophet to his people. i. In opening up this part of our subject, we shall first examine the foundation of these qualifications, which we shall find in great measure identical with that on which his priestly office rests, that is, his glorious Person, as Immanuel, God with us. That he is God, actually and essentially God, as the second Person in the glorious Trinity, is the foundation not only of all his offices--but of everything that he is to the Church of God. Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, all of which are essential attributes of Deity, are needed in him who shall atone as Priest, teach as Prophet, and rule as King. The Deity of our blessed Lord does not, therefore, rest merely on single texts of Scripture, however numerous or however clear. We bless God for giving us these direct testimonies to strengthen our faith and to defend it against gainsayers; but the indirect are, if possible, stronger still. The Deity of our blessed Lord is so interwoven with the truth of God that could it be torn from it, the whole of revelation must fall to pieces. His blood, his righteousness, his grace and glory, and the whole scheme of salvation as accomplished by him, are so dependent upon his Deity, that without it and separate from it, they have not only no value or validity--but would have no existence--no place in the word, and no place in the heart of the family of God.

View this in connection with his offices. If Jesus were only a man, his blood, as at once Priest and Sacrifice, could not be of sufficient value to put away one sin, much less millions of sins of millions of sinners. If he were only a man, his eye could not see, his ear hear, or his lips instruct, as the Prophet of his Church, thousands of his believing people who are crying and looking to him from all parts for instruction. If he were only a man, how could his shoulders support the weight of sovereignty as King over all things in heaven and in earth? Thus the very foundation of all his offices is his eternal, actual, essential Deity, for without that every other qualification would be utterly ineffectual. But here again, as in the case of his priestly office, we are met by that blessed and glorious truth of his real, proper, and eternal Sonship. This is as necessary a qualification for his office as Prophet as his eternal Deity; and, in fact, is intimately and indissolubly connected with it. When, then, we assert that the true and proper Sonship of our blessed Lord is an essential qualification to his sustaining the office of Prophet to his Church, we do so as a declaration of a grand and important gospel truth. In our introductory remarks on the nature of the prophetic office, we showed that the fundamental character of a prophet was that he was one who spoke for God. Now, this is just the character that our blessed Lord sustains to the Church as the Son of the Father in truth and love. He speaks for the Father to the Church; for the Father speaks in and by him. Twice did the Father speak with express voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and added on the holy mount, "Hear him." (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5.) The peculiar grace and glory of the Christian dispensation, its eminent and distinctive feature, is that in it God speaks in and by his dear Son. How clearly and beautifully is this declared by the Apostle in the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews--"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has

spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs." (Hebrews 1:1-4.) When we have a view by faith of the Son of God as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, well may we feel and say--Who so proper, who so suited to speak for the Father as his own Son, who had forever lain in his bosom? Who so perfectly and intimately acquainted with the Father's will, who so able to reveal that will to the sons of men? In whom can we find love and power so blended; such zeal for the glory of God, such pity for the children of men; such majesty and such mercy; such infinite purity, yet such unspeakable condescension; such a representative of God, such a messenger for man! He and the Father are one--one in essence, one in will, though in Person distinct. To be one with the Father in essence, yet distinct from the Father in Person, is the peculiar character of his eternal relationship to him as his only-begotten Son. The Word is his title as a Person in the Godhead, "For the Word was God." But why is he the Word? Because God speaks in him and by him. But why does the Father speak in and by him? Because he is his Son. Who is so fit for the Father to speak by as his own Son; or, who is so fit to speak for the Father? Out of the Son, the Father can neither be seen, nor heard, nor known. God is in himself essentially invisible, for he dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen or can see. But he has been pleased to reveal himself in the Person of his dear Son. Thus in seeing him we see the Father, as he told Philip; (John 14:9;) and in beholding his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, we view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6.) In a similar way we cannot hear directly and immediately the voice of God. When that voice spoke on Sinai's blazing top, all the people that were in the camp trembled; yes, the whole mount itself quaked greatly; for so fearful was that voice that those who heard it entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; and so terrible was the sight that even Moses, the man of God, and the typical mediator, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." (Hebrews 12:1921.) As, then, we cannot see God but as revealing himself in his Son, so we cannot hear God--but as speaking in his Son. This was John the Baptist's witness of him. "No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." (John 1:18.) As coming from the bosom of the Father, how qualified was he to speak of him and for him, as John so plainly testified--"He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth, but he has come from heaven. He tells what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Those who believe him discover that God is true. For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God's Spirit is upon him without measure or limit." (John 3:31-34.) In our next topic we shall hope, with God's help and blessing, to enter still further on the qualifications of the Lord Jesus Christ to sustain the office of Prophet to the Church of God. In all his works and in all his ways, whether in creation, in providence, or in grace, the infinite wisdom of the great and glorious Sovereign of heaven and earth shines forth with conspicuous luster. It is true that in consequence of the darkness, unbelief, and infidelity of the human mind, as sunk and debased by the fall, this wisdom is for the most part hidden from the eyes of men; but when, under the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, we are brought to see light in God's light, then this infinite and unspeakable wisdom begins to open itself to our admiring view. As taught by the Spirit to see in

creation his wonderworking hand, we can join with David in saying, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom have you made then all. The earth is full of your riches." (Psalms 104:24.) As favored to trace his providential hand, we can look back upon all the way by which he has led us these many years in the wilderness, and see wisdom and mercy stamped upon every step. But whatever view we may obtain by faith of the only wise God as working in the wonders of creation, or as ruling in the complicated affairs of providence, it is in the domain of grace that his wisdom is more especially discovered to a believing heart; for as the gospel is the grand final revelation of his mind and will in the salvation of his people, it is the greatest display of the wisdom of God that could be afforded to his intelligent creatures, whether redeemed men, or admiring, adoring angels. A sense of this made the Apostle say, "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began." (1 Corinthians 2:6-7.) This, on another occasion, made him stand as if on the brink of holy wonder and admiring awe, with the cry in his heart and mouth, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways ast finding out!" (Romans 11:33.) The angels, therefore, themselves, those bright and glorious beings who always behold the face of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus in heaven, derive their deepest lessons of instruction into the wisdom of God from contemplating his gracious dealings with his people--"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10-11.) This manifestation of the wisdom of God to angelic intelligences by means of the Church was typically represented to the Old Testament saints by the two cherubim of beaten gold who covered the mercy seat with their wings, and turned their faces towards it, as if seeking ever to penetrate into the divine mystery of mercy and grace for guilty man through the incarnation of the Son of God; as the Apostle speaks, "Which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:12.) The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, in his Person and work, as the Mediator between God and men, in all the offices that he sustains, in all the riches of his grace, and all the fullness of his glory, is "the wisdom of God," as well as "the power of God;" (1 Corinthians 1:24;) for "in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3.) But as these treasures are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed only to babes, (Matthew 11:25,) he himself is "of God made unto us wisdom," (1 Corinthians 1:30,) that by sitting at his feet and hearing his words; (Luke 10:39;) by taking his yoke upon us and learning of him; (Matthew 11:29;) by union and communion with him as living members of his mystical body; (Ephesians 5:30;) by being joined to him as one spirit with him; (1 Corinthians 6:17;) by drinking into his mind; (1 Corinthians 2:16;) by beholding with open face as in a glass his glory, and being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, (2 Corinthians 3:18,) we may possess in him, and derive from him that wellspring of wisdom which shall be in us as a flowing brook. (Proverbs 18:4.) The bearing of these remarks on the wisdom of God, as displayed in the Person and work of Christ, may perhaps not be immediately obvious, but they have been dropped by us in connection with that part of our subject which is still before us, that is, the qualifications possessed by the Lord Jesus for the fulfillment of his office as Prophet to his people.

If, then, the blessed Lord is "the wisdom of God," this wisdom will shine forth, not only in the constitution of his glorious Person as Immanuel, God with us, but in every one of his covenant

offices. Not only as Priest and King but as Prophet he shines forth in the glory of the Father. Infinite wisdom, infinite love, and infinite power--the wisdom of God the Father, the love of God the Son, and the power of God the Holy Spirit, all combined in the Person and work of Immanuel to glorify the Father, to exalt the Son, and to save the Church. To understand, to believe, to love, to revere, and adore the heavenly mystery of this wisdom, love, and power--to realize it in sweet experience, and to be filled with all the blessed fruits which spring out of it for time and for eternity, will be our highest wisdom and richest mercy. With the desire, then, to look into some of these depths of wisdom, love, and power, let us now resume our subject--the qualifications of Jesus to sustain the prophetical office for the glory of God and the good of his people.

We have previously dwelt chiefly upon those qualifications which he possesses as a divine Person in the glorious Trinity, antecedent to and irrespective of man, viewed as fallen or unfallen. These were two--1. His eternal Deity; 2. His true and proper Sonship. Both of those, we have seen, were necessary to qualify him to speak for God as his mouth. He was "the Word," who "in the beginning was with God;" who alone had seen the Father; (John 6:46;) who knew the Father as the Father know him; (John 10:15;) who came forth from the Father; (John 16:28;) the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father; (John 1:18;) and who revealed what he had seen and heard that he testified. (John 3:32.) It is very strengthening to faith to have a view of these qualifications of the blessed Lord to testify of the Father. We want certainties, the fullest evidence, the clearest assurance, that what Jesus has declared of the Father he knew, not by inspiration, as the prophets, but by actual personal sight and knowledge; that he came from the bosom of the Father; that he was "ever by him as one brought up with him, and daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." (Proverbs 8:30.) What a repose is this for faith, that it can rest with implicit confidence on all that Jesus has testified of the Father as alone knowing him, and yet graciously revealing him to the sons of men. In the things which concern our everlasting peace, in the solemn matters of eternity, where our soul’s comfort and joy, not to say its eternal salvation, are at stake, how needful it is to have a foundation on which faith can firmly build and stand secure amid all the storms of temptation, waves of affliction, and the foaming billows of unbelief and infidelity, urged on by the breath of Satan.

Believer, your faith has to rest upon and deal with the words of Jesus Christ, for he has "the words of eternal life." Your faith, if it has not already been, will have to be tried with fire. Look well, then, to the foundation, and see that it is firm and good. We shall have, with God’s help and blessing, to dwell more fully upon this part of our subject when we come to see how our Lord’s prophetical office bears upon a believer’s experience; but we wish to impress upon the mind of our readers the necessity as well as the blessedness of having true and believing views of the qualifications of our Lord to speak in the name of the Father, as "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person," before the foundations of the earth were laid, or the dayspring knew its place. But now we come to those qualifications which are more immediately connected with his pure HUMANITY; and these we shall find as necessary as those which are based upon his eternal Deity and Sonship.

1. It is his being man as well as God that makes him fit to be a Mediator--"for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5.) It is his being "the man Christ Jesus," as well as God the Son, which makes him capable of being the arbitrator or "umpire," (margin,) for whom Job longed, (Job 9:33,) that can lay his hand upon us both. As God,

Jesus could speak to God for man; as man, he could speak to man for God. High as the highest, he became low as the lowest; equal with the Father in his divine nature--he became equal with man in his human nature. The Prophet of whom Moses spoke was to be "from the midst of the children of Israel, of their brethren." "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren;" and again "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deuteronomy 18:18.) The promised Prophet was to be raised up from the midst of, and from "among the brethren," for he was to be of the seed of the woman, (Genesis 3:15,) and of the seed of David according to the flesh. (Romans 1:3.) To be a brother he must assume their nature, as the Apostle declares--"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;" (Hebrews 2:14;) and again--"We all know that Jesus came to help the descendants of Abraham, not to help the angels. Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus to be in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:16-17.) This qualified him to say, "I will declare your name unto my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto you." (Hebrews 2:12.) His qualification as man to sustain the office of a Prophet was as needful as his qualification as God. To save man God became man. To teach his brethren the Son of God became their brother. This pure and perfect humanity he assumed in the womb of the Virgin, and the Holy Spirit, under whose divine and supernatural operation and overshadowing this human nature was conceived, filled it, at the very instant of its conception, with every grace, making it a holy temple in which all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.

2. But though this human nature of our blessed Lord was in the instant of its conception sanctified and filled with all heavenly grace, yet was it capable of both natural and spiritual growth, and a further increase of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. We therefore read of Jesus in his earliest years, that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." (Luke 2:40.) The growth spoken of there refers to his body, as he is said elsewhere to have "increased in stature," (Luke 2:52) growing as we grow from childhood to youth and manhood, but without any of those drawbacks of sickness and infantile complaints to which we are subject, from which he was perfectly free, as having no taint of disease or seeds of mortality in his pure and holy frame. His being said to "wax strong in spirit" refers to his being more and more filled in his soul with strength and wisdom, from more continual accessions of the power and unction of the Holy Spirit. No new grace was imparted to his soul, as no new member was added to his body; but as his pure human soul, like our own, expanded and grew with his bodily growth, so was it more and more filled with the Holy Spirit. The divine nature was not to our blessed Lord in the place of a soul. The two natures were essentially distinct, and though mysteriously united in the Person of the God-man, there was, as the Athanasian Creed has well expressed it, no "confusion of substance" from their intermixture, which would have been the case had his essential Deity been as a soul to animate his body. And if it be asked why the human soul of Jesus needed the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, as it was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin and sinners from the moment of his conception, we answer, that without these gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit it would not have been consecrated to the service of God, nor could it have lived unto him and for him according to the full measure of its capacity. The whole of his human nature, body and soul, would still have been "a holy thing;" (Luke 1:35;) but as the body

without natural growth would have ever remained a babe, so would his soul not have grown up into all its fullness of wisdom and grace unless the same blessed Spirit who had formed and sanctified it in the womb had continually replenished it with heavenly treasure. This is beautifully unfolded in the words of the prophet--"Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot--yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him--the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will never judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay." (Isaiah 11:1-3.) By the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit the human nature of our blessed Lord became a holy temple, consecrated to the service of God, replenished with every grace, and qualified not only to do and suffer the whole will of the Father, but to sustain every covenant office.

3. But it was more particularly at his baptism when the Spirit of God descended from heaven in a bodily shape like a dove, and rested on him, when the Father proclaimed with an audible voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," that he was consecrated to the active service of his heavenly Father. This corresponded to the anointing of the prophets of old to their prophetical office, as Elijah was commanded to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room. (1 Kings 19:16.) Then the Father sealed him, (John 6:27,) bore witness of him, (John 8:18,) testified to his Sonship, gave him the Spirit without measure, (John 3:34,) and bade us hear him. Then the Holy Spirit, as John the Baptist saw, descended from heaven and abode upon him; (John 1:32-33;) and by this visible descent and perpetual abiding on him anointed him in a more especial manner with all those divine gifts and graces whereby he was qualified to fulfill his mission as the Messenger of the covenant in the most perfect and complete manner for the glory of God and the good of his people.

We may thus draw a distinction between those graces of the Holy Spirit whereby he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, (Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9,) and that special communication of heavenly graces and gifts whereby he was peculiarly set apart and qualified to finish the work which the Father gave him to do. Our blessed Lord lived a life of faith upon his heavenly Father. The actings of this faith in all its diversified phases may be clearly seen portrayed to our view in those Psalms which beyond all controversy contain the experience of Jesus in the days of his flesh. There is not a grace or fruit of the Holy Spirit possessed by his people in measure--which the Lord did not possess without measure. And these, it must be borne in mind, were active graces, drawn out and called into continual exercise by the same Holy Spirit who had communicated them. As read with an enlightened eye, the Psalms wherein our Lord speaks show all these graces in constant and active exercise. Faith in all its actings, hope in all its anchorings, love in all its flowings, patience in all its endurings, humility in all its submittings, prayer in all its supplicatings, praise in all its adorings, obedience in all its yieldings, zeal in all its burnings, devotedness in all its self-sacrificings, holiness in all its flame, and worship in all its fervor--all, all those graces and fruits of the Holy Spirit may be seen shining forth as with beams of heavenly light in the personal experience of our blessed Lord in those Psalms in which he speaks. They were, as it were, framed for him by the Holy Spirit before he came into a time state, that they might be not only prophetical of his sufferings for the benefit of his Church, but be the spiritual utterance of his own holy soul in the days of his flesh.* This personal experience of our blessed Lord forms another and most necessary qualification for his sustaining the prophetical office. He thus possessed the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

* When we speak thus of the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ being contained in the Psalms, we would strictly disclaim the view that all of them refer to him. That some do is evident from their being applied to him in the New Testament, and from his own words; (Luke 24:44;) but it would be monstrous to refer such Psalms as Psalms 32:1-11 and Psalms 51:1-19 to him. Beyond all controversy, however, Psalms 22:1-31, Psalms 40:1-17, Psalms 69:1-36, and Psalms 110:1-7 belong to him; and if, in Psalms 22:1-31 for instance, his bodily sufferings are described by his own lips, is it not in full harmony with this to consider the sufferings of his soul, in other words, his inward experience, similarly described by himself; more especially as he used the first verse to express that most dolorous of all his sufferings when the Father hid his face from him? This is what we mean when we say that the Psalms contain the experience of Christ.

4. But this leads us to another qualification of our blessed. Lord to sustain the prophetical office--that he had a personal experience of temptation. We have already seen that, in the depths of infinite wisdom, it pleased the Father to send as a messenger of the covenant one who had that intimate and ineffable knowledge of himself which none possessed but his only-begotten Son. Now as thus in his divine nature Jesus was thereby qualified in the highest degree to speak that which he knew, and to testify that which he had seen, so it pleased the father that in his human nature he should possess similar qualifications. We have already seen this under its two most principal features--1. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon him without measure for the benefit of others; 2. The personal experience which he possessed of every grace of the Spirit. The former made him a preacher, the latter made him a believer; by the first he lived for God, by the second he lived to God; by the one he broke the bread of life to others, by the other he had himself food to eat the world knew not of; by the first the words that he spoke were spirit and life to his believing people, by the second he could say, "And he who sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." (John 8:29.) The distinction that we have thus drawn between the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Lord for the exercise of his prophetical office and the grace with which he was filled as a matter of his own personal experience, may not be obvious to all our readers, but the difference seems clearly pointed out by comparing Isaiah 11:2-3 with Isaiah 61:1-3 --"The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, making him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," evidently points to an inward experience of godly fear which we know in the word of truth often stands for the whole sum of vital godliness; but his being anointed "to preach good tidings unto the meek" evidently points to the gifts conferred upon him to speak for God to his people. But as a part of this personal experience, it was needful for the Lord to know experimentally and feelingly the reality and power of temptation. Immediately, therefore, after his baptism, before he entered on the discharge of his prophetical office, he was led, or as one of the evangelists forcibly expresses it, "driven," (Mark 1:12,) that is, carried by a mighty impulse of the Spirit, into the wilderness, there to be tempted of the devil. Into the record and nature of those temptations we shall not enter, though doubtless much profitable instruction is contained in them. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to direct the attention of our readers to what we may call the Apostle’s divine commentary upon them--"For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to support those who are tempted." "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities--but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15.) The Lord’s people are, for the most part, a very tried and tempted people. It was therefore needful that their suffering Head should be tried and tempted too, that in his own soul he might

have a personal, individual, and deep experience of the nature and power of temptation. It was not sufficient that he should know temptation as the omniscient God; he must know it as suffering man. As he knew poverty by being poor, not having a place to lay his head; persecution, contempt, and hatred by being despised and rejected of men; suffering and sorrow by being himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; desertion of God by his Father forsaking him in the hour of his most dolorous agony--so he learned the power and pangs of temptation by being himself personally tempted. He "was in all points tempted like as we are," so that not a single temptation from without or from within can assail the child of God of which Jesus had not a personal experience; yet be it ever borne in mind, "without sin," of which there was no seed or taint in either body or soul. Here the gracious Lord differs from us. Temptation never comes to us without meeting with and stirring up sin; but in him there was no sin to stir up, as he said himself--"The prince of this world (Satan) comes, and has nothing in me," (John 14:30,)--nothing sinful to work upon, nothing corrupt to incite, nothing of his own spawn to beget upon, nothing combustible to inflame.

All figures must be essentially incomplete and inherently imperfect to set forth divine truth, and especially one so deeply mysterious and inscrutable by the human intellect as what passed in the soul of the holy Redeemer as tempted by the prince of darkness; but we may perhaps, with this reservation, employ two simple comparisons to illustrate the difference between temptation assailing the holy soul of Jesus and temptation assailing our corrupt heart. A raging sea may beat against a pure, white marble rock, or against a bank of earth. The former it can neither move nor sully; wave after wave is repelled and dashed off; whatever streams may lave its sides, the rock remains as before; the salt water has not penetrated its substance or mingled itself with it. So the pure and holy soul of Jesus, of him who is the "Rock of Ages," repelled and shook off, unmoved and unsullied, the fiercest, foulest temptations of Satan--felt them, knew them, experienced them, but never mingled with them, nor they with it. In the wilderness, on the top of the exceeding high mountain, on the pinnacle of the temple, with what holy calmness did Jesus shake off the assaults of the tempter, with "It is written!" Not that he did not feel the power of the temptations, but the Lion of Judah shook them off as the dew-drops from his mane. But we are a bank of earth, against, which, when the sea of temptation beats, it mixes with the native soil, washes off pieces, and runs off in muddy streams, as entering into its very substance. As in our figure the same sea assails rock and bank, so the same temptations assailed the Lord and us; but how different their effect! He felt them without sin; we feel them with sin. They mingled not with his pure soul, and therefore defiled it not; but they do mix with our corrupt heart, and sadly pollute it. But take another figure, of a still humbler character, to illustrate the difference between the effect of temptation in the Lord’s case and ours. On your right hand is a golden vase filled with the purest, clearest water; on the left is an earthenware vessel in which the water looks clean and good, but for this reason only, that all the dirt has subsided to the bottom. Stir both with the same stick. The water in the vase is still pure and clean; the water in the bowl is at once turbid and thick. Whence the difference? Not in the stick that stirs; not altogether in the receptacle; but in the mud at the bottom of the water. But if our figures are imperfect and inadequate (and we fully admit that they are so), yet fix your eyes--your believing eyes--for sense and reason are useless and worse than useless here, on these two points, and seek to enter into them, though unable to comprehend them--1. "In all points tempted like as we are;" 2. "Yet without sin." In these two points the whole truth and the whole mystery of our Lord’s temptation are locked up and contained. But if any, still wanting some explanation of the

mystery, should inquire how the Lord could feel temptation as we do if there was no sinful principle in him to mingle with it, let him ask himself if he never feels temptation when he abhors it? The fiery darts of Satan, as, for instance, blasphemous and infidel temptations, things that your very soul abhors, do not these grieve and distress your spirit, which hates and abhors them? The more heavenly-minded, spiritual, and holy a man be, the more acutely he feels these "masterpieces of hell." This then may give you a faint conception of the way in which the holy soul of the Redeemer felt, most acutely felt, felt in proportion to his own spotless holiness, the temptations of Satan, yet was never tainted by them. But we must pause. We have rather run out to sea, as the wind filled our sail; still, we trust we have not gone out of our course if, fixing our eye on Jesus as our polar-star, we have followed up our intention to lay before our readers the qualifications of our gracious Lord to fulfill that prophetical office for the benefit and blessing of the Church of God which he undertook in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.

Thus far the qualifications of our blessed Lord to sustain the office of Prophet to his Church have formed the subject of our Meditations. As all the relationships which the Lord bears to his people, as their covenant Head, are living springs of strength and consolation to them in exact proportion to their faith in him and to their receiving of his fullness grace for grace; (Psalms 87:7; John 1:16; Galatians 2:20;) and as this faith is fed by knowledge, and works by love, how desirable it is that all who believe in his name should clearly see with anointed eyes, and experimentally feel with confiding hearts, the strong foundation on which their trust in him is built. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isaiah 28:16.) Our faith, if indeed it be the faith of God’s elect, has to be tried as by fire. We need then look well to two things--1, the foundation itself; 2, the faith which stands on that foundation. Failure in either would be perilous, if not fatal. We are at present engaged with the foundation; the faith which builds upon it will, in due course, come under our notice.

O you, then, who would build for eternity, but are often deeply tried and exercised about your faith whether it be indeed wrought in your heart by the mighty power of God, look well to the foundation. How can your faith be strong if the foundation be weak? Or how can your faith firmly embrace the foundation, unless you clearly see it as laid by the hand of God himself in Zion, and know for yourself that, as a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation, it is able to bear all the weight of your aggravated sins, all the burden of your continual sorrows, all the pressure of your daily needs, all the load of your complicated perplexities? This is the reason, then, why in all our previous attempts to set forth the covenant offices of our exalted Lord, we have dwelt so much on his qualifications to sustain them for the glory of God and the salvation and sanctification of his people. Let us ever bear in mind that the glorious Person of Christ is the grand object of our faith. "Look unto me,"--not my offices--"and be saved--all the ends of the earth;" (Isaiah 45:22;) "Come unto me,"--to myself, to me, the God-man, "all you that labor and are heavy laden," (Matthew 11:28,) are his gracious words. First himself, then his offices; first the Son of God, then the High Priest over the house of God; first the Son given, then the Wonderful Counselor; first the mighty God, then the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6.) From his glorious Person, his covenant offices derive all their grace and glory, all their beauty and blessedness, all their suitability to our wants and woes.

Unless, then, we have a living faith in his Person, we cannot have a living faith in his work. We first embrace his glorious Person, as revealed to our soul by the power of God as his only-begotten Son, and then, by receiving out of his fullness supplies of heavenly grace, live a life of faith upon

him. If, then, our faith has to embrace him as "the Messenger of the covenant," (Malachi 3:1,) as the promised Prophet, to whose words we are to hearken, under penalty of eternal ruin; if we turn away our ear from him and harden our heart against him; (Deuteronomy 18:15-19;) if all the saints who are in his hand "sit down at his feet and receive of his words," (Deuteronomy 33:3,)--and we are among that favored number, surely we cannot be too well grounded and established in a spiritual and experimental knowledge, first of his glorious Person, and then of his covenant office as Prophet, whereby he leads in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that he may cause those who love him to inherit substance, and he will fill their treasures. (Proverbs 8:20-21.) In pursuance, then, of this desire to lay a sure foundation for faith, we have thus far endeavored to show the qualifications of our gracious Lord--both as the Son of God and as the Son of man--to be the Messenger of the Father, the Revealer of his mind and will, the Mouth by which he speaks to the sons of men.

02.03. The execution of the office of Prophet by our blessed Lord upon earth

The execution of the office of Prophet by our blessed Lord upon earth.

We have already seen that Jesus was consecrated to the service of his heavenly Father from the womb, that every grace and gift of the Spirit rested upon and filled his pure humanity, and that thus initially he was Priest, Prophet, and King from his miraculous conception and birth. But it was at his baptism, as we have already pointed out, that he was peculiarly consecrated and set apart for the work which his Father had given him to do. When found in the temple by his sorrowing parents, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, he said unto them, "How is it that you sought me? Know you not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:46; Luke 2:49;) but it was after his baptism that he could more specially say, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34.) i. The first step towards doing this will and finishing this work which we shall notice is, his receiving words from his heavenly Father, that he might speak them in his name. In our introductory remarks on the nature of the prophetic office, we showed that its peculiar and most prominent feature was, that the prophet was, as it were, the very mouth by which God spoke. "Thus says the Lord,"--not "I his prophet," was not only his only title to be heard, but the only message with which he came. Now this "Thus says the Lord" involved the necessity that whatever he uttered in the name of the Lord should be the very words which God spoke unto him; for if they were in the least degree modified or altered, there would be no certainty that they were the full and exact expression of the mind and will of the Lord of hosts. We all know that if a messenger be allowed to put the words of him who sent him into his own language, they cannot be fully relied on. Thus our blessed Lord, as the anointed Prophet of the Father, had words given to him, which words he spoke exactly as the Father gave them to him. As this is to our mind a point of deep importance, yet one which we have rarely if ever seen touched upon, we shall devote a few minutes' attention to it. When Moses went up into the mount, the whole pattern of the tabernacle was set before him, and the injunction was given him, "Be sure that you make them after their pattern, which was showed you in the mount." (Exodus 25:40.) Not a loop, therefore, or pin could Moses put in or leave out in the construction of the tabernacle to make it swerve one item from the pattern set before him. Had there been the least deviation or alteration from the exact pattern, it would not have been the Lord's own tabernacle. The additional loop would have been not the Lord's, but man's, and therefore an ungodly intrusion into the sanctuary; and the deficient pin would have taken from the fullness of the Lord's house, and made it imperfect. (How far this is applicable to the service of the Christian sanctuary, and condemnatory of all additions not commanded, and of all deficiencies not supplied, let our readers judge.)

Thus, in a similar way, our blessed Lord, as the Prophet of the Most High, received words from his heavenly Father, full in number, and exact in nature; and these words he spoke in his name and by his authority, no more and no fewer than they were given him. How plain are his words on this

point--"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting. Whatever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:49-50.) These words were "the words of eternal life," (John 6:68,) and as such were "spirit and life" (John 6:63) to those who received them with power from his lips.

But, as we shall presently show, they were in a more especial manner given by him to his disciples, according to his own divine language in his intercessory prayer--"I have given unto them the words which you gave me." (John 17:8.) And that those were the exact words given him by his heavenly Father is plain from what he also elsewhere testified--"Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." (John 14:10.) But the question may arise as an objection to this view, "If the Lord Jesus were indeed God, possessing, as such, all the perfections of Deity, if, as you have so much insisted upon, the Son of the Father in truth and love, and as such intimately acquainted with his mind and will, what need was there that express words should be given him? Could he not have spoken them in his own name, and by his own authority, as he said to the roaring sea, 'Peace be still?"' (Mark 4:39.) Such questions are not very reverent, as we should receive the truth in the simplicity and humility of little children, and believe where we cannot comprehend; but as we cannot always still the objections of our reasoning mind, and this question admits a sufficient and satisfactory answer, we have anticipated it, and shall reply to it. When our blessed Lord took our nature into union with his own divine Person, it was to become the Father's servant--"Behold my servant," etc. (Isaiah 42:1.) A servant, in his character as a servant, does his master's will, and speaks his master's words. For a servant, then, in the highest and fullest sense of the word, to have a will different from his master's will, and to speak words different from his master's words, would be not obedience but disobedience, not service but rebellion. As, then, the blessed Lord came as the most obedient and devoted of all servants to do his Father's will and his Father's work, (Hebrews 10:7; Matthew 26:39; John 17:4,) and as his deepest grace and highest glory were to do both perfectly, so when he came as a servant to speak his Father's words, it was to him no degradation, but, on the contrary, a most gracious and blessed humbling of himself to speak them just as they were given him, without addition, diminishing, or alteration. He was as perfect as a prophet to speak for God, as a priest to die unto God. It no more, then, detracts from his Deity and divine Sonship that he did not speak his own words than it detracts from them that he did not do his own will. Will and words, doing and dying, obedience and suffering, death and resurrection, grace and glory, were all determined on in the eternal Covenant, and were as fixed, certain, and unalterable as the stars in their courses or the sun in the sky. Fixed as these, do we say? Aye, much more, for the Covenant will stand when the stars fall from their places, and the sun, like a weary giant, pales and faints in his daily race.

We do not think, however, that we should have dwelt so long upon this point were there not this peculiar blessedness in the words of Jesus as Prophet being the words of the Father, that 1, they thereby perfectly reveal the mind and will of God; 2, that, as spoken by the Mediator between God and man, they are words of peace and reconciliation from that just and holy God against and before whom we have so grievously sinned; 3, that, as applied to the heart by the power of God, they are spirit and life. We much wish that our limits allowed us to dwell more on this peculiar feature of the Lord's ministry, as it formed its chief power and glory, but we must pass on to the

second step of the execution of his prophetical office, which we consider to have been, ii. The choice of disciples. Our blessed Lord had to found a church on earth. The grain of wheat had to fall into the ground and die, that it might bring forth much fruit. (John 12:24.) And after this grain of wheat had fallen into the earth and risen out of it--in other words, after the Lord Jesus had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, had risen from the dead, and gone up on high, it was the will of God that his death and resurrection should issue in a glorious crop of redeemed sinners. But that this crop might be gathered, laborers were needed; and that these laborers might go forth fully commissioned by the Lord of the harvest, they themselves must first be taught to plough, sow, and reap. Our Lord, then, for this purpose chose disciples, "whom also he named apostles, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13.) In unfolding this part of our subject, it may, perhaps, be well to bear in mind that the Lord's calling and ordaining of his twelve disciples were distinct events, and took place at different periods of his ministry. He first drew disciples unto himself by those secret cords of his grace whereby, as made willing in the day of his power, they forsook all and followed him. It was at Bethany beyond Jordan, when John was baptizing, that the Lord thus drew to himself his first disciples. "Behold the Lamb of God" was the word of power which, as it fell from John's lips, the Holy Spirit applied to the heart of two of his own disciples, and made them follow Jesus. One of the two was Andrew, who, having found for himself the Messiah, the Christ, must needs, in the overflowing of his heart, tell his brother Peter the good news,** and bring him to the same blessed Lord. Philip is the next whom Jesus finds as a poor, lost, wandering sheep, and whose heart he touches and subdues with the word of power, "Follow me." Philip finds Nathanael, the Israelite without deceit; and the omniscient eye which saw him under the fig-tree wins him to believe that not only good, but the Giver of all good, could come out of Nazareth. (John 1:35-51.) These disciples followed the Lord into Galilee, and were present with him at Cana, where he wrought his first miracle, in turning water into wine, to manifest forth his glory and to confirm their faith. (John 2:11.)

We need not, however, particularize the call of the disciples by their gracious Master. It is sufficient for our purpose to show that to call, ordain, and commission them was a leading feature of the execution of his prophetical office. We may therefore divide this branch of his earthly ministry into three distinct periods--1. The call of the disciples, which took place at different times in the first year of his ministry; 2. Their ordination in a more special and solemn manner to be apostles, which seems to have occurred in the first quarter of the second year of his ministry; and 3. Their final commission after the resurrection, when he breathed on them the Holy Spirit, as the foretaste and pledge of the full effusion of that sacred Comforter on the day of Pentecost. It was to the disciples thus called and ordained that he gave the words which the Father had given him. These words they received with power from his lips; and by this reception of them a spiritual knowledge of him, and a divine faith in him, were raised up in their hearts, according to his own testimony--"For I have given unto them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you did send me." (John 17:8.) iii. This introduces us to another leading feature of our Lord's ministry, that is, the peculiar character of his teaching. This we may view under three different aspects--1. Its general bearing on the people at large; 2. Its peculiar reference to his own immediate disciples; 3. Its character toward the afflicted family of God.

1. As regards the people, it was with authority, and not as the scribes. At the time of our Lord's appearance on the earth, the pure word of God, the living oracles which had been committed to the trust of the Jewish church, (Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2,) had become overlaid by the traditions of the elders. Such pure and holy breathings towards the word of truth, and such an insight into, and experience of its spirituality and power as we find described in Psalms 119:1-176, and enforced by the prophets, were no longer known or taught by those who sat in Moses's seat. The tithing of mint, anise, and cummin; the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables; and a frivolous and burdensome code of traditions had, as it were, smothered the true knowledge of God and the worship of him in spirit and in truth. Formality and ceremony, long robes and broad phylacteries, praying in the market-place and at the corners of the streets, were substituted for justice and the love of God; and as this mere formal religion was to some a mask of hypocrisy, and to others a cloak of covetousness, the scribe and the pharisee ruled over an ignorant people. To beat down, then, this corrupt pharisaism, to show the spirituality of the law, and how the precepts of God had been overlaid and perverted by the traditions of men, formed one leading feature of the Lord's prophetical ministry. It must be borne in mind that the Lord Jesus, as the promised prophet, was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God." (Romans 15:8.) The Jewish people being in outward covenant the people of God, to them was Jesus sent, and to them he preached. Our limits will not allow us to enter further on this branch of the Lord's personal ministry; but it will be found the animating breath of many of his parables, his discourses, John 6:1-71, John 8:1-59, John 10:1-42, and especially of his Sermon on the Mount. But though our space does not admit of our entering more fully into this branch of our Lord's ministry, yet we would earnestly call our readers' attention to the wisdom, power, and authority with which he spoke. This was felt and acknowledged even by the people themselves, though they derived no personal benefit from it, for we read that "they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matthew 7:28-29.) But with whatever power or wisdom he spoke, none received his words as the words of eternal life but the elect remnant, for it was with the rest as the apostle speaks--"What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened. As the Scriptures say--God has put them into a deep sleep. To this very day he has shut their eyes so they do not see, and closed their ears so they do not hear." (Romans 11:7-8)

2. In order, then, that his words should not wholly fall to the ground, God gave him a few disciples, who would receive them, and be saved and sanctified by them. There is something peculiarly emphatic in the language of Peter, when the Lord said unto the twelve, "Will you go away?" It seems as if at his Master's voice faith immediately sprang up in his heart. "Lord," was his answer, in the name of them all, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." He might find words elsewhere. The scribes and pharisees had them in abundance. But where could he find words which dropped eternal life into his soul but those which fell from the lips of the Son of the living God? Thus, apart from the wisdom and authority with which he spoke, there was a power, a special power, which attended his words to the heart of his disciples. Others might say, "Never man spoke like this man;" others might hang upon his lips, (Luke 19:48) and wonder at "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." But all this astonishment and admiration passed away as the morning cloud and the early dew. Eternal life was not communicated thereby. But as the distinguishing feature of his words, as spoken with power to the hearts of his disciples, eternal life gushed with them into their souls.

3. But besides our Lord’s peculiar and personal ministry to his disciples, there was a scattered remnant to which his words were made words of power. Look, for instance, at the Syrophenician woman; (Mark 7:26;) the man sick of the palsy; (Matthew 9:2;) the woman with the issue of blood; (Matthew 9:22;) the woman who was a sinner; (Luke 7:47;) Zaccheus; (Luke 19:9;) Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. (John 11:5.) These are all instances of believing, pardoned, and saved sinners, to whom the Lord’s words were words of power as distinct from those which were given to his disciples. This peculiar feature of the Lord’s ministry is blessedly opened up in that portion of the word of truth which he read in the synagogue of Nazareth, and claimed as his own--"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19.)

Thus, as distinct from his public preaching, when "he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all," (Luke 4:15,) and from his private ministry, when, after he had spoken to the multitude in parables, "when they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples," (Mark 4:34,) the Lord had a peculiar ministration for the afflicted remnant--the lost sheep of the house of Israel, whom he was sent to seek and save. (Matthew 15:24; Luke 19:10.) These were the poor to whom he preached the gospel, (Matthew 11:5,) the broken-hearted whom he came to heal, the captives to whom he proclaimed deliverance, the blind to whom he gave recovering of sight, and the bruised whom he set at liberty. In sweet harmony with this peculiar ministry of our gracious Lord are the opening sentences of the Sermon on the Mount the invitations, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," etc.; "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink;" the promises, "My sheep shall never perish;" "Him who comes unto me I will never cast out;" and the gracious declarations contained in John 6:1-71 and similar passages.

There is, indeed, this peculiar blessedness stamped on the whole personal ministry of the adorable Lord, that grace being poured into his lips, all that he spoke is full of profit and instruction to the Church of God. Take, for instance, his conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Here was a poor sinful creature, dark as midnight, and dead as the dust of Adam, who comes to draw water, as she had often done before, little thinking whom she was that day to meet--the Son of God in the guise of a weary traveler. But mark how, in his conversation with this guilty daughter of sin, the blessed Lord, as the anointed Prophet of God, put forth truths of the deepest import to the Church of the living God. That God is a Spirit; that those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth; that the water which Jesus gives is a well of water springing up into everlasting life--what a power and influence have these living truths had on the Church of Christ, and will have while there is a Church on earth. And yet to whom were they spoken? To a Samaritan--to one so hated by the Jew, that he would not, were he half dead with thirst, have taken a cup of cold water from the hands of any one of the abhorred race. To a sinful woman, living at the very time in immoral adultery with one who was not her husband. This is but one instance to show that this Prophet never spoke, but grace and truth dropped from his lips.

Another instance is his conversation with the carnal multitude which sought him not because they saw the miracles, but because they ate of the loaves, and were filled. (John 6:26.) What holy and sublime truths did he discourse in their hearing! What a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined--not for them who strove among

themselves, and murmured out, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" but for his believing saints who eat his flesh and drink his blood, and experimentally know that his flesh is meat indeed and his blood drink indeed. That carnal, unbelieving, murmuring multitude passed away, dying in their sins; but the truths spoken in their hearing, and recorded by the Holy Spirit in the pages of John, live forever.

John 8:1-59 affords another instance of the deepest and most blessed truths dropped by our Lord in the presence of his enemies. They called him a Samaritan, and said that he had a devil--no, took up stones to cast at him; but those words, which to them were a savor of death unto death, have been to thousands a savor of life unto life. Blessed be his holy name that such gracious words fell from his lips and blessed be the eternal Spirit, the Comforter, who has recorded them in the inspired page!

When, too, we pass on to the closing scene, and are admitted to hear those heavenly discourses whereby our gracious Lord consoled the hearts of his sorrowing disciples, (John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33) well may we long to sit at his foot, and drink in the rich contents of that legacy of peace which he there left, not for them only but for all who would believe on him through their word. Dear friends, friends of truth, friends of the Friend of sinners, lovers of the Son of God, can we believe too firmly, prize too highly, love too dearly, the words that dropped from the lips of the Redeemer as the Prophet sent by the Father? It is by believing them that we feel their power and sweetness, and experience their liberating and sanctifying influence.

* The Sermon on the Mount may be considered as embodying and illustrating the three distinct features of the Lord’s personal ministry which we have pointed out. Thus in its opening sentences it is addressed to the afflicted remnant; in those parts where the spirituality of the law and its opposition to the interpretation put upon it by the traditions of the elders are enforced, it is addressed to the people; and in those passages where the Lord says, "You are the salt of the earth," etc., it is spoken to the disciples. But in the warmth of our heart we are anticipating a future subject of meditation--the bearing which the prophetical office of the Lord Jesus has on the experience of a believer. We have not yet finished the mode of its execution.

Next to the "unspeakable gift" of his dear Son, the greatest blessing which God has bestowed upon the Church is the gift of that holy word which testifies of him. And if this be true of the Scripture generally, as a divine revelation of the mind and will of God and of his testimony to the Person and work of the Son of his love, it is especially so of that portion of the inspired record which contains the words actually spoken by the Lord himself, when tabernacling here below. What indeed would the Church of Christ have fully and clearly known of the gracious words which the Lord Jesus spoke when on earth, as the Prophet of the Most High, had they not been stored up, and thus, as it were, forever embalmed in the four inspired Gospels? Memory, it is true, at first, and tradition afterwards, might for a season, have retained a small remnant of them; but what with the frailty and treachery of the one, and the corrupting tendency of the other, nothing certain, nothing pure could have been preserved for the benefit of the Church in the succeeding periods of time. But the Holy Spirit having inspired the four evangelists to commit to writing the exact words and actions of the blessed Redeemer as they were spoken and performed, the faith of the Church has a solid ground on which to rest, and each successive generation of believers can sit at his feet and hear his words almost as if they were still dropping from his gracious lips. But as we are still

engaged with the execution of his office here below, another feature of our Lord’s prophetical ministry demands a few moments’ consideration. iv. The miracles by which the Lord authenticated his divine mission. These were essential to prove that he was sent by God as the promised Prophet. Had he not wrought miracles, there would not only have been no open proof of his divine mission, but he would have been inferior to Moses who gave the law, and to Elijah who restored the law--both of whom proved their commission of God by the wondrous deeds which they wrought in his name. The subject is too wide for us to enter into in our limited space. It will be sufficient to show from two passages the connection between our Lord’s miracles and the belief that he was the promised Prophet. The first is in connection with the miracle of feeding the five thousand--"When the people saw this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!" (John 6:14.) The other is the Lord’s answer to John, when he sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the inquiry, "Are you he who should come," (that is, the promised Prophet,) "or do we look for another?" "Jesus told them--Go back to John and tell him about what you have heard and seen--the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Gospel is being preached to the poor." (Matthew 11:4-5.) There the Lord appealed to his miracles, that he was "he who would come," the Shiloh, the Prophet of whom Moses spoke. But though our limits preclude us from dwelling further on the Lord’s miracles as a proof of his divine mission, yet we cannot but make upon them, as viewed in connection with the execution of his prophetical office, the following observations:

1. They were so vast, so numerous, and so well authenticated, that one would think that only infidelity itself would try to deny or explain them away. When five thousand men, for instance, were fed with five barley loaves and two small fish, there were five thousand witnesses to the truth and reality of the miracle, besides the disciples, who distributed them to the people, and afterwards filled twelve baskets with the fragments which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Could all these have been deceived? Take five thousand hungry people now at some national gathering. To feed such a number, what an apparatus of provisions would be requisite! Did not, then, each man of this hungry multitude know for himself that there was no such apparatus to feed them? They were in "a desert place," (Matthew 14:15,) far from any human habitation, and were faint for lack of food. Now, how could provisions in sufficient amount to feed such a famished crowd have been brought into this wilderness, and the people thus abundantly fed--not see or know it? Where were their eyes, not to see the camels loaded with loaves, or the boats on the shore of the lake filled with glittering fish? The large amount of provision needed and consumed precluded all collusion or mistake on the part of the disciples; and there could have been no deception of the senses on the part of the famished multitude, when each hungry man ate the broad and tasted the fish, and found and felt his hunger and faintness gone.

These observations are indeed obvious enough, but the deep-seated infidelity of our wretched heart sometimes needs a seasonable check, and faith itself may occasionally need confirming by taking a closer view of the solid grounds on which it rests. We have, therefore, purposely selected this one miracle to show how clear the proof that it was wrought by a divine power; but the same train of reasoning, a little modified according to the circumstances of each, may be applied to them all. They were too open, too palpable, too vast, too supernatural, to be anything but real manifestations of divine power.

2. They were almost all miracles of mercy. The only exceptions that we can call to mind were, the permission given to the unclean spirits to enter into the herd of swine, and the denunciation of the barren fig-tree; of which the first was a just punishment for keeping for profit a herd of unclean animals, contrary to the law; and the other a standing warning against all barren professors.* Contrast with the beneficent miracles of Jesus, some of those wrought by Moses and Elisha, and it will at once be seen what compassion for suffering, and what power to relieve it, met in his tender, loving heart.

* As the fig-tree stood by the way-side, and was therefore no man’s property, no one was injured by its destruction; and being barren, no one would have been benefited by its continuance.

3. Our Lord’s miracles were wrought immediately by his own power, and not like those of Moses, mediately by the power of God. In other words, Moses and the prophets only wrought miracles instrumentally by the power of the Almighty; the Lord Jesus wrought them by his own power as himself the mighty God. Moses could do nothing without his rod; Jesus had but to say, "I will; be clean," and the leprosy departed; "Lazarus, come forth," and the dead man issued out of the tomb. v. But while treating of the execution of his prophetical office, we must not omit another noticeable point; that the Lord, as a Prophet, predicted events that would come to pass. Thus he prophesied his own sufferings, death, and resurrection, the treachery of Judas, the fall and recovery of Peter, the destruction of Jerusalem, the spread of the gospel among all nations, and his own second coming. To work miracles and to predict future events are the two grand credentials of a prophet. Both of them, therefore, were in an eminent degree possessed and manifested by our blessed Lord as the anointed Prophet of the Father. vi. One more feature will close this branch of our subject. Jesus sealed the truth of his prophetic mission by his sufferings and death. Persecution and death was the frequent if not the usual treatment of the prophets. How pathetically does the Lord apostrophize Jerusalem--"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets." (Matthew 23:37.) As a prophet, then, he too must suffer persecution and death, and that at Jerusalem--"Nevertheless, I must walk today and tomorrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke 13:33.) He sealed his mission with his blood.

Faithful unto God, faithful unto man, he laid down his life not only as a sacrificing Priest, but as an attesting Prophet; and as by dying on the cross he fulfilled that part of his priestly office which his heavenly Father gave him to do, which was to be executed on earth, so, by the same precious death, he accomplished that part of his prophetical office which he was to perform in the flesh to the glory of God.

02.04. The present mode in which the Lord sustains the prophetic office in heaven

The present mode in which the Lord sustains the prophetic office in heaven. Our blessed Lord had a work given him to do on earth, as he himself declared--"My food is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34.) And thus, toward the conclusion of his earthly ministry, he could appeal to his heavenly Father, "I have glorified you on the earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do." (John 17:4.) But though he did not bow his sacred head, nor lay down his precious life, until he could say, "It is finished," we must not thence conclude that the gracious Lord laid down his covenant offices when he breathed forth his spirit on the cross.

We know that it was not so with his priestly office, for the Apostle says, "We have" (now have) "such a High Priest, who has sat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" (Hebrews 8:1;) and again, "And having" (that is, now having) "a High Priest over the house of God." (Hebrews 10:21.) That Jesus, as "having an unchangeable priesthood," and being a priest "who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life," (Hebrews 7:16; Hebrews 7:24,) "ever lives to make intercession for us," is the hope and help of all our approaches to the throne of grace. Thus we have the fullest, clearest evidence, without and within, in the word and in the heart, that Jesus is still executing his priestly office in the courts above. So also with regard to his kingly office. Though he never ceased to be King, for as he was "born King of the Jews," (Matthew 2:2,) so, even in death, the title put upon the cross proclaimed him "Jesus, the King of the Jews;" still, it was chiefly after his resurrection that the regal scepter was put into his hand. Thus when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he said to them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18.) And this royal scepter he still wields as crowned King in Zion, for "he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet." (1 Corinthians 15:25.) In a similar way, then, the blessed Lord did not lay down his prophetical office when he laid down his precious life, for the Church’s glorious Head has never parted with one atom of his grace or his glory--but resumed it with his other covenant characters after his resurrection. Of this we have the clearest proof in the communion which he held with the disciples before his ascension. Thus, in his conversation with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, we read that, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27.) And similarly; as regarded the rest of the disciples, we read, "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:45-48.) The opening of the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures--what was this but fulfilling his office by which he still taught them after the resurrection as the anointed Prophet of the Father?

1. But as the blessed Lord was about to withdraw his personal presence from his disciples, and to go to the Father, that he might sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high, there was a necessity

that while he still retained his prophetical office there should be a change in its mode of administration. This he fully and clearly opened up to his disciples in his last discourses with them, where he promised them "another Comforter," even "the Spirit of truth," who should "teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatever he had said unto them." But though the mode of administration is changed, that it is still Jesus who teaches is plain from his own words--"I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth--for he shall not speak of himself; but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." (John 16:12-13.) "I have yet many things to say unto you." Does not this show that Jesus still had many things to say to his disciples? And when should he say them but from the right hand of the Father when he had baptized them with the Holy Spirit and with fire? Until that full and heavenly baptism they could not bear the weight of instruction which he had to impart. But again, "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time comes, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father." (John 16:25.) What time was that of which he said that when it came he would show them plainly of the Father? Not between the resurrection and the ascension, for though he was seen of them forty days, and spoke to the disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, (Acts 1:3,) yet his visits were but occasional, and their minds were as yet unprepared for a fuller revelation of the Father. Clearly then the time was from the day of Pentecost, when they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. We see, then, plainly that though there was necessarily a change of ministration, yet that the blessed Lord still continued to fulfill his prophetical office after his ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high. To show the nature, and to give them an earnest of this change before he left the earth, "he breathed on his disciples, and said unto them, Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22.)

2. But as the Lord before his ascension gave his disciples a charge to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and as he promised to be with them even unto the end of the world, it was necessary that there should be a continued supply of the Holy Spirit to ratify that promise in raising up, commissioning, and qualifying a series of heaven-taught ministers to feed in each successive generation the Church of God. Our gracious Lord, therefore, as the Head of his body the Church, when he went up on high, received gifts for that express purpose. This was spoken by the mouth of prophecy many hundred years before its fulfillment--"You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." (Psalms 68:18.) But what these gifts were the Apostle unfolds in his divine commentary on that prediction--"That is why the Scriptures say--When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people. He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:8; Ephesians 4:11-12.)

Jesus, then, is still the Prophet of his Church, and is still executing this office at the right hand of the Father. But his own personal ministry having ceased when he himself withdrew his presence from the earth, he carries it on now–

1, by sending forth his Spirit into the heart of his people to testify of himself; and,

2, by qualifying, commissioning, and sending his servants to preach the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

Chapter 40

02.05. The bearing of the Prophetical Office of the Lord Jesus Christ on the experience of ...

The bearing of the Prophetical Office of the Lord Jesus Christ on the experience of his people.

Whatever the blessed Lord is in himself to his Church and people, it is only so far as he is spiritually and experimentally made known to the soul of each individual believer that any personal benefit or blessing is derived from him. Thus the Apostle declares that he "of God is made unto us wisdom;" (1 Corinthians 1:30;) but if there is no discovery or revelation of him as such to our soul; if he does not himself teach us by his Spirit and grace; if we are not personally and individually taught and brought to sit at his feet and hear his word; if we do not take his yoke upon us, and learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, he is not made "wisdom" to us as living members of his mystical body--nor do we derive any benefit or blessing from what he thus is to the Church of God. It is so with every other office that he sustains in the courts above. Is he a High Priest over the house of God? It is only as the efficacy of his atoning blood is made known to our conscience, and our prayers, as perfumed by his meritorious intercession at the right hand of the Majesty on high, enter into the ears of the Lord Almighty, that we derive any personal benefit from his high priesthood. So with his kingly office. Unless he reigns and rules in us, and sways his gentle and peaceable, yet powerful scepter over our hearts--we are but his subjects in name, and are utter strangers to the influence of his constraining love. Indeed, all profession which does not spring out of a real, vital, experimental knowledge of, faith in, and love towards the Lord of life and glory, is but a miserable delusion--which, to those who live and die in it, will end in destruction and perdition. If, then, we profess to receive the Lord Jesus as our risen and glorified Prophet, how needful it is to search and examine what individual and personal influence this belief has upon our heart and conscience. To this point, then, we shall now direct our readers' attention.

We have already shown that our blessed Lord, as now sustaining the office of Prophet to his Church and people, teaches them by his Spirit. This is no detraction from, or derogatory to his prophetical office, for such is the Unity of the divine Essence, that though the Persons in the blessed Trinity are Three, yet the work of each is the work of all, and the work of all is the work of each. As the Apostle says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all." (1 Corinthians 12:4-6.) Thus, the Father teaches; (John 6:45;) the Son teaches; (John 16:25;) and the Holy Spirit teaches. (John 14:26.) But though in this sense each of the Persons in the glorious Trinity teaches the Church of God, yet we must bear in mind that they only teach it in consequence of the gracious Lord being the Mediator between God and men. Only because the Son of God has redeemed the Church by his own precious blood, has risen from the dead, gone up on high, and is in the presence of God for us, is any divine teaching imparted to the members of his mystical body. The gift of the Spirit depended on Jesus being glorified. (John 7:39.) It is still, then, he who speaks from heaven (Hebrews 12:25) to the souls of his dear people, for his words, as applied by the blessed Spirit, fall with power upon their hearts,

and thus become life and spirit to their fainting souls. Thus it is still true, "My sheep hear my voice," though the good Shepherd is enthroned in the highest bliss, and his bodily presence withdrawn from the earth. But before we can personally realize the blessedness of having the Lord himself thus for our teacher, we must be made to feel and that deeply our ignorance, our darkness, our unbelief, our thorough helplessness to procure or produce any saving knowledge, either of himself or of any divine truth connected with him. This deep and abiding conviction of our ignorance and helplessness is the first fruit of the first moving of the blessed Spirit on the crude and wild chaos of our heart, enlightening the eyes of our understanding to see, quickening the soul into divine life to feel, and planting in the conscience that fear of the Lord which, as the beginning of wisdom, trembles at this discovery of our ruined condition. But as it is so important to make straight paths for our feet here, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, let us consider this part of our subject a little more clearly and closely.

One of the four promises of the New Covenant is, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts." (Hebrews 8:10.) This putting of his laws into their minds, and writing them in their hearts, is the fulfillment of the general promise to the Lord’s family as opened up by the Lord himself, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." (John 6:45.) To share, then, in divine teaching is to possess a sure and blessed evidence of being a child of God. But the question still arises--What are the marks and what the effects of this divine teaching? In a day like the present when "many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased," it is easy to be deceived with the mere natural and notional knowledge of the letter of truth, and mistake light upon the word for the light of life in the soul. The distinction between them is better felt than described; for as you cannot explain light to a person born blind, or the sound of music to one that is deaf and dumb, so you cannot by mere words lay open the deep mystery of divine life in the heart; nor indeed do we claim to ourselves an unfailing discernment.

"For neither man nor angel can discern Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks Invisible, except to God alone."--Milton. But whether we can clearly discern the difference between natural and spiritual light or not, or whether we can or cannot clearly describe it, the fact, the grand, the all-important fact still remains the same; that there is in the regenerated family of God a light, a life, a teaching, a power, an unction, a knowledge, a savor, a heavenly blessing, which may be imitated and counterfeited, but still remains unapproached and unapproachable by all but the elect of God. This is "the anointing which teaches of all things, and is truth and no lie," that peculiar "unction" which is "from the Holy One," and whereby the saint of God "knows all things." A few marks, then, and evidences of this divine teaching we shall attempt to show; but in so doing we shall chiefly confine ourselves to the peculiar bearing which the prophetical office of the risen Lord has on the work of grace.

1. Conviction of sin, it is evident, is the first mark and effect of divine teaching. "When he has come, he will convince the world of sin." (John 16:8.) This conviction we see in those who were pierced in their heart under Peter’s sermon; (Acts 2:37;) and in the case of the Philippian jailer. Indeed, what knowledge can there be of salvation by the blood of the Lamb if guilt and condemnation have never ploughed up the heart and made deep wounds in the conscience? As Hart truly says–

"What comfort can a Savior bring To those who never felt their woe? A sinner is a sacred thing, The Holy Spirit has made him so."

If we read, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," we read also, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law." (Psalms 94:12.) Thus to be taught out of the law, so as to know its curse, condemnation, guilt, fear, wrath, and bondage, is a blessing, for it breaks up the fallow ground of the heart, prevents sowing among thorns, and opens the furrows deep and wide to receive the pure seed of the gospel when it comes with power to the soul.

2. The second mark and effect of this divine teaching is that which the Lord himself has given--"It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me." (John 6:45.) To come, then, to Jesus for pardon and peace, for mercy and deliverance, for teaching and instruction, is the Lord’s own mark of being taught of God. And to show us that this is a spiritual coming under heavenly drawings, he declared, "No man can come to me except the Father who has sent me draws him." It is by these secret drawings of the Father that we come to Jesus. The eyes of our understanding are spiritually enlightened to see his glorious Person at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; and we come to him as the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. As it stands on this sacred ground, at Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to the soul; faith is raised up to believe in the things thus presented to view; hope anchors in them as divine realities within the veil; and love flows forth to embrace the Person and work of the Son of God--as full of grace and glory, as all its salvation and all its desire. But as we are now showing the special bearing which the prophetical office of Jesus has on the experience of a child of God, we shall trace this out as connected with his coming to Jesus as the risen and glorified prophet of the Most High. As such we have already shown that he now teaches us by his Spirit.

3. The blessed Spirit, then, as a needful preparation for his own divine instruction, convinces us of our ignorance, of the veil of unbelief that is by nature spread over our heart, and of our utter inability to take it away. So great is this darkness, as a matter of personal inward experience, that, like the darkness in Egypt, it maybe "felt;" so deep this ignorance that all knowledge or capability of knowledge seems utterly gone; so strong, so desperate this unbelief that it seems as if thoroughly incurable. And yet amid all this deep and dense cloud of ignorance, darkness and unbelief--rays and beams of light every now and then break through, which, though they seem at the time only to show the darkness and make it deeper--yet really are a guiding light to the throne of God and the Lamb. There Jesus sits enthroned in glory, not only as an interceding High Priest to save, not only as an exalted King to rule, but as a most gracious Prophet to teach.

We read, "Nevertheless, when it (that is, Israel) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." (2 Corinthians 3:16.) Thus, in soul experience, as the veil is felt to be thick and strong over the heart, there is a turning to the Lord with prayer and supplication that he would take it away; and as he, in answer to prayer, is pleased to do this, light is seen in his light, his truth drops with savor and sweetness into the soul, and the word of his grace sways and regulates the heart, lip, and life.

4. As, then, the veil of ignorance and unbelief is taken away, and the heart, under divine operations, becomes as the wax to the seal and the clay to the potter, there is raised up an earnest desire to know the mind and will of God, that we may be instructed into the one, and do

the other. But Jesus, as the anointed Prophet of the Father, has revealed to us the mind and will of God. In his holy example, in his meek, humble, and devoted life, in his suffering death, and especially in his gracious words, as filled with the light and power of the Holy Spirit--Jesus has revealed the mind of God--for in seeing him we see the Father, and in hearing him we hear the Father. Now, the Apostle says, "We have the mind of Christ;" (1 Corinthians 2:16;) and again, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Php 2:5.) But this mind of Christ can only be in us by the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, for "the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God;" and as thus taught and blessed of the Spirit, we become spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. "He who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit;" (1 Corinthians 6:17;) and as thus baptized into his Spirit, there is union and communion with him. Thus the Lord breathes, as it were, his mind into the soul--that it may see as with his eyes and feel as with his heart, hate what he hates, love what he loves, be warm for his truth, zealous for his honor, and earnest for his glory. So also with knowing and doing the will of God from the heart. (Ephesians 6:6.) It can only be learned at his feet who did it with a perfect heart, who submitted himself wholly to it in the gloomy garden and on the accursed tree; and who now, at the right hand of the Father, enables his people to do what that will commands, abstain from what that will forbids, and bear what that will imposes.

5. The ministry of the gospel, as flowing out of and connected with the prophetical office of the Lord Jesus, has here also a spiritual bearing on the experience of the saints of God. We have before shown that when Jesus went up on high he received gifts for men, and these gifts he poured forth in sending apostles, prophets, etc., to testify of himself. Thus every servant of Christ, whom he teaches by his Holy Spirit, and sends into the gospel field to labor in his service, is a witness to the present life of Jesus as still a Prophet to his Church and people in the courts above. When at Damascus gate Jesus spoke from heaven for the first time to his chosen vessel Saul, he said, "'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you." (Acts 26:16.) "What I will show you." Do not these words show that by fresh and continued appearances of, and communications from Jesus, Paul’s ministry was maintained? Again--"And he said unto me, Depart; for I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts 22:21.) He has not ceased, nor will he ever cease, to send laborers into his harvest; for his own gracious promise connected with the ministry of the gospel is, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." When, then, he qualifies and sends one of his own servants, all his experience first and last, his knowledge, understanding, gifts, abilities, success, and blessing, are all so many standing testimonies that Jesus still speaks in and by him. What he is as a blessing to any of the living family he is by the grace of God and as if the spring were to cease to flow, or were diverted from its course, the brook at once would fail, so, were Jesus to withdraw the continual supplies of his grace to his servants, their gifts would wither, their ministry dry up, and they become like a summer stream, which "vanishes in the heat." (Job 6:17.) So also with the gracious hearers of the ministry of the word; they too have a share in the blessing which Jesus sends down as the risen Prophet of his Church. When the ministry of the word is made life and spirit to their soul, when the gospel comes "not in word only but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance," when the hard and stony heart melts into contrition and love, under the voice of the Beloved speaking through his sent servant--then the hearer as well as the minister has an evidence that Jesus still lives and lives to bless.

6. We might name also the precepts of the gospel which Jesus has prescribed, the ordinances of his house which he has instituted, the whole course of holy obedience which he has enjoined, as closely connected with his prophetical office. But as we purpose, with God’s help and blessing, to view him in a subsequent article as King in Zion; and as this part of our subject will fall more conveniently under the consideration of his kingly office, we shall not now dwell on these points. We could not indeed, altogether pass them unmentioned by; but our present space as well as the reason already alleged prohibit us from entering further upon them.

7. We might also instance as closely connected with an experience of the prophetical office of Jesus, the inward possession and practical exemplification of that wisdom which is "from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Indeed all that in a believer is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; all his excellence and virtue as a saint, all his praise in the churches--all, all flow out of his union and communion with Jesus as a risen Head, and are all connected with the teaching which he gives, and the supply of grace which he ministers. How fully, how blessedly is the whole of this divine teaching summed up in Paul’s prayer for the saints of God at Ephesus--"I keep asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people. I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence." (Ephesians 1:17-23.) With this prayer, which may the Lord fulfill in our readers’ hearts and ours, we close our Meditations on the prophetical office of Jesus.

02A.00. Jesus, the Enthroned King

Jesus, the Enthroned King by J. C. Philpot In our past Meditations we have, though in scanty measure and with feeble pen, attempted to set before our readers a few leading features of that surpassing grace and glory which the Lord Jesus Christ bears as anointed of the Father to be the interceding High Priest and the teaching Prophet of his Church and people. We now approach the consideration of that still greater and more glorious title which he wears as Zion's enthroned King. But O, at the very outset, how unworthy, as well as unable, do we feel ourselves to be to set forth in any suitable, any befitting manner the glory of that exalted Sovereign who sits at the right hand of the Father as Head over all things to the Church! When the sun veils its rays behind a cloud we can look upon its milder glories with undazzled eye. But who can gaze on its meridian beams in all their undimmed splendor? Thus when the Son of God veiled the brightness of his eternal glory by assuming a tabernacle of flesh, faith can view him as a suffering yet sacrificing High Priest in the garden and on the cross with undazzled, though with sympathizing, eye. In a similar way, when Jesus still speaks as a Prophet in the word of his grace—"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," faith can now sit at his feet and hear his words without being overwhelmed with his glory. But when we look up and attempt to view him sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high in all his exalted dignity and power as King of kings and Lord of lords—then we feel as if dazzled and overborne with a sight and sense of his surpassing glory. In the days of his flesh, the beloved disciple could lean on the bosom of Jesus and stand by his cross; but when in Patmos' lonely isle he appeared in his majesty so that "his eyes were as a flame of fire," and "his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength," John fell at his feet as dead! Yet if he has made us willing in the day of his power, has brought us to his feet in all humility to touch the scepter of his grace and own him Lord of all, we may, in company with his saints, "speak of the glory of his kingdom and talk of his power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." (Psalms 145:11-12.) And as we have undertaken to set forth the covenant characters of the Lord Jesus, we must not now sink under the sense either of his glory or of our own insufficiency, and throw aside our pen as we are tempted to do, but endeavor, as the Lord may enable us, to trace out what is revealed to us in the word of truth of his present dignity as Zion's exalted King. But as we desire to present the subject before the mind of our readers with as much clearness and distinctness as possible, we shall arrange our views and Meditations upon it in the following order:

I. The eternal purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son, and exalt him as Lord and King.

II. The execution of this purpose in the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Son of God.

III. The nature, object, extent, and duration of his kingdom.

IV. Its future development and glorious manifestation.

V. The practical and experimental bearing and influence which the royal power and authority of Jesus have on believing hearts.

Chapter 42

02A.01. The eternal purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son, and exalt him as ...

The eternal purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son, and exalt him as Lord and King. To glorify his dear Son, to set him at his own right hand in kingly majesty and sovereign dominion over all things in heaven and earth and under the earth, was the eternal purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will. As the Son of the Father in truth and love, Jesus is "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person." That this glory, then, of the Father might be seen and reverently adored by the sons of men; that a view of it here by faith and hereafter by sight might fill millions of redeemed saints with immortal joy; that all the love, beauty, blessedness, holiness, and happiness of a Triune Jehovah might shine forth in the glorified humanity of the Son of God; and that by virtue of their union with him he might dwell in his elect as his Father dwells in him, that thus they all might be one, (John 17:21; John 17:23,)—this was that mystery of eternal wisdom, love, and grace which was hidden in the bosom of God from before the foundation of the world. For this purpose all things were created; and that this purpose might be fully accomplished are they still preserved in being. Redemption by atoning blood being a part—an all-important part of this wondrous scheme—Jesus suffered, bled, died, and rose again to fulfill it, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in royal dignity and power, fully and finally to accomplish all that yet remains to be done. But that we may not darken counsel by words without knowledge, we shall endeavor, as far as we possibly can, to take the Scriptures for our sole guide. Ill would it become us to seek to penetrate with unhallowed gaze into the purposes of God, were they not revealed in the word of his grace; for though "secret things," that is, things purposely hidden from view, "belong unto the Lord, yet those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." (Deuteronomy 29:29.) i. In opening then this subject, we shall tread as closely as we can in the footprints of revelation, and commence with the witness of the New Testament.

We will take first our Lord’s own testimony of himself.

1. At the last supper, just before the gloomy hour when he was to pass into Gethsemane, Jesus said to his disciples, "You have remained true to me in my time of trial. And just as my Father has granted me a Kingdom, I now grant you the right to eat and drink at my table in that Kingdom. And you will sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:28-30.)

2. So when he stood before Pilate, and the Roman governor in all the plenitude of his power and authority asked, "Are you a king then?" what was his meek yet firm reply? "You say," that is, say truly, "that I am a king. To this end was I born." But to show that his kingdom was not of this world, he had previously declared, "Now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36-37.)

3. To these plain testimonies of the Lord concerning himself we may add the promise given to Mary by the angel Gabriel—"He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever;

his Kingdom will never end!" (Luke 1:32-33.)

4. In full accordance, then, with this angelic testimony, as "King of the Jews" was he born and worshiped by the wise men of the East; (Matthew 2:2; Matthew 2:11;) as "King of Israel" was he owned and worshiped by his believing disciples, (John 1:49,) and as "King of the Jews" was he crucified, and proclaimed as such in the three then best known languages, that Hebrew, Greek, and Roman might read his title* firm and good, standing on high in the fixed purpose of God, in spite of protesting chief priests in whose heart the gnawing pang of guilty fear would gladly have altered the title to a more qualified declaration.

* We do not remember to have seen the remark, though sufficiently obvious--that it was this title that arrested the attention and was blessed to the soul of the dying thief, the Holy Spirit arising up faith in his heart that Jesus then and there crucified before his eyes was indeed the Son of God and King of Israel, and as such had a kingdom beyond death and the grave. ii. But we shall now direct our readers' attention to the intimations given in the Old Testament of the kingly reign and authority of Jesus. Declarations of greater or less clearness of the eternal purpose of God to give his dear Son a kingdom are scattered through the whole of these scriptures with so liberal a hand that we can only select a few.

1. The first clear intimation of it, if we except the typical appearance of Melchizedek, king of Salem (Genesis 14:18,) and the prophecy of dying Jacob that "Shiloh would come, and to him should the gathering of the people be," (Genesis 49:10,) is contained in the thanksgiving song of Hannah—"Those who fight against the Lord will be broken. He thunders against them from heaven; the Lord judges throughout the earth. He gives mighty strength to his king; he increases the might of his anointed one." (1 Samuel 2:10.) This is the first mention of the title which Jesus was to bear as the "Messiah," or the "anointed" Prophet, Priest, and King of his people—that being the word in the original. Its second mention is in Psalms 2:2.

2. But the clearest intimation given to the Church not only that she should have a King but that God's own eternal Son should be that King is contained in that Psalm of Psalms, Psalms 2:1-12, where the fixed decree is brought to light and written as with a beam of dazzling glory to assure the friends and confound the enemies of the Son of God. Sitting upon the throne of his glory and looking forth to that time when counsel should be taken against the Lord and against his anointed, the God of all power and might asks by his Spirit, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed one." (Psalms 2:1-2.) Their rebellious hearts cried out, "We will not have this man to reign over us. Let us break these bands asunder, and cast away those cords which would bind us in any subjection or in any submission to the Person and work, the reign or rule of the Son of God." But vain is their rage, idle their counsel. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." "Yet (in spite of all their wrath and rebellion) have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Then the Son meekly answers, "I will declare the decree." This decree was the result of the eternal counsels of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, hidden in the bosom of a Triune God from before the foundation of the world, and then first brought to light in the page of revelation from his mouth who, as revealing the mind and will of the Father, is eminently and emphatically "the Word." "The Lord has said unto me, You are my Son, this day have I begotten you." Then the Father speaks—"Not only have I set you—already set you,

as my King upon my holy hill of Zion," but, "Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." In this Psalm, then, we have the first as well as fullest and clearest view given to the Old Testament Church of the purpose of the Father to exalt the Son of his love to be Lord and King.

3. Psalms 8:1-9, as opened up and commented upon by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, gives us a view of the humiliation of the Son of God and his subsequent exaltation. "But one in a certain place testified, saying--What is man, that you are mindful of him? or the son of man, that you visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." (Hebrews 2:6-8.) The Apostle, in his spiritual interpretation of this Psalm, brings Jesus before our eyes as the man who was "made a little" (or for "a little while," margin,) "lower than the angels"—as indeed he was by assuming the flesh and blood of the children, human nature being in itself intrinsically inferior to angelic. But the Holy Spirit in the Psalm,* as interpreted by the Apostle, looked not only beyond the original thought of the Psalmist, as he first contemplated the starry heavens, in all their midnight oriental splendor, and then viewed man in his first creation, as made a little lower than the angels, and yet crowned with glory and honor, as invested with dominion over the works of God’s hands—the Holy Spirit, in inspiring this Psalm, looked, we say, not only beyond this primary intention of the Psalmist, but also beyond the humiliation of the blessed Lord to his glorification at the right hand of the Father, and testified to his regal dignity by the words, "You crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

* We have often thought, and indeed may say we fully believe, that the inspired writers of the Old Testament did not themselves always fully see or understand the meaning of their own language. The Holy Spirit so influenced their mind and guided their pen that fuller, deeper truth was lodged in and conveyed by their words than they knew of. Thus when David cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalms 22:1,) he was crying out under the hidings of God’s countenance from himself. But the Holy Spirit had a deeper meaning by them, even the dolorous cry of the suffering Son of God. The inspired penmen knew indeed that the sufferings and glory of Messiah were intimated by the Holy Spirit, but their views of both were dim and feeble. Yet they sought to penetrate into the mind of the Spirit, as Peter speaks—"This salvation was something the prophets wanted to know more about. They prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you, even though they had many questions as to what it all could mean. They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ’s suffering and his great glory afterward. They wondered when and to whom all this would happen." (1 Peter 1:10-11.)

4. A similar testimony was given by the Father to his sovereign purpose to exalt the Son of his love in those memorable words which the Lord himself quoted in the days of his flesh, (Matthew 22:41-45,) "The Lord said unto my Lord--Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." (Psalms 110:1.) The ’right hand’ is the place of dignity, power, and authority. To set his dear Son there in all the grace and glory, power and authority of his Person as God-man—the Son of God incarnate, that in him all the perfections of Deity might shine, that the invisible, self-existent I AM, who dwells in the light that no man can approach unto, might come forth, as it were, out of this unapproachable shroud of dazzling, overwhelming light, and appear in a form in and under

which he might be seen, known, believed in, loved, worshiped, and adored by millions of redeemed men and elect angels, was a part—a leading and principal part of that "counsel of the Lord which stands forever," of "the thoughts of his heart" which will endure "to all generations." (Psalms 33:11.)

5. But though the Psalms, and especially such as Psalms 72:1-20, Psalms 89:1-52, Psalms 96:1-13, Psalms 98:1-9, Psalms 149:1-9, contain intimations more or less clear of the fixed purpose of God to set his dear Son on the throne of his glory, yet nowhere in the inspired page do we meet with such plain and positive declarations of this eternal counsel as in the prophet Isaiah. The promised reign of Messiah shines with steady light all through the pages of Isaiah; but, we shall direct our readers' attention chiefly to Isaiah 49:1-26, which contains, so to speak, a holy dialogue between the Father and the Son on the subject of his work of redeeming love, and the reward promised him in consequence. The chapter opens with the address of the Son to the lands, as preparatory to the expression of his utterance, and the Father's gracious answer—"Listen to me, all of you in far-off lands! The Lord called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name. He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword. He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand. I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver. He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory." (Isaiah 49:1-3.) The blessed Lord here prophetically intimates to the distant lands—may we not say, to our own favored land among them?—his then future incarnation as called from the womb to be God's servant, and as even from the womb of his virgin mother bearing a name which should be above every name. He then speaks of the words of authority and power which the Father had already in eternal purpose given him to kill and make alive in making his mouth "like a sharp two-edged sword;" and then brings to view the protecting hand of his heavenly Father in hiding him from all the malice of earth and hell in the shadow of his hand. He next intimates, that the Father—who, by giving him a prepared body, had made him "a sharpened arrow" would hide him in his quiver until the appointed time when he would send him forth from his right hand to execute judgment; for the Father had, in eternal counsels and covenant transactions, said to him, "You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (We need not suppose that these words contain an exact representation, or are a literal transcript of the solemn transactions between the Father and the Son; but they convey to our mind, under a prophetic form, certain realities which it was the eternal purpose of God to accomplish, and which have been already partially and will one day be wholly fulfilled.) But foreseeing his rejection by Israel after the flesh—that he would come unto his own and his own would receive him not, he prophetically utters the language of complaint—"Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain." Still meekly submitting to his Father's will, and finding a sacred joy in leaving in his hands the result of his sufferings and work, he adds, "Yet surely my judgment," (that is, the decision of my righteous cause,) "is with the Lord, and my work," (or "reward," margin,) "with my God." But even if Israel after the flesh should reject him, this would not alter his glory—"And now the Lord speaks—he who formed me in my mother's womb to be his servant, who commissioned me to bring his people of Israel back to him. The Lord has honored me, and my God has given me strength." (Isaiah 49:5.) The Father then answers—"And he said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6) Here is contained that gracious, that blessed promise of which we Gentiles are now enjoying the fulfillment. Should Israel after the flesh reject, yes, crucify their promised Messiah—will that

foreseen rejection disappoint the purposes of Jehovah? No! It is already foreknown, already fore-provided for. The incarnate Son shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. To the poor Gentiles, despised and abhorred by the proud Jews as out of the covenant, and therefore without God and without hope in the world, he shall be a light to guide elect sinners into the way of peace, yes, shall himself be God’s "own salvation unto the end of the earth." Then comes that glorious promise of the exaltation of his dear Son as Lord and King, of which the first fulfillment began when Jesus, after his ascension, took the throne, but of which the full accomplishment awaits the further unfolding of the purposes of God. With this promise, being unusually pressed for time and room, we shall conclude our present paper—"The Lord, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, says to the one who is despised and rejected by a nation, to the one who is the servant of rulers: "Kings will stand at attention when you pass by. Princes will bow low because the Lord has chosen you. He, the faithful Lord, the Holy One of Israel, chooses you." (Isaiah 49:7.)

It is sweet to view by the eye of living faith the eternal purposes and fixed counsels of the Father to exalt and glorify the Son of his love. That Jesus should be eternally glorified; that he should wear the crown so anciently promised, so righteously won; that he should sway, as if with those very hands that were nailed to the cross, his righteous scepter over all things in heaven and in earth—a scepter of grace to his friends, a rod of iron to his foes; and thus fully accomplish the counsels of God’s heart and the sure word of his lips, is the desire and joy of all who love his name. To them, therefore, the contemplation of the fixed purposes of God to exalt his dear Son and put all things under his feet is full of sweetness and blessedness. An "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" deep counsels of eternal wisdom; fixed purposes of grace and glory; the word and oath of a God who cannot lie; the infinite knowledge of an omniscient, and the boundless power of an omnipotent Sovereign—these deep mysteries, which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed to the babes who long to be taught and love to learn.

They see and feel what a sin-worn world the present scene is; what wreck and ruin everywhere meet the enlightened eye; what misery, what crime, what contempt of all divine authority; what rebellion against every restraint of law or conscience; what open defiance of all check on pride or passion, everywhere abound. Viewing, then, this state of things, and seeing, as wealth increases and population advances, what an influx of foreign ways and manners, of modes of thought and reckless ungodliness, seems more and more rushing in as with an overflowing tide, the child of grace is almost tempted to lose sight of Him who sits above the waterfloods, and to feel or fear as if the god and prince of this world were the real master of the scene, and the great controller of events. As a relief against such unbelieving, God-dishonoring, infidel thoughts, faith is sometimes enabled to look through and beyond all these dark mists of the valley to those unclouded heavens where the Son of God sits at the right hand of power. The present reign of Jesus cannot be seen by the eye of sense. Indeed we have no evidence that Jesus reigns at all, but by watching and discerning his hand in providence, believing the word of his grace, or feeling the power of his resurrection in the heart. These are the three witnesses against all the persuasions of sense and the cavilings of the reasoning mind—the grand sustaining props of the soul when the floods of ungodly men make it afraid. But the chief witness is the sure word of promise, the sworn oath of the Father to the Son, as recorded in the Scriptures of truth—"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. 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 forever, and his throne as the sun before me." (Psalms 89:3-4; Psalms 89:34-36) As, then, Abraham, the father of the faithful, "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform," so faith rests upon the sure promises of God that the throne of his dear Son shall be established forever. Were sense and reason not opposed to the fulfillment of this sure word of promise, there would be no need of a faith like Abraham's—against hope to believe in hope.

Meanwhile, may it be our happy portion to touch for ourselves the scepter of his grace, to submit to his sovereign will, and whoever may say, "We will not have this man to reign over us," to yield ourselves to his unseen, yet not unfelt authority as Lord and King in our hearts and consciences. But as we have shown, in our last paper, from the word of truth, the eternal purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son and exalt him as Lord and King, we shall now consider, with his help and blessing, the execution of this purpose in the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Son of God.

02A.02. The Execution of This Purpose...

The EXECUTION of this purpose in the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Son of God. Our blessed Lord, speaking of himself, said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." (John 12:24.) Under this figure, the grain of wheat, the Lord intimated his death and resurrection, and the fruit which was to spring out of them. Using the same figure, the Apostle says, "But God gives it a body, as it has pleased him." (1 Corinthians 15:38.) Thus, in order to carry out God's eternal purposes to glorify his dear Son, it was needful that he should take a body chosen and prepared for him by the Father. He was to be exalted to regal dignity and power, not merely as the Son of God, but as the Son of man, or rather as the Son of God and the Son of man in one Person. In this mysterious and most blessed union of Deity and humanity in one glorious Person, lie hidden boundless treasures of grace and glory. To be a King he became incarnate. In reply, therefore, to Pilate's question, "Are you a King, then?" Jesus answered, "You say (that is, say truly,) that I am a King. To this end was I born," (John 18:37.) The road to royalty, to a throne which should endure as the days of heaven, lay through the Virgin's womb. The eternal Son of God must become in time a man, that he might reign as God-man forever and ever. He must come down to earth, that all power might be given unto him in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18.) He must be made lower than the lowest, that he might become higher than the highest; must serve, that he might rule; wash his disciples' feet, that a crown of glory might be put upon his head; take upon him the form of a servant, that God might "highly exalt him and give him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Php 2:7-10.)

Through the disobedience and transgression of man, created in the image of God to be his representative on earth, God's lower creation became marred and defaced. Sin, the spoiler, entered Paradise. With sin entered death; and with death--disorder, wreck, and ruin spread themselves far and wide over this once fair domain which God himself pronounced very good, until earth has become a very Aceldama—a field of blood. How dishonorable, then, would it have been to the ever-living God had Satan been thus permitted to triumph. Would it not have been the boast of devils and the wonder of angels, that the arch-fiend of hell should have, as it were, outwitted by his skill all the wisdom of Omniscience, and defeated by his power all the strength of Omnipotence? To destroy, we all know, is easier than to create. A child may, by accident or thoughtlessness, in a moment break a priceless vase; a madman set fire to the accumulated wealth of ages; a vile assassin take at one thrust a life precious to a whole nation. But if to destroy be so much easier than to create, how much more difficult is it to restore what is destroyed! What skillful hand shall repair the shattered vase? What are can give us back the precious manuscripts, the antique cameos, the statues of a Phidias, the paintings of a Raphael? What Promethean skill renew the murdered statesman's life? Here the skill of man fails; here the mocking devil seems to triumph, and to gather up fresh strength to go on with that infernal work whence he borrows his name, "Abaddon," the destroyer. (Revelation 9:11, margin.) But where man falters in despair and

Satan shouts in triumph, the wisdom of the All-wise, the might of the Almighty, the grace of the All-gracious, eminently shine and display themselves with infinite luster before the eyes of all created intelligences. Over man Satan prevailed by craft and infernal skill; but by man—by that very nature which he sought utterly to destroy, shall he be baffled, defeated, overwhelmed with shame and everlasting contempt. He was allowed to bind wretched man in the chain of sin until the iron entered into his soul; but by man shall everlasting chains be bound round him unto the judgment of the great day. As Apollyon, the destroyer, shall he destroy the image of God in man; but by man shall that image be restored, and not only so, but raised to a glory, a brightness, and a luster to which it never could have attained by its original creation.

Pride and envy, inflamed by desperate malice against God and man that human nature, inferior to angelic by creation, should be promoted to the favor from which he had fallen, urged on Satan to plot the deadly deed. He would ruin and destroy that nature. The image of God should not shine upon earth. He would mar and deface it; he would pollute with his own infernal spawn the very nature on which that image had been stamped; would debase it to the lowest hell; would fill it with bestiality and filth, blood and crime, until, as sunk below the brute creation, God should loathe and abhor the work of his own hands. In this hellish plot he was, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, allowed so far to succeed as to make the world what we now see it, a hideous wreck and ruin, festering and sweltering, like a huge carcase, in its own corruption, until the burning flames of hell seem to be the only place into which it can be cast out of the sight and presence of a God of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity. But O the depths of eternal wisdom and surpassing grace! Into this very time-worn scene of sin and woe, just as the spring-tide of iniquity had risen to its utmost height, and the whole world seemed flooded with evil as with the waters of a second deluge into this wrecked and ruined world, and what was far worse, amid these degraded and debased wild beasts of men, the Son of God came in the flesh. From the bosom of the Father did the Son of his love come forth to repair the waste places, the desolations of many generations. On this very sin-stricken earth, this abode of misery and crime, did the feet of the Son of God in our nature rest. This valley of tears he trod with holy steps--in the world but not of it--a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. According to ancient promise, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem those who were under the law." (Galatians 4:4.) In that sacred humanity—real flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the children, though not fallen like theirs, but holy and pure--the eternal Son of the Father stood in the gap and repaired the breach, took a holy portion of that nature which sin and Satan had defiled into union with his own divine Person, obeyed in it the law, enduring the curse, offered up his holy body and soul as a sacrifice for sin, laid down the life which for that purpose he had taken, and raising his incorruptible body from the tomb, took it with him into the courts of bliss, there to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

O the wisdom and power of God! O the unfathomable depths of mercy and grace! O the unsearchable treasures of goodness and love! O the opening visions of eternal glory! Satan baffled! Sin blotted out! The image of God restored! Human nature raised to inconceivable dignity by its personal union with the divine Person of the Son of God! The fallen Church washed, justified, sanctified, and glorified with all the glory of her Head and Husband, and an eternal revenue of glory brought to a Triune Jehovah—to God the Father for his eternal purposes of wisdom and love; to God the Son for his unspeakable condescension in the work of redemption; to

God the Holy Spirit for his forming the sacred humanity of Jesus, and sanctifying the elect of God to know his grace, be conformed to his image, and partake of his glory. But carried away by the grace and glory of a theme so precious, we have rather anticipated our subject. We proposed to show the connection between the incarnation and death of Jesus--and his exaltation to royal dignity. We have thus far, then, showed that, in the boundless depths of the wisdom of God, his dear Son took flesh that as our great High Priest he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. But the same boundless wisdom and grace which provided the sacrifice assured him of a crown as his reward. This was a part of "the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame." Death was not only necessary as a part—a main part of the sacrifice which he, as Priest, offered, but as a requisite for the glory with which he, as King, should be crowned. In fact all his three offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King, required to be sustained and magnified by his sufferings and death. What an example of meekness and martyrdom, what lessons of suffering and patient endurance of the deepest agony and shame are seen in the dying Prophet; what precious blood in a dying Priest; what grace in a dying King! How this last shone forth so conspicuously that the dying thief acknowledged him as King, and begged for an interest in his kingdom. But there was another reason why the road to the throne lay through the valley of the shadow of death. Our blessed Lord had "to destroy death and him that had the power of death, that is the devil." But this was "through death." (Hebrews 2:14.) Through sin death had come into the world, and had no sooner entered than it set up its throne on the earth, for "it reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them (that is, infants) who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression," which was a voluntary act of disobedience, but as overwhelmed in his original sin, they had fallen under the power and authority of the grim king of terrors. The scepter had therefore to be wrung out of his hand. But, according to the eternal appointments of infinite wisdom, this could only be by the Son of God submitting to die. He therefore took a nature which could die—not in itself mortal, but capable of dying by a voluntary act. No man took his life from him. The Lord of life could not be robbed of life by the creatures to whom he had himself given breath. But he could lay down the life which he had taken by a voluntary submission to the reign of death. He could thus snatch the scepter from his grasp, destroy and disannul him, and by the same act of meritorious obedience break to pieces the reign of Satan, "who had the power of death," as ever terrifying by it the children of God, whom by this terror he held in cruel bondage.

It deserves our utmost attention and prayerful consideration to see, by the eye of faith, the display of wisdom and power shining forth in the way in which the all-wise God sent his dear Son "to destroy," or as the word is in the original, to unloose "the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8.) Satan had, so to speak, spun a raveled knot when he cast the cords of sin round man’s heart. This tangled and tightly drawn knot could not be cut through as by a sword of omnipotent power; but had by infinite wisdom and patience to be unraveled through its whole length. The work which Satan had done was to be undone. Disobedience had to be repaired by obedience—the voluntary obedience of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite value. Sin had to be atoned for by sacrifice—the sacrifice of the nature which had sinned, in union with the Person of the Son of God, and therefore deriving from it unspeakable efficacy. Death had to be destroyed by the ever-living Son of God submitting to die. The law must be magnified by being obeyed by him who by his divine Person is above law. The Lawgiver must be the law-fulfiller. He who is the ever-blessed One must be made a curse; and the holy One of Israel, who know no sin, must be "made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Who will set the briars and thorns against

me in battle?" asked the Lord; "I would go through them," is his answer. (Isaiah 27:4.) So our blessed Lord went through these thorns and briars set against him in battle. He thoroughly went through all that he undertook; and by going through unraveled the work of Satan.

Let us explain this more distinctly, as a point full of truth and blessedness. Thus he went through temptation—wholly through, for he "was in all points tempted like as we are," (Hebrews 4:15,) and by going through every possible temptation which can beset us, threaded, so to speak, the whole avenue of temptation from beginning to end. So he went through the whole of the law, rendering a perfect obedience to it in every demand of unfailing love to God and his neighbor. So he went through the whole of suffering, for "he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," experiencing every possible form of suffering that was compatible with a holy nature. And, in a sense, he went through the whole of sin—not as a personal transgressor, for he was perfectly holy in body and soul, "a lamb without blemish and without spot"--but by imputation, feeling the weight, grief, and burden of all the sins of his elect people. So also did he go through the whole wrath of God, for he drank the cup of his indignation against sin to the very dregs. We can only glance at these things, but they are full of the deepest import--and might, with God’s help and blessing, form a theme of most fruitful meditation, for they embrace the whole of the work which the Father gave him to do. But in thus going through, and by going through undoing the works of the devil, it is desirable to bear in mind and have, as it were, before our eyes that the blessed Lord went through all that we have mentioned in his complex Person as God-man. Thus his sacred humanity, in union with his Deity, went through the law, temptation, suffering, and death—the human nature tasting each and all in their utmost intensity--but the divine nature sustaining, dignifying, ennobling, and bestowing unutterable value, merit, and validity upon every thought, word, and act of the suffering and obedience of the holy humanity--for there was but one Person, though two natures, and therefore all the acts were personal acts. As an illustration of this, look at the actings of our own soul and body. These are distinct, but as united in one person are viewed as one. Thus, as our blessed Lord went through the whole work which the Father gave him to do, his Deity, being in union with his obeying, suffering humanity, stamped each successive movement, as he went through it, with all the value and validity of Godhead. If this is difficult to understand—or at least realize, for who can understand it?—revert to our figure. Is not the mind of an artist stamped upon his work? Does not our soul impress itself and express itself by our body? So Deity stamped value and validity on all the acts of the Redeemer’s humanity. This is beautifully alluded to, Psalms 45:1-17, in the description of the bridal garments of the Church as the queen—"The King’s daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in clothing of needlework." The gold was to be wrought into her clothing, the clothing to be of needlework, intimating that her robe of justifying righteousness was wrought, as it were, as in needlework, stitch by stitch; yet that every thread was embroidered with gold. Here we have the thread of the humanity in union with the gold of Deity, and yet each in such close union that the thread is but one. In gold thread the beauty, the value is in the gold; yet how close the union. Gold by itself could not be made into embroidery. So Deity cannot suffer, bleed, or die; but humanity can in union with it. It is this union of Deity with humanity which made the work of redeeming love so unspeakably glorious, and so meritoriously efficacious. As Hart says--"Almighty God sighed human breath."

It is indeed a mystery; but "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." O glorious mystery!"

"The highest heavens are short of this;

’Tis deeper than the vast abyss;

’Tis more than thought can e’er conceive, Or hope expect, or faith believe."

Yet what or where would redemption have been, unless Deity had imparted value and validity to every thought, word, and act of the obedient, suffering humanity. Our blessed Lord, then, passed through death seemingly conquered, but really a conqueror; seemingly overthrown by Satan, but really his overthrower; seemingly covered with shame, but only to be crowned with glory and honor; seemingly under the curse of God, but really enduring the curse that he might be made a blessing; as a servant, obedient unto death, for crucifixion was the mode of punishment for slaves, yet that he might be exalted in that very nature which there suffered, bled, and died--to a throne of immortal glory. Thus, too, he lay in the grave, that as by dying he might rob death of his sting, so by the tomb he might spoil the grave of its victory. But death could not hold the Lord of life, nor the grave enchain the hand that held the keys of hell, as the Apostle preached, and as faith believes—"Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be held by it." (Acts 2:24.) He fought, he won, and to him as the overcomer was the crown given—"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father in his throne." (Revelation 2:21.) But the question may arise in the mind, When, that is, at what particular period, did the blessed Lord enter upon his kingly office? We have already shown that in his other offices there was an initial entrance before his full assumption of them. Thus, as Priest, he entered initially into the priestly office at his circumcision; as Prophet, he entered initially into his prophetical office when, a child in the temple, he sat among the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. But he did not enter fully upon his prophetical office until after his baptism, nor upon the priestly until he consecrated himself in the prayer recorded John 17:1-26. In a similar way he entered initially upon his kingly office at his birth, for he was "born King of the Jews;" (Matthew 2:2;) but he did not enter actually upon it until after his resurrection, for then it was that "all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18.) But it was more especially when he went up on high, and sat down at the right hand of the Father that the scepter of royal dignity and power was put into his hands. In Psalms 24:1-10 we have a beautiful description of Zion’s anointed King entering into the courts of bliss as he returned victorious from the conquest over sin, death, and hell—"Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, invincible in battle. Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord Almighty—he is the King of glory." Then did God highly exalt him, and give him a name which is above every name. In bringing before our readers our thoughts and Meditations on the Kingly Office of the Lord Jesus Christ we have thus far attempted to trace out, in full harmony, we trust, with the word of truth, two prominent, though as yet preliminary, features of its peculiar character, and have shown, 1. The eternal purpose of God the Father to glorify his dear Son, and exalt him to his own right hand as Lord and King; and, 2. The execution of this purpose in the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of our adorable Redeemer. The point at which we

somewhat abruptly stopped was the exact period at which the blessed Lord entered upon the full exercise of this royal dignity and power. We drew, as our readers will doubtless remember, a distinction between the initial and the full assumption of his kingly authority, and showed, from his own words to the disciples, that "all power in heaven and in earth" was not given unto him until after his resurrection and just antecedently to his ascension and glorification. Until then, though his Son, he was the Servant of the Father, meekly doing his will, and finishing the work which he had given him to do. (Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 49:3; John 17:4; Hebrews 10:7.) Even among his disciples, in the days of his flesh, he was "as he who serves;" (Luke 22:27;) and "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Php 2:8.) He was then "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" who "hid not his face from shame and spitting." Out of his mouth there went not then "a sharp two-edged sword," (Revelation 1:16,) but "prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." (Hebrews 5:7.) "His visage" then, as viewed in vision by the evangelical prophet, "was so marred more than any man;" (Isaiah 52:14;) for "his countenance" was not yet, as seen by the beloved disciple in the Isle of Patmos, "as the sun shines in his strength." (Revelation 1:16.) Lots were then cast on his vesture; (Matthew 27:35;) for on it was not yet written, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." (Revelation 19:16.) The kiss which touched his sacred cheek was the kiss of a base traitor, (Matthew 26:49,) not that of loving, loyal, submissive allegiance. (1 Samuel 10:1; Psalms 2:12.) The crown of thorns then pressed his brow, not the diadem of glory; a reed, not a scepter, was put into his right hand; and the knee bowed before him was not the knee "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," but the knee of mockery and scorn. (Matthew 27:29; Php 2:10.)

Yet was there a joy set before him; and this was the joy of being "set at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come;" in seeing of the travail of his soul, and having "all things put under his feet, and made the Head over all things to the Church." Ephesians 1:20-22.) But when exalted to the throne of glory, then was fulfilled the promise, "The Lord said unto my Lord--Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies." (Psalms 110:1-2.) This present kingly power is mystically represented in the word of truth by his sitting on Mount Zion; for that is "the city of the great King," (Psalms 48:2,) and as such typified the royal dignity and sway of Jesus.* As thus mystically his royal residence, Zion became the perfection of beauty, for out of it God had shined; and out of it now sends forth the rod, or scepter, of his strength. (Psalms 50:2; Psalms 110:2.) The peculiar glory and blessedness of this exaltation of Jesus is that it is in our nature. As one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he ever was King; for "Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together." (Colossians 1:16-17.) He who created all things must be the King of all things; he who is before all things must rule all things, as their rightful Sovereign; he who daily holds all creation together, must needs ever sway over them his protecting scepter. But this is not the regal dignity which Jesus now wears, nor the peculiar scepter put by the Father into his hands. The peculiar glory of his kingly office is that the scepters held by human hands—by those very hands through which the nails of the cross were driven. Yes; that very hated Nazarene, against whom "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together;" that

very abhorred Jesus, against whom the maddened crowd, in their bitter enmity, cried, "Crucify him, crucify him;" that despised One of men, and rejected of the people, whom they, in their judicial blindness, did "esteem stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" that "very Man of Sorrows," who poured out his soul unto death, and who was numbered with the transgressors, now seated on his throne of glory, reigns with sovereign sway, and must reign until he has put down all rule and all authority and power. This exaltation to the right hand of power was the promised reward of his humiliation, sufferings, and death. (Php 2:9-11; Hebrews 12:2; Revelation 3:21.) But as we shall have occasion to enter more fully into this subject before we close our Meditations, we shall now proceed to our next point.

02A.03. Nature, Object, Extent, and Duration ...

The nature, object, extent, and duration of this royal dignity, as now invested in the Person of the risen, ascended, and glorified Son of God.

A. And first, the NATURE of his kingdom. This, like the place where it is exercised, and whence it issues its royal mandates, is heavenly. Our blessed Lord, when he stood before Pilate's judgment bar, declared that his "kingdom was not of this world." It is, therefore, a kingdom, not earthly but heavenly; and as such possesses peculiar characteristics which entirely distinguish it from all other kingdoms.

We will take a glance, therefore, at some of the peculiar features of this heavenly kingdom:

1. It is eminently a spiritual kingdom. When our blessed Lord went up on high, he received gifts for men, as is declared in those exulting words of the Psalmist, "You have ascended on high; you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them." (Psalms 68:18.) These gifts were spiritual gifts, different measures of heavenly grace, as the Apostle explains—"But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Ephesians 4:7-8.) So also testified Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when the risen Lord, as he had promised, baptized his disciples with the Holy Spirit—"This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this, which you now see and hear." (Acts 2:32-33.) This blessed Spirit was not given, in his full measure of heavenly gifts and graces, until Jesus was glorified. (John 7:39.) Comforting, therefore, his sorrowing disciples, their gracious Master said to them, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away—for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7.) The disciples seem themselves to have expected a temporal kingdom. This anticipation of worldly dignity and of a throne erected on earth's base clay manifested itself in the request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee—"Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on your right hand, and the other on the left, in your kingdom." (Matthew 20:21.) And, what we would have less expected, even after his resurrection, when the cross and the sepulcher must have, as one would think, forever dispelled their dreams of a temporal throne, the eleven disciples asked their risen Master, "Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6.) Thus even those faithful few who had walked with him in intimate union for several years, who had heard his heavenly discourses, and more particularly listened to those spiritual lessons uttered in their ears after the last supper, and his closing prayer so filled with holiness and truth—even these believing, affectionate disciples seemed to turn their eyes to the restoration of the fallen national and natural kingdom of Israel. They did not see, until baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, how poor, how low, how unbecoming the glory and dignity of the Son of God it would have been to sway an earthly scepter.

What is its chief glory, but that it is a spiritual kingdom, administered by spiritual means, for spiritual persons, and unto spiritual ends? To subdue hearts, not to conquer kingdoms; to bestow the riches of his grace on poor and needy sinners, not, like Solomon, to heap up gold, and silver, and precious stones; to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, not to spread ruin and desolation over countless provinces; to be surrounded with an army of martyrs, not an army of soldiers; to hold a court where paupers, not nobles, are freely welcome, and where the court dress is not "scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms; their rings, jewels, fine robes, gowns, capes, and purses" (Isaiah 3:20-22), but "the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints;" to issue not pensions, but pardons; and to grant to favored objects not trophies and medals, but "bands of love," and "the morning star" of his dawning smile, (Hosea 11:4; Revelation 2:28,)—such are some of the objects of the King of saints.

Say that the Lord after his resurrection had appeared in majesty and glory to put to flight the Roman armies; say that he had made Jerusalem his metropolis, and subdued all the nations of the earth; would that have been a conquest worthy of his coming from the bosom of the Father, or in harmony with his agonies in the garden, and his sufferings and sacrifice on the cross? To reign spiritually over believing hearts; to quicken and regenerate, save and sanctify, pardon and bless the objects of his eternal love; to conform them to his suffering image, and make them fit for the inheritance of the saints in light--what would the highest, greatest, and most glorious earthly conquests have been in comparison with such and similar spiritual triumphs of his grace?

2. As being, therefore, a spiritual kingdom, it is a kingdom of grace, for in it, as administered by its heavenly Sovereign, grace "reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life." (Romans 5:21.) This is one of the chief blessings of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of power, that the throne on which he sits is "a throne of grace." (Hebrews 4:16.) Thus, having finished the work on earth which the Father gave him to do, he has gone up on high to carry into execution those purposes of grace which brought him down. To begin, carry on, and complete, from heaven his dwelling place, the work of grace on thousands of his chosen saints here below; by grace to pardon their sins; by grace to subdue their iniquities; by grace to purify their hearts by faith; by grace to sanctify their affections and fix them on things above, where he himself sits on the right hand of God—such and similar conquests of his all-victorious grace make Jesus unspeakably precious to those who believe. But what heart can conceive, or what tongue recount the daily, hourly triumphs of his all-conquering grace? We see scarcely a millionth part of what Jesus, as a King on his throne, is daily doing; and yet we see enough to know that he ever lives at God’s right hand, and lives to save and bless. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds his throne! What urgent wants and woes to relieve; what cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage; what broken hearts to bind up; what wounded consciences to heal; what countless prayers to hear; what earnest petitions to grant; what stubborn foes to subdue; what guilty fears to quell! What clemency, what kindness, what long-suffering, what compassion, what mercy, what love, and yet what power and authority does this Almighty Sovereign display! No circumstance is too trifling; no petitioner too insignificant; no case too hard; no difficulty too great; no suer too importunate; no beggar too ragged; no bankrupt too penniless; no debtor too insolvent, for him not to notice and not to relieve! Sitting on his throne of grace, his all-seeing eye views all, his almighty hand grasps all, and his loving heart embraces all whom the Father gave him by covenant, whom he himself redeemed by his blood, and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by his invincible

power. The hopeless, the helpless; the outcasts whom no man cares for; the tossed with tempest and not comforted; the ready to perish; the mourners in Zion; the bereaved widow; the wailing orphan; the sick in body, and still more sick in heart; the racked with hourly pain; the fevered consumptive; the wrestler with death's last struggle—O what crowds of pitiable objects surround his throne; and all needing a look from his eye, a word from his lips, a smile from his face, a touch from his hand. O could we but see what his grace is, what his grace has, what his grace does; and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we should have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high by Zion's enthroned King!

3. But it is a kingdom also of life. A living King needs living subjects. The dead in sin, the dead in profession, have neither part nor lot in the matter. "Death cannot celebrate you." "The living, the living, he shall praise you, as I do this day." (Isaiah 38:18-19.) Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life;" and as such says to his people, "Because I live, you shall live also." Thus he appeared to John in the Revelation, calming his fears when he fell at his feet as dead—"And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18.) To give life, and that more abundantly; (John 10:10;) to be "the resurrection and the life, so that he who believes in him, though he were dead, yet should he live," (John 11:25,) was a part of his divine mission. As, then, the kingdom of the beast is full of darkness and death, (Revelation 16:10,) so the kingdom of Jesus is full of light and life, for he has declared that he is "the light of the world;" and that "he who follows him shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12.) The nature of this kingdom is beautifully unfolded in Psalms 21:1-13.* "How the king rejoices in your strength, O Lord! He shouts with joy because of your victory. For you have given him his heart's desire; you have held back nothing that he requested. You welcomed him back with success and prosperity. You placed a crown of finest gold on his head." (Psalms 21:1-3.) It will be observed that among the blessings thus asked and granted was life. "He asked you for life, and you gave it to him--length of days, forever and ever." (Psalms 21:4.) This life is his mediatorial life, and, therefore, a given, not a self-existent life. As he himself declared—"For as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26.) Of this mediatorial life he gives to his people; and thus they live by him and on him, as he lives by the Father, according to his own words—"As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so he who eats me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:57.) This life quickens, animates, and sustains the Church of Christ as she comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved. Thence comes all her union and all her communion with her risen Head. She lives by it in him, and he lives by it in her. Thus Head and members are one; for as in the natural body the life of the head is that of the members, and this oneness of life makes them one, so is there one life in that mystical and spiritual body of which Christ is the glorious Head. But the subject of Christ as our Life is too wide for our present limits, for it embraces all those communications of divine life which make and manifest his people to be a living people, and comprehends every breath of spiritual life in their hearts from the first cry of a convinced sinner to the last hallelujah of an expiring saint.

* Psalms 21:1-13 is a kind of pendant, or what is sometimes called a complement to Psalms 20:1-9. In Psalms 20:1-9 the Church, fore-viewing the sufferings and sacrifice of Messiah, thus prays on his behalf to his heavenly Father—"The Lord hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you. Send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion.

Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice." (Psalms 20:1-4.) She has a confidence that the Father will accept his burnt sacrifice, will "grant him according to his own heart"—the salvation of his people, and will "fulfill all his counsel"—the counsel of peace "between them both." (Zechariah 6:13.) In this anticipation she says, "We will rejoice in your salvation," &c., and adds, in the confidence of faith, "Now know I that the Lord saves his anointed"—that is, his Messiah, his Christ, the very name which Jesus bore, and by which he is still called. But as in Psalms 20:1-9 the Church viewed the suffering, sacrificing Messiah, so in Psalms 21:1-13 she views the triumphant, reigning Messiah; and sees the Father setting a "crown of pure gold on his head," thus exalting him as King to his own right hand. She sees all his petitions granted, "honor and majesty laid upon him," and himself made "most blessed forever." Thus the two Psalms, as it were, fit into and mutually explain and illustrate each other. Psalms 20:1-9 is prayer, Psalms 21:1-13 is praise; Psalms 20:1-9 sees the cross, Psalms 21:1-13 sees the crown. In the one we see what Jesus was; in the other what Jesus is. Read in this point of view, they cast much light upon both the past and present work of Christ; and especially show the deep interest and sympathy which the Church takes and feels in both his humiliation and exaltation.

4. For a similar reason we can only just briefly remark that the reign of Christ is in its very nature a kingdom, also, of light, (1 John 1:7,) as opposed to the power of darkness; (Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 5:8;) a kingdom of liberty, (John 8:32; John 8:36; 2 Corinthians 3:17,) as opposed to the reign of bondage; (Acts 15:10; Galatians 4:24-25; Galatians 4:31;) a kingdom of love, (1 John 3:1; 1 John 3:16,) as opposed to the reign of enmity and alienation; (Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21;) a kingdom of peace, (Isaiah 9:6-7,) as opposed to war and strife; and a kingdom of holiness, (Isaiah 35:3; Daniel 7:22; Hebrews 12:14,) as opposed to a reign of sin and uncleanness. (Romans 5:21.)

5. But its peculiar characteristic and chief glory is that it is an internal kingdom. "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21.) "The King’s daughter is all glorious within." (Psalms 45:13.) This internal kingdom is that "kingdom of God," of which the Apostle declares that it "is not food and drink--but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17.) It is, therefore, "not in word but in power;" (1 Corinthians 4:20;) requires a new and spiritual birth to see it and enter into it; (John 3:3-5;) is the special inheritance of "the poor in spirit;" (Matthew 5:3;) is entered into "through much tribulation;" (Acts 14:22;) "suffers violence, and is taken by force;" (Matthew 11:12;) and, when received in faith, is "a kingdom that cannot be moved." (Hebrews 12:28.)

It is, therefore, not a kingdom of outward grandeur--but of inward grace; not one of temporal majesty--but of spiritual authority; not one of visible pomp and show--but of invisible influence; not a display of rustling robes, clashing bells, pealing organs, painted windows, medieval architecture, white-robed choristers, intoning priests, surpliced processions, and all that sensuous appeal to the mere natural feelings and passions of the human mind, whereby Satan, as an angel of light, deceives the nations--but a holy, heavenly, spiritual reign of the Lord of life in a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a tender conscience. Happy those who, illuminated from above by a heavenly light, and made alive unto God by a new and divine life, are not to be imposed upon by the baubles of an empty religion; who, knowing the truth for themselves by the teaching and testimony, work and witness of the blessed Spirit, cannot and will not "call evil good or good evil, nor put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." Happy those who see, feel, and know the difference between form and power, deception and reality, a name to live and Christ formed in the heart, the hope of glory! Happy those to whom the King of kings has

extended the golden scepter of his grace, whom he has made willing in the day of his power, and on whose hearts he sits enthroned as their only Lord and Sovereign. In viewing with believing eyes the Person and work, grace and glory, qualifications and offices of the blessed Lord, we are apt to fix our faith upon them more in reference to ourselves—to our own personal salvation and consolation, than as eternally designed to manifest the glory of God. It is, indeed, as seeing him fully and wondrously suited to all our wants and woes that we are first led and enabled to believe on the Son of God unto eternal life. A High Priest who has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and who, as now at the right hand of Power, is "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him," well suits a self-condemned, guilty sinner; a kind and condescending Teacher, at whose feet we may humbly sit to hear his words dropping with unction into the heart, is well adapted to those who feel their ignorance, and long for heavenly instruction; and a King who cannot only manage for them all their temporal and spiritual affairs, but—harder work still!—can rule over their stubborn wills and subdue their iniquities by his Spirit and grace, well meets the case of those who sigh after deliverance from the power and prevalence of a body of sin and death. But though these benefits and blessings, which come down to the people of God out of the mediatorial life and fullness of the Lord Jesus, are in themselves exceedingly great, and, as realized by heart experience, unspeakably precious, yet are they really but second and, as it were--subsidiary to higher and more glorious purposes. No final object can be so dear to God as his own glory. To fill heaven and earth with his manifested glory must be a purpose of greater significance with the Lord, than to save and bless a ruined race. To forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin is a part of God’s glory; (Exodus 33:18-23; Exodus 34:5-7; Numbers 14:17-18;) but the glory itself must be greater than that of forgiveness, of which it is but a part. Thus after the Lord had said to Moses, "I have pardoned, according to your word," he added, "But, as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numbers 14:20-21.) The glory of his holiness, of his justice, of his power, of his faithfulness, of his love, and all the other perfections of the divine nature, must be equal to that of his forgiveness of sin, not to mention the essential glory of his eternal existence as a Trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the Unity of the undivided Essence. To reveal this glory, that thus it might be seen and admired both in heaven and earth, was the eternal purpose of the Most High, even of him who has said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah 46:10.) But as God is essentially invisible, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen or can see, this glory could only be revealed in the face of his dear Son, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person." This is John’s express testimony—"No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." (John 1:18.) In almost similar language speaks the Apostle Paul—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6.) We see, therefore, that to glorify his dear Son was the eternal purpose of God; for in glorifying him he glorified himself, as our Lord declares—"I have glorified you on the earth;" (John 17:4;) and again, "Father, glorify your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John 12:28) But the glory of the Father and of the Son are one, according to the words of our Lord’s intercessory prayer—"I brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you told me to do. And now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began." (John 17:4-5.) Thus we see that the Son of God glorified his Father on earth, and that the Father now glorifies his Son in

heaven. And as he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places that he might be thus glorified in him, so the main purpose of the present royal dignity of Jesus is to manifest that glory.

These few remarks may perhaps prepare us to enter more clearly into the consideration of that part of our subject which now lies before us, that is, the object, extent, and duration of the royal dignity of Jesus at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

B. The OBJECT of this regal sway demands first our consideration. In that sublime and most affecting prayer which the Lord Jesus offered up to his heavenly Father on the eve of his sufferings in the garden and on the cross, he himself unfolded one special object of his present possession of supreme authority and power—"As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him." (John 17:2.) From these words of the gracious Lord we gather two things—1, that the Father has given him power over all flesh; 2, that it was necessary he should possess this supreme authority in order to bestow the gift of eternal life on as many as the Father had given him. The execution, however, of this latter purpose, implies and involves several others, which we shall now, therefore, attempt to unfold.

1. The execution of God's will upon earth is entrusted to the hands of the risen and exalted Son of God. God's open will is made known to us in the Scriptures, and this must ever be our guiding rule, for secret things belong unto the Lord God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29.) But besides this open or express will, God has a secret will, not revealed, at least not plainly and clearly revealed, as is his positive will in the word of truth, though there doubtless are dim intimations of it, could we see them. But as all our readers may not see the distinction we make between the open and the secret will of God, let us explain our meaning a little more distinctly. One instance may suffice as an illustration of the distinction between them. It was God's open or expressed will that when he sent his dear Son, Israel after the flesh should believe in him as the promised Messiah; but his secret will was, that his people by outward covenant should reject him, and nail him to the accursed tree, that redemption by atoning blood might be accomplished, and also that the Gentiles should be the first-fruits of the Savior's finished work.

Now, as the secret will of God thus sometimes differs from his open will, who is so fit to carry into execution this hidden will as the Son of his love, of whom we read, "No man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father save the Son?" He who ever lay in his bosom as his dear Son must fully know all the mind of the Father, for he declares, "As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father." (John 10:15.) To carry out this will demands infinite wisdom and infinite power, as well as an infinite knowledge of the mind and purpose of God. But in whom shall we find this union of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power but in the exalted Son of God? To bring the subject more fully before your mind, take as an instance the execution of the secret purpose of God to save his elect people from all their sins and all their foes. Consider for a moment the countless complications of events connected with the execution of this purpose! Look at the millions of human beings and of human passions which lie in the path as obstacles; the opposition of all the powers of earth and hell; the dreadful state of alienation and enmity into which the elect are sunk; the several and special call of every vessel of mercy; the temptations, trials, and deliverances of each, all which need infinite wisdom to know and almighty power to meet—do but consider these complicated circumstances, and what a view will it give you of the present reign

of Jesus as carrying into execution this secret will of the Father. We have named but one instance, but that is sufficient to give us some little idea of the authority and power committed to the hands of Jesus as enthroned King in Zion.

2. Another purpose of the exaltation of the blessed Lord to the throne of mediatorial glory is that he should be a living Head of influence to his Church. This, is beautifully set forth by the Apostle in that heavenly prayer which he put up for the Church of God at Ephesus at the close of the first chapter of his Epistle—"I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence." (Ephesians 1:19-23.) In what grand, noble, eloquent, expressive language does the Apostle here set forth the exaltation of Jesus, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion" in earth, heaven, or hell, and "all things" past, present, and to come put under his feet," that he might be a glorious Head of life, power, and influence to the members of his mystical body.

It has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell—a fullness of all grace and gifts as well as all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Out of this fullness he is ever supplying the members of his mystical body; for from him, as an ever-living Head, "For we are joined together in his body by his strong sinews, and we grow only as we get our nourishment and strength from God." (Colossians 2:19.) It is only by this union with Christ as a living Head, and by receiving supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness, that we come experimentally and feelingly to know that he lives at the right hand of the Father. We may indeed believe it to be so from the testimony of God in the written word, but we have no such evidence as the Lord speaks of when he says, "At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you;" (John 14:20;) or that which John means when he declares, He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." (1 John 5:10.) This is the grand, the vital distinction between the living and the dead, that the living have union and communion with a living Head, while the dead are "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Ephesians 4:18.) This blessed truth and divine mystery of union and communion with him, the Lord unfolded to his sorrowing disciples in those heavenly discourses, before his sufferings and death, which the Holy Spirit has recorded by the pen of John—John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33. But we shall merely refer to one passage in them as chiefly illustrating our present point—"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me. Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:18-19.) Let us seek to enter into the meaning of our Lord’s gracious words here. His bodily presence was now to be withdrawn from the world. It had despised, it had rejected him. It knew him not, it valued him not. It had proved itself utterly unworthy of his continued presence; it should therefore be deprived of that blessing; it should "see him no more." This polluted earth should no more be trodden by his holy feet. His miracles of mercy should cease; his words of grace and truth should be no more heard; and as the world had no powers of sight but the bodily organ of the eye, when he left the earth it ceased to behold him. "But you," he says to his disciples, "but you see me. Because I live, you shall live also." Our Lord in these words unfolds two mysteries of his heavenly grace—sight and

life. The believer sees, the believer lives. But whom does he see, and by whom does he live? He sees Jesus, he lives by Jesus. He sees by a spiritual sight, he lives by a spiritual life, for Jesus is his life; and because Jesus lives, he shall live also. Thus the child of God carries in his own bosom the clearest proof and sweetest evidence that the Son of God is risen from the dead and reigns supreme in the courts above, for he sees him there, he feels him there. His anointed eye, like the eye of Moses, sees him who is invisible;" (Hebrews 11:27;) and his believing heart, rising up on the wings of love, seeks those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. (Colossians 3:1.) In the parable of the vine and the branches, this mystery of vital godliness is more fully and clearly unfolded, especially in the words, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, no more can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5.) A living Head in heaven is the great object of our faith. Without faith in him, there is no union with him; without union with him, there is no communion with him; without communion with him, there is no fruitfulness; without fruitfulness, there is a casting into the fire as a withered and dead branch. Such is the circle of divine life and fruitfulness in the mystery of faith; such the outcome of barrenness and death in the mystery of unbelief. Let us trace it a little more distinctly.

Jesus lives at the right hand of God; because he lives, he quickens into spiritual life the members of his mystical body; as a fruit of this quickening power, they live; they see him; they believe on him; they have union and communion with him; they live a life of faith upon him; and bring forth fruit to his praise. The whole mystery of this life is contained in the experience of the Apostle—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20.) But as this life of faith on the Son of God is exposed to countless fluctuations, and is opposed by countless inward and outward foes; as it has no power to maintain itself, but, like fire, must go out if left untended; and as the extinction of this life would involve the oath and promise of God and the faithfulness of his dear Son, it needs the Almighty power of the enthroned King of Zion to maintain it in being by continual communications of grace and strength out of his own fullness.

3. Another purpose of the regal sway of the Son of God is to subdue all things unto himself. When the Father raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, he virtually put all things under his feet. This was the promise made in Psalms 8:1-9, as spiritually interpreted by the Apostle—"You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him." (Hebrews 2:7-8.) When God created Adam, he gave him dominion over the works of his hands. This dominion, however, he forfeited by transgression. But the dominion given to the first Adam is bestowed in a much larger measure on the second Adam; for to the first Adam was granted dominion only over all things in the earth, but to the second Adam of "things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Php 2:10.) But though this dominion is virtually and absolutely given him, and though he sits at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, as a sure pledge of the Father’s absolute gift, yet its full accomplishment is still incomplete. This is clearly intimated by the Apostle in the last clause of the

words quoted by us from Hebrews 2:8—"But now we see not all things put under him;" and in that remarkable passage—"After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. For the Scriptures say, "God has given him authority over all things." (Of course, when it says "authority over all things," it does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.)" (1 Corinthians 15:24-27.)

We shall have occasion, in the course of our Meditations, to dwell somewhat fully on these words; but the point to which we wish to call present attention is, the declaration in them that Christ "must reign until he has humbled all enemies under his feet." But why this necessity? Because the Father has virtually put all things under his feet, both by promise and by performance; by promise when he said, "Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession;" and by performance when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. He must, therefore, reign until he has fully executed the Father’s purpose and the Father’s promise. Were he to leave the throne before he had "put all things under his feet," where would be the faithfulness of God; where the promised reward of Jesus? But we must bear in mind that as the reign of Jesus is a spiritual reign, so the enemies put under his feet are the spiritual enemies of his people. Their enemies are invisible, and therefore the power exercised against them is invisible also.

We see sin and wickedness universally prevailing; a most cruel, bloody, and fratricidal war (the civil war in America,) desolating some of the fairest provinces of the earth, and by its consequences affecting millions of our own countrymen; Satan raging as if his time were short; vital godliness at a very low ebb; churches torn to pieces with internal strife; few faithful ministers in the land, and these often walking apart as if half afraid of, or half jealous of each other; error widely spreading; and popular preachers either pandering to the worldly spirit of their hearers, amusing them with jokes and anecdotes, and entertaining them with stories, or arresting attention by novel interpretations of Scripture, and running a reckless combat against established truths.

When, then, we survey a scene like this, our hearts may well sink, and our faltering lips may almost say, "Does Jesus reign? Why, then, do these objects meet our eye so opposed to his holy government? If ’all things are put under his feet,’ why is the world, why is the Church what we cannot but see they are?" To silence this questioning spirit, which the more it is indulged the more perplexing it becomes, let us bear in mind the great truth which we have endeavored to enforce--that the reign of Jesus is eminently a spiritual kingdom, and exercised for his spiritual people. Thus it is not consistent with his present counsel to put down in an open manner, by visible acts of authority, the enemies of his people, but to strip them of so much of their power as affects the salvation and sanctification of his own loyal subjects. To set this in a clearer light, let us bear in mind that an evident distinction may be drawn between the partial and the full display of the present power of Jesus. A king may possess in himself absolute power, and yet restrain himself in the exercise of it. So with the Lord Jesus Christ as King in Zion. None who believe in the power of the Lord Jesus as the exalted God-man can doubt his ability to sweep away from the face of the earth every vestige of sin and misery. But he does not do so. Sin still reigns rampant, and the cry of misery rises up on every side. We must come, then, to one of these two conclusions--either that Jesus does not reign with supreme authority--or that his power is for wise purposes not fully put forth. The first conclusion is infidelity; the second agrees with the views that

we have put forth of the spiritual reign of Jesus. And to this agrees the testimony of the written word, for we read—"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven--The whole world has now become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped him. And they said--We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign." (Revelation 11:15-17.) From this prophetic declaration it is plain that until "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ," which they are not now, the Lord has not "taken to himself his great power and reigned," that is, has not displayed his sovereign authority in visible manifestation. It is now spiritual, and therefore invisible, but not the less real because at present necessarily partial. Were it otherwise, this world would not be a place of temptation and trial, nor would we be conformed to Christ's suffering image by walking here as he walked. View this point, then, of real though partial authority and power as exercised by the Lord, in relation to the various enemies of his people.

Take, first, that enemy of God and man, the arch enemy Satan. By his death, Jesus "destroyed," or, as the word rather means, broke his power; (Hebrews 2:14;) and when he ascended up on high "spoiled" him and all his associated "principalities and powers, making a show of them openly." (Colossians 2:15.) Does not this look like a complete conquest of the powers of hell? Yet Satan is still permitted to blind the minds of those who believe not, (2 Corinthians 4:4,) and hurl his fiery darts against the children of God. Satan could fill the heart of Ananias with evil, (Acts 5:3,) and hinder Paul from good. (1 Thessalonians 2:18.) Can we reconcile these two statements? Is he destroyed who can blind and ruin the sinner? Is he spoiled who can distress and hinder the saint? Yes--but not fully nor finally. He is virtually destroyed as regards the saints of God, because he cannot destroy them, either body or soul; he is spoiled, if not of all power to hinder or distress them, yet of that overwhelming authority which he is allowed to exercise over the world as being still its god and prince. Thus we can understand how the kingdom of Christ is a real kingdom, and his power a really exercised power, though not at present triumphant in full and open manifestation. But though thus wisely and necessarily limited as to conspicuous display, as regards its spiritual exercise it is full and effectual.

Take as an instance, more fully to elucidate this point, another enemy which is put under his feet—death. The consideration of this may give us a still clearer insight into the nature of the authority exercised by the Lord in his kingdom than the one already adduced. That beautiful chapter, 1 Cor. 15, will throw great light on this part of our subject—"For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:25-26.) Observe the connection here between the reign of Christ until he has put all enemies under his feet, and the destruction of the last enemy, death. As death is still destroying, he is not yet destroyed, that is, in the full sense of the term. But he will be fully destroyed. When? At the resurrection; for then, and not until then, "will be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." But is there no destruction of death until his final destruction? Surely. When, by a manifestation of pardoning love, the sting of death is taken away, is not death then spiritually destroyed? Many a dear saint of God has shouted on a dying bed, "O death, where is your sting! O grave, where is your victory?" even at the moment when Death is stinging him to death, and the victorious grave is about to claim for its prey the worn-out body.

We need not pursue further the train of thought. The examples we have given, and to them we might add those of the world and of sin, sufficiently show that the apparent incompleteness of the Lord's triumphs over his enemies, the wide prevalence of sin and misery, and all the opposition made to his authority and power, are no valid arguments against the reality of his reign, or the exercise of his government. It is full and complete for all its intended purposes. If more were needed, more would be displayed. Is it not enough that he reigns spiritually in the hearts of his people; that he controls the power of all their enemies; that he subdues their iniquities; that he sets a limit to the strength and subtlety of Satan; that he deprives death of its sting, and robs the grave of its victory; that he keeps back the raging waves of an ungodly, persecuting world; defeats all devices against his Church; and brings every member of his mystical body through all the storms of time and waves of corruption to the eternal enjoyment of himself? Is not this a real kingdom? Is not this supreme and successful authority? And is not the exercise of this sovereign government, invisible though it is, as effectual as if it were more openly displayed and shone more brightly and conspicuously before the eyes of men? But here we shall pause, reserving to our next paper our considerations upon the extent and duration of this kingdom of the Son of God, the nature and purpose of which we have thus far, however feebly and imperfectly, attempted to unfold for the edification of our readers and the promotion of the glory of a Triune God.

C. The nature and object of the Mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ having thus far formed the subject of our Meditations, we shall now, with God's help and blessing, attempt to unfold the two next points which we proposed for consideration--its EXTENT and DURATION.

Both these points involve difficulties, and have been the subject of frequent as well as warm controversy. But without flinching from expressing our views on the subject, we shall endeavor, while we avoid doubtful and controversial points, to tread as closely as we can in the footsteps of Scripture, and advance nothing which is not, at least in our judgment, in strict accordance with the inspired testimony. By the extent of the Mediatorial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, we may understand two things:

1. The present extent.

2. The future extent.

Both of these points will demand our careful and prayerful consideration, that we may advance nothing inconsistent with the word of truth or the dignity and glory of the blessed Lord. The future extent will come more conveniently under the next section, in which we propose to consider the future development and glorious manifestation of Christ's Mediatorial kingdom; and its duration will fall also better into its place when we have taken a view of his future glory.

We have, therefore, now chiefly to examine the PRESENT extent of the Mediatorial kingdom of Jesus. One word will express this extent—unlimited. Nothing short of, nothing less than this, will be in accordance with his own words—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18.) What possible limit can be assigned to "all power in heaven and in earth?" All power in heaven includes dominion over all the angelic multitudes above; and all power on earth embraces absolute, uncontrolled authority over all men, things, events, and circumstances beneath the starry skies. But the question may, perhaps, arise, "Did not the Lord Jesus, as the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, already possess

supreme dominion over angels and men, and so over all things in heaven and in earth?" Surely he did. But his power and authority, as the Son of God, are distinct from his power and authority as now exercised at the right hand of the Father. The peculiar glory of his Mediatorial kingdom is that the Lord Jesus reigns in our nature—not simply, therefore, as the Son of God, but as the Son of man. This Stephen saw in the vision of faith—"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55-56.) This was also the prophetic view given to Daniel—"As my vision continued that night, I saw someone who looked like a man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14.)

Exactly similar are the declarations of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament—"I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence." (Ephesians 1:19-23.) "And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal’s death on a cross. Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Php 2:8-11.) These testimonies demand our careful and particular attention, as in them are locked up some of the deepest mysteries of our most holy faith; and we will therefore bestow upon them, before we proceed further, a few moments’ attentive consideration. The Holy Spirit has set before us in the word of truth the blessed Lord as the object of our faith under three distinct points of view:

1. What he was from all eternity—the only-begotten Son of God; the Son of the Father in truth and love.

2. What he became in time—the Son of man, by taking upon him the flesh and blood of the children.

3. What he now is—the exalted God-man at the right hand of the Father; still the only-begotten Son of God, still the very and true Son of man; but uniting both these distinct natures, the divine and the human, in one glorious Person, and thus crowned with glory and honor, and sitting as a Priest on his throne in the highest heavens. These three points are all embodied in one verse, as spoken to his disciples by our gracious Lord—"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28.) "I came forth from the Father;" there is his eternal Deity and Sonship. "And am come into the world;" there is his sacred humanity. "Again I leave the world, and go to the Father;" there is his present glorified state as God-man.

It has been our aim and desire to set him before the Church of God under these three points of view, so far, at least, as we have seen him by the eye of faith and felt him precious. In one series of papers, we endeavored to set him forth in his Deity and Sonship, as the Son of the living God; in another series, we attempted to unfold the mystery of his sacred humanity as the Son of man; and in the present series, now coming to a close, to bring him before the Church in his Mediatorial grace and glory as the enthroned Priest, Prophet, and King of his redeemed people. May he graciously smile on this feeble attempt to set forth his praise, and more and more reveal himself to both writer and reader as the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.

It is, then, in his glorious complex Person as Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, that he now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and in him, as thus exalted to be the head over all things to the Church, faith believes, hope anchors, and love embraces. To look to him, even at times, from the very ends of the earth; (Isaiah 45:22; Psalms 61:2;) to call upon him; (Acts 7:59; Acts 9:14; 1 Corinthians 1:2;) to confess and bewail at his feet our grievous sins and innumerable backslidings; to seek after clear and renewed manifestations of his glorious Person and finished work, of his atoning blood and dying love; to desire the promotion of his glory, not of our own; that his will should be accomplished in and by us, and not that our own wretched inclinations and sinful desires should be gratified to our fancied present pleasure, but real future glory; to live to his praise; to listen to his voice, and obey it; to be separated from the world and worldly professors and enjoy union and communion with him; to walk in his footsteps; and when this life, with all its sins and sorrows, comes to a close, to die in his loving embrace—is not this to live a life of faith in the Son of God, and thus "to know him and the power of his resurrection?"

It was a special mark of the primitive believers that they "called on the name" of Christ, that is, addressed their prayers to him as God. Thus Saul came to Damascus "with authority from the chief priests to bind all that called on his name;" (Acts 9:14;) and Paul addressed his epistle "to the Church of God at Corinth," etc., "with all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours." (2 Corinthians 1:2.) So the heathen writer, Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, the Roman Emperor, written about A. D. 102 or 103, giving an account of the early Christians, says, "They are accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ as God." It was this worship of Christ, as the exalted Son of God, which drew down upon them such a load of shame and persecution. That they should worship as God one who had been crucified as a common malefactor, was unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who were called, it was Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:23-24.) But though we do not tie ourselves strictly down to a prescribed line of thought, and do sometimes avail ourselves of the liberty implied in the very word "Meditations" to wander, not, indeed, from the truth, nor even from the subject, but from a rigid adherence to a fixed path of discussion into the green pastures of musing contemplation of the grace and glory of the Lord the Lamb, yet we feel that we have rather digressed from our point, which was to show the present extent of the Mediatorial reign of Jesus.

We have already pointed out that in all the office characters undertaken by our blessed Lord, there was an initial entering upon them on earth prior to their full assumption as now exercised by him in heaven. In his priestly office there was an absolute necessity for this, as the Apostle so cogently argues—"For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have something also to offer." (Hebrews 8:3.) What he offered was himself—"Nor yet

that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:25-26.) As, then, the blessed Lord entered initially into his priestly office when he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, so he entered initially into his kingly office while here below, before his full assumption of it as now administered by him at the right hand of the Father. Thus we see the subjection of all things to his dominion, even in the days of his flesh, as a pledge of all power being given to him at his resurrection in heaven and in earth. At his rebuke, as Lord of the elements, stormy winds and roaring waves were hushed into a calm. At his approach, diseases fled, for there went virtue out of him and healed them all; under his creative hand, food for famishing multitudes multiplied itself, without stint or limit; at his bidding, water was at once changed into wine; at his commanding word, the paralytic started up from his year-long couch, and the dead from his grave-borne coffin. He had but to speak, and the deaf heard, the blind saw, the lame walked, the leper was cleansed. Was not this to walk on earth as its King and Lord? Yes; as Lord of the sea, he walked, in calm grandeur, upon its waves; as Lord of the earth, he bade the grave give back the buried Lazarus; and as Lord of hell, cast out devils, and made those infernal spirits cry out as in terror, "Are you come here to torment us before the time?" If, then, his dominion and authority were so unlimited in the days of his flesh, before he ascended the throne of his Mediatorial glory, what possible limit can be assigned to them now? But as our views of it are too often sadly narrow, and our faith in it proportionally weak, let us endeavor to show in some detail how wide, how unlimited is its present extent.

1. First, then, view it as extending over all people; and bear in mind that this includes enemies as well as friends—those whom he will one day break with a rod of iron and dash in pieces as a potter’s vessel, and those who serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. We are very apt to lose sight of the unspeakable benefits and blessings which we enjoy in the Lord’s exercising kingly authority over all persons, and especially those in high places. Our beloved Queen, our temporal rulers, our judges, magistrates, and all administrators of government; our justly-prized and inestimable constitution; our just and moderate laws; our civil and religious liberties; and all, in fact, that we enjoy as citizens of this highly-favored country, we owe to the real power of our exalted Lord.

How plainly does it declare this under his name as "Wisdom," in the word of truth—"By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even "the judges of the earth;" (Proverbs 8:15-16;) "The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water he turns it wherever he will." (Proverbs 21:1.) Similar is the testimony of the New Testament—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God;" (Romans 13:1;) "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake—whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." (1 Peter 2:13-14.) Thus all civil authority is of God; and, as the Lord of life and glory sits at his right hand in the plenitude of his power, we cannot err in ascribing to his royal authority every temporal privilege that we enjoy. And not only in this favored island, the Queen of the isles sitting on her sea-girt throne, the envy and admiration of surrounding nations, but everywhere on this earthly globe, as far as waves roll, winds blow, sun shines, or stars hold on their nightly courses, does the scepter

of Jesus sway the destinies and control the designs and actions of men. If, amid all the turmoil and confusion of passing events, it is difficult to realize this, consider the consequences which would result both to the world and the Church, were no such supreme dominion exercised. Look for a moment at the fierce, we may say ferocious, passions of carnal men, and see what earth would soon become--were they left unchained in all their natural ferocity. Without the restraints of law and government, which, as we have shown, are instruments of Christ's supremacy, men would tear each other to pieces, like infuriated wild beasts, and deluge society with blood and crime. Where, amid this awful storm, with every element of fury let loose, would society be? Imagine London given up for one day to the unchecked passions of its criminal population, and then ask yourself, "Is there no mighty power which holds in check these worse than wild beasts?" Yes, there is a power as wide-spread as light, as universal as air, as pervasive and far mightier than that which holds the earth itself in its orbit—the supreme dominion of heaven's exalted Lord. Not to believe this, is not to be a believer at all. But you will, perhaps, say, "If Jesus reigns thus supreme, why all this disorder, this misery and crime? why is earth what it is? why this bloody, fratricidal war in America? why this appalling distress in Lancashire, if he holds the reins of government?" But are you a judge of order or disorder? Where you see little else but confusion, there may be the greatest order; and wisdom where you would gladly charge the Almighty with folly. Are you a prophet, or the son of a prophet? Can you foretell what blessing is to spring out of this horrid war, or this sore distress? Does not a king punish as well as rule? And how can the Lord more effectually punish men than by scourging them with their own sins? It is God's special prerogative to bring good out of evil, and order out of confusion. If you were to watch carefully from an astronomical observatory the movements of the planets, you would see them all in the greatest apparent disorder. Sometimes they would seem to move forward, sometimes backward, and sometimes not to move at all. These confused and contradictory movements sadly puzzled astronomers, until Newton rose and explained the whole; then all was seen to be the most beautiful harmony and order, where before there was the most puzzling confusion. But take a scriptural instance, the highest and greatest that we can give, to show that where, to outward appearance, all is disorder, there the greatest wisdom and most determinate will reign. Look at the crucifixion of our blessed Lord. Can you not almost see the scene as painted in the word of truth? See those scheming priests, that wild mob, those rough soldiers, that faltering Roman governor, the pale and terrified disciples, the weeping women, and, above all, the innocent Sufferer with the crown of thorns, and enduring that last scene of surpassing woe, which made the earth quake, and the sun withdraw his light. What confusion! what disorder! What triumphant guilt! What oppressed and vanquished innocence! But was it really so? Was there no wisdom or power of God here accomplishing, even by the instrumentality of human wickedness, his own eternal purposes? Hear his own testimony to this point—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23.) The "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," in the great and glorious work of redemption, was accomplished by the wicked hands of man; and if so, in this the worst and wickedest of all possible cases, is not the same eternal will also now executed in instances of a similar nature, though to us at present less visible? But having taken this hasty glance at the authoritative rule of Christ over and in the midst of his enemies, let us now look at his mild and merciful dominion over his own people. Here we seem to stand, if not on surer, yet, at least, on plainer and more evident ground. The ancient promise of authority and power given unto the Son

of God in prospect of his future exaltation, and of this the Scriptures are full, embraced two things—the subjection of enemies, and the willing obedience of friends—"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule you in the midst of your enemies. Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; you have the dew of your youth." Willingly or unwillingly, all should be made subject to his scepter; for "those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him" in the voluntary obedience of love, and "his enemies shall lick the dust" in the forced submission of power. This distinction between the willing obedience of friends and the forced subjection of foes runs through many other inspired declarations of the nature and extent of the Mediatorial reign of Jesus. Thus, addressing his heavenly Father, the Lord speaks in ancient prophecy—"You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; and you have made me the head of the heathen. A people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me. The strangers shall submit themselves unto me." (Psalms 18:43-44.) We prefer the marginal reading of the last clause, "The strangers shall lie, or yield feigned obedience," as closer to the original, and more in accordance with the next verse—"The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places." Almost the first act of faith is to obey. It was the first act of the faith of Abraham—"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went." (Hebrews 11:8.) The faith of the gospel, therefore, is called "the obedience of faith," (Romans 16:26,) and to believe the gospel is to obey the gospel, as the Apostle speaks—"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Elijah says, Lord who has believed our report?" (Romans 10:16.) When, therefore, we believe the gospel, as made the power of God unto our salvation, we obey the voice of the Beloved as speaking in and by it. "You who dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken to your voice. Cause me to hear it." (Song of Solomon 8:13.) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27.) As, then, the good Shepherd speaks, the sheep hear, and, as they hear, they believe and obey. The Prince of Peace sways his scepter of love and grace over their hearts; they take his yoke upon them, which, by submission, they feel to be easy, and his burden to be light; and thus find rest unto their souls. But this unlimited dominion extends also over all things—all events and circumstances, as well an all persons. This is hard to believe, but, were it not so, what security would there be for the salvation of the Church of God? "All things are yours," says the Apostle; "things present and things to come, all are yours." But how and why are all things yours? "Because you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s." (1 Corinthians 3:22-23.) But how could "all things" be ours, unless all things were subjected to the sovereign sway of Jesus? Again, we read that heart-cheering declaration—"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28.) But how can "all things work together for good," unless these all things are in the hand, and under the supreme control of the Lord Jesus? for were any one thing exempt, that one thing, like a misplaced wheel in a piece of intricate mechanism, might make the whole machinery go wrong, and work for ill instead of good. At the end of the same noble chapter from which we have just quoted, the Apostle enumerates a whole series of dangerous and distressing incidents to a Christian course. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for slaughter." (Romans 8:35-36.) He then adds, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through

him that loved us." (Romans 8:37) But how "in all these things" could the suffering saints of God be more than conquerors, if he who loved them had not supreme control over them? Rising in a glorious climax of triumphant faith, he then declares—"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." (Romans 8:38-39.) "Things present and things to come" must be under the sovereign control of Jesus, as well as "angels, principalities, and powers," or some of them in height, or some of them in depth, or some of them in creation, would be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. Have we not said enough to show from the word of truth what many believe in doctrine, but few believe in real, heartfelt, practical experience, that all things, events, and circumstances are subjected to the sovereign control of the King of kings and Lord of lords? But we now pass on to more difficult and delicate ground—the FUTURE extent of this Mediatorial reign.

02A.04. The FUTURE extent of this Mediatorial reign.

The FUTURE extent of this Mediatorial reign.

Now, at the very outset, we express our firm belief that this will be beyond all that has been ever witnessed, or seen, or known. To assert, as some are now asserting, that this present is the millennial dispensation, and that we are to have no other, is one of those wild, heady, unscriptural declarations which may be well expected from men who deny the true and proper Sonship of our adorable Lord. Can nothing content them but to strip Jesus of his "many crowns?" (Revelation 19:12.) First, they rob him of his dearest and eternal crown—that he is "the Son of the Father in truth and love," and now they will strike another from his head, and will not allow that all nations shall call him blessed, or the whole earth be filled with his glory. That Christ shall reign to an extent hitherto unknown is so clearly revealed in the word of truth that, to our mind, nothing but the most obstinate unbelief or inveterate prejudice can deny it. Whether this reign is to be a personal or a spiritual reign we shall not discuss. It has been the subject of much controversy, and our object is not to discuss vexed questions, but to bring forth out of a believing heart that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to our readers. But we cannot pass the subject by without expressing two convictions, founded, we trust, on the word of truth, as far as it has been opened up to our spiritual understanding:

1. That the reign of Jesus will be from sea to sea and from shore to shore; and 2, that this reign, whether personal or spiritual, will be in full accordance with every gospel doctrine, every heavenly truth, and every part of living experience. We have no idea of a carnal kingdom, or any sympathy with those who by their sensual views of Christ's future reign have done so much to prejudice the minds of God's family against it. Man must ever be what he now is, a poor, fallen, sinful creature, whom the blood of Christ alone can save and the Spirit of Christ alone regenerate. What the blessed Spirit can do, when poured abundantly out, was seen on the day of Pentecost. No carnal paradise, no earthly delights, no worldly thrones or scepters, no rivers of literal milk and honey, no amount of wheat, or wine, or oil, no abundance of the young of the flock and of the herd can satisfy the souls of those, whether few or many, now or hereafter, who come and sing in the height of Zion and flow together to the goodness of the Lord. Unless their soul be as a watered garden, watered with the blood and love of the Lamb, God's people would not, could not be satisfied with his goodness. (Jeremiah 31:12-14.) There will be an abundance of earthly peace and temporal prosperity in those happy days when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" but if all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord it can be no other glory than that seen by the saints now—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6.) This must be a spiritual glory, according to the Apostle's testimony—"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18.) But while we believe that there will be a display of the future glory of Christ's Mediatorial kingdom

such as earth has never yet witnessed, but which all the prophets have foretold in their highest strains, and as with one harmonious voice, yet would we guard ourselves strictly against forecasting either the time or the manner of its accomplishment. When the disciples asked their risen Master, "Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" what was his answer? "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power." (Acts 1:7.) He did not say that the kingdom should never be restored to Israel, but he checked their inquisitive spirit into God's sovereign disposal of the times and seasons, and bade them, by implication, not indulge in vain dreams of an earthly kingdom in which they should hold power and authority; but directed their faith to the promised gift of the Holy Spirit and their own personal witness of him—a witness in faith and suffering, unto the uttermost part of the earth. No one thing has cast more contempt on the prophecies of the Scriptures, than the innumerable rash attempts to settle dates and times for their fulfillment; for when these anticipated dates have been falsified by the events not then taking place, occasion has been taken from these mistakes to throw discredit on the prophecies themselves. We dare not, therefore, fix any date or time for the fulfillment of any one unfulfilled prediction.

Nor, again, do we venture to entertain in our own mind any idea of the manner in which the Lord will accomplish what he has promised. But this we will say, that we have no faith in missionary exertions, at least as at present exercised; or any hope that by huge mixed Societies of believer and unbeliever, or any cumbrous, worldly apparatus of subscriptions and donations, patrons, presidents, secretaries, and deputations, or by what are called revivals, or united prayer-meetings, or any similar means, the glory of the Son of God will be made to shine upon earth. No. The Lord will take his own way as well as his own time. No arm of flesh shall put the crown on his head, as no arm of flesh can take it off. Whatever attempts man may make, until "the Spirit be poured upon us from on high," the wilderness will not be a fruitful field. But when he sets his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, then his own way will be at once the mightiest, wisest, and best; and when accomplished, the whole fulfillment of his eternal promises to glorify his dear Son will be not only in the strictest accordance with the word of grace, but in harmony with every glorious perfection of a triune God.

We know by painful experience how unbelief and infidelity fight against this testimony of God to the manifest glory of his dear Son on earth. When, then, we feel so much unbelief within, can we wonder that in these last days there should be "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4.) Fixing the eye of sense on visible objects, and seeing "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," men naturally resist the declarations of God in his word, that there shall be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness;" and where they cannot and do not openly deny "the testimony of Jesus" which is the very "spirit of prophecy," they so qualify and explain away the express language of the Holy Spirit, as to amount to a virtual denial of his kingdom and glory beyond its present manifestation. No heart is naturally more unbelieving than that which beats in our bosom; but we cannot and dare not resist the testimony of God, which forces itself, as it were, upon us more and more as we examine the sacred page. When, for instance, we read such a testimony as this—"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," (Isaiah 11:9,) we ask ourselves, "Are these the words of him that cannot lie?" Surely they

are; for they are in the book of God. But are they fulfilled? Is the earth, at the present moment, as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? How do the waters cover the sea—partially or fully? Who can say that the knowledge of the Lord, that knowledge of which Jesus says it is "eternal life," (John 17:3,) fully covers England, or one town, or one house, or one whole family in it? We must either, then, believe in the future fulfillment of such a promise, or deny that God means what he says. See, then, how the case stands, a case that has often tried us to the very quick. The submission of faith, or the denial of unbelief. There is no other alternative. Which of them, reader, is yours? But take another testimony. "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion, also, from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Psalms 72:7-8.) And again, "Yes, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." "His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." (Psalms 72:11, Psalms 72:17.) Are these predictions fulfilled? Do the righteous now flourish? Is there "abundance of peace so long as the moon endures?" Let America testify. Let the fields of Maryland, covered with 30,000 wounded or dying men, proclaim aloud, "Yes, this is the millennium. There is no other. This is the fulfillment of all the prophecies which proclaim, 'All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.' Is not the whole American nation serving the Prince of Peace, when brother meets brother on the battlefield? Is not the knowledge of the Lord covering Maryland as the waters cover the sea, when heaps of dying men strew her plains, and putrid corpses choke up her rivers?" But the booming cannon, the bursting shell, the volleys of musketry, the shrieks of the wounded, the groans of the dying, the wail of mothers and widows, and the very blood of the battlefield all cry, "No, no! This is not the domain of the Prince of Peace. This is rather hell broken loose upon earth than the binding of Satan; rather the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath than the pouring out of the Spirit from on high."

Wearied, then, and sick at the sight of such scenes of human sin and woe, our mind has sometimes felt a sweet relief in the belief that even this sin-worn world shall not always be what it now is, a very Aceldama, a field of blood and crime; that a day will come when "the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one." (Zechariah 14:9.) Is this beyond the power or beyond the promises of God? "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," the Lord bade his disciples pray. Is that prayer yet accomplished? Is it ever to be? If not, why were the disciples taught to pray for what God never meant to grant? We might fill our pages with similar testimonies and with similar arguments, but we will content ourselves with one already referred to—"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14.) Is this testimony fulfilled? Do all people, nations, and languages serve the Son of man? Does China serve him, or Turkey? Or, not to mention heathen lands, does France, does Italy, does England serve him? We need not pursue the argument. It is such passages as these, the force of which we cannot evade or resist, which, after many years of thought and examination, as well as temptation, have made us come to the conclusion that if there be no future development and manifestation of the kingdom and dominion of Christ more than what is now seen, the testimony of God in the Scripture cannot be true. But "let God be true and every man a liar." Here faith rests; and here for the present we lay down our pen.

The end of the year admonishes us that it is time for us also to bring to a close our Meditations on the Office Characters of the Lord Jesus. Without further preface, then, we proceed to the consideration of the two remaining points which we proposed to examine in reference to the royal authority and power now exercised by the risen Son of God as Zion's anointed and enthroned King. These two points were, 1. The duration of his Mediatorial Kingdom;

2. The experimental influence and practical bearing which a knowledge of his royal sway has, or should have, upon believing hearts.

We shall now, then, with God's help and blessing, attempt to consider both these points in their order. The DURATION of the Mediatorial reign of the blessed Lord we find most plainly and clearly intimated by the Apostle in that noble chapter which has so stirred and comforted the hearts of thousands of the saints of God. (1 Corinthians 15:24.) We there read, "Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet." These words clearly and definitely fix the period of the Lord's present reign as now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high. "Then comes the end." An end therefore is to come. But what end? An end to the present state of things—to the existing Mediatorial dispensation; an end to that peculiar form of government which Jesus now exercises. He is now on his throne of grace; but he has to sit on his throne of glory, according to his own words—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." He is now "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1.) But he is "ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." When, then, he shall leave his Mediatorial throne "to judge the living and dead at his appearing and kingdom;" (2 Timothy 4:1,) then his regal government, under its present form of administration, will cease. But we must not suppose from this that he will cease to be King. Such a supposition would violate a thousand promises made by the Father to and on behalf of the Son of his love. We will content ourselves with adducing one from the Old Testament and another from the New—"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 forever, and his throne as the sun before me." Agreeing with this is the promise made by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary—"He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." The kingdom then will remain--but the mode of administration be changed.

It is now a kingdom of grace, but will then be a kingdom of glory. Christ now reigns in his people, but he will then reign with his people. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Timothy 2:12.) He now sits as a priest on his throne;" (Zechariah 6:13;) but when he appears a second time, without sin unto salvation, intercession will be no longer needed, for he will come and all his saints with him, and raising up their sleeping dust will present them to his Father conformed in body and soul to his own glorified image. The Apostle therefore tells us—"For he must reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." When, then, he has destroyed this last enemy by the resurrection, his Mediatorial reign will cease, and a reign of glory commence, which shall endure forever and ever.

02A.05. The Practical and Experimental Bearing...

The practical and experimental bearing and influence which the royal power and authority of Jesus have on believing hearts. But we now approach a part of our subject which is of the deepest importance as personally affecting the case and state of every one who professes to believe that Jesus reigns as King in Zion—the experimental and practical influence which a knowledge of this truth has or should have on believing hearts. If we have no experience of the reign of Christ in our own bosom, and his royal power and authority have no practical effect on our lives, there is little evidence that we know him or the power of his resurrection by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit. We know his royal power only as far as we experience it; we experience it only as far as we act upon it. Thus the evidence of knowledge is experience--the evidence of experience is practice. See then the golden chain which binds truth, knowledge, experience, and practice together, and all to the throne of the King of Zion. He is himself "the truth;" a revelation of him gives a knowledge of it; a knowledge of the truth works an experience of it; an experience of the truth produces the practice of it. Thus truth is in Jesus; knowledge from Jesus; experience out of Jesus; and practice after Jesus. Is not the chain complete? What shall we add to or take from it? But do not all the links, so closely bound together, derive alike their union and their power from his kingly sway? And over whom does he wave his royal scepter? Over believing hearts; for his reign is a reign of grace, and therefore demands gracious subjects; a spiritual kingdom, and is therefore set up and maintained by the power of the Spirit; a rule of love, and is therefore received by faith and embraced by affection. It is impossible, therefore, to dissociate his kingly authority from a gracious experience of its power, or the scepter of his grace from a practical obedience to its rule. To separate truth from experience--and experience from practice--is to put asunder what God has joined together; and woe be to the man who proclaims such a divorce by his lips or by his life.

Let us, then, with the Lord’s help and blessing, attempt to trace out this connection, and to do so with greater clearness we will view them separately, directing our attention first to the experimental influence which a knowledge of Christ’s kingly authority has upon a believing heart. i. Few words have been more misunderstood, and, as a necessary consequence misrepresented, than the term experience. It has actually been stigmatized as almost synonymous with corruption; and many a proud lip has angrily curled at the word, and many a libelous tongue hurled at it an arrow of contempt. But by the term is meant, at least by those who use it aright, a gracious knowledge of the truth. It thus comprehends the whole work of God upon the heart—every branch of the divine life in the soul. Without it, therefore, there is neither faith nor repentance, neither regeneration nor conversion; and to be without it is to be destitute of the Spirit of Christ and so to be none of his, to be dead in sins, without God and without hope in the world. By an experience, then, of the authority of Jesus as King in Zion we understand a spiritual, gracious, and saving acquaintance with his kingdom as set up in the heart by the power of God. This kingdom is an internal kingdom. "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21.) "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." (1 Corinthians 4:20.) "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." If, then, it be within us, there must be an internal perception of its

presence; if it be in power, it must do something for and in us; if it be "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," there must be some spiritual tasting of these heavenly fruits. But before this kingdom can be set up in the heart there must be a breaking to pieces of every other kingdom there. This is beautifully shown in Daniel's vision of the image. "You saw until that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them—and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:34-35.) The "stone cut out without hands" represents the Lord Jesus, a reference being intended to his human nature as not formed by ordinary generation; and the breaking to pieces of the feet, of the image mystically foreshadows the wreck and ruin of everything which stands in the way of the setting up and full development of his kingdom. (We do not say there is not a prophetical sense of the passage besides the spiritual meaning here given.) That Christ, then, may reign and rule in the heart, there must be a previous breaking to pieces of all other authority and power. The reign of sin must give way to the reign of grace; idols must be dethroned; rivals banished; lusts subdued; the flesh mortified and crucified; the old man put off, the new man put on. But who is sufficient for these things? Who will pluck out his own right eye, or cut off his own right hand? Who will drive the nails of crucifixion into his own quivering flesh? No one! The Lord, then, must do it all for and in us by his Spirit and grace. The means which he uses is his word, for "where the word of a king is, there is power;" and he himself says, "Is not my word like a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29.) To revert, then, to our figure, upon the toes of sin and self, on which the image stands, the stone falls and breaks them to pieces. This fracture brings down the image, and, with the same crash, the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, so that no place is found for them. In this way pride and self-righteousness, unbelief and infidelity, hypocrisy and vain confidence, carnality and worldly mindedness, sin and self in all their various shapes and forms, whether strong as iron, base as clay, bright as brass, precious as silver, or glittering as gold, become smitten as with a deadly blow, and scattered to the winds of heaven, so as to form a compact and standing image no more. Now this fall and ruin of self makes way for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in the heart. Jesus reveals himself to the soul, thus broken and humbled, as its Lord and King. He thus becomes known, believed in, and loved; and these three things, knowledge, faith, and love, lie at the foundation, and form the root of all gracious living experience.

Let us view them separately.

1. KNOWLEDGE. Unless we know the Lord, how can we trust him? for it is those, and those only, "who know his name," who can or will "put their trust in him." (Psalms 9:10.) Indeed, without a spiritual, experimental knowledge of the Son of God, there is no eternal life, for "this is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:1.) But how can we thus spiritually and savingly know him unless he manifests himself unto us as he does not manifest himself to the world? (John 14:22.) As, then, he manifests himself, his divine Person and finished work, his surpassing grace, and heavenly glory, his matchless beauty and supreme blessedness, his complete suitability and all-satisfying sufficiency are clearly seen. This is to see light in God's light; (Psalms 36:9;) to be enlightened with the light of the living; (Psalms

56:13;) and to enjoy the blessing described by the Apostle—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6.)

2. FAITH. This revelation of Christ gives a spiritual knowledge of him, and out of this knowledge of him springs faith in him; "I know," says the Apostle, "whom I have believed." (2 Timothy 1:12.) Of this faith Jesus is the author, and Jesus the finisher, for it stands "not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (Hebrews 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:5.) But view this grace of faith chiefly as raised up and drawn forth upon the Person of Jesus as King of Zion. What is its first work? To give him a place in the heart. When Jesus reveals himself with power, faith immediately stretches forth its arms, and embraces him, and thus brings him into the soul. This is beautifully expressed by the Bride—"It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." (Song of Solomon 3:4.) It is by faith that Christ dwells in the heart, (Ephesians 3:17,) for faith first gives him admission, and afterwards maintains him there.

3. LOVE. And as faith works by love, love next flows forth to delight itself in him who is altogether lovely, and thus to enshrine him in the warmest, tenderest affections of the soul. This is the crowning grace of the Spirit, the richest, ripest fruit of the whole heavenly cluster. As, then, Jesus is thus known, believed in, and loved, by this threefold cord the heart is bound to his throne, and to him who sits thereon in the fullness of his Mediatorial grace and ascended glory.

4. From this knowledge of him, faith in him, and love to him, springs UNION with him as the Church's living Head; for the same holy and blessed Spirit, through whose heavenly teaching and unction these graces are communicated, gives and cements by them a spiritual union with thus Son of God. (1 Corinthians 6:17.)

5. From this spiritual union with the Lord flows COMMUNION or fellowship with him—"God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." This made holy John say, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.)

6. From this communion flows FRUITFULNESS, as the Lord so beautifully opens up in the parable of the vine and the branches.* How plainly he there declares that "without him," that is, without union and communion with him, we can "do nothing," that is, bring forth no fruit to his praise; but that, if we "abide in him" by faith and love, and he "abides in us" by his Spirit and grace, fruit will be abundantly brought forth to the glory of God. (John 15:4-8.) The whole of this beautiful chain of vital godliness may be found by a spiritual eye, in those wondrous chapters wherein the Lord comforted his sorrowing disciples—John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26.

1. The glory of Christ with his Father—John 17:5, John 17:11, John 17:24.

2. The manifestation of Christ to the soul—John 14:21-22; John 16:16, John 16:22.

3. A saving knowledge of Christ—John 14:19; John 16:14-15.

4. Faith in him—John 14:1, John 14:10-11. John 14:29; John 16:27; John 17:8.

5. Union with him—John 14:20; John 15:5; John 17:21, John 17:23.

6. Communion—John 15:4, John 15:7, John 15:10-11.

7. Fruitfulness—John 15:2, John 15:5, John 15:16. ii. We thus see the necessary connection between an experience of the kingly power of Jesus, and all real PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE to his will and word, all inward and outward submission to his sovereign sway and divine authority. Of this obedience love is the main-spring—"The love of Christ constrains us." (2 Corinthians 5:14.) For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3.) Does not our blessed Lord himself say,"If you love me, keep my commandments?" No, so closely is obedience connected with love, that, not only is it made the test of it, but the very manifestations of Christ are closely connected with it. "He who has my commandments, and keeps them--he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21.)

Practical obedience; a godly, consistent conduct and conversation; a daily walking in the fear and love of God; a fruitfulness in every good word and work; a living not unto ourselves but unto the Lord; a seeking of God’s glory and not our own; a desire to do good to the bodies and souls of our fellow men; and a cleansing ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit--by the word of God’s grace. All such and similar fruits of faith are generally left out of the Calvinistic profession of the present day. ’Good works’ are left to the Arminians. The very word would desecrate, it is thought, a Calvinistic pulpit, and to enforce them would seem to smack too strongly of free-will and self-righteousness to please the pew. But though left out of the ministry of the day, and left out of the practice of the people, they are not left out of the book of God, nor out of the consciences of those who truly fear and love him; and it will be seen in the great day how far they have been safely left out of the profession and practice of many who are considered by themselves and others champions of truth. But whatever such men may think or say, the word of God bears a sure, an unerring testimony that "holiness becomes the house of the Lord forever," and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Psalms 93:5; Hebrews 12:14.)

Thus far, then, have we seen what a holy, sanctifying influence a true experimental knowledge of Christ as Lord and King has over a believer’s heart and life. His throne, though to our unspeakable comfort a throne of grace, is at the same time "a throne of holiness." (Psalms 47:8.) The hill of Zion on which the Father has set his Son is a "holy hill." (Psalms 2:6.) To that holy throne, to that holy hill, sinners are welcome, but not sin. If we serve the Lord it must be with fear; if we rejoice in him it must be with trembling. (Psalms 2:11.) But it is time for us to bring our Meditations to a close. Our desire and aim in them have been to bring before our readers the Mediatorial grace and glory of the exalted Son of God--as Priest, Prophet, and King, to his redeemed and regenerated people; and in pursuance of this object, we have sought to make our Meditations edifying and profitable, by not handling these sacred topics as mere matters of doctrinal speculation, but as blessed experimental themes of heavenly meditation and practical efficacy and influence.

We cannot but feel how weakly, how imperfectly, we have treated these heavenly mysteries; but they have not been handled by us without some thought and care, as well as prayer for divine instruction for ourselves, and a spiritual blessing upon them for our readers. We have not written carelessly for careless readers; but while we have endeavored "to hold fast the faithful word as we have been taught, so as to be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," we have also aimed so to blend experience with doctrine, and practice with

experience, as to edify the living family of God. They will be both our best and most lenient judges, for as they, and they only, know the value and blessedness of the subjects which we have brought before them, so they, and they only, will throw a mantle of love over our imperfections. And now what remains but to beg of the Lord that, as these Meditations on his Office Characters were written to magnify the exceeding riches of his grace, so he would make them redound to the praise of his glory! Amen.

Chapter 47

03.00. Meditations on EPHESIANS, chapters 1 and 2

Meditations on EPHESIANS, Ephesians 1:1-23 and Ephesians 2:1-22 by J. C. Philpot, 1869

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03.000. Introductory Paper

INTRODUCTORY PAPER

We have hitherto, in our Meditations, addressed ourselves chiefly to the consideration of "various important points of our most holy faith;" but it has for some time past struck our mind that for the sake of a little variety for our readers, as well as for other reasons more specially connected with our own thoughts, desires, and feelings, we would now turn our attention to Scripture Exposition. In the course of a long profession, for our own private profit and edification, and had this not been a primary object, almost necessarily from having been so many years in the ministry, we have read, we may, perhaps, say studied, the Scriptures a good deal, especially the Epistles of the New Testament; and if, through the Lord's goodness, any light has been cast upon them by the Blessed Spirit for our own instruction and edification, and if we have gathered any fruit or profit thereby for our own soul, it will be both a pleasure and a privilege to be allowed to impart any measure of both to others. "Freely have you received, freely give," the Lord said to his disciples. Acting in the spirit of this blessed precept, we would freely impart anything which we have so freely, so undeservedly received, and can only lament that both reception and gift should be in so scant a measure. "But if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." Measured by this willingness, and not by the amount of the gift, would we lay our contribution at the Lord's feet, in the hope that he will make use of it for his own glory and his people's good. Our hearers in various places will, perhaps, remember that 'exposition' almost always formed a part of our ministry when we were engaged in its active exercise; and if we may give some of our friends credit for soundness of judgment, as well as for sincerity in its expression, they have sometimes assured us that the exposition was much more profitable than the sermon. Nor is the reason far to seek, whether in our own case or in that of our brother ministers who are in the habit of expounding the Scripture, for some of the choicest servants of God, whether dead or living, have not practiced it. (Mr. Fowler used to expound, and Mr. Hardy was singularly great in exposition; but Mr. Gadsby and Mr. Warburton, and, we believe, Mr. Huntington considered preaching quite sufficient.) In 'sermons', there is generally a good deal of what we may call surplusage, mere straw and hay by way of packing, as in a crate of glass, to keep our ideas a little together, and prevent them from getting broken; but in 'exposition', at least where there is any gift that way, there is more of the word of GOD, and less of the word of MAN. We let the word of truth speak more for itself, and, therefore, it flows less diluted and watered, and thus less weakened than when drawn out in a long and often tedious discourse.

Being, then, in the wise dispensation of the Lord, a good deal laid aside, especially in the colder parts of the year, from the work of the ministry, if we can, through the pages of the Standard, by opening the word of truth, in some measure carry it on from our study, it will but form another cause of thankfulness to the God of all our mercies that he still spares our life when so many of our brethren in the ministry are being taken away on the right hand and on the left, whose places we know not to whom to look to supply. But enough of self, of which, indeed, we should not have said so much, had we not wished to explain why we have been led to adopt the plan we have proposed

of offering to our readers some exposition of various portions of the word of God. Suffice it, then, to say, that if we can throw any light on the word of truth, if we can enable our readers more clearly to understand, more firmly to believe, and more experimentally to feel the power of what God has revealed in the Scriptures for their instruction, edification, and consolation—that will be our chief reward, as, we hope, it is our chief aim.

We shall commence with the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, as not only that is a special portion of the word which has been opened to our mind, and made sweet to our taste; but there has long been a secret desire in our bosom to bring it before the living family of God, as containing such a rich store of precious gospel truth. In endeavoring to expound it, and we wish the same remark to apply to all our other attempts of a similar nature, we shall neither seek nor shun anything which may look like learning or research. We have read it so often in the original that it is almost as familiar to us as the English translation; and if, therefore, sometimes we may refer to it, let it not be ascribed to any foolish, and in things of God, most unbecoming, no, sinful, desire of what is called showing off, but to a simple wish to make the truth of God more clear and precious. But before we proceed to our intended exposition, let us make a few preliminary remarks on the Epistles generally, and that to the Ephesians in particular. The New Testament may be broadly divided into three distinct portions—1. Narrative; 2. Epistolary; 3. Prophetical. The first division, the narrative, comprehends the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; the second, the epistolary, all the Epistles of the New Testament; and the third, the prophetical, the Book of Revelation.

Now the wisdom of the Holy Spirit is especially to be admired in adopting this threefold mode of communicating the books of the New Testament as the inspired word of God. The foundation of our faith is the Person and work of the Son of God. It was, therefore, needful that there should be a historical revelation of his birth, death, and resurrection, of his miracles and his discourses so full of grace and truth, and generally of what he was and did, suffered and sorrowed when here below. It will be seen at a glance that what was required was an inspired and, therefore, perfectly truthful narrative of the words and actions of the blessed Lord, in order that our faith in him might rest on some clear, tangible, visible foundation. Now nothing is so suitable for a foundation of this kind as a simple historical narrative guaranteed by positive divine inspiration from all mistake of fact or expression. An epistle here would be out of place. We have, therefore, four distinct inspired narratives, each independent of the other, and yet all combining to give us a faithful portraiture of the Lord in the days of his flesh. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are two grand capital features of our most holy faith. In the four gospels, then, we have the clearest possible account which even an inspired pen could give of the crucifixion of Christ, and of his resurrection from the dead. But we also needed the visible proofs of his ascension and glorification at the right hand of the Father in the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in a Church to be called out and manifested as his purchased possession. This we have also in a similar form of narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, which embraces a period of about 30 years from the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, to Paul’s journey to Rome to appear before Caesar. Here again we see the necessity of narrative to present to us a connected account of such part of the history of the early churches as the Holy Spirit thought best to give for the general instruction and edification of the Church. As it was the mind of the Spirit that so many of the Epistles should be written by Paul, we see his wisdom in giving us in the Acts so large an

account of his labors, and thus the Epistles and the Acts mutually explain and confirm each other. Into these points we need not, therefore, further enter, except to name that a prophetical map was also needed as a kind of chart for the Church, and especially to warn and prepare her beforehand for that monstrous system which has developed itself as the Babylon of the New Testament, and which we have described beforehand in the Revelation. But now, just for a few moments, admire with us the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in giving us the EPISTLES of the New Testament. There was sweet, precious, and most important truth in the bosom of Christ, which could not be revealed to the Church until after the ascension of her risen Lord. This, then, is unfolded in the Epistles; and observe with what special grace and wisdom that form of communicating divine truth has been chosen. Of all modes of composition, a letter (for these Epistles are letters) is what we may call most flexible; that is, most easily adapted to almost every mode of conveying meaning.

1. Thus a letter admits first of narrative. You can tell a friend, in a letter, where you have been, and what you have said and done. So in the Epistles, we have sometimes simple narrative. See, for instance, 2 Corinthians 11:24-33; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 Galatians 1:15-24; Galatians 2:1-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8. In these places we have simple narrative of actions; and all will see how naturally and easily this historical relation falls in with the rest of the Epistle.

2. An epistle or letter admits also of direct or positive teaching. This feature is out of place in a narrative, except as it records words actually spoken; as in the case of the discourses of the blessed Lord. But a letter written by an inspired Apostle to a Church admits, in the fullest degree, of an authoritative declaration of divine truth. Take any one of the Epistles, and you would be surprised, if you were not prepared for it, at the amount of positive teaching which it contains. Look, for instance, at the Epistle to the Romans, and see what a large amount of direct, positive truth it contains, as the Holy Spirit gradually unfolds in it the way in which God justifies a sinner, freely and fully, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son.

Read the first eleven chapters of the Romans as a harmonious whole, and see what a full, clear, connected exposition it is, from the description of what man is by actual transgression, in Romans 1:1-32; to the present casting off and future restoration of Israel, in Romans 11:1-36. We wish we could convey to all our readers what we have seen of the beauty and harmony of the whole chain of scriptural, we might almost say logical, reasoning which connects these chapters, as in one golden bond. Or take the Epistle to the Hebrews. What a large and blessed amount of positive teaching, of clear detailed instruction about the priesthood of Christ, and its connection with that of Aaron and Melchisedek, do we find through the whole Epistle. So with the Epistle to the Ephesians. What a clear and full amount of direct, positive teaching as to the Church of Christ, and the position in which she stands to her risen and glorified Lord. We see from these examples how admirably a letter or an epistle, written by an inspired Apostle, is adapted to convey clear, distinct, positive instruction in divine truth.

3. Then observe how beautifully adapted the epistolary form is to the inculcation of precept. How suitably, how forcibly an inspired Apostle, in his letters to a Church of Christ, can urge on them all Christian practice, and, at the same time, enter into the minutest details of gospel obedience in the various relationships of life.

4. Mark again the peculiar tenderness and affection which nothing can so well convey as a letter. In a letter, there is the pouring out of the heart of the writer as if into the bosom of his

correspondent. Think for a moment, if you wished to express your feelings of affection to a friend or relative; if you could find any means so good as writing a letter to him or her. Is it not next best to conversing with them, and in some respects better, for shyness or reserve might sometimes stop your tongue—though it does not chain your pen? Lovers, friends, relations—all communicate by letter what their affection prompts. So in the Epistles of the New Testament. What a pouring out of the heart there is in Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians, written with so many tears. How touching is all this! How it goes from heart to heart. How it makes the Epistles the choicest of love-letters, and what a softness and tenderness has the spirit of love poured into all the instruction and all the exhortation contained in them, thus removing all dryness or formality, whether in instruction or exhortation—and steeping both in an atmosphere of the truest affection.

5. A letter, again, admits of continual change from one point to another, and one form of writing to another. It is eminently what we have already termed flexible—that is, may be bent or turned almost in any direction without violence in its nature. The writer may glide from one thing to another by the most easy transitions. Thus Paul sometimes teaches as an instructor, sometimes exhorts as a father, sometimes gives us a little bit of his past history or experience, sometimes drops a word of warning, or admonition; and yet all is done without any sensible break, or the introduction of anything unsuitable to the character of a letter. This beautiful flexibility is peculiar to the letter style, and is, therefore, eminently adapted for all readers.

6. Letters also admit of familiarly discussing various matters which could not at all be so well handled in a more fixed and formal mode of composition. It is said of the trunk of an elephant that it can pick up a pin, or rend an oak. So a letter can take up the minutest circumstance, such as leaving a cloak at Troas, or pull down an angel with a curse, were he to preach any other gospel than that which Paul had preached unto the Galatians. It can tell a woman to cover her head and keep silence in the house of God, and it can sound forth such majestic chants of triumph over death and hell as fill the last parts of Romans 8 and 1 Cor. 15 with such strains of heavenly eloquence that, side by side with them, all mere human oratory sounds like the tunes of a street organ.

7. A letter also admits of all lengths, from a short epistle, like that to Philemon, to one of many chapters, as that to the Romans and those to the Corinthians, and may be written to individuals, as to Timothy and Titus, or to particular churches, as that at Ephesus or Philippi, or like those of Peter, James, and Jude, to the whole body of the elect scattered abroad.

8. The chief charm of a letter is its ease—the absence of all stiffness and form. It is, as it were, written conversation; and the conversation, too, of intelligent people, able easily and fluently to express their thoughts and feelings without reserve, shyness, or restraint. If we might point out this feature as visible in the Epistles of Paul, we might direct attention to the remarkable ease with which his thoughts and words generally flow. We do not mean to say that he is always easy to understand. To do so requires divine teaching; and we must add careful study and attention, frequent reading, and earnest prayer. But if blessed with the anointing from above, which teaches of all things, and if favored with a studious, teachable, prayerful spirit, desirous to know the mind of Christ, and be led into all the counsel of God, we shall find the Epistles "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." And be not discouraged, Christian reader, if you seem slow of understanding, and do not as yet see the

beauty and blessedness of this portion of the word of truth—"The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Persevere in reading them. If you feel to lack wisdom, do as James bids, "ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not, and it shall be given you;" and then you will say, "How sweet are your words unto my taste; yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth;" and you will be able to add, "Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." (Psalms 119:104.)

These preliminary remarks on the Epistles generally, which have been drawn out farther than we intended, may, perhaps, prepare us for the more profitable examination of that to the Ephesians, which we shall hope to consider in our next paper.

03.01.01. Part One

Part I. In our introductory paper we attempted to show the wisdom and grace of the Holy Spirit in choosing Epistles as the most fit and suitable medium of communicating to the Church of Christ all that instruction which was needful, as a sequel to the inspired narrative of the Gospels and the Acts, to build her up upon her most holy faith; and the point to which we directed special attention was the flexible character of that mode of composition as admitting so great a variety both of subject and expression. But when we come to examine these inspired Epistles a little more closely, we find that almost every one of them has a distinctive and peculiar character of its own, what we may, perhaps, call a key-note, which, as in music, controls and dominates the whole composition. Thus in the Romans, justification is the key-note; in the Hebrews, the priesthood of Christ; in the Corinthians, the internal administration of the Church; in the Galatians, liberty from the law; in the Colossians, the headship and fullness of Christ; in the Thessalonians, his second coming; in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, the peculiar qualifications and duties of ministers and deacons. Not that each of these Epistles is wholly taken up with the subject which we have thus briefly pointed out as its dominant idea, but that such is the leading feature with which almost every verse is in harmony, and to which it is subordinate.

If this be the case, unless we get hold of, and in some good measure not only apprehend, but carry with us as we read, this key-note, as we have termed it, we cannot clearly see, or fully appreciate the spiritual meaning of any one of the Epistles. We may, indeed, understand the meaning and realize the sweetness and blessedness of single verses or detached portions; but we shall lose the harmony of thought, the connection of one argument with another, and the way in which they all tend to one point, which carry such conviction to the mind which can grasp the whole subject as unfolded by the Apostle. And to lose this is, we may add, no little loss in the eyes of those who love the truth, and see an unspeakable beauty in the harmony of every part. When the Apostle sat down to write to a Church or to a brother in the Lord, it would seem as if the Holy Spirit not only inspired every thought and expression, but impressed on his mind a particular subject to guide those thoughts and words into a definite channel. The Epistles, therefore, do not spread themselves loosely and at random over the fields like a flood, but flow in a determinate course like a river; and as this definite object preserves them from confusion, so by stamping upon each Epistle a character of its own, it gives them a beautiful variety. Careless, formal readers of the Scripture, of whom there are so many in the professing Church, may not, indeed, see the necessity or the benefit of a serious, earnest, prayerful study of these divine Epistles; and others of a different stamp may shelter their indolence under the pretext that the blessed Spirit will teach them without any pains of their own. But we are bidden to "search the Scriptures," (John 5:39,) and this searching of them is compared to "seeking as for silver, and searching as for hid treasures," (Proverbs 2:4,) implying some such diligent toil as a man uses who is mining for silver in the depths of the earth, or digging all over a field to get at a treasure which he has been led to believe is somewhere hidden in it. But the question now arises, What is the key-note of the Epistle to the Ephesians, with which we are now more immediately engaged? To this we briefly answer,

The relationship of the Church to Christ as her risen and glorified Head. This is the leading feature, the grand subject, the fundamental idea which runs through the whole Epistle, and which, binding in one harmonious chain well-near every verse, again and again sounds forth its distinctive note in various parts. If you will refer to the last two verses of the first chapter, you will find this key-note first clearly struck; but you will discover it sounding also afterwards, Ephesians 2:16-22; Ephesians 3:1-21; Ephesians 4:15-16; Ephesians 5:23-32, in all which passages mention is made directly or indirectly of the Church as the body of Christ.

Following the Apostle's example, we shall not dwell particularly on this point until we arrive at it in due course; but if our readers will bear in mind the fundamental idea of the Epistle which we have thus pointed out, it may, with God's help and blessing, not only enable them better to follow us in our exposition, but, what is of much more importance, better to understand and enter into the spiritual meaning of the whole. May the Lord the Spirit be with both writer and readers, teaching him to open up and rightly divide the word of truth, and applying with power to their hearts what he may thus be enabled to lay before them in harmony with it.

After this, we fear, too long introduction, we come now to our exposition of the first chapter.

Verse 1. Two things at once strike us as we open upon the first verse. Being a letter, it commences according to the custom of the period, with, 1, The name of the writer; 2, The name of the persons to whom it was written. Both of these points will claim our attention.

1. First, then, the WRITER, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." The ancient way of putting at the top of the letter first the name of the writer, and then the name of the person to whom he wrote was a far more sensible plan than our mode of placing the name of the writer at the end, and that of our correspondent on the back, or, according to present custom, on an envelope. He, therefore, begins at once, "Paul." How clear, how simple, how distinct is this. How adapted to call attention at once to the writer. Let us for a moment endeavor to realize the meeting of the Ephesian Church to hear read to them an epistle just arrived from Paul, their beloved father and revered Apostle, who for the space of three years had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God, and ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:27-31.) One of the elders, perhaps one of the very men who had wept sore and fallen on Paul's neck and kissed him, when they parted at Miletus, would open and read the epistle. How still would they all be; and as the word "Paul" broke on their ears, with what reverence and attention would they listen. But he immediately adds his commission and authority to address them in the name of the Lord, "An apostle of Jesus Christ." Apostleship was the greatest gift and the highest office in the first visible setting up of the Church of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. "And he gave some apostles and some prophets." (Ephesians 4:11.) "And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets." (1 Corinthians 12:28.) As this, then, was the highest office, so it demanded peculiar requisites, and possessed peculiar privileges. The two chief prerequisites for an apostle were, 1, An immediate call and commission from the Lord himself; 2, That he had seen the Lord after he had risen from the dead, and was thus a witness of his resurrection. The call and commission of the other apostles we have in the gospels. Luke 6:18 gives us their call, and Matthew 28:18-20 their commission; and from Acts 1:21-22, we see the fact as well as the necessity of their being witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. These two points, then, we need not further prove. But here comes in a difficulty in the way of the apostleship of Paul, for he

seemed to lack these two grand requisites 1, He had not been visibly and manifestly called or commissioned by the Lord himself; 2, He had never seen the Lord, personally, either before or after his resurrection. This is why he calls himself, "one born out of due time." (1 Corinthians 15:8.) How, then, were these two difficulties obviated? Thus. The first by a special call and commission; (Acts 26:12-18;) and the second by a personal revelation of the Lord to his soul. He, therefore, says, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (1 Corinthians 9:1.) Some of our best MSS., as the Alexandrine, the Vatican, and the Sinaiticus, transpose these two clauses, and read, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?" which certainly better connects apostleship with seeing the Lord. In one sense, therefore, he received a higher commission than any of the other apostles; for his was from Christ in his risen glory, whereas they had received theirs from Christ in his grace. Theirs was given them when Christ was on earth, but Paul his when Christ was in heaven. Theirs was in conjunction with one another; his, peculiar and special to himself. This special call and commission he much insists on, especially whenever it was called in question. He writes, therefore, to the Galatians—"Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." (Galatians 1:1.) So he writes to Timothy—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope." (1 Timothy 1:1.) So also, "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." (1 Timothy 1:11-12.) And as he was called and commissioned in a special manner, so was he taught and qualified in a special manner. As to make up, as it were, for his not seeing Christ in the flesh, he had a special revelation of him from heaven, so to make up the loss which he had of not receiving the oral instruction of Christ before and after the resurrection, which his fellow-apostles had been favored with, the gospel was in a peculiar and special manner revealed to him by Christ himself, after his ascension. He therefore speaks—"But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.'' (Galatians 1:11-12.) So in the epistle before us—"If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Ephesians 3:2-4.) Similar expressions may be found, 1 Corinthians 11:23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3.

It is very desirable to have clear views on this point, as it gives such weight and power to the Apostle's words. If one whom we could fully trust should assure us that he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ, personally, in his risen glory, and that he had received certain words and a certain message from his mouth, which he was commanded to communicate to us; with what reverence and attention would we listen to and receive his communication. This, then, we have precisely in the Apostle Paul, and in the epistle before us. He assures us (and his whole life and labors prove how worthy he is to be implicitly believed) that he had seen Christ for himself, and that the gospel which he had preached had been revealed to him specially and particularly by the Lord Jesus. Now, just as far as we are persuaded of this, shall we listen to and receive his words; shall we desire to understand them, to believe them, to enter into their true and heavenly meaning, to experience their power and influence in our heart, and to find them made spirit and life to our souls. This is the true spirit in which we should approach and read this epistle, drinking its words into our inmost heart, and receiving them as a special and personal message from God to us as

much as if Jesus Christ spoke to us himself from heaven.

He, therefore, adds, "By the will of God;" that is, not God's mere approval or ratification of his commission to be an apostle, but that eternal, sovereign good will and pleasure of his, by which all things were ordained, disposed, and regulated. As it is this apostleship of Jesus Christ by the will of God which gave Paul all his authority to write this epistle, it may not be out of place to point out two peculiar features of his commission. Its first feature is, as we have already pointed out, that it was given him by a special revelation. All the Apostles were indeed taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit; (John 14:26; John 16:13-15; Acts 1:6;) but they did not each receive an individual and separate revelation from the Lord himself in his glory, at least not in that direct and express way with which Paul was favored. Peter was really as much commissioned, (Galatians 2:7,) as truly inspired, both to preach and write, (Acts 10:42; 2 Peter 1:12-16; 2 Peter 3:1-2,) and as much endued with the gifts of miracles and tongues (Acts 2:4; Acts 9:32-41) as Paul; but he was not caught up to the third heaven, nor favored with such revelations of the Lord as the great Apostle of the Gentiles. But the Gospel which Paul preached was also one of a special and particular character. He was emphatically sent to preach to the Gentiles, as Peter's mission and preaching was to the Jews; (Galatians 2:6-7;) though, as a special act of favor, God made choice among the apostles that the Gentiles, by Peter's mouth, should first hear the word of the gospel and believe. (Acts 15:7.) If you will carefully read Ephesians 3:1-11, for it is too long for us to quote, you will see how clearly and beautifully the Apostle there unfolds the peculiar dispensation of the grace of God given unto him, and that by revelation he made known to him a mystery, or heavenly secret which from the beginning of the world had been hidden in the bosom of God. But what was this mystery? It was that the Gentiles should be "fellow-heirs with the Jews and of the same body, and partakers of the same promise in Christ by the gospel." Thus Jew and Gentile formed one complete and glorious body, the Church. Christ, as our peace, had made both one; and there was no longer any middle wall of partition between them, for the Lord Jesus had reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross; and having done this, he now came in the ministry of the gospel to preach peace to the far-off Gentile, and to the nearer, by external privilege, Jew. This was the gospel that Paul preached, and which shines as with a ray of heavenly light through all his Epistles.

2. But now for the RECIPIENTS of the Epistle.

What we have already said about the commission of the writer may the better prepare us to understand why he should write to the Ephesians, and why address them as"saints and faithful in Christ Jesus." They had been Gentiles and had "walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he had loved them even when dead in sins, had quickened them into divine life; and as they had been freely and fully justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, so were they sanctified by the Spirit of God. He could, therefore, address them as "saints," not only as sanctified by the will of the Father, and the blood of his dear Son, (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:29,) but inwardly sanctified by the special operations, sealing, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 2:22.) The epistle is addressed also to the "faithful in Christ Jesus." This seems to give the epistle a somewhat fuller and wider scope, as if, in addition to the saints in Ephesus, it would comprehend "all the faithful in Christ Jesus" to whom it might come. The word translated "faithful" means also "believing," or a believer, and is frequently so rendered, as Acts 10:45; Acts 16:1; 2 Corinthians

6:15; 1 Timothy 4:3; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Timothy 5:16; etc. We might, therefore, so translate the word here, and read, "to the believers in Christ Jesus," as, indeed, would seem to be its preferable meaning, for the epistle is addressed not so much to those who are faithful in their profession as to those who possess a living faith in the Son of God. To the saints at Ephesus, then, specially, and the believers in Jesus Christ generally, is this epistle addressed; and as the first title made it peculiarly suitable to them, so the second makes it especially suitable to us. The Ephesian saints have passed away, and Ephesus itself is a ruin; but believers in Christ Jesus still live, and will live until the Church is complete. But we cannot leave this salutation without pointing out how grace adorns and sanctifies all that it touches. The usual cold and formal beginning of a letter in ancient times we may see, Acts 23:26, where we have an original and authentic Roman letter—"Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sends greeting." Preserving the usual mode, how the Apostle infuses life, as it were, into a dead formula. How cold, though respectful, is "the most excellent governor," and how bare is the word "greeting." But how warm, how full of grace and life, as contrasted with this cold, dead salutation, is "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus—Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:1-2.)

Ephesians 1:2. But now a few words as to the BLESSINGS prayed for. These are "grace and peace,"—grace the fountain, peace the stream; "grace," as containing in its bosom all that favor which God the Father has towards his people; and "peace," all that personal manifestation of it which could be realized and enjoyed from a sense of pardoning mercy. But we must not here enlarge, as much lies before us, and our progress at present has been but slow.

Ephesians 1:3. Now no sooner had the Apostle given to the Ephesian saints his affectionate greeting, and breathed forth his spiritual desires on their behalf, than his heart was touched and his whole soul as if inflamed with a sense of the wondrous goodness and mercy of God to him and to them. So melted and overpowered was he with a view by faith of what God had already done for them in the exceeding riches of his grace, that he bursts forth into an anthem of grateful praise—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3.)

How shall we attempt to unfold, we will not say all, for that is beyond the tongue of men or angels, but a small part only of the treasures of grace and glory which the Holy Spirit by the pen of Paul has stored up in the bosom of these words? Yet let us bring our cup, that we may draw if it be but one clear draught out of this ever-flowing, overflowing fountain of heavenly truth.

1. The first thing which we shall notice is the word "blessed," which occurs twice, though in two different senses, in this verse. As first used, it is the ascription on our part of thankful praise to God, speaking well, as the word literally means, of his gracious Majesty. To bless and praise God, and that for evermore, is the employment and the happiness of those who bask in the full beams of his love and favor in the glorious mansions above. But the first notes of this eternal song of heavenly praise are sounded here below, and are produced and drawn forth by a sense of God’s goodness and mercy as revealed to the soul, and especially when his love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. This made David say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits." (Psalms

103:1-2.) He blesses God for having blessed him. But now observe the difference between his blessing us and our blessing him; for we have observed that the word "blessed" is used in two different senses. God blesses us in deed; we bless him in word. His blessings are actual, substantial favors, freely conferred; ours, are merely the thankful acknowledgment of them as received. This, however, we shall more clearly see as we advance in our exposition of the verse now before us. But who is it whom the Apostle thus fervently blesses? Under what name and title does he praise him? It is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" whom he thus praises and blesses. We cannot bless God simply and nakedly as God, for in himself and out of Christ in his tremendous Majesty, he is a consuming fire to sinners like us. Simply, then, as God, he has not blessed us, nor as such can we bless him. But as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," we, if saints and believers, may bless him, for as such and as such only, has he blessed us. This is his peculiar New Testament title, as that of "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" was his Old Testament name. Let us seek, then, to apprehend its spiritual meaning and import.

You will observe that, according to this New Testament title, he is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. As these two titles evidently differ, the distinction between them demands a little explanation.

1. First, then, he is, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." This may seem at first sight a somewhat harsh and unusual expression; but it is perfectly scriptural, and when spiritually understood and realized, full of blessed meaning. Thus the Apostle, in the chapter before us, expressly uses the term where he prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation." (Ephesians 1:17) But how is he "the God of Christ?" To understand this we must bear in mind that though the Lord Jesus Christ has but one Person, yet he has two natures; and that though the Scriptures clearly distinguish between these two natures, yet, on account of the oneness of his Person, they ascribe to our Lord the attributes of each nature without drawing minute distinctions. Thus, in Romans 1:3-4, Paul distinguishes the two natures—"Which" (or, as we now say, "Who") "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh—there is the human nature; "And declared to be the Son of God with power;" not "made," but "declared"—there is his divine nature as the eternal Son. But in Hebrews 1, the same Apostle makes no such clear distinction of the two natures, for he says of the same Son of God—"Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person," which he could only be in his divine nature, "by himself purged our sins," which was by the blood of his human nature in union with his divine. So the title, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," blends into one gracious name what God is to Christ in his human, and what he is to him in his divine nature. Thus, as Christ is the Son of God, God is his Father; but as he is the Son of man, God is his God. As choosing and appointing him to the work of mediation, as making an everlasting covenant with him, as preparing a body for him, as in due time sending him, as anointing him with the Holy Spirit and with power, as accepting his sacrifice as a propitiation for sin, as raising him from the dead and setting him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,—in all these points God is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our blessed Lord, therefore, in the depth of his agony on the cross, cried to him under that title—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" So in Psalms 22:1-31, the first words of which the Lord thus took to himself on the cross, and which, therefore, contains throughout his language, we find him speaking, "You are my God from my mother’s belly," (Psalms 22:10,) which shows the connection between the incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin and God being his God. So

also in Psalm. 40, in which we know also from Hebrews 10:5-7 that the Lord Jesus speaks, we find him saying, "I delight to do your will, O my God," (Ephesians 1:8) which he did when he took the body prepared for him; and again, "Make no tarrying, O my God," (Ephesians 1:17) which shows his looking to him and hanging upon him in the days of his flesh. And to show that this covenant title did not cease at his death, but abides still in all its completeness, immediately after his resurrection, before he ascended up on high to be the great High Priest over the house of God, he declared that God was still his God, when, by Mary Magdalene, he sent that gracious message to his disciples—"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John 20:17.)

2. That he is "the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," inasmuch as Christ is his only-begotten Son, we need not stay to prove, as we have written so much on the subject of our Lord’s true, proper, and eternal Sonship. It will be sufficient, therefore, now merely to notice it.

Now it is the blending of these two titles in one and the same God which makes him to us so relatively blessed; we say relatively, for God in himself is and ever must be blessed as distinct from anything he is or can be to any of his creatures. He, then, who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the glorious yet incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity is the God of Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace. Here is the foundation of all salvation, here is the fountain of every spiritual blessing, that the Son of the Father by eternal subsistence should be the Mediator between God and men by an everlasting covenant. But we will not further enlarge here, both for the reason that we have given, and especially because this blessed mystery, which we have thus far ventured to unfold, will be continually meeting with us as we proceed with our exposition.

We pass on, then, to the next words,"Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings." It is literally, "in every spiritual blessing;" but the sense is much the same, for "every spiritual blessing" means the same as "all spiritual blessings;" and though "in" is somewhat fuller and stronger than "with," as implying an actual possession and enjoyment of them, yet "with" is sufficiently expressive of the sense of the Apostle.

We have already pointed out a difference between our blessing God and his blessing us. We can only faintly and feebly bless him in word for what he blesses us in deed. And O, could our faith but embrace a little, were it only a little, and O, could we daily come and drink but a few drops of this pure fountain of immortal joy, in the sweet realization of being blessed, already blessed, fully blessed, unalterably, irreversibly blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ—what strength and consolation would it impart to our often cast-down soul. Look at the words; examine them again and again; think over in your mind, one by one, the spiritual blessings that you most covet. Is it pardon? Is it peace? Is it the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Is it the Spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry, Abba, Father? Is it communion with God? Is it the enjoyment of his presence and smiles? Is it deliverance from every doubt and fear? Is it a large measure of his fear in your heart, a subduing of all your lusts and corruptions, a godly, holy life, and a happy, blessed death? Are not these the spiritual blessings which you prize above house or land, wife or husband, child or relative, or any earthly good? With these, then, and with every other are you blessed, already blessed, if you are one of God’s saints and a believer in Christ Jesus. God has not yet to bless you, beyond giving you a foretaste here and the full enjoyment hereafter. He has already blessed you with them all in Christ Jesus. But where? "In heavenly places?" As after "heavenly" in the

original there is no substantive, for you will observe that in our translation "places" is in italics, which signifies a word wanting in the Greek, we might read "heavenly things," as is noted in the margin. But we think that our translators were wise in putting "places" instead of "things." And why? Because we are blessed with all these spiritual blessings in Christ. And where is he? Is he not in the heavenly places? Was he not set there by God himself, when he raised him from the dead, as it is declared in this chapter, Ephesians 1:20? Every spiritual blessing with which God has blessed his people is in Christ; and as he is now in heavenly places, all these blessings are there stored and secured in him.

We here see the union between Christ and the Church, and her relationship to him as her risen, glorified Head, which we have pointed out as the distinguishing feature, and, if we may use the expression, peculiar signature of this epistle. God has blessed her with all spiritual blessings. But why, and how? "In Christ." That is the reason, and that is the manner of her being so blessed. She is not so blessed in or for herself—but only by virtue of her union with, her relationship unto, and her standing in, the Lord Jesus Christ. Figures are but dim and imperfect representations of the union between Christ and the Church, but as the Holy Spirit has himself chosen marriage as an illustration of the nature and closeness of this union, we may safely adopt, and perhaps expand it, to unfold more clearly the connection of the Church’s union with Christ and her being blessed with all spiritual blessings in him.

Take, then, the figure of a father richly endowing the chosen bride of his only son, and loading her with most costly gifts. Why? Because, and only because, she is his son’s wedded spouse. Her union with his son makes her his daughter, and he becomes her father by her becoming his son’s wife. We therefore read, "The King’s daughter is all glorious within;" and again, "Hearken, O daughter." (Psalms 45:10; Psalms 45:13.) The best of all blessings are "spiritual blessings." All others are for time; but they, and they only, for eternity. Health and wealth, wife and children, food and clothing, friends and relations, house and home, are but for the body, and will not be needed when body and soul part company. But spiritual blessings—those blessings which the Holy Spirit manifests and reveals to the souls of God’s people, and by the knowledge, possession, and enjoyment of which he qualifies them and makes them fit for the inheritance of the saints in light—those blessings, so worthy of God to give and for her to receive, are given to the Church only as in union with her covenant Head.

Chapter 50

03.01.02. Part Two

Part II.

Viewing the Church of Christ in her relationship to her glorious covenant Head, which we have pointed out as the characteristic mark and distinguishing feature of this Epistle, two things, intimately connected with this relationship, prominently meet our eye—1, her being; 2, her well-being; first that the Church is; secondly, that she is what she is. The first of these two points we shall but briefly touch upon; the second, as intimately connected with our subject, will require from us a fuller and larger degree of handling. And if our exposition of this part of the chapter should seem somewhat dull or dry, as being chiefly doctrinal, be it borne in mind that sound and clear doctrine must ever precede and be the foundation of all sound and clear experience of the truth in its purity and its power.

1. That there should be a Church at all is, in itself, a marvel which surpasses and baffles all our attempts to understand or explain; for consider, for a moment, what is involved in the simple fact made known to us only by divine revelation, and only received by faith, that there is a Church, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That God should have chosen, before the foundation of the world, an innumerable multitude of the human race, and that these should form, in their united assemblage, one perfect, harmonious body—the mystical body of Christ, and as such should be the Bride and Spouse of the Son of God—what a mystery of wisdom and grace is here! At present, we know but in part, (1 Corinthians 13:9,) and can therefore, only stand, as if in holy admiration, on the brink of this sea of love and grace, without being able, in our time-state, to embark upon and sail over it. We believe it only on the testimony of God in the word; and if we can rejoice in hope of personal interest in it, it is only from the testimony of God in the soul.

As, then, by faith we view what the Apostle calls "the mystery of Christ," which "from the beginning of the world was hidden in God, but in due time was revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit," which mystery is the union of Head and members into one mystical body, the question may, perhaps, arise in our mind, "How can these things be?" To this our chief answer must be, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36.) But viewing this divine mystery as revealed in the word of truth, with special reference to the two points already named, we may briefly say that the sovereign will of God is the cause of the Church’s being; and his eternal love, boundless grace, and infinite wisdom the cause of her well-being.

It is not well, perhaps, to draw too fine or needless distinctions; and yet it may help our thoughts in contemplating this heavenly mystery to see that there is a distinction between the Church simply being the bride of Christ, and the Church being a bride adorned for him with all her beauty and

glory. A simple illustration may assist us here. Youth, beauty, and graceful accomplishments, sweetness of temper, and amiability of disposition, do not constitute womanhood; nor are they necessary to kindle love in man's heart; and yet they may much endear the bride who possesses them to him who has won her affections, and can now call her by marriage his. So the Church's present grace and future glory do not make her to be a Church; but being constituted a Church by the appointment of the Father, her beauty and loveliness enhance her heavenly Bridegroom's love, and call forth those almost rapturous words from his lips, "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you." "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck. How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is your love than wine; and the fragrance of your ointments, than all spices!" (Song of Solomon 4:9-10.)

It is this beauty of the Church which we have now to unfold; for it mainly consists in her being blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ.

2. It being, then, the sovereign goodwill and pleasure of the Father that there should be a Church, as the bride and spouse of his dear Son, his love went out in blessing her, his grace in enriching her, and his wisdom in furnishing her with every qualification suitable to her high and heavenly calling, and to that state of ultimate and eternal glory for which he had designed her. And do we not see a glorious beauty and harmony in all this? Being but a creature, even in her primitive innocence, in all the purity of her unfallen condition, the Church, as she could have had no existence but by the sovereign goodwill and pleasure of God, so she could not have furnished herself with those qualifications which should render her a suitable bride, friend, and companion for the Son of God. As then love moved the heart of the Father toward her, so wisdom directed his counsels; and the result was that he blessed her with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in the Son of his love. Thus was she prepared beforehand in eternity as "a bride adorned for her husband;" for she was viewed by him, "who sees the end from the beginning," with whom there is neither time nor space, but one eternal "now," then as she will one day appear, arrayed in all the beauties of holiness, and shining forth in all the glory of the Lord the Lamb.

Verse 4. But this brings us to resume the thread of our exposition; for what followed upon the sovereign goodwill and pleasure of God that there should be a Church, and that he blessed her with all spiritual blessings in Christ? The determinate choice of the members of this mystical body, which we believe to have been not general and indiscriminate, not national or to privileges, not with respect to faith and obedience foreseen, or any other such scheme as the wit of man has devised to nullify or render palatable a doctrine offensive to the carnal mind; but an election personal and individual; in other words, an absolute, unconditional, and distinct choice of every individual member, so that there should be, in their totality, neither more nor fewer than should make a perfect body. This personal and individual election is intimated in the words—"According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Ephesians 1:4.) The connection between this and the preceding verse lies in the words, "According as." Having simply declared that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, the Apostle goes to show why and how he has so blessed us. It is "according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Election in Christ, therefore, precedes being blessed with all spiritual blessings; for we are blessed with them only as being in him, and we are only in him as chosen in him. We thus see what an important and

momentous truth the doctrine of election is, and that in it not only our very present existence, our now living and moving on this earth, is bound up, but that all our hopes and prospects for the future center in it. Election also, we may remark, though distinct and personal, is not, as is sometimes loosely and confusedly stated, a mere abstract or absolute choice of persons to eternal salvation, irrespective of their union with their covenant Head, but, according to our text, is a choice of them in Christ. It, therefore, precedes every blessing, and they were given only through it and in accordance with it.

God chose him and the elect in him at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the Head of election and of the elect of God; for as in the natural body the head was not first formed and then the members, but head and members were by one and the same act called at the same moment into being; so it was with Christ mystical. God the Father did not choose Christ first to be a Mediator, and then choose his people by a subsequent act, and put them into him, which would be setting up a Head without members, a Bridegroom without a bride, a Shepherd without sheep, and a Vine without branches; but chose him and them in him by one eternal act.

You will also carefully bear in mind that Christ was not chosen to be the Son of God by this act of election, for this he ever was and is by virtue of his eternal subsistence; but being, already and eternally being, the Son of the Father in truth and love, and fore-viewed and predestinated as incarnate, he was chosen as God-man Mediator, and his people chosen in him as such. Here we see both their being and their well-being; why they are, and why they are what they are. Here we see two divine mysteries unfolded, in which are wrapped up all that the elect of God are and all that they ever will be—1. Their union with Christ; 2. The blessings which they possess in him by virtue of that union. Here we see why and how God has blessed them with all spiritual blessings. It is "in him," and because they are in him as being chosen in him.

Viewing them, therefore, in union with his dear Son, God loved them with the same love as he loved him (John 17:23,) and out of the fullness of this love he blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him. It was as if he could not do enough for the bride of his dear Son; as if he would enrich and endow her with every blessing which could not only qualify her to be a suitable spouse, but raise and elevate her to a state of holiness, happiness, and glory, not only beyond all human or angelic thought or conception, but such as would satisfy the very heart of God himself, and display to all eternity the riches of his wisdom and grace, and the height, depth, length, and breadth of his love.

This, then, brings us back to the fuller consideration and examination of the SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS with which God has blessed the Church in heavenly places in Christ. i. The first spiritual blessing is being "chosen in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before God in love." We prefer ourselves to put the stop after "before him," and connecting the words "in love" with the next verse, to read it thus: "In love having predestinated us." But we will first take the words as they stand in our translation.

Two spiritual blessings are spoken of here—1, holiness; 2, blamelessness. Unto both of these, as needful qualifications to render her a suitable bride for the Son of God, was the Church chosen. As it is very desirable to understand what is signified or implied by these two qualifications, we shall endeavor to unfold them separately, that we may enter into their spiritual meaning, and try our own

state and standing by them. And we may here remark that unless we can raise our eyes to the position which the Church occupies as the spouse and bride of the Son of God, all our views of her will be weak and defective, and our own experience of spiritual blessings, as their design and result, be dim and confused. The grand end and result of all personal experience of spiritual blessings is to bring us into manifested union and communion with the Lord Jesus, so as to drink into his spirit, have his mind, and be conformed to his likeness. We thus become one spirit with him; and without this there can be no communion between him and us. Even in earthly marriage, there must be some union of soul as well as of body, of mind as well as of person—of spirit as well as of flesh—between man and wife, and especially in the case of the people of God, to make wedded life happy. What makes so many miserable marriages but disparity and unsuitability of mind or disposition between the parties? When God, then, would provide a bride for his dear Son, he took abundant care that she should be a suitable friend and companion—as well as wedded spouse. They were to dwell together in the most blissful intimacy of spirit through a glorious eternity. She must, therefore, be perfectly conformed to his image, that he might delight in her as reflecting his beauty and glory, and she delight in him as beholding all the perfections of Deity shining forth through the medium of his glorified humanity. This was why God chose her to the possession and enjoyment of two of the richest spiritual blessings which even his wisdom could devise or his love bestow—1, perfection of holiness within; 2, a perfection of spotless beauty without. The psalmist puts them together in one verse, "The King’s daughter is all glorious within." There is her inward perfection in holiness. "Her clothing is of wrought gold." There is her outward perfection; We will look at both these blessings in connection with the verse now before us. And first of the choice of the Church unto holiness.

1. By HOLINESS we may understand two things—1, holiness in its germ or earthly beginning; and 2, holiness in its full maturity or heavenly completion. God is essentially and infinitely holy; and he has said to his people, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15.) So holy is he, that nothing which is unholy can live in his presence. As, then, without holiness no man can see the Lord, so, without holiness no man can enjoy the Lord. Holiness, as an internal grace, is especially a spiritual blessing, for it mainly consists in a spiritual capacity to delight in God as essentially and ineffably holy, and to have communion with him from oneness of spirit with the Lord Jesus, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person. The happiness of heaven is not only to be perfectly holy, but to enjoy eternal communion with a Three-One God in all the beauties of holiness. This is the fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light, without which heaven, could they reach it, would be no heaven to them. There is a depth of vital truth in those remarkable words of the Apostle, to which we have already alluded—"But he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:17.) Thus, even here below, with all our weakness and sinfulness, there is a sweet spiritual delighting in Christ as the Holy One of Israel, and so far a blessed communion with him as joined to him and one spirit with him.

Though in ourselves such hideous, loathsome lepers, polluted without and within by every sin and crime, yet, as partaking of his spirit and born of God into a new and hidden life, we cannot but, with the eyes of our new man, admire the beauty of the King as he presents himself to our view, and wins over and engages every affection of our willing heart unto himself. Indeed, if ever we hate and loathe ourselves on account of our iniquities, it is because we are so unlike him, and have so sinned against and before the eyes of his infinite purity and against his bleeding, dying love. Sin,

horrid sin, is the cause of all our grief, burden, and trouble; and we are sure that whatever moments of peace we may now and then enjoy, we never can or shall be perfectly happy until we are perfectly holy, and be done forever with our daily plague and continual burden. The words of Hart well express our feelings—"But I would be holy." And whence springs such a feeling and such a desire? From being born of God. It is our new nature, our spirit born of the Spirit, which is holy; not "our flesh in which dwells no good thing." It is this holy and divine nature in us which hates sin and pants after holiness, which relishes holy employments, and delights in spiritual enjoyments, which believes, and hopes, and loves; which prays and praises, which alternately sings and sighs; trembles and rejoices, lies at the footstool and waits at the doorposts, mourns like a dove and mounts as an eagle. But in this present earthly life, this principle of holiness is but an infant seed under the clods, as a sprouting seed in the furrow, as a tender blade amid the weeds, as a lily among the thorns. Earth is not its native climate or destined home. It is now, indeed, planted in the house of the Lord, but it will flourish only in full perfection in the courts of God. (Psalms 92:13.) To this ultimate state of perfection in holiness is the Church chosen. And God will most certainly "perfect that which concerns her, nor will he forsake the work of his own hands." "He who has begun the good work will perform [or 'finish,' margin] it until the day of Jesus Christ;" (Php 1:6;) for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall his saints also appear with him in glory." At his appearing, "he will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Then, and not until then, will the holiness to which the Church has been chosen be perfect and complete. Holy in soul and holy in body, and each wholly conformed to the perfect exemplar of the glorified humanity of the Son of God, the saints will dwell forever in union and communion with their loving and beloved Lord.

2. Then, also, will the Church be "without blame before God." Most commentators, we believe, connect this spiritual blessing with the preceding, as if they formed but one; but we prefer to view them, as already observed, as distinct, and to refer the blessing of holiness to the internal, and the blessing of BLAMELESSNESS to the external character of the Church. Justification and sanctification are distinct blessings. The first springs out of, and is connected with, the finished work of the Son of God; the other springs out of, and is connected with, the work of the Holy Spirit on the soul. Sin has defiled our persons externally as well as polluted our souls internally. We cannot, therefore, stand before God unless washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in his spotless righteousness. This righteousness forms our title to heaven, as holiness constitutes our fitness. The former is our wedding robe, the latter our spiritual qualification. The hymn well draws this distinction:

"Tis he adorned my naked soul, And made salvation mine;

Upon a poor, polluted worm He makes his graces shine.

And, lest the shadow of a spot Should on my soul be found, He took the robe the Savior wrought, And cast it all around. The Spirit wrought my faith, and love, And hope, and every grace; But Jesus spent his life to work The robe of righteousness."

Without these two qualifications, what entrance could there be into heaven, or what happiness there, could entrance be gained? For consider not only the infinite purity and holiness of God, but the blazing splendor of his immediate presence—the piercing ray of his deep-searching eye. Who

or what can live in his presence but what is absolutely perfect without and within? But this the Church could not be, unless she were washed in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of God's dear Son; and perfectly sanctified by the operations and indwelling of his Spirit. We therefore read—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27.)

Both of these blessings are contained in the above words. Christ "loving the Church, and giving himself for it," implies his blood-shedding and obedience, whereby it was so thoroughly and completely justified so as to be without blame before God; and his "sanctifying and cleansing it with the washing of water by the word" points to the work of sanctification by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, whereby it is made holy—here initially, hereafter perfectly; the ultimate end of both her justification and sanctification being "that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

And, adopting for the present the usual reading, all this "in love," for love was the moving cause, as it will be the final consummation of the whole counsel of God. He, therefore, says—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." There is the moving cause. "Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." There is the carrying out of the purposes of his heart, in the drawing of her unto his own bosom by the cords of his loving-kindness, here to taste, there fully to enjoy, when, perfect in holiness and blameless in righteousness, the Church will be presented by her heavenly Bridegroom faultless before the presence of the Father, with exceeding joy; (Jude 1:24;) and thus will she dwell forever in his love.

Ephesians 1:5.

3. The next spiritual blessing is PREDESTINATION—"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Ephesians 1:5.)

We have mentioned that we prefer putting the stop after "before him," and thus to connect the words "in love" with the next verse, reading the whole thus "in love having predestinated us," etc. The reasons why we prefer so to read it we will now, therefore, endeavor, to explain. First, it removes a little difficulty which seems to present itself in the way of clearly understanding the meaning of the expression, "being without blame before God in love;" for, though we have given an interpretation of the words as we believe they are usually explained, yet we confess that we are by no means fully satisfied with the explanation. It is easy to understand the meaning of being chosen unto perfect holiness, and to spotless blamelessness before God; but, according to our view, it is not so easy to see what is signified by being so "in love;" for it is not love which produces either the holiness or the blamelessness, though it enhances and completes both. But if we join "in love" to the next clause, not only is this little difficulty removed, but we are furnished with a beautiful and blessed reason why God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself; and we thus make it fully harmonize with the words of John on the same point—"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore, the world knows us not, because it knew him not." (1 John 3:1.)

We may also add, as a point of learned criticism, that some of the oldest versions and ancient fathers so read the passage, and that it has been adopted by the best and newest editions of the Greek Testament. But our main reasons for so connecting the words, we shall presently more fully unfold. Adopting, then, this mode of reading the connection, we will now consider the meaning of God’s having "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself."

1. And, first, what is the difference between election and predestination? or is there any difference between them? It is hardly worth while to draw, in such difficult points, minute distinctions, and yet we may safely conclude that there is some difference between them, or the Apostle would not have used the two words. We may, then, briefly say that election is the first act in the mind of God whereby he "chose the persons of the elect to be holy and without blame; and that predestination was the second act, which ratified by fixed decree the state of those to whom election had given birth. Having chosen them in his dear Son unto a perfection of holiness and righteousness, his love went forth, not only to fix their state by firm decree, but to add another blessing, the highest and greatest which even his love could bestow, that is, to make them his own children by adoption, and thus himself become their Father and their God. He might, so to speak, have rested short of this. To choose them to perfect holiness and spotless perfection would have abundantly secured their happiness, for this is all that the angels have. But his love to his dear Son was so vast, yes, so infinite, that having chosen a people in him, his love went out towards them as one with his own Son, and in the depth of that love he predestinated them unto the adoption of children unto himself.

Here, then, we see a solid and substantial reason why "in love" should be prefixed to "having predestinated;" for it more clearly and distinctly shows us the movements of God’s love, in enriching the Church with that greatest and best of all blessings, the adoption of children unto himself. Viewing them in Christ, in union to the Son of his love, he would do more for them than make them perfect in holiness and righteousness. He would adopt them as his own children, and love them with the same love as that with which he loved his dear Son! A figure may perhaps help us here. A father chooses a bride for his son, as Abraham chose one of his own kin for Isaac, and gives her a goodly dowry, besides presenting her with bridal ornaments, such as Eleazar put upon Rebekah. But on becoming the spouse of his son, she becomes his daughter, and now his affections flow forth to her, not only as a suitable bride for his dear son; not only does he admire her beauty and grace, and is charmed with the sweetness of her disposition, but he is moved also with fatherly love towards her as adopted unto himself, and thus occupying a newer and nearer relationship.

Figures are, of course, necessarily imperfect, and as such must not be pressed too far; but if the one which we have adduced at all helps us to a clearer understanding of the wondrous love of God in the adoption of us unto himself, it will not be out of place. We thus see that predestination to the adoption of children is a higher, richer, and greater blessing than being chosen unto holiness and blamelessness, and may thus be said to follow upon them as an additional and special fruit of God’s love. But the love of God, in predestinating the Church unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, has even a deeper root than viewing her as the Bride of his dear Son. It springs out of, and is most closely and intimately connected with the true, real, and eternal Sonship of Jesus. Being chosen in Christ, the elect become the sons of God. Why? Because he is the true, real, and essential Son of the Father; and thus, as in union with him, who

is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by adoption. Were he a Son merely by office, or by incarnation, this would not be the case, for he would then only be a Son by adoption himself. But being the Son of God by eternal subsistence, he can say, "Behold I and the children which you have given me." "I your Son by nature, they your sons by adoption." We see, then, that so great, so special was the love of God to his only-begotten Son, that, viewing the Church in union with him, his heart embraced her with the same love as that with which he loved him! The Apostle, therefore, adds, "Unto himself." No words could so well set forth the thoughts of God's heart toward the Church, and the ultimate consummation of his eternal purposes. In choosing the Church in Christ unto holiness, and in predestinating her unto the adoption of children, it was to bring her into union and communion with himself. But this she could not have as a creature, however holy and perfect, except by union with the Son of God. Angels are holy and without blame before God, but they have not union and communion with him. Why? Because they have not union and communion with his dear Son. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Christ could not, therefore, say of angels, "I in them and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Nor could he use of them those wondrous words, "That they all may be one; as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us." (John 17:21; John 17:23.) But as we must not linger too long on any one point, we pass on to our exposition of the next words, "According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:5-6.) Two things are spoken of here as moving causes in the mind of God—1. The good pleasure of his will; 2. The praise of the glory of his grace. We will look at these separately.

1. "According to the good pleasure of his will." This we may call the determining cause of the whole of God's counsel in the choice of the Church, and blessing her with all spiritual blessings, as the praise of the glory of his grace was the ultimate end. Thus to endow and bless her was his sovereign will; and observe the expression, "the good pleasure of his will." All things are and exist only by the will of God; that is, his naked, absolute, sovereign will. But when he willed that there should be a Church in union with his dear Son; he rejoiced and delighted in that peculiar act of his will. It was, therefore, the "good pleasure of his will." An earthly sovereign must sometimes punish. It is necessary to good government that the law should be strictly executed; but, though his will, it is not his good pleasure. He does not delight in executing a necessary act of justice; but, in exercising his prerogative of mercy in the pardon of a criminal, he may enjoy a sensible pleasure. So God is said to delight in mercy; (Micah 7:18;) whereas to punish is "his strange act," (Isaiah 28:21,) as if it were foreign to his merciful disposition. When, then, God chose the Church unto holiness and blamelessness, and predestinated her unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, it was not only his will—but the good pleasure of his will. And this gives us another reason for connecting "in love" with "having predestinated;" for the good pleasure of his will, according to which he chose and blessed the Church—was the carrying out of his love into a positive act of pleasurable will.

How beautiful it is to see the sweet and glorious harmony between the love of God, the good pleasure of God, and the will of God, and all moving in blessed concert in electing the Church in Christ to holiness and righteousness—and predestinating her to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself. What views it gives us of God, not merely as an absolute sovereign, and as such disposing all things according to the counsel of his own will—but going forth in goodness and

love! That as we see and feel our lost and ruined state, we may, by the power of his grace, know and believe the love that God has to us, (1 John 4:16,) and be thus encouraged ever to look and wait upon him.

2. The next point to be considered is the ultimate END of these counsels of God—"To the praise of the glory of his grace." But as this is a wide subject, we must defer out thoughts upon it to our next paper.

03.01.03. Part Three

Part III.

What God does he does for his own glory. All his wonders in creation—all his dealings in providence—all his actions in grace are for this end—that his great name might be magnified, and his glory be visibly manifested. Were there, indeed, no creation, no providence, no grace, God would still be the same; nothing would be lacking to his happiness, nothing lacking to his eternal and infinite perfections. We can, therefore, in imagination, look back to that period in eternity when there was no creation, when "as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world;" (Proverbs 8:26;) and we can similarly fix our eyes on that moment when "he laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:4; Job 38:7.) But creation, with all its wonders, added nothing to the glory of God. It became, indeed, a vast theater for its visible display to millions of angelic and human intelligences; but the wisdom and power of God would have been the same had he never said, "Let there be light, and there was light," or made man in his own image, after his own likeness. But it was his holy will that there should be a visible manifestation of his glory; in other words, that there should be a display of his wisdom and power, and of every other such attribute of his divine character, as should bring eternal praise and honor to his name. Thence his original wonders in creation, thence his daily acts in providence, in opening his hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing.

How beautifully is all this unfolded by the psalmist—"O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both great and small. See the ships sailing along, and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea. Every one of these depends on you to give them their food as they need it. When you supply it, they gather it. You open your hand to feed them, and they are satisfied." (Psalms 104:24-28.) And why this display of his power? "The glory of the Lord shall endure forever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works." (Psalms 104:31.) But we need not dwell on the glory of God as thus visibly manifested in creation and in providence. The point which more immediately concerns us, as being connected with our present exposition, is the manifestation of this glory in a special way of grace—"To the praise of the glory of his grace." At this point, therefore, we resume our exposition of the chapter before us. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6.)

We have showed that "the good pleasure of God’s will" was the moving cause of his choosing the Church in Christ before the foundation of the world, and blessing her with all spiritual blessings in him. As, then, we may call "the good pleasure of his will" the moving cause of his choice, so we may term "the praise of his glory" its ultimate end. This is expressed by the Apostle in the words now before us, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Let us look a little, then, into this deep and blessed subject.

We are usually so much taken up with looking at grace as suitable to ourselves, that we are apt to forget or overlook it as glorifying to God. It is, indeed, hardly to be expected that, in early days, we should lose sight of ourselves, when our own miserable condition as sinners before God is forced so continually on our thoughts, and so deeply and sensibly impressed upon our consciences. And it seems to be the will of God that we should practically and experimentally learn our need of grace as suitable to ourselves, before we rise up into a higher knowledge of grace as glorifying to him. It is for this reason that we are made to feel the burden of our sins, the holiness and justice of God, and what we deserve at his hands as transgressors. This is a view of the glory of God in the law, as reflecting his justice; but not a view of him in the gospel, as reflecting his grace. But it is still divine teaching, for we read—"Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law." (Psalms 94:12.) Under, then, this heavenly teaching, producing a sense of sin and of the justice of God in punishing it, all hope or help in self is cut off, and down we sink, body and soul, before the face of the Almighty, just able to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Now this view of the glory of God in the law prepares us for a view of his glory in the gospel; and a knowledge of sin by the ministration of condemnation and death fits us for a knowledge of salvation by the ministration of life and righteousness. As, then, salvation by grace is manifested to the eyes of our enlightened understanding in the word, and is inwardly revealed by the power of God to the soul—how sweet and suitable is the melodious sound, as it thus reaches both ears and heart. It is this blessed suitability of God’s way of saving sinners by grace, when every other door is shut and every other refuge cut off—which makes salvation by grace the sweetest tidings which can ever fall on the ears of man! Nor does an increasing knowledge of grace, both in its Fountain and in its streams, lessen either its suitability or its sweetness. No, the more deeply that we are led into a knowledge of the mystery of ungodliness—the more suitable and precious does salvation by grace become—as opening to our faith and hope the only escape from the wrath to come, and the only remedy that we can see or find, in heaven or earth, to meet the whole extent of our desperate case.

As, then, the benefit and blessedness of grace become more clearly and fully manifested—and its freeness, sovereignty, and super-aboundings are made more experimentally known—it is more warmly and lovingly embraced, more closely cleaved unto, more fully and unreservedly looked to and hung upon—as the only hope of our tried and tempted, and often cast down and dejected soul. But during all this time we may have but very dim and scanty views of the grand and glorious truth here presented to us by the Apostle—that this grace, which is so suitable to us—is also glorifying to God. We seem to love and admire the gift more than the glory of the Giver! Our own salvation by the fullness and freeness of his grace—not his praise and glory in thus fully and freely saving us—as it was at first our chief concern, so it seems to form too often afterwards our chief thought and pleasure. Now this is surely not rendering to God the glory due to his name. It is not making his will our will, nor his glory the chief joy of our soul; and we thus fall short of what should be the main desire of our hearts. And as we thus fail in rendering to God the glory due to his name, so we proportionately lose much of what would be for our own comfort and stability, had we a clearer apprehension and a more abiding sense of the intimate connection between the grace of God end the glory of God. But when we are somewhat farther and more clearly led into a vital, experimental knowledge of the great mystery of salvation by Christ, and can see by the eye of faith that God’s own glory is far more deeply interested in saving us freely and eternally by his

grace—than if it were merely from a feeling of pity and compassion to us as lost, undone sinners—then we seem to get a new view of what grace is, as dwelling eternally in the bosom of God, and see that it is not only for our salvation—but to the praise of his glory. As, then, we thus rise out of self into the purer and higher atmosphere of the glory of God, we see that this view of the true nature of grace gives it a deeper root, a firmer foundation, and makes it a more rich, copious, and ever-flowing spring of salvation and sanctification, of holiness and happiness, than were it merely God's free favor to undone sinners, in which his own glory had little share.

Now it will ever be found that as the glory of God is the ultimate end of all his thoughts and counsels, words and works—so a dim and defective view of this glory will impair our spiritual judgment, weaken our faith, becloud our hope, and diminish our love. To be always thinking of ourselves, and never lift up eye or heart to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is a kind of spiritual selfishness, which, like moral selfishness, cramps and contracts the heart, and, by shutting out the glory of God, may, in a sense, be said to shut out himself. But we need hardly wonder that so many of the living family of God have such dim and imperfect views of the real nature of grace, when we think how deficient in this point is the ministry of the day. There are but few, speaking comparatively, who preach salvation by grace at all; but even of those who do preach it, most seem to represent it rather as a remedy for the fall, a kind of expedient which God, moved with compassion, devised, almost as an after-thought, to repair the breach—than as a fruit of his eternal counsel and good pleasure for the manifestation of his own glory. They speak well of grace as opposed to works; and they proclaim, at least many of them, clearly and boldly, that salvation is all of grace from first to last. But they do not seem to see and admire how the glory of God shines forth with such conspicuous luster in his grace, and that he saves man, not merely as touched with pity and compassion for his case, but that, long before man sinned and fell, it was his determinate will that the love of his heart, the wisdom of his counsels, the power of his might, and the triumphs of his grace should bring to himself a revenue of eternal praise.

This, then, is what we should seek to realize by the power of faith, and we shall then see that this view of grace identifies, if we may use the expression—God in his glory with grace in its manifestation—and that it arrays, therefore, on the side of grace, not merely the sovereign will of God, but that glory which is the end of all his works. Thus it is, as the Apostle here declares, "to the praise of his glory." That his glory in manifesting his favor to the poor, needy children of men should be eternally praised, and form the theme of thanksgiving and blessing of myriads of redeemed sinners through millions of revolving ages, as it was the ultimate end of God's counsels, so in it will he eternally rest and be satisfied. And as this alone will satisfy God—so it alone will satisfy the objects of his love and the subjects of his grace. And you, poor needy reader, who are often pressed and bowed down with a sense of your sins, have you not sometimes felt that none would so bless and praise God as you, if admitted to his presence—for of all sinners you have been and are in your feelings the vilest and worst, and of all extreme, peculiar, and complicated cases—yours seems to be at times the most deep and desperate? Well, then, you will have something to bless and praise God for, should you reach heaven at last—and to do this with an immortal tongue, as it will be your highest happiness, so it will be to God's own eternal glory. But the Apostle goes on still further to unfold the nature and the triumphs of sovereign grace—"Wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved." That the grace revealed in the gospel is wholly in Christ must never for one moment be lost sight of. This is the reason why the Apostle

keeps pressing it again and again on our attention, lest we should unawares lose sight of it. The point, then, here chiefly developed is our ACCEPTANCE. "Accepted in the Beloved." The word means literally "graced" us, or given us favor, "in the Beloved," that is, of course, the beloved Son of God. The word occurs only in another place in the New Testament, that is, Luke 1:28, in the salutation of Gabriel to the Virgin, where it is rendered in our version, "You that are highly favored," and in the margin, "Graciously accepted," or "much graced."

Acceptance, then, means being in a state of favor of God; and "acceptance in the Beloved" gives us the reason of this state of favor, that it is in consequence of possessing such a union with Christ, and of being so identified with him, as to be viewed with the same favor as he is by the Father. What a light this throws upon the union of the Church with Christ and the fruit of this union. How close, peculiar, and intimate must be the union of the Church with the Person of the Son of God, if by virtue of it the Father loves her with the same love, rejoices over her with the same delight, and bears toward her the same favor as he does to his only-begotten Son. This union with Christ is, then, the only ground of the acceptance of our persons; and, as such, is the first fruit of distinguishing grace. Until we were thus personally accepted, there could be no flowing forth of the streams of love and mercy, some of which we have already touched upon, and others which we hope soon to trace.

Indeed, we may say that it is almost in divine as in human love. A woman must be personally acceptable to a man before love can fix itself upon her. He may and should love her for the qualities of her mind; but it is her person, for the most part, which first catches and entangles his affections. And if this be thought a carnal view of divine love, may we not appeal to that portion of the Book of which heavenly love forms the chief subject? In that record of the loves of Christ and the Church do we find the heavenly Bridegroom unmindful of, or insensible to the personal charms of his bride? How much of the divine Song is taken up with the mutual admiration of each other's personal beauty. How we seem to see the Bridegroom's loving looks and hear his loving tones—"Behold, you are fair, my love; behold, you are fair; you have doves' eyes within your locks; your hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead." "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you." "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." (Sol. Song of Solomon 4:1; Song of Solomon 4:7; Song of Solomon 4:9.) But what is all this personal beauty which the heavenly Lover so much admires in the Church—but the reflection of his own loveliness in her? It is with her as the Lord said to the Church of old—"And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty; for it was perfect through my loveliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 16:14.) The Church, then, being viewed as one with Christ, the beloved Son of God—his beauty and loveliness are seen put upon her and reflected in her—and the Father, viewing her as thus one with his dear Son, contemplates her with the same delight, approbation, and favor—as that with which he looks upon the Son of his eternal love. Our Lord, therefore, said of his people to the Father, "And have loved them as you have loved me." (John 17:23.)

This, then, is being "made accepted in the Beloved;" and this acceptance of our persons, as it is the first result of our union with Christ, so it is the source of all subsequent acts of favor. A man can never do too much for the woman that he loves. "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." No sacrifice was too great, no suffering too severe for him not to endure for her sake. From love to her he laid his glory aside, took part of the flesh and blood of the children, hid not his face

from shame and spitting, and endured all the agony and ignominy of the cross. But this is a subject on which we need not enlarge, as it would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that all subsequent thoughts, words, and acts of love towards the Church were built, as it were, on this foundation. "I was," the Church says, "in his eyes as one that found favor." (Song of Solomon 8:10.) But why? Because she was made accepted in the Beloved. But as this is a grand point, not only of Christian doctrine but of Christian experience, we trust to be excused if we dwell a little longer upon it, and show how it bears upon the work of the blessed Spirit on the heart.

We are ever looking for something in SELF to make ourselves acceptable to God, and are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find that holiness, that obedience, that calm submission to the will of God, that serenity of soul, that spirituality and heavenly-mindedness which we believe to be acceptable in his sight, and to make us acceptable too. Our crooked tempers, fretful, peevish minds, rebellious thoughts, coldness, barrenness, and death, our alienation from good and headlong proneness to ill, with the daily feeling that we get no better but rather worse, make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves. And this brings on great darkness of mind and bondage of spirit, until we seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ, and get into the miserable dregs of self, almost ready to quarrel with God because we are so vile, and only get worse as we get older. Now the more we get into these dregs of self, and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view, the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel, and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God. It is "in the Beloved" that we are accepted, and not for any good words or good works, good thoughts, good hearts, or good intentions of our own. Not but that the fruits of godliness are acceptable in God’s sight; not but that our continual sins are displeasing in his eyes. But we must draw a distinction between the acceptance of our persons and the acceptance of our works—between what we are as standing in Christ and what we are as still in the flesh. If our acceptance with God depended on anything in ourselves, we would have to adopt the Wesleyan creed, and believe we might be children of God today and children of the devil tomorrow! What comfort that doctrine would give us, we leave our exercised readers to judge of for themselves. If it did not drive an exercised soul to despair, we know not what either hope or despair is. What, then, is to keep us from sinking altogether into despair, without hope or help? Why, a knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved," independent of everything in us, good or bad. Here is a firm foundation for our faith and hope. And how the Scriptures pour in, as it were, on all sides their confirming testimony—"Their righteousness is of me, says the Lord." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." "You are complete in him." "By him all that believe are justified from all things. Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," "That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you." What a universal chorus of harmonious voices do we hear all sounding forth the same melodious strain, that the Church stands before God accepted in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:7. But we need not further enlarge on this point, especially as we have other precious truths still in reserve. We pass on, therefore, to the next verse—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

It will be, perhaps, observed that we now come to a spiritual blessing connected with, and dependent upon the fall. The blessings which we have hitherto been considering we may view as

antecedent to and, therefore, unconnected with the fall of man. Election in Christ before the foundation of the world, a state of perfect holiness and blamelessness before God, predestination to the adoption of children to himself, and acceptance in the Beloved—these four choice blessings are irrespective of the entrance of sin into the word and of death by sin. And observe how, as being antecedent to and irrespective of the fall, they gave the Church a standing in Christ which preserved her from being personally wrecked and ruined by the fall. We say "personally," that is, as regards her person; for as regards her state she fell in Adam, being in his loins when he committed the first transgression. A figure may help us here. A king marries his son to a pure, chaste bride, and presents her with a goodly dowry. Now, she might be carried off by pirates, dragged into slavery, reduced to a state of great poverty and misery, and yet with all this remain the king's daughter and the son's wife. And if her husband should go after and undergo every kind of peril and privation to find her and bring her back, this would not make her any more his wife than she was before.

What made the Church to be the bride of God's dear Son? You cannot surely say that redemption made her such, any more than being rescued from the hands of the pirates, in our figure, made the freed captive to be the king's son's wife. We see, therefore, that the Church had a standing in Christ as his chosen bride before she fell in Adam, and thus the blessings which we nave named and gone through in our exposition were given her antecedent to, and irrespective of the fall. We do not say that the fall was not foreseen and fore-provided for; we do not say that in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, regard was not had to it. All we contend for is, that the choice of the Church in Christ, her union with him as his bride, and her acceptance in him as the beloved Son of the Father—were blessings antecedent to, and irrespective of the Adam fall. But though it is not our object to dispute, or split hairs in divinity, yet as it is in our judgment a blessed part of revealed truth, we shall close our present article with an extract from Goodwin, who, in our judgment, of all authors whom we have ever read, has written most clearly and beautifully on this point:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephesians 1:7)

"I stand here at Ephesians 1:7, between two of the greatest—what shall I call them?—heights or depths of God's wisdom and grace toward us; and as that angel in the Revelation had one foot upon the earth and another upon the sea, so I stand with one foot upon the blessings ordained us from eternity, and intended us when we come in heaven, and the other upon the blessings intended us here in this world. They are both of them two vast arguments, and therefore you shall give me leave to be somewhat larger than ordinary about them. For of all the mysteries of the gospel, since I knew it, this has most swallowed up my thoughts.

"Two things I shall observe about these two sorts of decrees and blessings—First, I shall show you how these blessings differ, as before I showed you what was common to them among themselves; and, Secondly, I shall give you a glimpse of that infinitely glorious harmony between these two contrivements, and of the wisdom of God which shines in them both. The greatness of the point deserves this.

"For the First. How these blessings DIFFER.

"First. The first sort of blessings, perfect holiness, adoption, &c., were ordained us without the consideration of the fall, though not before the consideration of the fall; for all the things which God decrees are at once in his mind. They were all, both one and other, ordained to our persons. But God, in the decrees about these first sort of blessings, viewed us as creabiles, as creatures which he could and would make so and so glorious. For God can easily ordain the subject, and the utmost well-being of it, both at once; and this might well be the first idea taken of us in God's purposes, because such is the perfection of God's understanding, that he at first looks to the perfection and end of his work. But the second sort of blessings were ordained us merely upon consideration of the fall, and to our persons considered as sinners and unbelievers. And the first sort were to the praise of God's grace, taking grace for the freeness of love; whereas, the latter sort are to the praise of the glory of his grace, are with an endearment of a greater degree of his grace, unto a further glory of his grace, and an illustration of it, taking grace for free mercy.

"Secondly. Those first sort of blessings are ordained to have their full and plenary accomplishment, and to take place in that other world, and are suited to that state into which we shall then be installed. And as in God's primary intention they are before the other, and therefore are said to have been 'before the foundation of the world,' (Ephesians 1:4) so they are to take place after this world ended, they being the center of all God's thoughts towards us. Then we shall be so holy as Satan himself shall find no ground to carp at us. Then we shall receive the adoption of children; and though we are now the sons of God, yet then it shall appear to us and all the world, by that infinite glory that God will then bestow upon us. But those second sort of blessings were ordained for our entertainment in this world, and are suited unto that condition which we shall run through unto the day of judgment.

"Thirdly. The first sort are founded merely upon our relation to the Person of Christ, as is manifested in all those three mentioned, (Ephesians 1:4-6) 'chosen in him,' and therefore holy; because as he, being the Son of God, was to be holy, (Luke 1:35,) 'That holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God,' so are we, we being members of him. And as this is true of holiness, so of the other two it is more plain. But this second sort are founded merely upon the merits of Christ; as redemption through his blood, and so forgiveness, conversion, etc. In a word, these latter blessings are but the removings of those obstacles which, by reason of sin, stood in our way to that intended glory. In the fullness of time God sent his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:5.)"—Dr. Goodwin's Works, vol. 1, p. 117.

03.01.04. Part Four

Part IV.

We have already more than once pointed out what we have called the key-note of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and have endeavored to show that its dominant theme is the peculiar relationship which the Church occupies to the Lord Jesus Christ as her covenant Head. In no other part of Scripture is this personal and peculiar relationship so fully or so clearly unfolded; and indeed we may almost say that all that is elsewhere spoken of the Church would have lost much of its force and significancy to our apprehension but for the light cast upon it by this Epistle.

We have also dwelt upon the foundation of this relationship, and shown that it is based upon the eternal union of the Church with the Son of God. If, then, we press these points again and again upon the attention of our readers, it is from our firm conviction that it is only so far as we spiritually apprehend, and bear them steadily in mind, that we can enter into the treasures of divine truth which are stored up in the Epistle before us, or in the chapter of which we are now attempting the exposition.

If our readers have rightly apprehended the distinction drawn in our last paper, and so ably opened up by Dr. Goodwin, in the extract that we gave from his works, between spiritual blessings antecedent to and irrespective of—and blessings consequent on and relating to the fall—they will be more fully prepared to follow us in our exposition of Ephesians 1:7—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

We observed that there were four spiritual blessings antecedent to and irrespective of the fall. These were—

1. election in Christ;

2. a perfection of holiness in him;

3. adoption into the family of God;

4. acceptance in the Beloved. Had the Church never sinned or fallen, she would still have been, 1, chosen in Christ; 2, perfect in his perfections; 3, a daughter of the King of heaven; 4, accepted in the Beloved. But it was the secret permissive will of God that the Church should fall. Why, we know not. It is one of those mysteries which are hidden from our eyes. But this we gather from the sacred record, that it was for the manifestation of his own glory. This, however, is a question on which we shall not dwell. There are subjects into which it is well not to enter, lest we venture upon ground where we cannot walk steadily and safely, and where it is best to say with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it;" or with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"(Romans 11:33.)

As, then, there are four blessings spoken of by the Apostle in this chapter as antecedent to and irrespective of the fall—so there are four blessings also mentioned as consequent to and dependent upon the fall. These are—

1. redemption;

2. justification;

3. regeneration;

4. sealing.

We shall endeavor to trace out these four blessings thus brought before us by the Apostle.

1. REDEMPTION occupies the first place. No heart can conceive, or tongue express—into what a state of degradation and misery the fall cast the whole of Adam's ruined race. And as the Church was in his loins when he sinned and fell, she sinned and fell in and with him to the utmost extent of the fall. The Scripture compares the state to which the fall reduced us to that of bondage or slavery; and thus "redemption," as expressive of a spiritual blessing in Christ, signifies a deliverance from a state of slavery and bondage. When we look at Adam as he was before the fall and as he was after the fall, we see at once how suitable and appropriate is the figure of a free man as compared with a slave. Before the fall he was free to serve and worship his Maker according to the light then given him. He was free to walk before God in uprightness and innocency, and hold communion with him as made in his own image after his own likeness. He was free to stand and, we may add, free to fall. But he chose the worse part, and by his one fatal act of disobedience, "Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

He thus deliberately and wilfully sold himself to the worst of all masters, and into the most miserable and degrading of all possible degrees of servitude—for he became the slave of sin and Satan. As the Church, therefore, sinned in and with him, she fell in and with him into the same state of bondage, misery, and degradation.

Now, we are well convinced that no one can know or feel what this state of bondage is until his soul is quickened into divine life; and therefore that none can either know or prize redemption but those who, as possessed of divine life, have felt the iron enter into their soul. It is the spirit of freedom in a man longing for liberty which makes the yoke of slavery so intolerable. It is so naturally. Many a slave in the Southern States, before that accursed system was shattered to pieces, preferred slavery to freedom. If he were well taken care of, if lightly worked, if a favorite servant—he looked on his own condition as far superior to that of "the white trash," as the lower class of whites was termed—who had to work hard and get little. But let the same man be sold to a harsh and cruel master; let him be overtasked with hard work, badly fed, miserably clothed, frequently flogged, and treated worse than the beasts of the earth; and in that miserable condition let an inextinguishable thirst for freedom spring up in his heart, would he then prefer slavery to liberty? Would he not then envy the birds of the air, and the wild animals of the forest, and every creature which was free to breathe, move, act, and live? So it is with us spiritually. There was a time when we loved our slavery, when freedom from the dominion of sin would have been to give up our chief delight and choicest pleasure. But when divine light and life made us see and feel what a hard master was sin, and what a cruel oppressor was Satan, and a thirst for liberty was

kindled in our bosom from some glimpse of the King in his beauty, and of the land—the free and happy land, as yet afar off, then, as we groaned under our yoke and burden, we knew the miserable state to which the fall had brought us, and longed for deliverance from it.

Now, how blessed it is to believe—"In whom we have redemption through his blood." O redemption, redemption! What a blessing is in that word, as experimentally made known to a groaning captive, a miserable prisoner, who not only is sin's and Satan's slave through original transgression—but has wilfully, wantonly, and deliberately sold himself to them by plotted and executed transgression! And observe, "In whom." How the Apostle still keeps to his grand point, and, as it were, urges it again and again upon us—the union of the Church with Christ, as the foundation and source of every spiritual blessing. Observe, also, how "in whom" effectually does away with the vain figment of universal redemption. Are all men in Christ? Have all union with him? If it be "in him" that we have redemption, it can be only in him. And out of him—out of union with him—redemption there can be none. And see, also, how the same truth—the limitation of redemption to the elect of God, flows from the intimate nature of this union as antecedent to and irrespective of the fall. But for the fall the Church would not have needed redemption. But for her previous union with the Son of God, he would not, if we may venture so to speak, have redeemed her. But because she was his Hephzi-bah, his virgin bride, in whom was all his delight, the chosen partner of his throne, no scenes of sin, misery, slavery, and degradation could or would tear her from his heart. But then, if he would still have her, he must redeem her, bring her out of this state of slavery, and pay a price such as would satisfy the justice of God—and be a full and equivalent ransom and release.

It is when we consider what our own personal transgressions have been, how dreadful in themselves, and how horribly aggravated by the wilfulness and determination under which they were committed; it is when we look at even a few of our sins—for who can call to mind a thousandth part of what God has seen us think, plot, devise, say, and do?—it is when, in some solemn moment of close inquiry, we view this and that and the other iniquity which conscience registers—that we really see what a holy law and strict justice demand. What, then, shall we say to the full score? Where could we hide our guilty head? How could we face either God or man—were all our sins charged to our account? It is such an experience as this, and of our own utter inability to pay one farthing of this huge, this stupendous load of debt—which makes us see and feel our need of redemption in and by Christ; and to value, also, the price paid—that is, his blood.

We have shown that the leading idea of the state to which the Adam fall had reduced the Church, was that of bondage and slavery. So, similarly, the leading idea of redemption is the price paid to buy the slave his liberty—"You are bought with a price." "Feed the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.) Redemption is usually spoken of as two-fold—

1. Redemption by price.

2. Redemption by power.

There is some truth in this distinction; but it should be carefully observed, that the one implies the other, and that there would have been no redemption by power unless there had first been redemption by price. Thus when it says, "The Lord redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt," (Deuteronomy 7:8,) it was a redemption by power; but it

was only so because Israel had been first redeemed by price. They were the Lord's own people, that is, typically and figuratively so—a type of the redeemed elect—and were detained unlawfully in Egypt. So, when a price has been paid down for an elect soul, he, having been bought with the blood of God's dear Son, may be redeemed with power, on the simple principle that if the ransom of a prisoner has been paid, and his master afterwards unjustly detain him, the prison where he is wrongly kept may be lawfully and justly broken up, and the captive delivered by main force. Thus had there been no redemption by price, there could be no redemption by power. But now Jesus can say to sin and Satan, on behalf of every redeemed prisoner, "Loose him, and let him go. He is mine, not yours. I have bought him with my blood. He is my property, and I will and must have him!" But you will observe, also, that sin and Satan are rather jailers than masters. The real master is the law, as commissioned by justice, and sin and Satan are but the mere warders of the jail into which the law, at the command of justice, has cast the prisoner. And this the prisoner feels. He is the law's prisoner, because the law-breaker. It is so naturally. The crime committed is the cause of the man's imprisonment. But who made the prison; and committed the criminal into custody? The law, which is the written expression of justice. So spiritually. If there were no law—no strict justice—there would be no prison. It is not, therefore, sin which has to be satisfied, but that which makes sin to be sin; for "whoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." Thus sin has to be atoned for that justice may be satisfied and every demand of the law fulfilled. This was effected by the obedience, blood-shedding, and death of the Son of God. His blood was the price paid for our redemption. But what gave it such amazing, such stupendous worth, value, and efficacy—that the blood of Christ should be a sufficient price to redeem millions from the curse of the law—and so satisfy law and justice that each should say, "It is enough?" See how the eternal Deity of the Son of God comes in here to answer the question. It is because it is the blood of the humanity taken into ineffable and indissoluble union with the Person of the Son of God, that it has such infinite unspeakable value. It is the obedience, blood shedding, and dying of the pure humanity, for God, as God, cannot obey, bleed, or die; but because that pure humanity is in intimate union with Deity—there is stamped upon it all the value and validity of Godhead.

If we have a view by faith of what this redemption through the blood of Christ is, we shall certainly see in it these two leading features—1, The depth of the fall, and the horrible, dreadful, damnable nature of sin as discovered by the length and breadth of the law, and the curse attached to it; and, 2, The fullness and completeness of the redemption wrought out by the blood shedding and obedience of God's dear Son. Here are two lessons which we are learning all our lives long—and to which every day's experience adds, so to speak, or at least should add a fresh line. Sometimes we sink, as if overwhelmed by a view of the depth of the fall, and a sight and sense of our own actual sins and inherent sinfulness; and then again we are raised up by a believing view of the finished work of the Son of God, and of that precious blood which cleanses from all sin!

2. But this brings us to the fruit of this redemption—"the FORGIVENESS OF SINS." This blessing we have called "justification," for though, strictly speaking, justification is by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, yet as the Apostle tells us that we are justified by his blood, (Romans 5:9,) we may apply the word justification to the forgiveness of sin, as including both pardon given and righteousness imputed. In fact, forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Lamb, and justification by the imputation of his obedience to those who believe are so connected, both in the mind of God

and in the experience of the believer, that they may be considered virtually one.

Because they do not know what sin really is, people think that it is an easy thing in God to forgive sin. In fact, to forgive sin was the hardest thing for God to do; so hard that it would have been impossible for him to have done it, had it not been for the redemption made by the blood of his own Son. To create was easy for infinite wisdom and infinite power. The difficulty was to mend what was marred. We know that even in works of art, to make is much easier than to mend, and that a blow or a fall may cause irreparable fracture. Not only, then, to restore the Church to her original standing, but to wash her from all her filth in the blood of his dear Son, and so clothe her in his imputed righteousness, that she should be fairer than before; so to satisfy law and justice; so to harmonize every perfection of Deity; so to manifest the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of they love of Christ; and so to set forth the riches of his grace—what a display is here of the infinite depths of the combined wisdom, power, mercy, and love of God, so as to be mirror into which angels may even look with admiration, (Ephesians 4:10; 1 Peter 1:12,) as well as form for the redeemed, an anthem for eternal praise! And we are very sure that, of all spiritual blessings made known to the soul by the power of God, "a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins" is the hardest to be obtained, and most prized when gotten. How many poor tried, exercised, distressed souls are at this very moment sighing and crying for the manifestation of this one blessing. These well know, and some of them by the painful experience of many years' hard bondage and travail, how hard it is to get forgiveness sealed on their heart. Not that it is really hard on the part of God now to forgive, that is, in experimental manifestation; for it is already done to and for all the elect of God—"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Colossians 2:13.) And, so our text—"In whom we have" (not "shall have" but "have," that is, now have) "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Though he may not be able to lay hold of it for himself, appropriate it as a personal blessing, and feel sweetly and blessedly assured, in his own heart and conscience, of the forgiveness of all his sins; yet every quickened soul is really forgiven all his trespasses—past, present, and to come. It is one of the spiritual blessings with which he has been blessed, already blessed, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. His believing it gives him the unspeakable comfort and sweet assurance of it; but it is really already his before he thus enjoys it—as the heir of a large property is really the possessor of the estate, though, as under tutors and governors, being still a minor, he cannot fully call it his own. Forgiveness of sins is, indeed, the necessary fruit and consequence of redemption through blood. The price has been paid which justice and law demanded. Did the law demand a perfect obedience? It has been rendered. The law has been magnified and made honorable, and every demand fully and gloriously fulfilled by the obedience to it of the Son of God. What higher honor could be paid to the law than that God's co-equal, co-eternal Son should be subject to it—obey it in every point, jot, and tittle—bear its curse—and suffer its extreme penalty? Justice surely must be fully satisfied when the Just One put himself in the place of the debtor, and discharged the whole debt due to its requisitions.

Thus if God forgives sin, it is not because sin is a light thing and easily forgiven, but because his own dear Son has made full atonement for it, and thus opened a most blessed channel through which the love, pity, mercy, and grace of God might flow down freely and fully to poor lost, ruined sinners. It is in this way that God can be "just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus."

(Romans 4:5.)

How blessedly and beautifully is the whole subject opened in those words, which we will say not only deserve to be written in letters of gold, but to be written by the finger of God on every believing heart—"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26.) And all this according to "the riches of his grace." Yes, "the riches of his grace!" What a full, what a beautiful expression! He had said before, "to the praise of the glory of his grace;" but here, it is "according to the riches of his grace." It is worth observing, how often, in this epistle, the Apostle uses the words "rich" and "riches" as applicable to the mercy, grace, and glory of God. Thus he says, "But God, who is rich in mercy;" (Ephesians 2:4) "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace;" (Ephesians 2:7) "That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" (Ephesians 3:8) "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:18) So in Romans he speaks of "the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God;" (Romans 11:33;) and in the Colossians of "the riches of the glory of the mystery of Christ." (Colossians 1:27.)

All these expressions show not only the exceeding value which he put upon the mercy, grace, wisdom, and glory of God, as revealed in the face of his dear Son and brought to light in the gospel—but the wealth that is stored up in them for the poor and needy. Grace and mercy, as seated in the bosom of God, are like a mine full of inexhaustible treasure, which has enriched millions, and can enrich millions more; or like an everflowing and overflowing river, carrying, as the Nile to Egypt, fertility and abundance wherever they come. We are thus encouraged to come to him with all our wants and woes, to receive thankfully what he gives so bountifully. But O, our poor narrow, unbelieving hearts! How we measure God by ourselves, and because we are so poor in receiving, think that he is also poor in giving.

Ephesians 1:8.

3. The next spiritual blessing connected with the fall we have set down as REGENERATION. This we gather from the words—"Wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself." (Ephesians 1:8-9.) It will, perhaps, have been observed that hitherto the Apostle has spoken of blessings in themselves apart from any personal manifestation of them. The spiritual blessings of election, blamelessness before God, adoption into his family, acceptance in the Beloved, redemption through the blood of Christ, and forgiveness of sin as its fruit, are blessings in themselves, independent of their manifestations and communication. They are intended for us, but they exist before they are given to us. But not so with the blessing which is now before us. There is "a making known unto us of the mystery of his will," and this "according to the abundant wisdom and prudence of God." This blessing, then, we may call regeneration, as the commencement of manifested blessings, and thus distinct from blessings before their

manifestation. By "the wisdom of God" we may understand generally those wise ways in which he deals with the souls of his people in bringing them to a knowledge of himself; and by his "prudence" the skill manifested in the variety of his dealings according to the disposition, the circumstances, the future lot of the individual believer, and the intentions of God toward him. Thus "wisdom" signifies the general character of God’s dealings in making known to his people the mystery of his will, and "prudence" his special skill in dealing with individual cases.

There is not a vessel of mercy called by grace in whom God does not show forth the abundance of his wisdom; but there seem to be special cases which call forth what perhaps we may term the practical skill of God. May we illustrate this by the practical skill of a physician as distinguished from his general professional knowledge? He has long and deeply studied his profession, and has a thorough acquaintance both with diseases and remedies. This suffices in a general way. But every now and then cases come before him which demand something beyond this thorough knowledge; a special discernment is needed of a very obscure or uncommon disease, or a special mode of treatment, or a peculiar management, say of diet, or nursing, or the use of some rare medicine—all which test and bring to light a peculiar skill in dealing with a special case as distinct from great and acknowledged ability in ordinary cases.

We do not very much like the rendering of our version, "prudence," and yet we do not know how to alter or amend it. But, like many other renderings, it falls short of the meaning of the original, and almost brings down the heavenly character of the special wisdom of God to an earthly prudence; that, at least, being the idea which we usually associate with the word. That is, however, not the mind or meaning of the Holy Spirit. We may, perhaps, however, exemplify its meaning better than we can define it. God has some special work for a man to do. He has to call and qualify an Augustine, a Bunyan, a Whitefield, a Huntington, a Hart, for a special work in his vineyard. Here is his prudence, his special skill, as distinct from his general wisdom to call, fit, and qualify this particular instrument. His dealings, therefore, with this individual will differ from the general course of his dealings with the bulk of his people. But as this is a somewhat wide subject, we shall defer the further consideration of it to our next paper.

03.01.05. Part Five

Part V. Our readers will remember that in the course of our exposition of the chapter before us, (Ephesians 1:1-23) we pointed out, as laid down by the Apostle, four spiritual blessings antecedent to and irrespective of the Adam fall—and four blessings as consequent upon and connected with it; and that we endeavored to open the peculiar and distinctive character of each of these blessings according to the ability which God gave us. It is with this last class of blessings that we are now engaged, the third, or REGENERATION, having occupied a portion of our Meditations in our last paper, and being still under consideration as not then fully completed by us. But the thought has struck our mind that perhaps some of our readers may consider the referring of Ephesians 1:8-9 to the blessing of Regeneration to be a somewhat strained interpretation of the passage, and others may be of opinion that the Apostle means rather the outward promulgation of the gospel than the inward reception of it. As our desire, then, is to remove every stumbling-block out of the path, as well as clearly and distinctly open the mind and meaning of the Apostle, we shall, before we proceed any further, explain why we have interpreted those verses as referring to the spiritual blessing of Regeneration, that is, the inward revelation of the will of God, rather than to the preached gospel, that is, the outward revelation of it. This we think will be best done by first quoting and then tracing out the connection of the whole passage—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself." (Ephesians 1:7-9.) The first point to be observed is that all the blessings consequent upon on the fall are here linked together in one connected chain. Redemption, the first of these blessings, takes the lead; for before the Church was redeemed by blood from the consequences of the fall, nothing effectual was or could be done for or to her in a way of grace. Forgiveness of sins and Justification by Christ’s blood and righteousness is the next link, and follows as the blessed result of Redemption. And now in this connected chain is not Regeneration the next spiritual blessing? Have not redemption and forgiveness of sin to be manifested and made known to the soul? and how can this be done until it is made alive unto God by regenerating grace? As soon, therefore, as the Apostle dropped the words, "The forgiveness of sins," he added, "According to the riches of his grace, wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." The words "wherein," (that is "in the riches of his grace,") "he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence," evidently mean the special display of the wisdom and prudence of God in making redemption and forgiveness of sins personally known to the soul, rather than the outward promulgation of them by the preached gospel; and this view seems confirmed by what immediately follows—"Having made known to us the mystery of his will."

It is true that this is done in the outward promulgation of the gospel; but the words "us," "abounding toward us," "having made known to us," point to individual and personal blessings as distinct from and beyond the general declaration of them by the preached word. Connecting, therefore, the abounding of God’s wisdom and prudence with the making known to us, in the display of that

wisdom and prudence, the mystery of his will, we seem to arrive at some special and personal revelation of divine truth to the soul; and as this is done in and by regeneration, we have for this reason explained the words of the Apostle as referring to that choice spiritual blessing. But we wish it to be fully understood that when we call this blessing "regeneration" we mean to include in that term not merely the beginning of divine life, but the whole of that work of God on the soul whereby he makes known to us "the mystery of his will" and abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Here, then, we resume our exposition. In our last paper we drew a distinction between "the wisdom" of God and "the prudence" of God, applying the former to his more usual and general, and the latter to his more special and peculiar dealings with the souls of his people. But whether these dealings are of a usual or of an unusual character, the result is the same. In and by them God makes known to the soul the mystery of his will. What this will is—why it is called a mystery—and how it is made known—are all points deserving our attentive consideration.

1. It will be observed that the Apostle speaks of three distinct things in the mind of God, but all moving together in perfect concert and harmony to a definite end. There is first God's "will;" secondly, his "good pleasure;" thirdly, his "purpose in himself." His "will" stands first as being the more general and comprehensive expression of the mind of God; for his will takes the widest range, exercising supreme control over all things and all persons in heaven and in earth—there being nothing too great and nothing too small to escape its sovereign domain. We therefore read—"All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him—What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35.) Dominion and will go together, as in the case of Alexander the Great, intimated by the prophet—"And a mighty king shall stand up, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will." (Daniel 11:3.) The will of God, then, extends beyond the domain of his grace, and reaches and influences every event. It is not, therefore, this general will of God which he makes known to the objects of his regenerating grace, but his special will, as manifested in the Person and work of his dear Son, and revealed in the gospel. But it will be observed that this part of his will moves in special concert with his "good pleasure"—his eudokia. The word in the New Testament generally means an object with which God is specially well pleased. It, therefore, occurs in that particular expression of his approbation, given with an audible voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus—"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17.) So the multitude of the heavenly host at the birth of Jesus, when they praised God, said—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14.) So our Lord, thanking his heavenly Father for hiding the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from the wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes, says—"Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in your sight." (Matthew 11:26.) Where the words "seemed good in your sight" are literally, "for so it became a good pleasure before you." So "of his good pleasure;" (Php 2:13;) "all the good pleasure of his goodness," (2 Thessalonians 1:11,) "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" (Luke 12:32;) "it pleased God," or, rather, God was well pleased, to save them that believe;" (1 Corinthians 1:21;) "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me;" (Galatians 1:15;) "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." (Colossians 1:19.)

If all those passages are carefully examined it will be found that God's "good pleasure," or will, specially respects the manifestation of his grace in the gospel of his dear Son. It is, therefore, that

part of the will of God in which he takes special delight. All his will has his approbation, for the two cannot be severed; but that part of his will whereby he has willed the gift of his dear Son, with all the benefits and blessings which spring out of and are connected with his Person and work, in that is the peculiar good pleasure, the special delight of God. And that this "good pleasure" of his will might be fixed without the shadow of a turn, it was settled by a resolve in his own immutable mind. This firm "decree" is expressed by the Apostle, in the words, "which he has purposed in himself." Thus God's will, God's good pleasure, and God's purpose in himself, all combine and move together, in harmonious concert—the sovereignty of his will, the approbation of his good pleasure, and the decree of his purpose, forming a threefold cord never to be broken.

2. But what are we to understand by "the mystery of his will?" The word "mystery" in the New Testament has chiefly two significations—1. It means generally those facts, doctrines, principles, etc., into which, as being beyond all human knowledge, we must be initiated by divine teaching. 2. It signifies specially the secret purpose of God as revealed and brought to light by the gospel. It does not mean what we often understand by the term "mysterious," as if it were something wrapped up in an inscrutable cloud. On the contrary, the word "mystery" means a secret, but which, when revealed and brought to light, is no longer mysterious, but becomes plain and clear. The word is borrowed from the ancient mysteries at which persons were initiated with many peculiar rites and ceremonies, and certain traditionary secrets made known to them which they were bound never to disclose. The gospel, therefore, was a mystery or secret hidden in the bosom of God, but in due time brought to light, and made known to the initiated, that is, those who were called by distinguishing grace. Thus, when the Apostle says, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ," (Ephesians 3:3-4,) he does not mean that there is something dark, mysterious, and inscrutable in the gospel, but just the contrary—that there was a secret purpose in the mind of God, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the spirit.

Now what was this secret purpose of God, this mystery revealed by the Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets? It was "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." (Ephesians 3:6.) He, therefore, adds, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 3:8-9.) The mystery, then, of God's will, the good pleasure which he has purposed in himself, is that Jew and Gentile should be fellow-heirs, should belong to the same mystical body of Christ, the Church; and enjoy in common every spiritual blessing with which he has blessed her in heavenly places in Christ. It is in the gospel that this mystery of God's will is revealed externally; but when this precious gospel is made known to the soul by a divine power, there is a display in it of the aboundings of the wisdom and prudence of God in making known this mystery of his will by and through regenerating grace. But the Apostle goes on to show more particularly what the mystery of this will of God is—"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." (Ephesians 1:10.) When man stood in his primeval innocence, and especially when the Church stood in all her virgin purity, as the chosen bride of the Son of God,

there was a harmony between heaven and earth. Elect angels above and unfallen man below, though of distinct natures, were one as regarded purity of creation, and each could serve God acceptably according to their intelligence and knowledge of him. When God, therefore, laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. (Job 38:7.) But the fall broke that bond of harmony asunder. Fallen man and holy, unfallen angels could no longer meet on the ground of obedience and worship. Angels, therefore, became God's ministers, to execute his commands against man, not for him; and as the first fruit of this work, were placed at the gates of Eden to guard with flaming sword the way to the tree of life.

Now it was the will of God, the good pleasure which he had purposed in himself, to reunite this family, but in a different way, and on a different footing. It was to put them both under a common Head, even his dear Son, and that not simply as his Son, but as incarnate, as the Son of God and the Son of man in one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us. Thus by taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, the blessed Lord became not only the Head of the body of the Church, but the Head of angels, and thus gathered together into one family redeemed men and elect angels under his glorious and abiding headship. We, therefore, read—"Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named." (Ephesians 3:15.) Thus angels, though not redeemed, though not in union with the Lord the Lamb, are as much interested in the incarnation of the Son of God as we are; for being gathered together into one family under his headship, they are eternally secured in their angelic condition, and can never fall away after the manner and example of the apostate angels who kept not their first estate. But here lies the depth and sweetness of the mystery that the Church, though fallen, should, by virtue of Christ's incarnation, blood shedding, and death, be promoted to a place higher, and what is more wonderful, nearer and dearer to the Lord of heaven and earth than elect angels ever had or could have. We may view it thus by way of illustration, and it will serve to show how the Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, and the Head also of angels. Take the case of the master of a house. He is the head of all that belong to the house. Wife, children, and servants, he is head to all; but to each in a different way, and in a different relationship. To the wife he is head—"The husband is the head of the wife," (Ephesians 5:23,) but he is also husband. To the children he is head, as father; to the servants he is head, as master. So the Lord Jesus is the head of the body the Church, but he is her husband too. This is a much nearer, dearer, sweeter, and more intimate relationship than angels can possess or enjoy. They have not, therefore, union and communion with the Lord, as the Church has. They are filled with all happiness and holiness; they love, worship, and adore; they admire the manifold wisdom of God made known to them by the Church, (Ephesians 3:10,) and gladly and willingly do they now perform their appointed office when they are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation. But the intimacy, the nearness, the love-embraces, the intercommunion of heart of husband and wife are not theirs. Angelic nature by original creation is superior to human, but, through the holy humanity of Jesus, human nature is now advanced above it. Angelic nature is not, and never can or will be in immediate and intimate union with Deity; but human nature, in the Person of Immanuel, is indissolubly united to it. This is the great mystery that Christ and the Church are one flesh, as the husband and wife are one flesh; and thus "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Ephesians 5:30-32.) The angels, therefore, as seen by John, were "round about the throne"—forming the outward circle, but not "in the midst of the throne," with the four living creatures and the elders—the inner circle. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, the Church his wife sits at the table as a bride adorned for her husband. The

angels look on, and reverently and admiringly wait, for envy and jealousy have no place in their pure and holy bosoms; but they do not sit down at the table with the bride.

3. "In the dispensation of the fullness of times," that is, when the times are full and the set season comes, this mystery will be made openly manifest. God will then visibly gather together in one, under one Head and one headship, "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." The mystery is not yet finished. (Revelation 10:7.) There is a work on the wheels still to be accomplished. Elect souls have to be called or gathered home, and the living stones to be quarried and hewed here below, as were those of Solomon's temple, before the temple is complete in all its glory. Now, at and by regeneration this mystery of God's will is made personally and experimentally known. There is therein a gathering of the soul as one of "the things on earth" into Christ. There is a making-known to it of "the mystery of God's will, according to his good pleasure," for as Christ is made known to the soul, believed in, hoped in, and loved; as union and communion with him are sensibly felt and realized, there is a gathering of the understanding, of the will, of the conscience, and of the affections unto him, so as to center wholly in him. The understanding is enlightened and informed, so as to approve of this mystery of God's will; the will is won over to join in sweet harmony with the will of God as thus revealed; the conscience is made alive, and being purged by blood, becomes clean and tender; and the affections are kindled and drawn forth to embrace the wonderful mystery of the love of God in Christ Jesus. The soul thus taught and led looks forward to the glorious day when the mystery will be complete, when the Lord himself will come and all his saints with him, and will openly claim and manifest his bride, and gathering together in himself in visible manifestation all things which are in heaven and on earth, will reign gloriously as Head of all.

It is well worthy of observation how the Apostle ever blends Christian doctrine with Christian experience, and thus brings doctrinal truth to bear upon our individual possession and personal knowledge of these heavenly mysteries—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." (Ephesians 1:11.) "In whom." Observe how again and again the man of God dwells upon union with Christ as the foundation and the fountain of all spiritual blessings. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." The words rendered literally mean, "In whom we have been allotted," or "chosen and apportioned unto by lot." They have, therefore, when thus rendered, a rather wider range than they have according to our translation, for they will bear two consistent senses—1, that we have been allotted to Christ for his inheritance; 2, that he has been allotted to us for ours. Both are scriptural, both rest on the same foundation, God's predestinating purposes, and both are intimately connected with the peculiar relation which the Church bears to Christ as her covenant Head.

1. Christ, in all his glorious fullness, is the portion and inheritance of his people—"The Lord is my portion, says my soul;" (Lamentations 3:24;) "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup." (Psalms 16:5.) The Levites, therefore, had no inheritance among the other tribes as being typical of those who are priests unto God, and offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5.) "But unto the tribe of Levi, Moses gave not any inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them." (Joshua 13:33.) And does not this flow out of the peculiar relationship which the Church bears to Christ? Is not the husband the wife's best portion? To a loving wife, her husband is her earthly all. His love, his approving smile, his tender

caresses, and affectionate embracements, his protection and companionship, his counsel, watchful care, and ever-ready help, and above all himself, as the object of her warmest love, and possessed by her as her own for life—is not this a better inheritance for a fond wife than a few dirty acres left her by her father, or money in a bank which she may lose at a single stroke?

Such a manifest union with the Son of God, and such sensible communion arising out of it as shall enable the soul to say, "My Beloved is mine and I am his," is an inheritance indeed. To have the Lord himself for our inheritance so as to be able to say, "Having Christ I have all I want, desire, or need; in possessing him I possess all things. His Person, his work, his blood and righteousness, his dying love, his all-sufficient grace and future glory—all are mine as my enduring and eternal portion"—could God give to his people a greater portion, a more blessed inheritance than this? What is all that earth can give compared with such an inheritance? Thus in him, the poorest, lowest, weakest believer obtains an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away.

2. And as the Church has obtained an inheritance in Christ, so Christ has obtained an inheritance in the Church. "Israel is the lot of his inheritance." "Ask of me," said the Father to the Son, "and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." But as we shall have occasion to enter into this point more fully when we come to the consideration of verse 18, we shall not now further dwell upon it, but direct the attention of our readers to the predestinating purpose of God, by which this mutual inheritance of Christ by the Church, and of the Church by Christ, was definitely fixed. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." (Ephesians 1:11.) The obtaining of this inheritance, or as we have preferred to render the words, "the allotment of the portion," is referred here by the Apostle to the predestination of God. We may observe four things spoken of in reference to this predestination, and its effects—the purpose of God, the will of God, the counsel of God, and the work of God.

1. His will we have before pointed out as the sovereign supreme author or controller of all persons and events in heaven and in earth; and as manifested in his dear Son is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," which we have to prove by divine teaching and personal experience. (Romans 12:2.) It is, therefore, called "his own will," as implying sovereignty and supremacy.

2. But there is "the counsel" of this will. By this we may understand the infinite wisdom of God, and that as especially manifested in the dealings of his grace. It is not, if we may use the expression without irreverence—an unthinking, unreasoning, arbitrary will, such as we see in the case of earthly sovereigns and irresponsible despots. But it moves in concert with the most perfect and infinite wisdom. There is in reality and truth, no prior or posterior, no first or last in the various acts of the mind of God; but to make the point more clear to our understanding, we may say that the counsel of God preceded the will of God in planning and fixing the economy of grace. He took counsel, so to speak, with his infinite wisdom in the whole plan of grace before his will went forth as a sovereign act of his mind; and when his infinite wisdom had devised the way, his sovereign will fixed it beyond the possibility of a change.

It is beautiful to see the wisdom of God engaged in every transaction of his grace; and that in a matter of such difficulty, where every perfection and attribute had to be harmonized in the salvation of the Church, he took counsel with the depths of his infinite wisdom. But no sooner had infinite

wisdom fixed the plan than the will of God went forth in sovereign approbation of it, and it then became his fixed "purpose."

3. The word "purpose" means fixed resolve, and this is the immediate result of God's will. Thus counsel comes first to plan—will next chooses what counsel advises—purpose next fixes what will approves—and work, lastly, effects what God thus predestinates. We find the word "purpose" elsewhere ascribed to the fixed resolves of God in the economy of grace. Thus we read of them who are "the called according to his purpose;" (Romans 8:28;) so "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:11.) So—"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Timothy 1:9.)

4. Here we are said to be "predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." The question may, therefore, arise, what is the distinction between the purpose of God—and the predestination of God? The difference seems to be this—that predestination goes one stop further and beyond purpose. It is the final expressed decision of it. Let us illustrate this by taking a glance at human actions. The first thing we do in a difficulty, is to take counsel with our own mind how to get the better of it. When the way suggests itself, and has been well considered, the next step is to approve of the plan thus suggested; then follows a resolve on our mind to adopt it; then an expression of this resolve by some utterance of mouth or writing of hand so as to fix it beyond recall; and lastly some act to put the whole into execution. So in the grand economy of grace. There is God's counsel to plan, his will to approve, his purpose to resolve, his predestination to unalterably fix, and his work to execute. Predestination, therefore, is beyond purpose, as being more definite. Thus God swore, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek." This was predestination in the oath sworn to his dear Son. The writing of the names of the elect in the book of life was also a predestinating act. It was fixing the persons who were to be saved as well as fixing the way by which they should be saved. This makes predestination a step beyond purpose, as the more definite expression of it by word or deed. I may have purposed in my own mind to help a friend, and it may be a fixed purpose too, only lacking time and opportunity, but when I have once promised him, or entered into a written engagement, it is fixed beyond recall. In this way, therefore, God's predestination goes a step beyond God's purpose, and makes that purpose as the open expression of his will irrevocable.

5. Then follows the execution—"Who works all things after the counsel of his own will." The expression is wide, for it takes in "all things;" but we may limit it here to the execution of the purposes of his grace. In this sense and this way God works all things after the counsel of his own will. "He works." Here again we come to the same point, the work of God on the soul, whereby he makes known the mystery of his will. As God's will embraces all persons and all events in heaven and on earth—so it specially has to do with the dispensation of his grace. He who works all things after the counsel of his own will works in his people both to will and to do of his good pleasure. But as the effect of this work is more fully explained in the next verse, we shall defer the further consideration of it to our following paper.

03.01.06. Part Six

Part VI. In meditating on the eternal and unchangeable purposes of God, as unfolded to our view in the chapter now before us, four things seem mainly to strike our mind as worthy of our most attentive consideration—

1. The ultimate end that is to crown the whole—which is the praise of the glory of God's grace.

2. The intermediate cause that moved and prompted the heart of God—which was the riches of his love and favor.

3. The directing counsel that planned and still guides all his purposes from first to last to their full and final accomplishment—which is his infinite wisdom.

4. The effectual execution of his purposes—which is by his omnipotent power.

These four things move together in united harmony, and work together in mutual co-operation, so that every blessing which grace could give, every way of manifesting love and favor which wisdom could devise, every act by which the purposes of grace could be effectually accomplished, all move forward in the most blessed and harmonious concord towards the grand crowning consummation of the whole, when there will be heard rising up from innumerable myriads one universal anthem of praise; when "everything which has breath will praise the Lord;" when "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, will be heard saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." (Revelation 5:13.) The fourth point to which we thus draw attention, that is, the effectual EXECUTION of the purposes of God's grace by his omnipotent power, we briefly noticed in our last paper in our exposition of Ephesians 1:11. We then took occasion to remark that the words, "Who works all things after the counsel of his own will," though they included God's universal power, yet here had reference to the execution of the purposes of his grace. By these words, therefore, the Apostle brings before our eyes God's omnipotent power as carrying into effectual performance the counsel of his own will towards the objects of his distinguishing favor. An especial blessing is couched in this. Next to a believing view of the purposes of God's grace, and a sweet persuasion of our interest in them—nothing is more strengthening and encouraging than a realizing apprehension of the power of God to carry them into full execution.

Feeling, as we do, our own miserable helplessness, sinking under the pressure of our daily weakness, mourning over continual failures, and grieving on account of perpetual backslidings, encompassed by foes, and distressed by fears, how strengthening it is to our faith, thus tried to the utmost, to believe that he who has purposed—has power to perform. This persuasion of the almighty power of God was the support and strength of Abraham's faith, which bore him up in the face of seeming impossibilities, and whereby he gave glory to God. (Romans 4:18-21.) When, then, as walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, we can look up believingly to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—as we behold sovereign grace in his heart—and infinite wisdom

in his mind—so we see almighty strength in his arm—and thus become sweetly persuaded that all which his loving heart feels, his infinite wisdom directs, and his omnipotent power can execute. But observe how the Apostle brings all this rich display of the grace, the wisdom, and the power of God to bear on personal experience—"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Ephesians 1:12.) From not knowing or not attending to the original Greek, and, we may add—not properly considering the analogy of faith, and the consistent harmony of the dispensation of grace, some commentators on the passage, and, we rather think, good old Dr. Hawker among them, have sadly misinterpreted the meaning of the Apostle's words, "Who first trusted in Christ." Observing that the words stand in immediate juxtaposition, and therefore seemingly in close connection with the previous word, "his," and not knowing or not remembering that in the Greek they are in the plural number, and what is called the accusative case, which necessarily defines the persons of whom the Apostle speaks, the commentators to whom we have alluded, and many preachers, doubtless, following in their track, have referred the words, "who first trusted in Christ," to God himself, as if it were he, not we, who first trusted in Christ; and they have explained it as if God beforehand trusted in Christ, that he would perform his covenant engagements; and therefore, before he came into the world, gave him credit, so to speak, for the whole of his finished work, as believing he would repay all that was thus previously lent him.

Now all this may seem very pretty and very plausible, and when put forward by a popular or favorite preacher with great confidence, as most of those fanciful interpretations are, such an interpretation may fall on the ears of many of the hearers as one of those wonderfully deep explanations which scarcely anyone but their minister is favored to see and give. But such an interpretation the original scatters to the winds; for, by all the laws of language, it fixes the persons who "first trusted in Christ" as grammatically connected with the preceding "we." But in this, as in almost every other case of a strained or fanciful interpretation, a man need not know Greek to detect its falsehood; for to our mind there is something very repulsive in the interpretation itself. Christ as the Father's servant, Christ as man, trusted in God. He trusted him in life, and he trusted him in death, for into his hands he committed his expiring spirit; and so evident was his trust in God that his bitter enemies taunted him with it; and its apparent fruitlessness. (Psalms 22:8; Matthew 27:43.) But we never read that God trusted in Christ in any way analogous to the manner in which a creditor trusts beforehand a debtor, in full expectation of payment at a time specified. The Father sent the Son; (John 10:36;) he upheld him; (Isaiah 42:1;) he delighted in, and was well pleased with him; (Matthew 3:17;) he glorified him; (John 17:1;) but to say that he trusted in him, and that before his incarnation, is a vain and foolish idea, and inconsistent with the harmony of the economy of grace, which always maintains the due relationship of the Father and the Son, and never attributes to the Sender that which especially belongs to the Sent. But there is another reason why so foolish an interpretation cannot stand, and which needs no knowledge of Greek to see and understand. If you look at the marginal reading, which is often more literal and nearer the original than the text, you will find the words, "or hoped." In fact the Greek word means "hoped" rather than "trusted;" and the whole verse should be thus translated—"that we should be to the praise of his glory—we who first hoped in Christ." But what is the meaning of the expression, "we who first hoped in Christ?" It means that those of whom the Apostle speaks, he himself included, were among the first fruits of the outpouring of the Spirit after the ascension and glorification of Christ. Looking forward therefore to those who should be hereafter called by God's distinguishing grace, Paul viewed himself and the saints of his day with a kind of holy triumph as the first trophies

of Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell. These first fruits would seem to be in an especial manner dedicated to the praise of the glory of God's grace. As the first fruits under the law were offered at the feast of the Passover before the Lord, being a sheaf of corn cut from the field as a pledge and earnest of the whole harvest, so was it with these first believers. This first rich display of the purposes of God's grace filled the Apostle's heart with holy joy. That he himself—a bloodthirsty persecutor, who had made havoc of the Church—that the blind idolaters at Ephesus, once dead in trespasses and sins—should have been chosen to be the first to hope in Christ, and thus be the foremost to place a crown of glory on the Redeemer's head—this made him rejoice with holy admiration. He felt the blessedness of a personal religion, of an experimental and enjoyed interest in an eternal inheritance; and that he and those to whom he wrote did not merely look on as spectators of the triumphs of redeeming blood, or were, like thousands, unconcerned hearers of the gospel which proclaimed salvation by grace—but, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will, had obtained an inheritance in Christ. And what was their evidence of this personal interest, and that they were Isaacs, not Ishmaels; Jacobs, not Esaus; Davids, not Sauls? It was that they were the "first who hoped in Christ."'

Observe how a hope in Christ, that is, of course, a good hope through grace—manifests our personal interest in Christ, and proves that in him we have obtained an inheritance. How this, as realized and felt, enables the soul to praise the Lord for his distinguishing grace; and as whoever offers praise glorifies God, those who hope in Christ are "to the praise of the glory of his grace." This tribute of praise, the first who were called by grace were the first to bring. And as the first fruits under the Levitical dispensation were a pledge of the future harvest, so was it with these first believers. Their call by grace and the work of the Spirit on their hearts were a pledge of a whole harvest to be reaped and garnered. Thus Epenetus and Stephanas are spoken of as being "the first fruits of Achaia," (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15) meaning that they were among the very first called in that part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital. (2 Corinthians 1:1.)

These Ephesians were, therefore, among the earliest trophies of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as being among the first who as quickened from a death in sin had been raised up to a hope in Christ. Having been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, having been chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and accepted in the Beloved, they had been made alive to God by regenerating grace, and had thus proved in their own consciences that they had obtained an inheritance in Christ, and this not for any goodness of their own, but because they had been predestinated to it according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will.

If the interpreters to whom we have already alluded had duly considered these points they would not have so thoroughly mistaken the meaning of the words "who first trusted in Christ." Even had they paid attention to the marginal reading, "hoped," they must have shrunk from such an interpretation, for they could not have asserted that God "first hoped in Christ." To ascribe faith and hope to God is ten thousand times worse than the error which Mr. Huntington so severely lashes of Onesimus, who ascribed faith and hope to the saints in heaven. But enough of this fanciful interpretation, which like most of its class, is but a cloak for error.

Following his divine theme, the Apostle goes on to show how the Ephesian saints were farther led on in the divine life so as to know their personal interest in these heavenly blessings—"In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (Ephesians 1:13.) It will be observed that the word "trusted" is in italics, showing, that it is not in the original, but was supplied by our translators to complete, as they considered, the sense. But, in our judgment, they were altogether wrong in supplying the ellipsis, as the omission of a word is termed, by the expression "trusted." If they had supplied the ellipsis at all, which was not necessary, they should have put "believed;" for the words "after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" come in as if in a kind of parenthesis, and the whole verse should have been rendered thus—"In whom you also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation," (here the Apostle goes back to where he began) "in whom also having believed, you were sealed," etc. There is no reference to their having first trusted in Christ, as would appear from the translation, but the Apostle passes on to another point—their faith in Christ from their hope in Christ, and to what followed as a testimony to the truth and reality of their faith. It is therefore as if he said—"All we to whom the gospel first came with power; all we who as first fruits of Christ's victory have had grace given to us before all the rest of the crop who are to be gathered in after us; all we were predestinated to the praise of the glory of God's grace. But among the first fruits are you also, you saints at Ephesus, you who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and have believed in him of whom that gospel testifies. God has abounded in it towards you in all wisdom and prudence; it came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. And what was the consequence? You believed in him of whom the gospel testified. And what followed upon believing? "You were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The Apostle thus joins together three things as following each other in gracious succession—1. Hearing; 2. Believing; 3. Sealing.

Hearing the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, was the first. For three years had they heard the gospel from the mouth of Paul. A mighty work was wrought through him at Ephesus, for the word of God mightily grew there and prevailed. (Acts 19:20.) "Faith," we read, "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So was it with these Ephesian saints. They heard, they believed. Paul preached to them Christ and him crucified. The Holy Spirit gave them ears to hear and hearts to feel. By his mighty and efficacious operation faith in the Son of God was raised up in their souls, and they received him, as of God made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. And what followed? Sealing. "They were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" that is, that Holy Spirit whom the Lord had promised to send; (John 16:7;) and this Holy Spirit, for the word "which" refers, not to the sealing, but to the Sealer, was a pledge of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

Several things claim our consideration here, and mainly these four—

1. The Sealer.

2. The sealing.

3. The pledge of the inheritance.

4. The redemption of the purchased possession.

1. The Sealer—This is the Holy Spirit. He it is who puts his attesting seal upon two things—two mighty and efficacious works—1. The finished work of the Son of God, whereby he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and 2, upon his own gracious work on the heart of those who believe. Having first effectually convinced us of sin, this blessed Teacher and Holy Comforter next opens our eyes to see, and our hearts to believe in the glorious Person of the Son of God, and to rest upon and hope in his blood and righteousness. He then afterwards, in various ways and at different seasons, seals upon our heart and conscience the reality and blessedness of what he has thus taught us. In doing this he takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us—glorifies Christ by revealing him in us—makes him dear, near, and precious—and thus seals upon our heart who and what he is in himself as the Son of God, and what he is to us by faith. He thus confirms and strengthens our faith in him—encourages and reanimates our hope—and draws forth our love. What we have seen in Christ, heard of Christ, and received from Christ he sets home upon the heart with an attesting power, so that we find and feel we have not followed cunningly devised fables in believing what the Scriptures declare of Jesus but that he is all, and more than all, we have tasted and experienced him to be.

2. And now the sealing—This is in an especial manner the blessed Spirit's attestation to his own work—the inward witness of the Spirit whereby he bears his peculiar testimony to his own previous teachings and operations. But sealing implies several things. 1. It is subsequent to believing—"In whom after you believed, you were sealed." In legal documents the writing always precedes the sealing. That is the last act, and follows even the signing, putting an attesting stamp on the whole document, from the first word to the last signature. So in grace. The Spirit begins the work. He writes the first lines of divine truth on the soul; he makes the first impression on the heart of stone, which under his operation becomes a heart of flesh; he writes every truth that he thus makes known on the fleshy tables of the heart. He thus gives faith and hope, and then he comes with his special inward witness, and seals the truth and reality of his own work, so as not only to make it plain and clear—but to ratify and confirm it beyond all doubt and fear, questioning or dispute, either by our self or others. The work of God on the soul sometimes seems to lie as if dead and dormant—little prayer goes up, little answer comes down. Then doubts and fears arise whether the work is genuine, and much bondage and darkness sensibly gather over the mind like a dark and gloomy cloud, which much obscures the handwriting of the divine finger. Now the blessed Spirit revives his work by some application of the word with power, some softening and melting of the hard heart by his divine influence—some communication of a spirit of prayer—some discovery of the gracious Lord—some strengthening of faith, reviving of hope, and drawing forth of love. He thus puts the seal on his own work, and stamps it as genuine.

Under the sweetness and blessedness of this attesting seal many a poor child of God can look back to this and that testimony, this and that Ebenezer, this and that hill Mizar, this and that deliverance, blessing, manifestation, answer to prayer, special season under the word or on his knees, which were almost lost and buried in unbelief and confusion. But especially when he bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God and shedding abroad the love of God in their heart becomes in them the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba Father—is his sealing manifest and complete.

2. But seal sometimes means proof—"He who has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true." (John 3:33.) There it means that he who has by faith received the testimony which

God has given of Christ has such an internal proof and testimony that he is the Son of God, that he can set his personal attestation to the truth and reality of his Sonship, and that the words which he spoke are true. So the Corinthians are declared by the Apostle (1 Corinthians 9:2) to be "the seal," that is, the attesting mark or proof of "his apostleship." The Holy Spirit having called, qualified, commissioned, and sent him to preach the gospel, every saint quickened and called under his ministry was a seal or an open manifest proof to the Apostle, to himself, and to all others that Paul's apostleship was of God.

3. It therefore means especially an approving testimony. Sealing is a general term to signify a special attestation; but when we read of our blessed Lord, "him has God the Father sealed," (John 6:27,) it means the approving seal which the Father set on the Person, work, miracles, and testimony of his dear Son, and whereby he especially commends him to our faith and acceptance. But we need not further dwell on the sealing of the Spirit, as our object is rather to explain the general meaning and connection of the chapter before us than preach a series of sermons on it, or say upon it all that might be experimentally and profitably said. We pass on, therefore, to show how the Holy Spirit of promise is "an earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." An 'earnest' is a part of the sum agreed on, paid in advance, as a binding pledge of the payment of the whole amount at the stipulated season. Thus in hiring a servant, a small sum is paid as an earnest to make the agreement valid and binding on both parties. In purchasing a house or an estate, a certain sum called the deposit money is paid as a pledge of the payment of the whole price at the fixed time. In this sense the blessed Spirit is himself the earnest of our inheritance, for the word "which" grammatically refers to him. His gifts and graces, his teachings, influences, and operations, his quickenings, revivings, renewings, his anointings and indwellings, and especially his sealings are so many pledges of the truth and reality of the inheritance, and of its being ours. And observe that the earnest is not only a pledge of the receipt of the whole sum, but is in itself of the same kind and nature. The first fruits, under the Law, were not only a pledge of the whole harvest, but were, as wheat or barley, of the same actual kind as the whole crop. The money paid at hiring, or the deposit at a purchase of land, are in the same coin as the rest of the sum, or they would not be part payment. So the earnest of the inheritance and the inheritance itself are of the same kind and nature. Both are Christ; first Christ in grace, then Christ in glory; Christ revealed here, Christ seen face to face hereafter; Christ in his visits, his presence, his love, his power on earth; Christ, the same blessed Christ, in all the fullness of his presence and love in heaven.

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Holy are its inhabitants, holy its employments, holy its enjoyments. The Holy Spirit, therefore, in his sealing, sanctifying operations, and the communication of a holy, spiritual, and divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) is the earnest of his holy and heavenly inheritance, making us, as the Apostle says (Colossians 1:12) "fit for the inheritance of the saints in light." This is a very important consideration, for it plainly shows that unless we know something of the teaching, the work, and witness of the Holy Spirit here, and are made partakers of a new, holy, spiritual, and heavenly nature, we have no pledge of our interest in the inheritance of the saints in bliss. A carnal, unsanctified, unholy, unrenewed heart is utterly incapable of understanding, entering into, longing after, and loving an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that passes not away. But every holy desire, heavenly affection, gracious longing, spiritual enjoyment, and believing, hoping, loving, looking unto and cleaving to the Lord of life and glory by

the power of the Holy Spirit, are all so many pledges of an interest in the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. The love, the joy, the peace, the calm tranquillity, and holy acquiescence in the will of God; the ravishing views of the glory of Christ which change the soul into the same image, from glory to glory; the delight felt in him, and the whole surrender of the heart and affections to the blessed Lord as the chief of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one—are all so many pledges of the inheritance above, as, being heaven begun below. But what is the meaning of "the redemption of the purchased possession," until which the spirit is the earnest of our inheritance? Two things here demand our consideration—1. What is meant by the expression "purchased possession." 2. What we are to understand by the "redemption" of this purchased possession.

1. First, then, what is the meaning of the expression "purchased possession?" In the original it is but one word, and signifies literally acquisition, or obtaining and gaining possession of an object. It is used in this sense 1 Thessalonians 5:9, where it is rendered in our translation "to obtain." "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:9.) Thence it is used to signify "salvation," as Hebrews 10:39, where our version renders the word "the saving of the soul." But our translators have well and wisely rendered the word in the passage now before us "the purchased possession;" the substantive borrowing the idea of purchase from the verb, from which it is derived, possessing that meaning, as in Acts 20:28, where it is rightly translated "purchased." By this purchased possession, then, we are to understand the Church, which the Lord purchased with his own blood. She is his possession, his acquisition, his inheritance, and, as bought with a price, (1 Corinthians 6:20,) his purchased possession. Peter, therefore, writing to the elect strangers, says—"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; (1 Peter 2:9;) where the word "peculiar" is the same as is used here, and may be translated, as in the margin, "a purchased people." We do not hold with purchased blessings, because we believe that God blessed the Church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, as the pure gift of his grace. All will admit that the love of God shed abroad in the heart is the best and greatest of spiritual blessings; and yet who that knows the truth will venture to say that this love was bought by the blood of Christ; when it was this very eternal love of God which moved him to send his only-begotten Son? (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10.) But though we do not hold with purchased blessings, we fully believe in a purchased people; and we also believe that no blessing comes to that purchased people except through the cross of Christ, that being, as it were, the consecrated channel through which every favor comes, and by which alone reconciliation was effected. We do not, therefore, at all quarrel or find fault with such expressions as "blood-bought pardon," for though not strictly bought in a way of purchase, yet pardon of sin was so wrung out of Christ's sorrows and sufferings that in a sense it may be said to have been bought by them. The Church of Christ, then, viewed in its entirety, as the body of which he is the glorious Head, the wife of whom he is the Husband, the inheritance of which he is the Lord and heir, (Mark 12:7,) is the purchased possession of which the Apostle here speaks.

2. But as connected with this point, now comes the question, What is the meaning of the expression the "redemption" of this purchased possession? What is this redemption, and why is it spoken of as still future? Redemption, in Scripture, taken in its widest sense, means deliverance, and chiefly and primarily by the payment of a ransom. Thus a captive might be delivered from captivity by a relation or friend paying the ransom set upon him by his captor. The Lord said,

therefore, of Cyrus that he would "let go his captives, not for price or reward," which was the usual way of their liberation, but gratuitously, which he did when he let them return from the Babylonish captivity, without exacting from them any ransom, tax, or tribute. (Isaiah 45:13.) Similarly a free-born Israelite, who, through poverty, had sold himself as a slave to a stranger, might be redeemed by one of his brethren, or, if able, might redeem himself. (Leviticus 25:47-52.) Here, again, a ransom price, calculated according to the number of years to the Jubilee, was needful for redemption. A third case is that of a field or parcel of land like Elimelech's, which had become mortgaged, but might be redeemed by the goel, or next kinsman in blood,* (Ruth 4:3) paying off the mortgage.

* The reason why the next kinsman refused to redeem the parcel of land was because he must have married the widow, and the son, by that marriage, would not have been considered his, but Elimelech's. He would, therefore, have lost his independent standing by merging, as it were, into a second Elimelech, and would thus have marred or lost his own inheritance as the head of a distinct faintly employed to deliver the servant, or recover possession of the land if either were unjustly detained.

All these cases which we need not further dwell upon are instances of redemption by price—by the payment of a ransom. And this is the primary meaning of the word "redeem." But there is also a redemption by power, as in the passage, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Psalms 107:2.) In this sense God is frequently said to have "redeemed his people from the house of bondage," where the word means deliverance without any express idea of a price being laid down, or a ransom paid. (Deuteronomy 7:8; Deuteronomy 13:5; Deuteronomy 15:15.) But it will be observed, that redemption by price makes a way for redemption by power; and that the one so precedes and implies the other, that there could and would have been no redemption by power had there not first been a redemption by price. Law and justice would cry aloud against taking away by force, one who had voluntarily sold himself to be a servant unless his value were paid, or against re-entering on a mortgaged piece of land without paying off the mortgage. But when the price had been fully and duly paid, and that to the satisfaction of the owner of the servant, or of the mortgagee, then power might be lawfully employed to deliver the servant, or recover possession of the land if either were unjustly detained.

These remarks may throw light on the expression "until the redemption of the purchased possession." The Church has been redeemed by price, but is not as yet fully redeemed by power. Christ has bought with his precious blood both the souls and bodies of his people, but he has not yet redeemed them openly. This redemption is still future, and will not be accomplished until the glorious resurrection morn, when the bodies of the dead saints will be raised, and the bodies of the living saints changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. This, therefore, is "the redemption of the purchased possession;" and this being future we have to wait for it, as the Apostle speaks, "But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Romans 8:25.) Our body is not yet redeemed from its native corruption. But, in the resurrection morn, when the dead will be raised incorruptible, then the redemption of the body will be complete. Then the inheritance will be fully entered into. The risen and glorified saints will inherit Christ, and Christ will inherit them; and his purchased possession will be forever delivered from every foe and every fear, from every sin and every sorrow, from every corruption of body or soul, and be crowned with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Unto this day of redemption the Holy Spirit

seals all the living family of God, (Ephesians 4:30,) not only by assuring them of their interest in the inheritance, and himself being the earnest of it, but as thereby securing to them the most certain possession of it.

Here, then, we see the distinct work of each person in the blessed Trinity. The Father chooses the Church in Christ, and blesses her with all spiritual blessings in Him. The Son accepts her as his Bride and inheritance, and, when fallen, redeems her by his precious blood. The Holy Spirit quickens the souls thus chosen, blessed and redeemed, makes them fit for the inheritance, and seals them for the present enjoyment of it in grace, and the future enjoyment of it in glory. And to what does all this redound, but "to the praise of God’s glory?"—praise to the Father, praise to the Son, and praise to the Holy Spirit; praise to the Father who loved the Church and chose her; praise to the Son who loved the Church and gave himself for her; and praise to the Holy Spirit who loved the Church, and seals her unto that glorious day when the purposes of God’s grace will be all fulfilled, and the Church reign with her covenant Head in glory forever and ever!

Chapter 55

03.01.07. Part Seven

Part VII.

Among the many prominent features which are so clearly and powerfully stamped upon the character and conduct of the Apostle Paul, as one of the most eminent saints and servants of Christ whom grace ever made or manifested, none seems to us more signal than the spirit of prayer and supplication which dwelt in his bosom on behalf of the churches and individuals to whom he addressed his Epistles. Such was his love to the Lord Jesus and to all his saints as members of his mystical body, such his desire for their spiritual prosperity, and such his persuasion that the Lord was able to do for them exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think, that when the churches came before his eyes, there gushed immediately out of his soul a flow of prayer and thanksgiving on their behalf; of thanksgiving for the wonders which grace had wrought in and for them, and of prayer for more and more visible manifestations of what grace could still accomplish in their hearts and in their lives.

It would be a most instructive task, if task it could be called, for a spiritual mind carefully to examine and prayerfully to meditate on the various prayers which the Apostle records as put up by himself for the churches. We should thus see more clearly what blessings we should desire for ourselves and others and what spiritual gifts and graces we should ask for when presenting our supplications before the throne of grace. It is a subject on which we cannot now enter, but it is one full of the choicest instruction if we had the opportunity to lay it fully before our readers. For these prayers, see Romans 15:5-6; Romans 15:13; Php 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Philemon 1:6; Hebrews 13:20-21. What a beautiful collection of inspired prayers for spiritual blessings! This epistle furnishes us with two of the longest, fullest, and choicest of all the prayers thus recorded as offered by the Apostle for the churches. One is contained in the chapter now before us; the other in Ephesians 3:16-19. The course of our exposition brings us to the first of these prayers—"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." (Ephesians 1:15-16.)

Tidings had been brought to the Apostle when a prisoner at Rome, (Acts 28:16; Acts 28:20; Ephesians 6:20,) most probably by Epaphras, (Colossians 1:7,) of the faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, which these Ephesian saints so clearly manifested.

These glad tidings at once touched the secret springs of love in his heart, and, knowing the power and prevalence of prayer, as the Spirit inspired and dictated, he poured forth his soul in petitions and supplications for them; and by the guidance of the same blessed Teacher, put upon permanent record the substance of these prayers, that not only the Ephesian saints, but the Church of God in all ages might see and know what blessings are to be sought for and obtained from the God of all grace, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would draw, therefore, particular attention to this prayer of the Apostle; and may the same blessed Spirit, under whose special aid and inspiration it was raised up, drawn forth, dictated, and recorded, help us so to

unfold and to enforce it that a special blessing may attend it to our readers.

Faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, are the two great marks of divine life; and there is this special blessedness attending them, that they are comprehensive and inclusive evidences; in other words, they comprehend in their embrace, and include in their circle, all the true saints of God, from the least to the greatest. It is not a question of strong faith or weak faith, of much love or little love, but of the reality of these two Christian graces. He is a saint, and he only is a saint, who believes in the Lord Jesus with a faith that is God's gift and work, and who loves his people with a love of God's communicating and shedding abroad. For all such true saints the Apostle poured forth his prayer—a prayer as suitable to us, if saints, as it was to them for whom it was particularly offered, and here specially recorded.

It is worthy of observation how continually the Apostle blends thanksgiving with prayer. This was his usual practice. (See Romans 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Php 1:3-4; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 1:4.) Remembering that these Ephesian saints had been before quickened into divine life, when they were without God, and had no hope in the world, and believing that, as chosen in Christ they had been blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, Paul's heart was melted into continual gratitude for what God had already done for them. It was as if his soul was ever full of praise and prayer, and that these continually flowed forth, mingled and blended with each other. It were good for us if we could more follow his example, and mingle praise more with our prayers.

Praise gives, as it were, wings to prayer, mounting up more directly from earth to heaven, and being especially acceptable to God, for "whoever offers praise glorifies him." Incense, under the law, was a compound of various spices, (Exodus 30:34-35,) and it was the blending of one with the other which made the perfume of it so refreshing and fragrant. It was, indeed, a special type of the intercession of our great High Priest; but it may be viewed also as representing typically the prayers of the saints, and their fragrance before God; for the Lord says, by the prophet—"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, says the Lord Almighty." (Malachi 1:11.) Similarly we read—"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Revelation 8:3-4.)

Among these sweet spices, praise is one of the most refreshing and fragrant; refreshing to us, fragrant before God; and were we enabled to blend more fully and frequently this spikenard with all the chief spices, we might not only find our own house filled with the odor of the ointment, but our Beloved might come oftener into his garden, when the south wind blows and the spices flow out, to eat his pleasant fruits. (John 12:3; Song Song of Solomon 4:16.) We cannot enlarge upon this point, but if our readers will consult the following passages, they will see how fully they confirm our words. See Psalms 50:14-15; Psalms 100:4; Psalms 107:1; Psalms 107:8, etc.; Php 4:6; Colossians 2:7; Colossians 4:2; Ephesians 5:20; Hebrews 13:15. But the chief point before us is the prayer of this man of God—"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your

understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:17-18.) Several points here demand our attentive consideration. i. The titles which the Apostle here gives God will furnish us with some profitable meditation. They are two. He calls him, 1, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ;" 2, "The Father of glory." We will, the Lord helping us, examine both of these titles.

1. Let us first observe that these titles, as used here by the Apostle, are not arbitrary names of God; by which we mean that, besides their real and intrinsic character as designating God the Father, they have a peculiar bearing upon and reference unto the blessings prayed for. This is almost always the case in other parts of Scripture, and it may be taken as a general truth, that wherever God speaks of himself, or is spoken of by his prophets and apostles, under certain titles, they have a special reference to the matter then in hand. Compare, for instance, the titles which God gives himself, (Exodus 34:6,) with the prayer of Moses. (Exodus 33:12-18.) A Lord God merciful, and gracious, patience and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet who would by no means clear the guilty, impenitent sinner—was the very God to go before and with Moses. Compare also the titles which the Lord gives of himself, (Isaiah 40:28,) with the complaint of Jacob and Israel in the preceding verse, and see how the titles suit and exactly meet the complaint.

Thus in the words before us, the Apostle having certain requests to make for the Ephesian saints, addresses God by those titles which are suitable to those particular blessings. The reason of this is because, being in himself what his titles declare of him, it is that part of his character which is in the sweetest harmony with the blessings prayed for, and thus affords a pledge and a security that he will grant the special petitions. It is, therefore, not merely a reminding God of the revelation which he has made of his great and glorious name, and a prevailing plea with him to grant the blessings prayed for, but an assurance to his people that he will, in consonance with his own gracious character, as unfolded by these titles, grant the petitions put up to him. The first title is a peculiar one, and one which, if we remember right, does not often occur in the New Testament under the same form. God the Father is continually called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," but not often "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our readers will bear in mind that the grand subject of the epistle is the union of the Church with Christ, as her Covenant Head, and the blessings and privileges which spring out of this union. God the Father is, therefore, here called "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," to show that, as being his God, and he being the Church's Head and Husband—all that belongs to him belongs to her. Our blessed Lord, therefore, after his resurrection, sent this message to his disciples—"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:17.) Why your Father? Because my Father. Why your God? Because my God. Thus, because God is "the God of the Lord Jesus Christ," the Church's living Head, he is the God of the Church also; and because he has blessed her with all spiritual blessings in him, he will grant these requests also. But he is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ in several ways. As the Lord Jesus Christ is the true, proper, and real Son of the Father, in truth and love—God is in this sense his God. We cannot understand, much less explain, the mystery, but we receive it by faith that the blessed Lord is "the only-begotten of the Father," "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." (John 1:14; John 1:18.) As such, therefore, God the Father is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is also his God as man, and the Son of man. We, therefore, find him claiming this peculiar title, even when sunk into all the sufferings and ignominy of the cross. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" burst forth from the dear Redeemer's lips in the moment of his most dolorous agony. Rejected by men, and for the moment forsaken by God, when the very sun hid its light, and the firm earth trembled, the Son of the Father in truth and love still held by his claim, and cried out in the face of the curse of the Law and the sufferings of death, "My God." Blessed Lord, despair never seized your holy soul. You did fight; you did conquer; and did not yield up your spirit until you could say, "It is finished." "The Lord heard you in the day of trouble; sent you help from the sanctuary and strengthened you out of Zion; remembered all your offerings and accepted your burnt sacrifice; granted you according to your own heart, and fulfilled all your counsel." And now what remains for us but to say, "We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners. The Lord fulfill all your petitions." (Psalms 20:1-5.) But he is in a more especial manner "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," viewed in his present mediatorial glory at the right hand of power. As his only-begotten Son from all eternity, God was his God; as the Father's messenger and servant, doing his will upon earth, even in his lowest humiliation, God was his God; and now that he has risen from the dead and gone up on high to be the great high priest over the house of God, now that he is entered into his glory and ever lives to make intercession for us, God is still his God. This view of Jesus is most strengthening and encouraging to faith. The great and glorious God, the great self-existent I AM, the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the God who made us and has preserved us in life and being to the present hour, the God before whom we stand with all we are and have, the God against and before whom we have so deeply and dreadfully sinned—this great and glorious God is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." We may, therefore, draw near unto him with all holy boldness, present our supplications before him, call upon his holy name, and worship him with all reverence and godly fear as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our God in him. A believing view of God, as revealing himself in the Person of his dear Son, as reconciling us to himself by his precious blood, as accepting us in the Beloved, and not imputing our trespasses unto us, disarms God of all his terrors, removes the bondage of the law out of our hearts and the guilt of sin from our consciences; enlarges, comforts, and solaces the soul, soothes the troubled spirit, and casts out that fear which has torment. Every other view of God but that in his dear Son disturbs and disquiets the mind, troubles the conscience, straitens the soul, contracts and narrows up the spirit, and either leaves us a prey to every lust, or engenders distrust, despondency, and despair. But God is also called here "the Father of glory." This may mean, by a frequent Hebrew idiom, the glorious Father; but we prefer to follow the strict literal meaning of the expression, and to understand by it that God is the author, the source and originator of all glory. All the glory of heaven is because God, in an especial manner, there manifests the brightness of his presence. Apart from him, and out of him, there is no glory in heaven or in earth; and to see his glory face to face constitutes the eternal bliss of the saints. On earth they have a foreview, a foretaste of this glory when God shines into the heart to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and as the veil of unbelief is taken off the heart, and they see with open or unveiled face the glory of the Lord, they are inwardly and experimentally changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 3:18.)

This, therefore, is the connection between the title given to God and the petition presented to him. The portion of the Church is to behold the glory of Christ here by faith, and hereafter by sight, as

our gracious Lord prayed, or rather expressed his holy will—"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24.) This glory, then, being their predestinated portion, there is a beautiful propriety in the Apostle begging that "the Father of glory" would give the Ephesian saints the blessings asked for; and we may add that it is as glorious for him to give as for them to receive. ii. But we will now consider THE PARTICULAR BLESSINGS THUS EARNESTLY PRAYED FOR, and we would direct the especial attention of our readers to the petitions thus put up, as showing us what should be our desires and prayers for ourselves and others. We may be sure that the Lord the Spirit inspired and raised up these prayers in the bosom of the Apostle, and that they are left on permanent record to be a pattern of instruction to the end of time. There is such a thing as asking and not receiving, because we ask amiss. (James 4:3.) We know not what we should pray for as we ought, (Romans 8:26,) and, therefore, need the blessed Spirit to help our infirmities, and among them the infirmity of ignorance. But this he does, not only by himself interceding in us and for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, but by recording in the inspired word such prayers as men of God were taught by him to put up. Thus viewed, these prayers of Paul have a special value as instructing us into those blessings which we should peculiarly ask for by prayer and supplication.

1. The first blessing prayed for is "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ." By the Spirit is meant the Holy Spirit, that sacred and divine Person in the glorious Trinity, whom he has before called "that Holy Spirit of promise." There is a heavenly wisdom which the Holy and Blessed Spirit alone can give, and he is, therefore, called "the Spirit of wisdom," not only as containing in himself all wisdom, but as the gracious communicator of it to the saints. It will be observed that it is not the gift of wisdom, even of heavenly wisdom, for which the Apostle prays so much as the Spirit himself of wisdom. We might have wisdom in the letter of truth, and learn much from the Scriptures; but how inferior is all this to the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, making our bodies his temple, and himself giving us blessed lessons, sealed with his own witness, and accompanied with his own light, life, unction, and power. He thus sheds a sacred light on his own word of truth, and by his personal and living teachings, opens, enlarges, and persuades the heart to receive what he thus shows and teaches.

We all know how different a living teacher is from a mere lesson-book in all matters of natural education; and that there are arts and sciences, and especially languages and accomplishments, which no book can teach, but which must be learned from the lips of the teacher himself. So in grace, however valuable and blessed the book of God is, we cannot be made wise unto salvation by the word itself—without the special teachings of the Holy Spirit as a personal and living instructor. He can suit his teachings to our case, knows when, where, and how to teach us, can bear with our ignorance and stupidity, give us the right lesson at the right time and in the right way, and do for us what no earthly teacher can—write his own laws upon our hearts and give us will and power to keep and obey them. But it is specially as giving us a knowledge of Christ that he is a Spirit of wisdom; for a spiritual, experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum and substance of all true wisdom. To flee unto Jesus, believe on him, trust in him, look continually to him, and cleave to him with purpose of heart; to cast away all hope and help but what centers in him and comes from him; to renounce all our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness; to hang upon him and him only, as of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, this is

true wisdom, and, issuing in the salvation of the soul, will shine forth in a blaze of glory when all earthly wisdom will be quenched in endless night.

2. But he is called also "the Spirit of revelation"—a title which demands our especial consideration.

Revelation means literally an uncovering or unveiling of a concealed or covered-up object. It is used, therefore, sometimes in the sense of manifesting, making known, or bringing to light, what had before been hidden in darkness and obscurity. This revelation is, therefore, either outward in the word, or inward in the soul, and the two strictly correspond to and are counterparts of each other. This is well unfolded by the Apostle, (2 Corinthians 3:1-18) where he is speaking of a double veil in the case of the literal Israel, that is, a veil upon the word of truth, and a veil upon the heart—"And not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished—but their minds were blinded; for until this day remains the same veil not taken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." (2 Corinthians 3:13-15.) The veil which Moses put upon his face was typical of this double veil; and as in them, so in all who are still in the darkness, ignorance, and unbelief of unregeneracy—there is a veil spread over the understanding. The Spirit of revelation, then, is that gracious, holy, and blessed Spirit who, by his divine operations, takes off this double veil; and, therefore, the Apostle says—"Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit—and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:16-17.) The day will come when the literal Israel will turn to the Lord, and then the veil now spread over them will be taken away. But what is true prophetically is true experimentally; what will be fulfilled in Israel after the flesh is now being continually fulfilled in Israel after the Spirit. Immediately that, by the power of divine grace, a poor Gentile sinner turns to the Lord, the Spirit of revelation removes the veil off the Scriptures, and off his heart. Have we not found it so? What a sealed book was the word of God once to us! How we read or heard it without one real ray of light to illuminate the dark page; and what a thick veil was there of ignorance, unbelief, prejudice, self-righteousness, and impenitence on our heart. But the gracious Spirit of revelation took this double veil away, and by giving us the light of life, made the word of God a new book, and gave us a new heart; and ever since the day when the entrance of his word gave us light, God’s word has been a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. But the Spirit of revelation is chiefly given to lead us into a spiritual, experimental, and saving knowledge of Christ. The Apostle, therefore, prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Without this blessed Spirit of revelation, Christ cannot be effectually or savingly known. When, therefore, Peter made that noble confession of his faith in Christ as "the Son of the living God," our Lord said to him—"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17.) So he speaks on another occasion—"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matthew 11:25-27.) Without this inward revelation by the Spirit of revelation, Christ cannot be savingly known. Paul, therefore, says of his own experience—"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my

mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Galatians 1:15-16.) But we are not to suppose that this special and inward revelation of Christ by the Spirit has anything in it of a mystical or enthusiastic nature. It is not a matter of dreams, voices, or visions, sights or sounds, visible objects or supernatural appearances. By such imitations and delusions, Satan, as an angel of light, has wrought at various times sad mischief with individuals and churches. It is especially needful here to have "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" to "gird up the loins of our mind," (not be entangled in the loose robes of enthusiasm;) "to be sober," (not flighty and visionary;) and "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us," (not sights in the sky or voices in the air,) "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Peter 1:13.) But the Apostle goes on to show the effect of the gift of this Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. It enlightens the eyes of the understanding—"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Among the benefits and blessings of heavenly teaching, a gracious understanding of divine truth is not the least or last. Some good people, and among them even ministers, do not seem to see clearly the difference between a gracious understanding of the truth and what is commonly called "head knowledge." But no two things can be more different in their source, their nature, and their effects. God is the author of one, man of the other; one is grace, the other nature; one is seated in the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him; the other in the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; one is attended with faith, and hope, and love, is tender, humble, simple, and sincere, saves and sanctifies; the other puffs up with pride, hardens the heart, sears the conscience, knows neither faith nor repentance, and for the most part holds the truth in unrighteousness.

There cannot well, then, be a greater mistake than to trample and beat down a gracious understanding of truth as so much dry and dead head knowledge, and thus confound the spiritual light which dwells in the enlightened mind of a saint with the carnal knowledge of the letter of truth, which has its seat in the head of a professor. One of the chief features of the present day is the lack of this gracious and enlightened understanding among the people of God. Being accustomed to hear all knowledge of the truth in an enlightened understanding beaten down as mere notions and head knowledge, they are afraid of everything beyond immediate feelings; and thus, instead of being firmly established in the truth, are often tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. The lack of this gracious understanding of the truth was never more painfully visible than in the late controversy about the Sonship of Christ and our wonder has often been that, amid so much ignorance on the subject in the churches of truth, the people of God were for the most part so preserved from instability on a point so vital and important as the true, real, and eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord. But we shall here close our remarks on this point of gracious experience, reserving for a future paper a more extended opening of the subject in connection with the rest of the passage.

03.01.08. Part Eight

PART VIII.

Pursuing our subject, we desire to walk step by step with this holy man of God, as we find him pouring forth his heart, under divine inspiration, for the saints of God at Ephesus. He and they no longer need such prayers. They are with Christ, seeing him as he is, and behold him and his glory, not as they once did and we do now, by faith, as in a glass darkly—but face to face, and know him as they also are known. But we who are still in this wilderness, struggling onwards to reach the same heavenly home, cannot be sufficiently thankful, and especially so in these days of error and evil, that the Holy Spirit inspired him so to pray, and to leave also on permanent record the petitions which he thus put up, that they might be for our instruction and edification. And we desire to bless and praise God for all the sweetness, suitability, and blessedness which we have seen and felt in them, and that he has thus far enabled us to lay before our spiritual readers what we hope has been for the profit of their souls. May he give us grace and wisdom still further to open the treasures of heavenly truth which are stored up for enlightened understandings and believing hearts in that portion of the Apostle's prayer which remains to be considered.

We showed in our last paper that there were certain blessings mentioned by the Apostle as attending the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. These blessings are mainly four—1. An enlightening of the eyes of the understanding; 2, A knowledge of the hope of his calling; 3, A knowledge of what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; 4, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, etc. The first of these blessings we have partly considered; but, as we proposed to examine it more fully in connection with the rest of the passage, we shall now attempt to redeem our pledge.

Viewing, then, the SOUL of man as the seat and subject of those gracious operations of God the Holy Spirit which give it a fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light, we may say that it possesses, 1, intellect; 2, will; 3, conscience; 4, affections; and viewing it as regenerated and renewed from above, we may add that the blessed Spirit is to it and in it, 1, a Spirit of light in the understanding; (2 Corinthians 3:16-18; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12;) 2, a Spirit of life and power in the will; (Psalms 110:3; Php 2:13;) 3, a Spirit of godly fear in the conscience; (Jeremiah 32:40;) 4, and a Spirit of love in the affections. (Romans 5:5.) The Scriptures, it is true, do not lay all this down in so many express terms, with a kind of mathematical or metaphysical accuracy, for that is not the way in which God has been pleased to reveal divine truth, but it is easy to trace it out from the word when we read it with an enlightened eye.

Thus in Psalms 119:1-176, which we may take as a most beautiful and blessed description of the work of grace upon the heart, through the power of the word, we find the Psalmist sometimes testifying to, or crying out for a shining in of divine light—"The entrance of your words gives light;" (Psalms 119:130) "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law;" (Psalms 119:18) "Give me understanding, and I shall live." (Psalms 119:144) See also Psalms 119:27,

Psalms 119:33, Psalms 119:73, Psalms 119:105, Psalms 119:169. Who that knows and feels the darkness of his mind does not from time to time seek and sigh after that divine light which, while it enlightens his understanding, at the same time softens and comforts his heart? How foolish, then, if not worse, to beat down as mere head knowledge that heavenly light, which, beaming into the soul out of the fullness of Christ, illuminates the mind and leads us into a spiritual knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! We would like to show how the same Holy and blessed Spirit is a Spirit of life and power in the will, a Spirit of godly fear in the conscience, and a Spirit of love in the affections; but it would take us too much away from our present subject.

2. But as another fruit of, and as attending this enlightening of the eyes of the understanding, the Apostle prays that the saints at Ephesus"might know what was the hope of Christ's calling." There is much precious truth couched in these words, if we have but grace and wisdom to open them up. We shall find in Romans 8:28-30, a blessed key to the meaning of the Apostle in uttering this prayer—"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those 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." (Romans 8:28-30.) In that glorious chain of divine blessings, foreknowledge is the first link, predestination the second, calling the third, justification the fourth, and glorification the fifth. Thus CALLING, as an intermediate link in this glorious chain, is connected on one side with predestination in eternity past, and on the other with glorification in eternity to come. In the bosom of calling, therefore, is lodged the love of God from all eternity as its cause, and the enjoyment of this love to all eternity as its fruit and effect. When, then, the Apostle prays that they might know what was the hope of this calling, he desires that they might clearly realize the certainty of their having been effectually called by the grace of God, and might know what he elsewhere terms "the hope of eternal life," (Titus 1:2,) which was couched in it. Now, as eternal life embraces a being hereafter with Christ where he is, a beholding and partaking of his glory, (John 17:22-24,) and a perfect conformity in body and soul to his glorious image, no heart can conceive, or tongue of men or angels describe, in what an ocean of bliss and blessedness, of holiness and happiness, and of an eternal weight of glory, effectual calling will issue.

How blessed then to know, realize, and enjoy now what is the hope of this calling, termed by the Apostle "his calling," as being immediately from Christ himself, that being cheered and animated by a good hope through grace, and looking forward to a blissful eternity, when we shall forever be done with all the sins and sorrows of this life, we may feed our thoughts with prospects of the glory that shall be revealed, and thus be lifted up out of the mud and mire of this wretched world and the miserable dregs of bondage, legality, and self—which cleave so closely to us! It is as if he would say to us, "Have you any testimony to your effectual calling? Has grace indeed laid hold of your heart? Have you heavenly light in your understanding, divine life in your will, a godly fear in your conscience, and heavenly love in your affections, as so many evidences of having received the gift of the Spirit as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? O that you might know more fully—God grant that you may know it more powerfully—what a blessed hope of eternal life is laid up in the bosom of this heavenly calling, that it may cheer and encourage you to press on more and more to realize all that he given you in Christ both for here and hereafter, in present grace and in future glory."

Thus, in knowing what is the hope of their effectual calling, the saints of God learn that this hope embraces all things which are made theirs in Christ, whether life or death, or things present or things to come—that all are theirs; and for this blessed and all-sufficient reason, that they are Christ's and Christ is God's. It is by making sure our calling that we make sure our election, (2 Peter 1:10,)—for the one is the sure evidence of the other; and thus, if doubt and uncertainty hang over our calling, the same doubt and uncertainty must rest upon our election to eternal life. But as these doubts and fears are removed by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and we can clearly see and fully believe that the grace of God effectually called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, then we see by faith what is laid up in the bosom of this calling, and what a glorious hope of eternal life is thereby afforded as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and thus abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 3:22-23.)

3. The next fruit and effect of this gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is"to know what are the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints."

Observe how the Apostle pours out his soul in earnest prayer and supplication that the saints of God might have a spiritual knowledge of the glorious inheritance which the Lord Jesus has in his Church and people. And shall we, with this prayer before us, despise and disparage that divine illumination of the understanding which the Apostle begs for so earnestly as the fruit of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? If it be but mere head knowledge, letter faith, and dry speculation—let us beat it down with both our feet, tread it down, and stamp it out as a deceit and a delusion; but let us beware of casting away precious gold because there are counterfeit sovereigns, or throwing away diamonds because there are fictitious jewels. To know Christ for ourselves by his blessed manifestations, to know his truth in its liberating, sanctifying influence and power, and to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge so as to be filled with all the fullness of God—what choice blessings are these! And are they not all held forth as such in the Scriptures? But how shall we attain to the saving knowledge of them? Are they not made known to us through the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, opening to our enlightened understanding and sealing on our believing heart the blessed mysteries of our most holy faith as revealed in the word of truth?

Now, among these heavenly mysteries is a knowledge of the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints. If we have an inheritance in Christ, Christ has an inheritance in us. The saints, that is, the whole body of the sanctified, are his allotted portion. Of this Israel of old was a type—"For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deuteronomy 32:9.) Moses, therefore, made this his prevailing plea when he would arrest his outstretched arm—"O Lord God, destroy not your people and your inheritance." (Deuteronomy 9:26.) But to show that this inheritance was not limited to the typical Israel, God said to his dear Son—"Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." (Psalms 2:8.) When, then, in the counsels of eternity, God the Father presented to his eternal and only-begotten Son the Church in all her virgin purity to be his bride, and he espoused her to himself, to be his forever and ever—she became his inheritance. He did not view her, as we now see her, wrecked and ruined by the fall, but as she will one day appear, radiant in all the beauty of her perfect conformity to his glorious image, with all her sins washed away in the

fountain of his most precious blood, clothed in his spotless righteousness, with every stain of mortal woe and weakness gone—and able to enjoy and return his love, in that bridal day when the espoused bride will become the wedded wife. That after he had espoused her to himself she should have so fallen from her virgin purity; that he should, out of the depths of his infinite love and pity, have gone down from heaven to earth for her rescue; that he should have so toiled, groaned, sweated great drops of blood, and suffered for her all the agonies of the cross; that he might wash out every stain of sin and guilt in his precious blood; that he should have died for her, and risen again, and gone up on high as her Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate; that he should have watched over every member so tenderly, borne with all their sins and provocations so unweariedly, quickened and delivered each at the appointed season so faithfully, preserved them through all the storms of life so efficaciously; and brought each and every one to full, and final glory so triumphantly; will not all this double his love and joy to his beloved bride when he rejoices over her in his Father’s mansions with joy and singing? As in the married life, to share in its sorrows and afflictions endears to each other husband and wife as much as, if not more than, to share in its joys and happiness, so that the gracious Lord should have been "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and that the Church should have had fellowship with him in his sufferings will only more endear her to him and him to her when eternal glory crowns their mutual love and happiness.

It is the glory of Christ that he should have this inheritance in the saints. God being essentially invisible, the Son of God could not have been seen and known, and therefore not fully or sufficiently glorified as the Father would have him to be but for his incarnation as the Son of Man. He was, indeed, as his only-begotten Son, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person;" but that there might be a visible representation to created intelligences of the character of God, that the love, the grace, the mercy, the compassion, the wisdom, truth, and power of a Triune Jehovah might be made known, and thus forever adored, it pleased the Father, in the depths of his infinite wisdom, to prepare for his dear Son a body in which he might reveal those adorable excellences. When, then, the Lord Jesus was here below, he was a visible representation of the invisible God. Thus John testifies—"No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." (John 1:18.) To believing eyes this representation of the image of God was full of glory—"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) They saw the glory of God in the face (or person) of Jesus Christ, and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, were changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God on their hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6.) We thus see that the glory of God shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, and that it is reflected from him through the glass of the gospel upon his saints—here in present grace, hereafter in future glory. In the eyes of Christ this glory is exceedingly great. The Apostle, therefore, calls it "the riches of his glory," as if the Lord viewed his saints with his grace now in their hearts, and eternal glory their assured portion hereafter, as enriching himself with ineffable glory. He sees his own image in them, his own grace shining forth, his own love manifested, his own obedience, his own holiness, his own example, discovered and displayed. The whole world lies in the wicked one. All, in a state of nature, are slaves to sin and Satan, enemies to God and godliness. But his saints, his own inheritance, whom he has redeemed by his blood and justified by his righteousness, whom he has quickened by his Spirit, in whose hearts he

has planted his fear, to whom he has revealed and made himself known, and whom he has thus taught to believe in him, love him, and obey him—in these he glories as his own inheritance. Of them he says—"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage." (Psalms 16:6.) That this is the speech of Christ is evident from verse 10; "You will not leave my soul in hell," etc.

These to save, these to sanctify, these to conform, first to his suffering, afterwards to his glorified image, was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, etc. The Apostle then prays that as a fruit and effect of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, we might know what are the riches of his glory in this inheritance. What do we for the most part see in the saints? Weakness and imperfection. We see them only as they are, not what they shall be. Nor indeed do we sufficiently value even the grace which we see in them, though we love it and love them for it. Often, indeed, it is so clogged and loaded with infirmities, so buried under corruption, so little shining forth as the mind and image of Christ, that we can hardly recognize it in ourselves or others. But so far as we fix our eyes, not on the infirmities of the saints, which is the very spirit of the world, but on the grace which is in them, have we the mind and Spirit of Christ. This therefore requires spiritual eyes to see, and a spiritual mind to love. In viewing the riches of his glory in his inheritance in the saints, the Lord sees them as they are complete in him, with all their sins washed away in the fountain of his precious blood, and as arrayed in his robe of righteousness. Our infirmities he pities, knowing that we are dust, and that they are not from willful rebellion or enmity of heart against him, and that we truly and really love him, though, from the weakness of our flesh, we continually say and do things which grieve our spirit, and are inconsistent with our holy profession.

Now, in proportion as this part of the Apostle’s prayer is fulfilled in us, we shall esteem and love the dear family of God. In earthly matters we know with what respect everything is looked at connected with royalty. If at Windsor Castle one should say to us—"This is the Queen’s private garden; this is her favorite walk; she often sits on that seat under the tree;" we would naturally feel a respect for the objects thus pointed out; and sad will that day be for England, should it ever come, when this instinctive feeling of respect and loyalty to the Sovereign dies out of the English heart. But now apply the figure. If we were more imbued with love and loyalty to our exalted King, we would more love, esteem, and respect his inheritance, and the places of his daily resort. This inheritance, it is true, is now, as viewed by ordinary eyes, a wreck and a ruin, more like some neglected garden, overrun with thorns and briers, the fences all broken down, nettles growing in every corner, the summer-house fallen in, and the walks overgrown with moss and grass, than "a garden enclosed," where grow "spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." (Song of Solomon 4:12-14.) But as a practiced gardener sees in a neglected garden more what it may be made into, than what it now is, and as his eye can discern here and there valuable shrubs struggling for life amid the weeds which well-near choke them, so should we whose eyes have been enlightened, view the Church of Christ, though now such a wreck and ruin, and look at her more as she will be, than what she now is. So also will the believing eye see the graces of the Spirit which from time to time manifest themselves in the people of God, under their various trials and afflictions, though struggling as if for life, amid all the rubbish of nature, by which they so often seem as if choked and suffocated. But it requires grace to see and love grace, and when that grace is but dimly visible, or much

borne down by natural infirmity and corruption, it needs proportionate grace to discern and feel union with it. Thus to perceive and love the image of Christ, however faint and feeble, is, let, it ever be borne in mind, as utterly distinct from that false and universal charity which thinks well of everybody and doubts nobody; as it is from that harsh, severe, and cutting spirit which would mow down into one common heap everything and everybody which does not exactly tally with a prescribed standard. No eye is so discerning as the eye enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom; no heart so tender as the heart blessed and softened by the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Such an eye sees, such a heart loves the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints, and sees and loves it because it is his. Were we then favored to view the suffering members of the mystical body of Christ more with the eyes of faith and less with the eyes of sense, what a glory would we see in many a poor despised child of God, which we now seem to lose! Instead of looking at this poor old man, coughing and gasping with an incurable asthma, almost as the doctor eyes him, and getting away from him, perhaps, as soon as we decently can; or as the parish undertaker views him, only fit for an wooden coffin and a pauper's grave, we should see in him, as the purchase of Christ's blood and a partaker of his Spirit, an heir of the glory that shall be revealed, and as clothed in the righteousness and conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God, one day to outshine angels. Instead of seeing a withered old woman, shrunk into nothing by poverty and illness, or a poor miserable creature dying of a cancer, loathsome to herself and to all around her, we would behold a precious jewel in that crown of glory which is in the hand of the Lord. Or, not to take extreme cases, were our eyes more anointed from above to see the glory which Christ has put upon his saints, and the delight which he takes in them, we would in our daily communion with them, treat them with more esteem, affection, and respect than we are accustomed to do. Viewing them as the purchase of Christ's precious blood, now partakers of his grace, and as such heirs of an eternal and unspeakable weight of glory, we would see in them, even in their present condition, a beauty, a dignity, a blessedness which would call forth the highest esteem and the tenderest love. So far from despising any who were weak in mind or poor in estate among them, so far from resenting any real or fancied injuries, so far from treating them with coldness and shyness, or, fostering a spirit of jealousy, division, and strife; so far from wounding their feelings and hurting their minds by words and conduct unbecoming our profession, we should seek to walk with them here, in some measure as we hope to walk with them hereafter.

How dear must those be to God whom he has loved from all eternity! how precious must those be to his dear Son for whom he shed his own blood! how beloved by the Holy Spirit who has quickened them into spiritual life and who so tenderly watches over his own work of grace in their heart! Should they not then be dear to us? And if so, how should we manifest that love but by seeking their good in every way that lies in our power?

Thus we see that in this portion of the prayer of the Apostle there is much that is eminently practical as well as deeply experimental, and that its fulfillment in our heart would not only lead us into clearer and deeper views of what the Church of Christ is in present grace and what she will be in future glory, but would much influence our mind and conduct in our daily walk and communion with our fellow-saints. Shallow and low views of the Person of Christ, of his finished work, and of his risen glory, will always be attended with shallow and low views of the Church, his bride, as the chosen companion of his glory; a shallow and low knowledge of the truth as revealed in the Person of Christ and his manifested glory will always be accompanied with a feeble experience of

its power; and a feeble experience of the power of truth as connected with what the Lord Jesus is in himself, and is to his people, will almost always issue in worldliness of spirit and too often in general lightness and looseness of walk, conduct, and conversation. To most however, who name the name of Christ, these grand and glorious truths of our most holy faith are as unknown as they are distasteful; and that is one reason why this prayer of the Apostle is so little understood, felt, and realized. Satisfied with a few dead and dry notions, and mistaking the accusings and excusings of natural conscience (Romans 2:15) for a gracious experience, hundreds, like the Laodicean Church, think they are "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," not seeing that, while destitute of a gracious knowledge of the truth, and an experience of its liberating, sanctifying influence and power, they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Here, however, we must pause, reserving the remainder of the Apostle’s prayer to our next paper, when we hope, if possible, to conclude our exposition of the chapter.

Chapter 57

03.01.09. Part Nine

Part IX. Our readers will perhaps remember that we pointed out in a previous paper four spiritual blessings which the Apostle prayed for on behalf of the saints at Ephesus, that they might be bestowed upon them as special fruits of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. These four choice blessings are 1, an enlightening of the eyes of our understanding; 2, a knowledge of the hope of our calling; 3, a knowledge of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints; and 4, a knowledge of "the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," etc. As we have already examined the first three of these blessings, the fourth and last will now engage our attention; and sincerely do we wish that we could open it in any way proportionate to its surpassing grace, glory, and blessedness. But this we may well despair to do, for apart from our own personal inability, there is, perhaps, scarcely a passage in the whole compass of Paul's epistles more pregnant with vital and glorious truth, more elevated in language, and more sublime for strength and beauty of expression.

4. In opening the meaning and force of this last blessing, two leading points will, with their various branches, mainly demand our attention—1, First, what is intended by the Apostle when he prays that "we might know what is the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us who believe." 2, The measure and standard of that power as evidenced and afforded in and by the resurrection, exaltation, and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. i. The first point, then, which we have to consider in unfolding this signal blessing is a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the exceeding greatness of the power of God to those that believe. The power here spoken of is evidently the power of God as put forth by him in his divine work on the soul; and this we may divide for clearness' sake into three distinct branches—

1. The power put forth in first communicating the work of grace in the heart.

2. The power put forth in subsequently maintaining the work of grace in the heart.

3. The power put forth in finally completing and consummating the work of grace in the heart.

Power may be evidenced as well as measured in two ways—

1. By the difficulties which it meets with and overcomes.

2. By the results and effects which it produces.

Take both these evidences and measures of power as manifested in the work of grace.

1. Contemplate first the difficulties which grace has, so to speak, to encounter in the quickening of a dead soul into spiritual life. View the depths of the fall. See the death of the soul in trespasses and sins; its thorough alienation from the life of God, through the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the understanding, the perverseness of the will, the hardness of the conscience, and the depravity of the affections. View its obduracy, stubbornness, and obstinacy; its pride, unbelief,

infidelity, and self-righteousness; its passionate love to, habitual practice of, and long inurement in sin. Consider its strong prejudices against everything godly and holy; the desperate, implacable enmity of the carnal mind against God himself; its firm and deep-rooted love to the world in all its varied shapes and forms; and remember also how all its hopes, happiness, and prospects are bound up in the things of time and sense. O what a complicated mass of difficulties do all these foes form in their firm combination, like a compact, well-armed, thoroughly trained army, against any power which would dislodge them from their position. Add to this all the power, malice, and arts of Satan, as the strong armed man, keeping the palace night and day, and yielding to none but the stronger than he. Consider, too, the sacrifices which must often be made by one who is to live godly in Christ Jesus; the tenderest ties, perhaps, to be broken; the lucrative or advantageous prospects which have to be abandoned; old friends to be renounced; family connections to be given up; position in life to be lost; and often the shame and contempt to be entailed on one's family and oneself. All, indeed, are not so hedged about with these peculiar difficulties which we have just named; but few are wholly free from them, and he who thus describes them had much personal experience of them in his first setting his face Zionward.

Viewing, then, a soul dead in sin with all these difficulties and obstacles in their complicated array, must we not pronounce that to be a mighty act of power which, in spite of all these apparently invincible hindrances, lifts it up and out of them all into a new and spiritual life as distinct from everything natural as Christ from Belial? So fully and thoroughly is this the fruit and effect of omnipotent power, and of omnipotent power alone, that it is spoken of in the word as a divine begetting; (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3;) a new and heavenly birth; (John 3:3-5;) a new creation; (2 Corinthians 5:17;) a resurrection; (John 5:25; Ephesians 2:1;) all which terms imply a putting forth of a divine power as distinct from and independent of any creature cooperation. Now say, then, whether the work of God on the soul, in its first putting forth, is or is not a work of sovereign and omnipotent power. It is called by the Apostle "the exceeding greatness of his power;" not merely '"power," but "the greatness of his power," and not only "greatness," but "the exceeding greatness." The word "exceeding," in the original, means literally, "throwing beyond," the idea being of men throwing a weight in rivalry, as in athletic games, and the strength of the victor manifested in throwing it beyond all the rest. Such is the work of grace in the soul, outdoing and surpassing every other work of God, except that which will soon come under consideration. But power, we said, is measured also by its fruits and effects. When we look at a great Egyptian pyramid pointing to the sky, or at one of the huge stones still standing upright at Stonehenge, or at the tubes of the Menai tubular bridge, a hundred feet above the water's edge, we see at once what a wonderful feat it was of human strength and skill to set up and fix such ponderous masses in their present position. So, in grace, we must view not only the difficulties which had to be encountered, but the difficulties as triumphed over and the results accomplished; for unless something visible has been achieved, a survey of the difficulties only convinces us of the weakness of the power unsuccessfully brought to bear upon and overcome them. Thus the power put forth by God, in the quickening of our souls into divine life, we may view under these two heads—1, The difficulties which it had to encounter in our own particular case; and, 2, How grace overcame and triumphed over them in our own personal experience; for this is what the Apostle prayed that we might know, real religion being such a personal matter. But how can we know either of those things, except by first taking a solemn review of what we were as fallen, helpless sinners—and how we were circumstanced in providence also before we were quickened into

divine life—and next realize what we were made to see, know, believe, and feel under the first quickenings and teachings of the blessed Spirit—and how we were moved and led to act according to the power which worked in us? We shall thus more clearly see what a mighty power was put forth in turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and how it was the outstretched arm of Omnipotence alone which could deliver us from the power of darkness and translate us into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

2. Similarly we have to know, as a fruit of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the mighty power of God in MAINTAINING divine life in our soul when it had been communicated. We have to see and feel what mountains of difficulty, what seas of temptation, what winds and storms of error, what assaults and snares of Satan, and the latter more dangerous than the former; what floods of vileness and ungodliness without and within; what strong lusts and passions; what secret slips and falls, backslidings and departures from the living God; what long seasons of darkness, barrenness, and death; what opposition of the flesh to the strait and narrow way; what crafty hypocrites, pretended friends, but real foes, false professors and erroneous characters, all striving to throw down or entangle our steps, we had to grapple with; what helplessness, inability, and miserable impotency in ourselves to all that is good; what headlong proneness to all that is evil—all these things we have to pass in solemn review.

We have also to ponder over what we have been and what we still are since we professed to fear God, and how, when left to ourselves, we have done nothing but sin against and provoke him to his face from first to last, and yet still have divine life maintained within. And thus as we hold in our hands, and read over article by article, this long dark catalogue, still to have a sweet persuasion that the life of God is in our soul, and that because Jesus lives we shall live also—this to realize, believe, and feel, and bless God for his surpassing, superabounding grace, is to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us who believe, in maintaining divine life after it had been first communicated. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" Romans 5:20

3. And then to look forward in the well-grounded hope that he who has begun will still carry on and COMPLETE the good work wrought in us by his grace, in spite of all without and within that may still await us; will perfect that which concerns us, and will not despise the work of his own hands; that he will still regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer; that he will work in us all the good pleasure of his will and the work of faith with power, and will never leave nor forsake us for his own name's sake, but will keep us by his own power unto salvation; this blessed hope for the future, with all that is included in it, which we have not now space to dwell upon, forms another part of what is to be known in sweet and personal experience as the mighty power of God to us who believe. ii. But the point to which we wish to direct special attention is what we have termed the STANDARD and MEASURE of this power. It is thus laid down by the Apostle—"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Ephesians 1:19-21.) Though beautifully enlarged and amplified to the end of the chapter by the wondrous pen of this man of God, we may arrange under two heads the truths thus advanced and dwelt upon by him. These two are, 1, the Resurrection; 2, the Exaltation of Christ. This resurrection and this exaltation are made the standard and measure of the power of God put forth

in communicating, maintaining, and completing the life of God in the soul. The Holy Spirit by the pen of the Apostle would lead us rightly to understand and realize the surpassing greatness of the work of grace in the heart; and therefore, brings before us a measure whereby to examine it. This measure is no less than the mighty power which God put forth when he raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to his own right hand. This last was the very greatest work which God ever wrought—and the next greatest is the work of God in the soul. Both these works are connected together, and we shall, therefore, when we have opened the nature and display of the power of God in the resurrection of Christ, attempt to show how they bear upon each other.

We would first call attention to the peculiar language of the Apostle in speaking of the power put forth in the RESURRECTION of Christ—"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:19-20.) Observe the expression, "According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ." It is in the margin, "the might of his power." This is more literal, and nearer the original, than the version in the text; but even this does not give the full meaning and peculiar force of the Greek, which we may translate, "according to the active energy of the victorious might of his strength, which he effectually wrought in Christ." There is first his "strength," as a general expression of the power of God; then the victorious might of his strength, as able to overcome all difficulty and opposition; and then the active energy of it as actually and effectually put forth, in accomplishing the work.*

* Bishop Pearson’s remarks, in his celebrated work upon the Creed, upon these words are so much to the purpose that we cannot forbear quoting them. Having cited the words of the original, he makes upon them the following comment. "Which words our translation comes far short of, and I doubt our language can scarce reach it. For first here are two words to express the power of God, and the validity and force of it, but not sufficient; wherefore there is an addition to each of them of two words, more to express the eminent greatness of this power and force, but not sufficient yet; and therefore, there is another addition to each addition, to set forth the eminence and activity of that greatness; and all yet, as it were but flat and dull until it be quickened with an active verb. All which he set on work, all which he actuated in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."

Now it is very evident that unless the work of raising Christ from the dead had been one of surpassing and extraordinary power, the Holy Spirit would not have used such amazing and almost unparalleled strength of language to set it forth. This question, therefore, at once suggests itself—"Why was the resurrection of Christ such a special act of omnipotent power? Was the raising of his dead body to life, though undoubtedly a miracle of omnipotence, yet one of such amazing magnitude that the utmost strength of human language fails to set it adequately forth? Are there not several instances of resurrection from the dead, both in the Old and Now Testaments? Did not God, in answer to the prayers of both Elijah and Elisha, raise the dead to life? (1 Kings 17:21-22; 2 Kings 4:34-35.) Did not the Lord himself raise up Lazarus and the widow’s son at Nain? Why, then, is the resurrection of Christ here spoken of as an act of such wondrous and surpassing power?" This question we shall endeavor to answer, to the best of our ability, as it involves truths of the deepest nature and of the greatest importance.

Bear, then, in mind that the resurrection of Christ is the very corner-stone and solid foundation of the faith of God's elect, and that on it rest all our hopes for eternity. Our faith, if genuine and saving, believes in Christ as the Son of God; but it was by his resurrection from the dead that he was "declared (literally, "determinately marked out") to be the Son of God with power." (Romans 1:4.) The Apostle, therefore, argues with the greatest cogency, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and our faith vain; you are yet in your sins; then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Corinthians 15:14-18.) The chief force, then, of Christ's resurrection lies in this—that by raising him from the dead God gave his attesting seal, in the most open and visible manner, that Jesus was what he had declared himself to be—the Son of God, and that he had finished the work which the Father had given him to do. It is this attesting seal of God to his Sonship which makes the resurrection of Christ the very foundation of our most holy faith. But this does not answer the question before us—why the resurrection of Christ was an act of such peculiar might and power. We have then to show how his resurrection was not only a proof of his divine Sonship and of the truth of his mission—but how it differed from what we may perhaps call those minor examples of resurrection to which we have referred, and which, though all displays of omnipotent power, yet were not characterized by the peculiar features which were stamped upon the resurrection of Christ. These characteristic features we will now therefore examine.

Consider, then, the peculiar circumstances which attended the death and burial of the Lord Jesus. No such circumstances attended the death and burial of Lazarus, which was but a simple, ordinary resurrection as his was a simple, ordinary death. But the Lord Jesus died as a necessary part of his oblation and sacrifice—Two things are needful to constitute sacrifice; 1, blood-shedding, and 2, death. If blood be not shed, it is no sacrifice; for "the life of the flesh is in the blood; and it is the blood which makes atonement for the soul," (Leviticus 17:11,) "and without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22.) Our blessed Lord therefore shed his precious blood on the cross in his wounded, bleeding hands, and feet, and side. But the death of the victim was necessary to complete the sacrifice, as we find all through the sacrifices of the Levitical law; and thus our Lord "died for our sins," (1 Corinthians 15:3,) "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8) was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," (Php 2:8,) "in due time died for the ungodly," (Romans 5:6,) all which testimonies of Holy Writ prove that the death of Christ was a necessary and integral part of that oblation which he offered to God when "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" (Hebrews 9:26;) and gave himself for us as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." (Ephesians 5:2.) As, then, his death was no common or ordinary death, so his resurrection was no common or ordinary resurrection; but corresponded with and bore an exact proportion to his death. It is only, then, as we connect Christ's death with Christ's resurrection, and bring together how and for what he died, and how and for what he rose again, that we can take any measure of the power put forth in his resurrection from the dead. But to help our thoughts a little further upon this point, consider the following circumstances attending Christ's death and resurrection in their mutual correspondence with each other.

1. Consider first what Peter calls "the pains of death," which God "loosed" when he raised him from the dead. (Acts 2:24.) The word translated "pains" means properly the pangs of a woman in travail, and thus seems to refer to the travail of Christ's soul on the cross, (Isaiah 53:11,) when "the sorrows of death compassed him, and the sorrows of hell (or as it might be rendered "the cords of the grave,") compassed him about." (Psalms 18:4-5.) These death-pangs, like those of a woman in

travail, came on him gradually. Four or five days before his death, he said, "Now is my soul troubled." (John 12:27.) But specially in the night on which he was betrayed on his first entrance into the gloomy garden, he was "heavy and sorely amazed," and said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." (Matthew 26:37-38.) These pangs as of one in travail kept increasing until "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44.) But it was chiefly on the cross that these pangs of death rose to their full height; for that was the scene of both conflict and of conquest. Then it was that "the pains of death," of all that death involves both of body and soul, both of the first and the second death, seized most fully on the blessed Redeemer, when the wrath of God and the curse of the law, and the hidings of his Father's face, all fell upon him in one terrible storm, and were "unto death," for he must have died under them had not his Godhead sustained his suffering manhood. But when the work vas finished which was given him to do, and full satisfaction made to every demand that could be made upon the Surety, God loosed the pains of death. Justice being satisfied, the law fulfilled, complete propitiation for sin made, and every perfection and attribute of God fully harmonized and glorified, his Father lifted up upon him the light of his countenance, and then he had but to die to complete the sacrifice. But until God had loosed the pains of death as accepting his propitiation for sin, he could not die.

Some writers, and even ministers, have spoken very unadvisedly of the sins which Christ bore by imputation sinking him into his grave as if he died under their load, and that when rose he left them behind in the tomb. No! Sin was fully put away before Jesus bowed his sacred head and gave up the spirit, or he never could have said, "It is finished." Had he died under the load of imputed sin, he would have died under the curse and wrath of God; and could not have said to the dying thief, "Today you shall be with me in paradise;" or to his heavenly Father, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." But the Hebrew word, Psalms 18:4, (to which Peter refers,) rendered "sorrows (or pains) of death," means also, as translated in the Septuagint, the "cords of death." There were no pains of death in the grave of Christ, for they were all over and gone; but there were "cords," and these cords had to be loosed by the power of God, for, dying as the Lord did, the cords which held him down in death were of strength corresponding with and proportionate to the nature and circumstances of his death. The resurrection of Christ can only be properly measured by his death; and therefore as his death was such as none but himself could or did die, so his resurrection was such as none but he could be raised up by. The same circumstances which set the death of Christ at an infinite distance from all other deaths, set the resurrection of Christ at an infinite distance from all other resurrections. If, then, we have low, faint, and feeble views of the sufferings and death of Christ, as a manifestation of his grace, we shall have equally low, faint, and feeble views of the power of his resurrection as a manifestation of his glory. And though we are sorry to say so, may we not well inquire if this be not one reason why the resurrection of Christ, which is the grand foundation of all our faith and hope, which formed the main subject of every sermon recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, which Paul sets forth here with a strength and force of language without a parallel, is scarcely ever touched upon in the ministry of the present day? We do not wish to dwell upon this point, but cannot forbear adding that such was neither the preaching nor experience of Paul when he could say that he counted all things but rubbish, not only that he might win Christ, and be found in him, but also that he might "know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." (Php 3:10.)

2. Consider also the reproach, shame, and ignominy under which the Lord Jesus died. We read that he "endured the cross, despising the shame." (Hebrews 12:2.) But though in himself the glorious Son of God, and losing not one ray of his eternal and essential glory in his humiliation, though veiled by it from the eyes of men, yet he sank into the grave under the heaviest load of reproach and shame which ever was laid upon the head of man. He therefore said to his heavenly Father, "You have known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor;" (Psalms 49:19;) for this was a part of the sufferings of the cross. For we must measure his shame by his glory. It is no shame to a beggar to be clothed in rags. But if a prince, the heir of a mighty throne, were clothed in rags and covered with vermin, as was the case with the unhappy dauphin, the eldest son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, when confined in the Temple at Paris during the Reign of Terror, it would be, if not really, as not procured by himself but, as inflicted upon him by cruel foes, to outward eyes, the lowest depth of shame. To the two malefactors it was not the shame, but the suffering and death on the cross under which they writhed in torment. But to the glorious Son of this Father in truth and love, the cross was the scene of such shame as none but he could know, and of such sufferings as none but he could feel. Abandoned by nearly all his disciples, mocked and scorned by his implacable foes, and for a time forsaken by his God; bearing our sins in his own body on the tree and made a curse for us; drinking the cup of God’s wrath against sin to the lowest dregs, that not one drop of that terrible wrath might fall upon us—was any sorrow like unto his sorrow? And that he who was the brightness of his Father’s glory and the express image of his Person should die a death of all others most reproachful, as inflicted on none but slaves and malefactors—was any shame like his shame? Blessed Lord, you hid not your face from shame and spitting, (Isaiah 50:6,) that shame and everlasting contempt might not be our justly-deserved portion. And now you are clothed with glory and honor as the due reward of all your shame when here below.

3. But consider also the circumstances under which the Lord Jesus died in being made a curse for us. We have already shown that he had put away sin by his blood shedding before he died, and that it was in order to complete the sacrifice that he laid down his life (for no man took it from him, he laid it down of himself) as a voluntary offering. (John 10:17-18.) But though the dear Redeemer had effectually put away sin before he gave up the spirit, and died under the approving smile of his Father and his God, yet, as dying on the cross, he died by a death to which God himself had attached a curse, as the Apostle speaks—"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." (Galatians 3:13.) He, therefore, to the eye of man, sank into the grave under a curse; and in this much consisted the triumph of his cruel foes, that by getting him crucified they had brought him, body and soul, under the curse pronounced in the law against all who died that death. And as God did not deliver him, and he himself did not come down from the cross, as they half expected or feared he might, they were hardened in the persuasion that they had done right in crucifying him, and that God himself had settled the question on their side. Here, then, was another strong cord which held him in death, and which the power of God alone could loose.

4. We are to consider, also, that by his sufferings, blood shedding, and death our gracious Lord not only made a complete atonement for sin—fulfilled every demand of the law—washed his people from all their iniquities in the fountain of his precious blood—and wrought out and brought in a perfect and everlasting righteousness for their justification—and "through death destroyed him

who had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14.) It was by the death of the cross that the gracious Lord "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:15.) It is a point little considered, though one of much importance, that the Lord Jesus had, as if personally, to grapple with and overcome the prince of the power of the air, to hurl Satan from his usurped throne, to destroy his works, and overthrow his kingdom; and this not by an act of omnipotent power, but by an act of the lowest weakness, for "he was crucified through weakness." (2 Corinthians 13:4.)

According to our simple views, we might think that all that was needed to overthrow Satan was an act of omnipotent power. But this was not God's way. The king over all the children of pride, in the depths of infinite wisdom, was to be dethroned by an act of the deepest humility, of the most meek and submissive obedience, of the intensest suffering of God's own beloved Son, as standing in the place of those over whom Satan and death had triumphed through sin. We read that "the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy (literally, "loosen" or "untie") the works of the devil." Thus he came, not only to untie and undo all that Satan had fastened and done by traversing, as it were, the whole ground, from the first entrance of sin and death, and, by a course of holy and meritorious obedience, repair the wreck and ruin produced by the primary author of all disobedience, but, as the final stroke, to destroy and put down the disobedient and rebellious prince of darkness himself. To open further these various points would occupy too much of our space, but they must be all taken into consideration when we look at the work accomplished on the cross by the sufferings, blood shedding, and death of the Lord of life and glory, and thus bring together the circumstances of his death and the power of his resurrection.

Now, these thoughts may help us to see what power was needed to raise up Christ from the dead. People often misunderstand the meaning of power as put forth by God, and conclude, because he is almighty in power, he can therefore do one thing as easily as another. But they do not see that infinite power in God is but one of his glorious perfections. He is infinite also in holiness, in justice, in wisdom, in knowledge, etc. The question, therefore, is not what God can do, but what God will do; and thus his power, not his absolute power, but his power moving in harmony with all his other glorious perfections, is to be taken into consideration. There is, therefore, what we may call God's moral power, that is, his power as working with, and co-ordinate to all his other perfections, as well as his almighty power. Now, to raise Christ from the dead was the act of God's moral power as well as his omnipotent power. This we showed in the case of Lazarus. To raise Lazarus merely demanded almighty power. There were no circumstances attending the death of Lazarus which drew upon the depths of infinite justice, infinite holiness, infinite wisdom, as well as infinite grace, mercy, and love. The death of Lazarus was as widely different from the death of Christ as Lazarus himself, a fallen sinner, was different from the Son of the Father in truth and love; and thus the resurrection of Christ was as different from the resurrection of Lazarus as the only-begotten Son of God differs from a worm of earth.

5. But consider also that in raising Christ from the dead, God raised at the same time, and by the same act, every member of his mystical body. In grace as in nature, when the Head rose the body rose. We read, therefore, that God "quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together." (Ephesians 2:6.). We are also said to be "risen with Christ," (Colossians 3:1.) Thus, to raise Christ from the dead, was not merely to raise him as an individual, but as the Head of the Church, and to quicken at the same moment and by the same act all the countless millions who will see him as he

is in the great day, and partake of his glory. What an act of power, not merely infinite power; but of power in harmony and co-ordinate with infinite mercy, wisdom, love, and grace was this to raise up at once Head and members! What a resurrection was here; how sure a pledge and first-fruits of the resurrection of the saints at the last day, as well as its meritorious cause and blessed precursor!

View the dead bodies of all the elect of God; behold the sleeping dust of apostles, prophets, martyrs, saints, and the whole assembly of the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, reposing in the silent tomb. Change the scene; stand by faith, as Ezekiel stood in vision, in the valley of dry bones, and see them all standing up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Behold this mighty host, and view them all raised up in glory and immortality on the resurrection morn; and then consider that this countless multitude was virtually and mystically raised from the dead at Christ's resurrection. Now, can you see why all the strength of language failed the Apostle to set forth the power which God put forth when he raised Christ from the dead?

6. Consider, also, that "Christ's resurrection was the sure pledge and meritorious cause of the Church's regeneration. The whole body of the elect was "quickened together with Christ," as well as raised up together with him; that is, mystically quickened, as they were mystically raised, quickened in a mystical regeneration of soul, as well as raised up in a mystical regeneration of body. How wonderful is this, that every soul quickened into divine life in time is so because mystically quickened as a member of Christ when he was raised from the dead. Now view the whole body of the elect as dead in sin. Then view them quickened, one by one, in all their countless multitude, during the whole stretch of time. Consider the power put forth in the regeneration of each individual. Then take a view of the quickening of the dead body of Christ, as prior to the resurrection, and the whole body of the elect mystically quickened together with him. Do you see no act of infinite power, and power in harmony with love and grace here? Where are the eyes of your faith, if you see not this? Where your admiring love, if you do not adore this act of love to the Church, as in union with her covenant Head? Was not that a mighty act of power and love which, at one moment, and by one and the same act, mystically quickened millions of souls which shall live forever in the presence of God?

7. And lastly consider the resurrection of Christ in connection with his exaltation. View him as man in his grave, view him as man at the right hand of the Father, on his mediatorial throne of grace and glory, and measure, if you can, by faith, the distance between the dead body of Jesus in the tomb and what that same body now is in the full blaze of his present glory. But this blessed subject must occupy a future paper. We were in hopes, and made a kind of half promise that we would finish the chapter with the year. But the greatness and importance of the subject have prevented us accomplishing both our wishes and our intention. We would not justify unnecessary prolixity, but when we undertake a subject it is usually with these two conditions attached to it—1. That we understand, or, at least, think that we understand it; 2. That we do it full justice. Now we cannot, in a few short, hasty papers, written, as some speak of doing, in a railway carriage, and usually at railway pace, do justice to such a chapter as Ephesians 1. Such deep subjects need much thought and examination, much comparison with the Scriptures and the analogy of faith, and therefore very careful writing and proportionate space. We must, therefore, either hurry over the grand and vital truths which remain to be considered, or defer their consideration to the opening year. And if we judge aright, our spiritual readers will say, "Go on with your exposition, even if it compel you to

break in upon a fresh volume and another year. Do not hurry over the exaltation of our gracious Lord. God has exalted him in our hearts, and we love to hear him exalted by tongue and pen. The Lord help you to exalt him more and more; and you cannot begin a new year better than by setting him on high whom we so dearly love." To this we say, "Well, be it so. Amen."

Chapter 58

03.01.10. Part Ten

Part X. The death, the resurrection, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ are three vital, fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith, and, as revealed to the soul by a divine power, become well-springs of hope, of strength, and of consolation, in exact proportion to the measure of faith whereby they are apprehended, embraced, and lived upon. In and by his sufferings, blood shedding, and death, we see sin fully and forever put away, an effectual atonement made for transgression, the law fulfilled and magnified, reconciliation between God and man effected, and every bar and hindrance which had kept them asunder thoroughly removed. In and by his resurrection we see him declared to be the Son of God with power, the attesting seal of God set to the truth of his mission and work, and infallible proof given to a vast number of chosen witnesses that he was the Christ of God, the promised seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. (Acts 1:3; Acts 2:32; Acts 10:40-42; Romans 1:4.)

Similarly in and by his exaltation we see him an ever-living Mediator at the right hand of the Father, a glorious High Priest over the house of God, an all-prevailing Intercessor, able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him; and a sceptered King, ruling with sovereign sway all things in heaven and on earth, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. These three vital truths, as embraced and realized in their various openings and bearings on our spiritual experience, and as seen and felt in their suitability and application to our innumerable wants and woes, form the food of all living faith; and, therefore, if we do not find or feel any such life, power, or blessedness in them, it shows our little knowledge of, our little faith in the very truths of the gospel which we profess to receive and embrace. But before faith can be raised up and drawn forth thus to act and live upon these precious truths of the everlasting gospel, we must, according to the prayer of the Apostle, have the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation given us in the knowledge of Christ; for a mere doctrinal knowledge of them, however sound, a mere letter faith in them, however strong, falls utterly short of conveying into the soul their sweetness and blessedness as made known by the Spirit of revelation. One grain of living faith, if it be but a grain, as raised up and drawn forth by the power of the Holy Spirit in a revelation of Christ, will do more for the soul in five minutes as to vital union and communion with the Lord Jesus, than heaps—whole heaps, tons, whole tons of the clearest, soundest doctrinal knowledge and the strongest letter faith would do in fifty years. Well, then, may we join, heart and soul, with the Apostle in his prayer that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; that we may personally realize and enjoy the efficacy of his death, the power of his resurrection, and the daily benefits and blessings of his exaltation. In our last paper, we gave as our reason for not closing our exposition of Ephesians 1 with the closing year, that we could not bring ourselves to hurry over so glorious and blessed a subject as the exaltation of our gracious Lord. And do we not find some responsive echo here in the hearts of many of our readers? Who that has ever seen by faith the blessed Mediator seated on his throne of grace; what poor, tried, tempted soul that has ever longed for or felt the tender sympathy of a compassionate High Priest; what almost despairing wretch who has clung

almost in agony to an Intercessor able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; what perplexed, storm-tossed vessel that needs a mighty hand to guide the helm, and a voice of power to calm the winds and waves, that does not cling to a Christ in heaven—a risen, exalted, and glorified Jesus; who has but to speak and all is well? But for his exaltation to the right hand of God, where would be all our prayers, desires, longings, sighs, and groans; where would be our hopes and expectations; where any strength, support, or consolation; where any triumph over death, or victory over the grave? Can we, then, hurry over or pass by as of little import the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, when with it we may be of all men most happy, without it, of all men most miserable? But to proceed with our exposition. The exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ necessarily followed upon his resurrection. He was raised that he might be glorified. The Scriptures, therefore, always connect the two together. It is hardly necessary to quote passages to prove this; but if you will read carefully Peter's sermons and addresses in the early chapters of the Acts, and Paul's at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:1-52) and at Athens (Acts 17:1-34), you will see how both these apostles bring together Christ's resurrection and glorification. The resurrection, therefore, of Christ, and the power put forth therein, having formed the subject of our previous Meditations, we shall now proceed to consider his exaltation. That we might know this in its experience and power was the prayer of the Apostle—"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:19-20.)

If we may draw a comparison, the power put forth in setting Christ at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places was even greater than that of raising him from the dead. The one was but the beginning of the other—the first step toward it, but which would have been incomplete without it. The crowning act was not when he came forth in power from the sepulcher, but when he entered the courts of bliss, when the everlasting doors lifted up their heads, and the King of glory went in. The great, the overwhelming mystery of the exaltation of Christ, and of the power displayed therein, lies in this, that it is in our nature he is exalted above the highest heavens. There is no special mystery in his exaltation as the Son of God. As such he can claim it by lawful right. He who made angels, principalities, and powers, is originally and eternally above them. The mystery is that he should be exalted above all the glorious hierarchy of heaven as the Son of man. If we examine with a believing eye the three great doctrines of which we have before spoken—the death, the resurrection, and the exaltation of the Lord, we shall see that all their grace and glory, all their beauty, blessedness, and suitability rest upon the union of two distinct natures in the one glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. This is the great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh. But this mystery has, so to speak, two sides, which alternately present themselves to view. In his death and resurrection, the mystery chiefly turns upon his divine, in his exaltation chiefly on his human nature. Let us explain this. That human nature should suffer, bleed, and die, is in itself no special mystery; that a dead human body should be raised from the dead is also no great mystery; but that he who died, that he who rose again as man, should be the Son of God and God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit—there is the mystery! And yet take away the Deity of Christ from his humanity, as suffering, and dying, and rising again—and you make the death and resurrection of Jesus of scarcely greater import than the death and resurrection of Lazarus. We thus see that it is his divine nature which makes the sufferings, blood shedding, and death of the Lord Jesus so full of grace, and his resurrection so full of glory. But in

his exaltation the mystery does not turn so much upon his divine—as on his human nature. It is no great mystery that the Son of God should be exalted to the throne of power. It is but a step from the bosom of the Father to his right hand. But that one in our nature should be exalted to that seat of pre-eminence and power; that the Mediator between God and man should be the man Christ Jesus; that the hands which once were nailed to the cross should now hold the scepter, and that the feet which once walked on lake Gennesaret, which were weary and dust-soiled at Jacob's well, which were washed with a sinful woman's tears, and kissed in penitential grief and love with polluted lips—that these very feet should now have all things put under them, both in heaven and earth—there is the mystery! And yet what food for faith. The living family of God need a living Savior—one who can hear and answer prayer, deliver out of soul-trouble, speak a word with power to the heart when bowed down with grief and sorrow, sympathize with them under powerful temptations, support them under the trials and afflictions of the way, maintain under a thousand discouragements his own life in their soul, sustain under bereavements the mourning widow, and be a father to her fatherless children, appear again and again in providence as a friend that loves at all times and a brother born for adversity, smile upon them in death, and comforting them with his rod and staff as they walk through the valley of its dark shadow, land them at last safely in a happy eternity. Do but take your eyes for a few moments off yourself and your own peculiar trials and sorrows, and look around you at the dear children of God whom you personally know. Now as you call to mind this and that suffering brother or sister in the Lord, and remember that those whom you know are only a small part, solitary specimens, as it were, of that large number of living saints who through much tribulation are entering the kingdom, do you not see what a poor and needy, tried and tempted, burdened and sorrowful, harassed and exercised family God's people for the most part are? But look a little further, and see the reason why they are thus dealt with. Do not all their various trials and exercises make them need a Savior at hand and not afar off, a very present help in trouble, a Lord to whom they can speak and who can speak to them, and thus have union and communion with him as a risen and exalted Christ? Is not this your case, too, as well as theirs? for how ignorant you must be of the power of vital godliness not to have some personal experience of this. This, then, is all the difference between a faith which stands in the power of God and a faith which stands in the wisdom of men—between a living religion, kindled and maintained by divine communications—and a dead, formal religion, which, with all its knowledge, gifts, praying, and preaching, working and willing, rests in the mere letter of truth—that the one is ever seeking or realizing union and communion with a risen and exalted Lord, and the other is satisfied with making a fair show in the flesh.

Now in this risen and exalted Lord we feel to have one whom we more or less know; and this draws out faith toward and upon him. He is revealed in the word of truth, and through the power of the word, in the hands of the Spirit, he becomes revealed to the heart. Thus our faith in the Lord Jesus is not a floating fancy, or mere matter of doctrinal sentiment, or traditionary opinion, or groveling superstition, or wild delusion; but a solid, substantial reality, for it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And it acts thus. We read his own blessed words, as they first fell from his lips, and were then preserved and stored up in the inspired Gospels. We thus see set before us by the Holy Spirit, in the word, a perfect representation of what the Son of God was when here below; we see his tender pity and compassion for poor sinners, his wondrous miracles when he went about doing good, and the grace and truth which shone in every word and work. We follow him step by step, pondering over his promises, his

precepts, his invitations, his declarations of his Sonship and oneness with the Father, his last discourses with his disciples, until we reach his sufferings and death; and as faith embraces and is mixed with what is thus revealed in the word of truth, and we feel its sweetness and power in our soul, we seem to get some spiritual and experimental knowledge of him as thus evidently set forth before our eyes, (Galatians 3:1,) and, by the power of his grace, become enabled to believe in him and to love him.

When, then, we see him by faith risen from the dead, and, by the same faith follow him up to the courts of heaven, we feel to have there as our Mediator, High Priest, Advocate, and King, not one unknown to us, but the same Jesus whom we have already seen, known, and believed in through the power of the word of his grace upon our heart. Thus, however high he is exalted, faith can still follow him up to the height of his glory, for he is still the same Jesus in the loftiest height that he was in the lowest depth; and as he is the same Lord, so the faith in him is the same faith; for as there is but one Lord, so there is but one faith. (Ephesians 4:5.) In harmony with this, the prayer of the Apostle was that we might know the power put forth by God in the exaltation of his dear Son, and thus have a personal experience of it, as raising us up to him who sits at the right hand of the Father. Let us then take a view of this exaltation as brought before us by the Apostle: i. God has "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The right hand is the place of dignity, pre-eminence, and power.

1. It is first the place of honor and dignity. (1 Kings 2:19; Psalms 45:9; Matthew 20:21.) We therefore read of Jesus being "crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews 2:9); and Peter told the wondering multitude at the healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple, that "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, had glorified his Son Jesus." (Acts 3:13.) The glory with which he is thus crowned is not the glory of the divine nature as distinct from the human, nor the glory of the human nature as distinct from the divine, but the glory put upon him as God-Man Mediator. It may therefore be termed his mediatorial glory—the peculiar glory which God has given him as a reward of his humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. (Php 2:8-9.) It was this glory which he expressed to his heavenly Father, in his memorable prayer, his holy will that his believing people might be with him to behold and to enjoy. (John 17:24.)

2. But the right hand is especially the seat of authority and power; and this seems to be the chief feature in the exaltation of Christ as brought forward by the Apostle, for his particular object evidently is to bring before us the investing of the Lord Jesus with supreme authority, power, and dominion over all things in heaven and in earth. What a wonderful subject for meditation is opened for us here. The presence of Jesus in heaven, of the man Christ Jesus, of the same man who was here below, who here suffered, bled, and died, is thus set before the eyes of our faith. John speaks of looking—"And behold a door was opened in heaven." (Revelation 4:1.) And is not this an opening of a door in heaven, when we can look up and see the man Christ Jesus at the right hand of God? This was the sight which comforted the martyred Stephen—"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56.) We thus see by faith the same Jesus, of whom we have heard and learned from the word of truth, to whom we have come, in whom we have believed, to whom we are daily looking, exalted above the highest, greatest, and most glorious of all angelic beings, and invested with supreme dominion and power.

It would seem from the Apostle's words here and elsewhere, especially Colossians 1:16, where he says, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers," that there is in heaven what has been termed a celestial hierarchy, in other words various ranks and orders of angels. It is not a matter of faith, still less of speculation, but of reverential acceptance of revealed truth without an intruding into those things which we have not seen. In this spirit, therefore, we accept the words of the Apostle, that in the celestial courts there are "principalities and powers" which hold delegated dominion—we say delegated dominion, for their power and authority is not their own, but one with which they are commissioned, and therefore exercise as servants ("are they not all ministering," that is, serving, "spirits?" (Hebrews 1:14), not as masters. But though servants and messengers, (The word translated 'angels' both in Hebrew and Greek means 'messengers'.) yet their power is so great as to be inconceivable by us. They are said, therefore, to "excel in strength," margin "mighty in strength." (Psalms 103:20.) John at one time saw "a strong angel" (Revelation 5:2), at another "a mighty angel, whose face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; who set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth" (Revelation 10:1-2); and at another an angel who thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered in the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. (Revelation 14:19.) An angel smote in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians, 185,000. What strength was here!

What strength there was in the angel whom David saw standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem to destroy it. (1 Chronicles 21:16.) And what a mighty power will be displayed by angels at the great day, when the Son of man will send them forth to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and to cast them into a furnace of fire. (Matthew 13:41-42.) We need not pursue this point further, as we have brought it forward chiefly to show how great and glorious are those angelic beings, above whom our blessed Lord has been exalted as the Son of man.

Now this, as we have before pointed out, is the mystery and the blessedness of this exaltation, that by virtue of its union with the Person of the Son of God, a nature naturally inferior is promoted and exalted above a nature naturally its superior. To understand this, let it be observed that the nature of angels is by essential and original constitution of a higher character than that of man. They were created wholly pure spiritual subsistences (Hebrews 1:7), and not as we of an immortal soul united to a body formed out of the dust of the ground. They are therefore essentially and by original constitution immortal. (Luke 20:36.) In power, too, as we have already shown, in original nearness to God, as ever beholding his face, and dwelling in his blissful presence (Matthew 17:10; Luke 1:19), in the perfection and swiftness of their obedience (Matthew 6:10; Daniel 9:21), and their being entrusted with the performance of works and offices beyond the natural capability of man even before the fall, they are a class of beings far superior to man. But it was the eternal purpose of the invisible God to make himself seen and known in some more visible way than the display of his power, wisdom, and glory in creation; or even in the effulgence of his brightness in the highest heavens as seen by angels. There were perfections in the Godhead, such as grace, mercy, love, etc., which creation could but dimly if at all unfold, or heaven itself manifest, but which it was his eternal good pleasure to make visibly and signally known. He chose, therefore, that his only-begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, should come into open manifestation, that in him he might be seen and known. But here is the mystery of wisdom and grace that the Son of God, the Son of the Father in truth and love, should come into

this open manifestation, not by taking on him the nature of angels, but by taking on him the seed of Abraham; and by taking part of the flesh and blood of the children (Hebrews 2:14-16), should exalt our nature, as in union with his divine Person, above the highest and most glorious angels. This, we repeat, is the wondrous mystery whereby God has chosen to display the riches of his grace, the wonders of his love, the depths of his wisdom, and the greatness of his power.

Chapter 59

03.01.11. Part Eleven

Part XI. In pursuing our Meditations on the exaltation of our gracious Lord to the right hand of the Father, we would recall to the mind of our readers a point on which we have already dwelt, that the deep mystery, and, we may add, the special blessedness of the glorification of Jesus, consist mainly in this, that it is in our nature that he is thus exalted to the highest place of dignity and power. Besides the unspeakable benefits and blessings which flow down to the Church from this exaltation of her glorious Head, the honor thus put upon human nature itself is beyond all expression or conception. That a nature, originally and intrinsically inferior to angelic, should be elevated and exalted far above all principality and power, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, this is the grand and solemn mystery on which the Apostle would have us fix the eyes of our enlightened understanding, and receive into our believing heart as a special fruit of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

Let us, then, endeavor to follow out a little further this blessed theme, as not only displaying the infinite wisdom and love of God, but as comprising in it boundless supplies of strength, encouragement, and consolation to those who, stripped of all hope or help in self, look to a risen and enthroned Mediator, High Priest, and Advocate to plead their cause, fight their battles, supply their needs, subdue their iniquities, and save them to the uttermost as ever coming to God by him. When the Son of God condescended to take our nature into union with his own divine Person, he, by that act of love and power, qualified it not only to share in the lowest depths of his humiliation, but to participate also in the loftiest heights of his heavenly glory. For it was an indissoluble union; and therefore no circumstances of depth or height, of suffering on earth or of glory in heaven, could separate what was thus forever joined together. But as the humiliation of our blessed Lord went before his exaltation, and was the necessary introduction to it, according to his own words, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" so must we learn by experience the one, before we can learn by experience the other. In other words, we must view by faith, experimentally know, and make as it were some personal acquaintance with Christ in his humiliation, to fit and prepare us to view, know, and make some personal acquaintance with him in his exaltation. The Scriptures therefore always connect the two together, as may be seen by comparing Php 2:5-11 with Hebrews 12:2. As a part of this humiliation, our Lord was, as the Apostle speaks, "made a little lower than the angels." (Hebrews 2:9.) How wondrous that he who, as the Son of God, made angels (Colossians 1:16), should be made inferior to them, and even need and receive their ministering aid and support. (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43.) O the depths of humiliation to which the blessed Redeemer stooped, carrying down into their lowest point that pure, spotless, holy humanity which he had assumed into union with his divine Person as the Son of God. And let us ever bear carefully in mind that humiliation is not degradation. Our blessed Lord "humbled himself" by a voluntary act of surpassing grace; and it was no more in the power of men or circumstances to debase him of his glory than of lying witnesses to strip him of his innocency. The spotless purity of his sacred humanity, as in union with his divine nature, and as filled with and

upheld by he Holy Spirit, preserved it from degradation in its lowest humiliation. The crown of thorns and the purple robe, the mocking knee of the Roman soldier and the taunting scoff of the Jewish priest, though they called forth the grace, did not tarnish the glory of our suffering Lord. His holy obedience to his Father's will in drinking the bitter cup, his meek dignity amid the worst of insults, and his calm resignation to all the weight of suffering which God or man laid upon him, all shone forth the more conspicuously under every attempt to dishonor him. It is most sweet and blessed to look down as it were into some of those depths of humiliation into which the Redeemer sank, and to see that in the lowest depths of his soul travail, when he was poured out like water, and his heart, broken with grief and sorrow, was melted within him like wax, he was, in the midst of all, the glorious Son of God, though then the suffering Son of man; and that he was the same Jesus yesterday when hanging on the cross, as he is today at the right hand of his Father, and will be forever in the realms of heavenly bliss!

Now it is a view by faith of the humiliation of Jesus which prepares us for a view by faith of the exaltation of Jesus, the two being, as we have observed, so closely and intimately connected together. The eye of our faith must be ever fixed on Jesus, for the Person of Christ is the grand object of faith, and to lose sight of him is to lose sight of the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As then faith views, contemplates, and acts upon the blessed Lord in the lowest depths of his humiliation, so faith—the same faith, for there is but "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5)—views, contemplates, and acts upon him in the heights of his glorious exaltation. And there is this peculiar feature and blessedness in faith's having viewed, and as it were made acquaintance with him in his humiliation, that it can carry this acquaintance with him into his exaltation. Is he not the same Jesus now that he was on earth? He is exalted, it is true, to an inconceivable height of glory, so that when John saw him, even as if in some measure veiled, he fell at his feet as dead. But he is the same Jesus now as when he was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as he wears the same human body, so he has the same tender, compassionate heart. All that he was upon earth as Jesus, he is in heaven still. All that tenderness and gentleness, all that pity to poor sensible sinners, all that compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way, all that grace and truth which came by him and were manifest in him, all that bleeding, dying love, all that sympathy with the afflicted and tempted, all that power to heal by a word all manner of sickness and disease, all that surpassing beauty and blessedness whereby he is to those who have seen him the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one, he not only retains in the highest heavens, but is, so to speak, endowed with greater capacity to use them, for all power is given to him in heaven and earth, and all things are put under his feet, and that not only for his own sake, but that he might be the Head over all things to the Church. Returning, then, to our exposition, we are thus brought to see some of the special benefits and blessings which flow down to the Church out of the exaltation of her glorious Head. i. The first named by the Apostle is that God has "put all things under his feet." There is an allusion here to the language of Psalm 8. In that Psalm, the psalmist having contemplated with wonder and admiration the glory of the starry heavens, turns his thoughts upon man as compared with them, apparently so base and insignificant. But the Holy Spirit in him, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, directs him to view man not as man, but to view man in the God-man, and to contemplate human nature not as we see it daily in ourselves and others, but as assumed into union with the Person of the Son of God, and thus, though by natural constitution made a little lower than the angels, yet, after the ascension of Jesus, exalted to sovereign rule and dominion.

Under this view by faith of the dominion given to the exalted God-man, he breaks forth in the following exalted strain—"What is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet." That such was the mind of the Holy Spirit in that psalm may be clearly seen by comparing with it the inspired comment on it, Hebrews 2:6-10, and observing also the reference made to it, 1 Corinthians 15:25-27, the whole forming a remarkable instance of what we may call the pregnancy of Scripture, and showing what depths of divine truth are laid up in passages beyond the reach of the common eye. And yet, read in the light of this interpretation, how appropriate the whole is, and what light it casts on the original donation of dominion in Adam. Adam, we know, was a type of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:45-49); and thus the dominion given him over every living thing that moves on the earth (Genesis 1:28) was typical of the dominion which should be given to the second Adam, he recovering all, and more than all, that Adam forfeited and lost, and, by his incarnation, exalting human nature as it never could have been exalted, even if Adam had continued in his state of created innocency. The putting of all things under the feet of Jesus, thus highly exalted, seems to imply three things:

1. The voluntary submission of friends.

2. The compulsory subjection of foes.

3. The subjection of all things, events, and circumstances.

1. The voluntary submission of friends. One grand distinction between those that are Christ’s and those that are not, is that the one meekly and submissively take his yoke upon them as being made willing in the day of his power; while the others say in heart, if not in lip, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Driven at first by necessity, and then subdued and overcome by the discoveries of his grace and the power of his word as made spirit and life to their souls, Jesus’ blood-bought people fall at his feet, and acknowledge him as their Lord and their God. They not only believe the gospel, but obey it, for it has been "made known to them for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26); and as it is the desire of their souls to be in everything subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:24), to keep his commandments, to do his will, and live to his praise, so it is their chief grief and complaint that they cannot do the things that they would on account of the strength and power of the sin that dwells in them. But he who has brought them to his feet will perfect that which concerns them, and will in his own time and way bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5.)

2. But the words specially point out the compulsory subjection of foes. As God has put all things under Christ’s feet, every one will be made, eventually, subject to his dominion; for this dominion is prospective as well as present. "We see not yet," says the Apostle, "all things put under him" (Hebrews 2:8); but "he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet." (1 Corinthians 15:25.) The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed; but God has set Jesus upon his holy hill of Zion, and he will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Fear not, then, your foes, you trembling saints. As the typical Joshua brought forth the captive kings, and bade the men of Israel put their feet on their necks (Joshua 10:24), so Jesus puts his feet, and would have you, by faith, put yours on the neck of your enemies—enemies, not personally or privately, enemies,

not from jarring and quarreling, strife and contention, but enemies as enemies to Christ, enemies of God and godliness. They may rage and rave, may persecute and oppress you; but Jesus has them all under his feet, and, sooner or later, you will see them all fall before you. Commit your way unto the Lord, wait patiently upon him, and you will see all the workers of iniquity, sooner or later, cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

3. But in putting all things under his feet, God has put also under them all things, events, and circumstances. How vast, how numerous, how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Church of God here below, as she travels onward to her heavenly home! What an intricate maze they often seem and how much they appear opposed to us, as if we never could get through them, or scarcely live under them. Now, if all things as well as all persons are put under Jesus' feet, there cannot be a single circumstance over which he has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to his disposal. There is not a trial or temptation, an affliction of body or soul, a loss, a cross, a painful bereavement, a vexation, grief, or disappointment, a case, state, or condition, which is not put under Jesus' feet. He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite knowledge he sees them, as possessed of infinite wisdom he can manage them, and as possessed of infinite power he can dispose and direct them for our good and his own glory. How much trouble and anxiety should we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this! If we could see by the eye of faith that every foe and every fear, every difficulty and perplexity, every trying or painful circumstance, every looked-for or unlooked-for event, every source of care, whether at present or in prospect, are all, as put under his feet, at his sovereign disposal, what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders. ii. But God has not only put all things under his feet, but has also given him to be "the Head over all things to the Church." This point we therefore have now to consider. In the early part of our exposition, we pointed out that the relationship which Christ bears to the Church as her covenant Head, and the relationship which the Church bears to him as his mystical body, form, as it were, the key-note to the whole of the Epistle. Unless, therefore, we clearly see and continually bear in mind this mutual relationship of Head and members, we shall lose much of the peculiar force and beauty of every doctrine, declaration, and precept revealed or enforced in it, and have very dim and imperfect views either of the glory of Christ, or of the grace bestowed on the Church. It is indeed a subject so surpassing all human thought or conception, that we need not wonder at our inability to rise up to it; except by the power of divine teaching, and a faith of God's special giving. And yet this relationship of Christ to the Church, whereby he was constituted her glorious Head, and she made his mystical body, had a special place in the counsel of the Lord which stands forever, and deeply engaged those thoughts of his heart which are to all generations. For the Church, the Son of God came into this world, and took upon him her nature in the womb of the Virgin; for her he lived, for her he obeyed, for her he suffered, bled, and died; for her he rose again, and for her he ascended on high, and had all things put under his feet. It is, then, as her Head that he is now over all things. Bearing all this carefully in mind, let us now view what this headship means and implies.

1. It means, first, that the Lord Jesus is the Church's Head in a way of pre-eminence. Has not our natural head a pre-eminence over all the members of our body; and is not this its distinguishing feature? Its very commanding position in the body, the way in which it is set over the other members in its high and exalted place, gives our head an acknowledged pre-eminence. But this

pre-eminence it uses and exercises for the benefit of the whole body. So it is with the headship of Christ. Its very pre-eminence is for the benefit of the members. Here, then, we see the way in which the offices which the Lord Jesus sustains are sustained by him as the Head of the Church for her special benefit. As her Head he intercedes for her as High Priest within the veil; as her Head he teaches and instructs her as Prophet; and as her Head he guides, directs, and rules over as King. This invests the offices of Christ with such peculiar force and blessedness that every transaction carried on by him in connection with them is as the Church's risen and glorious Head. This relationship gives them, if we may use the word, a special definiteness, as well as invests them with a peculiar tenderness. Does he, as High Priest, ever present before his Father the merits of his sufferings, blood shedding, and death? Is that sweet incense ever rising and filling the courts of heaven with unspeakable fragrance? It is for the Church as her risen and glorified Head that he thus pleads and intercedes.

He is the Church's Representative in the courts above, and thus his very presence there as her Head is a sure pledge of the prevalence of his intercession for her. Can she fail or have her suit rejected, with such an Advocate to plead her cause?

Similarly, what tenderness and definiteness does the Headship of Christ give to his office as Prophet. How tenderly does a husband teach a wife! What a docile affectionate pupil does he find in her! How he can mingle words with smiles, and counsels with kisses! (Song of Solomon 1:2.) As Milton beautifully says of Eve, anticipating a relation from Adam of the discourse of the angel, "From his lip, Not words alone pleased her." So also viewed as King. Jesus is no arbitrary monarch to his Church, but an enthroned Husband who rules for her and in her; who claims her heart, for he has fairly won it, and her loving obedience as best for her own happiness. His dominion over her, therefore, is the gentle, loving dominion of a husband over a wife, or, to preserve the figure, the rule of our natural head over the members of our body. For the body our eyes see, for the body our ears hear, for the body our lips speak. What we should do, where we should go, how we should act, what we should follow, what we should shun, how we should walk, run, fight, stand still, and do everything but turn back, our head advises and directs. So it is with our spiritual Head.

2. He is, therefore, secondly to the Church a Head of influence. This he manifests chiefly in three ways, that is, as a Source of life, of movement, and of strength.

1. In him we live, for he is "our life." (John 14:6; Colossians 3:4.) From him it was first derived, for "the Son quickens whom he will;" (John 5:21); and by him it is maintained, for he has promised, "Because I live you shall live also." While the Head lives, the body cannot die.

2. From him too comes all spiritual movement—all activity, energy, warmth, zeal, earnestness. Does the hand firmly grasp the sword? Does the foot move actively forward? Is there any willing service rendered to the cause of truth, to the afflicted saints, to the poor and needy? Is there any labor of love to distinguish the doer from the talker, the warm-hearted, self-denying, tender, sympathizing follower of Jesus from the lazy, self-indulgent, dry, and daring professor? It comes from Jesus as a living Head.

3. So also as the Church's living Head of influence; he is the source of all her strength. "All my springs," said one of old, "are in you." The Head spoke thus once to one of its suffering members,

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And what did the strengthened member reply? "Most gladly; therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." But we must hasten to a close. The Church is here declared to be "his body, the fullness of him which fills all in all." In the mind of God, and as chosen in Christ, the Church is a perfect body. It is, therefore, the fullness of Christ. Just as our head and members, in their union with each other, form one perfect harmonious body, so is it with Christ and the Church. As the natural head would be incomplete without the body, as the body would be incomplete without the head, so it is with Christ mystical, and his body the Church. Each lacks the other, and the union of both makes the whole complete. The Son of God, by becoming incarnate, needed a body of which he should be the Head. Without it, he would be as a bridegroom without the bride, a shepherd without the sheep, a foundation without the building, a vine without the branches. He did not need the Church as the Son of God, but he needed her as the Son of man. In that sense, therefore, she is "his fullness." In her all his love is complete, his work complete, his grace complete, his glory complete; and when she is brought home to be forever with him in glory, then all the purposes of God, all his eternal counsels of wisdom and grace, will be complete. In this sense we may understand the expression, "the fullness of him that fills all in all." What a wonderful thought it is that he who, as the Son of God, fills all in all—fills all places with his omnipresence, should yet deign to have a relative fullness in is body the Church! Thus there is not only his universal presence, but his gracious presence, with which he fills, according to the measure of their capacities, his saints while here below; for it is he who, out of his own fullness, now supplies all their need; whose mind he fills with a knowledge of himself; whose hearts he fills at times with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; whose consciences, by the application of his precious blood, he fills with peace; whose wills he fills with earnest longings and spiritual desires, as well as submission under afflictions; and whose affections he fills, by drawing them up in love to himself, and to all who love him. And there is also his glorious presence, with which he will fill all the members of his glorified body, when, according to his prayer, they shall be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, which the Father has given him. But what heart can conceive or tongue express the treasures of grace and glory which are thus revealed and brought to light in the chapter of which we have attempted the exposition? With all our desire, and attempt to unfold these heavenly mysteries to the spiritual understanding and believing reception of our readers, we feel how short we have come of setting before them these deep mysteries of our most holy faith. Still, we would desire to commend them to the blessing of that holy and gracious Spirit, by whom they have been recorded in the word of truth; and seeking pardon for everything defective or inconsistent, of which we may have been guilty, we now, in closing our exposition of this wondrous chapter, cast our bread upon the waters, hoping it may be found, after few or many days, to the glory and praise of a Triune God.

Chapter 60

03.02.01. Part One

Ephesians 2:1-22

Part I As we have reason to believe that our Meditations on the word of truth have been, for the most part, favorably received by our spiritual readers, we feel encouraged to continue them; and as exposition of the Scriptures, if one has the necessary grace and gift to understand and open the mind of the Spirit in them, is generally allowed to be both instructive and edifying, we desire to direct our Meditations into that channel, in the hope that the Lord may condescend to bless his own word to his own people as thus brought before them.

Having been for many years a student of the Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament, and having at times seen, felt, and tasted much sweetness and blessedness in them, we desire to cast into the treasury what we may have thus gained by trading; and if we should be the favored instrument of thereby enlightening the understanding, strengthening the faith, encouraging the hope, and drawing forth the love of any of the living family of God upon his dear Son and the word of promise in him, we shall consider ourselves well repaid for all our labors.

It has been a question with us whether we should go on with our exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians, or take up some other portion of the word of truth; and among them 1 Peter has presented itself to our view as a portion in which we have seen much edifying and instructive matter for exposition. Each course would have its distinctive advantages. By taking up 1 Peter, we would break, as it were, new ground, and thus afford a little variety of subject, which is, to a certain extent, desirable, as one continued strain of thought has a tendency to weary the mind of both writer and reader. But, on the other hand, by going on with the Epistle to the Ephesians, we would have the advantage of building on a foundation already laid, and thus be able to bring the great and glorious truths which we have already opened up to an experimental and practical outcome.

Ephesians 2:1-22 is a most beautiful development and application of the sublime and glorious doctrines set forth in the first, and unfolds very clearly and distinctly the fruit of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ in the heavenly places. As then in our exposition of the first chapter we have laid the foundation, we think that the advantage of rearing on it a fitting superstructure preponderates over breaking up fresh ground; and therefore, in that hope and confidence, we have decided, with the Lord’s help and blessing, to go on with our exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

"And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1.)

It is worthy of observation, what an experimental and practical turn the Apostle gives to the resurrection, exaltation, and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not leave it as a mere doctrine, barren and inoperative, but comes at once to personal and practical fruits—"And you has he quickened." He thus appeals to the personal experience of the Ephesian saints, as carrying in their own bosom a living proof of the glorious truths which he had laid down concerning the risen Head of the Church. "You," he would say, "have a proof and evidence in your own bosom of the

resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus, for, as risen and glorified, he has breathed divine life into your soul." He could, therefore, write to them, as Peter spoke when he stood before the council—"The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." (Acts 5:30-32.) We see here, then, the connection between the glorification of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our gracious Lord, in his discourse with his disciples, said to them, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away—for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7) John, therefore, declares, "But this spoke he of the Spirit, which those who believe on him should receive—for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39.) We see from these passages that the giving and sending of the Holy Spirit was the immediate fruit as well as the visible testimony that God had glorified his dear Son, and exalted him to his own right hand to be a Prince and a Savior. By going up on high and taking with him within the veil the incense of his sacrifice and death, and thus presenting himself before the eyes of the Father as the great High Priest over the house of God, he removed every barrier which had checked, so to speak, the free flow of the Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces to the children of men. But the question may, perhaps, arise in the mind of some of our readers—"If this be the case, it would seem as if the Holy Spirit was not given until Christ was glorified; and if so, what was the faith and hope, and what was the religion of the Old Testament worthies? Were they not taught by the Holy Spirit? Had they not the Holy Spirit? Does not David expressly say, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me?" To this we answer, First, that indubitably the Holy Spirit was given to them and was in them; for Peter, speaking of the ancient prophets, says of them that they "searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:11.) But he was given prospectively, in the same way as pardon for sin was given. Properly speaking, there was no pardon of sin until the Son of God had put it away by the sacrifice of himself. But prospectively God pardoned sin with a view to the atonement which was to be made by his dear Son for it. So all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit before Jesus was glorified were prospective; for until his ascension, he had not received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Also, the Holy Spirit was not yet poured out in all the fullness of his gifts and graces. There was not yet that full baptism of the Holy Spirit which the Lord promised to his disciples before his ascension—"For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:5.) But now having gone up on high, the gracious Lord, as Mediator between God and men, has not only opened a way whereby poor sinners may draw near freely unto God, but a way also whereby he can freely and fully send forth the Holy Spirit to testify of himself. And that holy and blessed Comforter delights in fulfilling his covenant office in taking of the things of Christ, showing them to his people, and thus glorifying him. In the resurrection, the ascension, and glorification of Jesus we see a treasure of heavenly grace; for it has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. To quicken, therefore, into divine and spiritual life those members of his mystical body who are yet dead in sin, is in his heart and his hands to whom all power has been given in heaven and in earth.

Now, whatever a man may be in the sight of God as chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and blessed, already blessed, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him, he must be quickened into divine life before he can be brought into that manifest union and communion with God's dear Son which puts him into a spiritual possession of, and real participation in the blessings of the gospel. But consider, for a moment, in what a state a man is before thus divinely quickened, and see how he is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness and hardness of his heart." Then observe what a wonderful display it is of sovereign grace and omnipotent power to breathe spiritual life into a soul so utterly sunk in death. The special character of God is that he lives. It is, therefore, the chief attribute by which he swore when he swore by himself, "As I live, says the Lord." What emphasis is here! What a dwelling upon his own Eternal existence! And so when godly men of old swore by him, their language was, "As the Lord lives." Now life and death, even on earth and between man and man, can have no union or communion. When Sarah, the beloved partner of Abraham, died, the aged patriarch said to the sons of Heth—"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." (Genesis 23:4.) She who had so long been the delight of his eyes, the wife of his bosom and the mother of his Isaac, must now be buried out of his sight; for death had come between them, and with death had come those necessary accompaniments of death which demanded her removal out of his sight. A living Abraham and a dead Sarah could live no more in the same tent, and lie no more in the same bed. If, then, this be true in the things of earth, and in those ties which bind together one human being to another; how much more is it so in the things of heaven. What union, what communion can there be between a living God and a dead soul? But there is something even worse than death. "Dead in trespasses and sins." In natural death, corruption and putrefaction are worse than the mere decease, than the pale cheek and cold rigid form, more loathsome, more disgusting, more cutting off union and communion with the living. Could our beautiful maidens see themselves, or could their doting lovers behold them, as they will appear a week or two after they have been buried out of sight, what a knell would it ring to all the charms of beauty. But even natural corruption, the hideousness of putrefaction, the loathsome change which has passed upon beauty's soft cheek and flashing eyes are nothing to the loathsomeness of sin in the sight of a holy God. Even our moral sense sometimes sees and feels this. We may admire the charms of maidenly modesty, but we loathe the painted cheek of the flaunting harlot. We may picture to ourselves in imagination the loathsomeness of a putrefying corpse, but all that the eye might see or the imagination suggest of such a scene would fall far short of what man is before the eyes of his Maker as dead in trespasses and sins.

We can never, therefore, sufficiently magnify, and adore the riches of his free sovereign and distinguishing grace if we have any clear testimony that the Lord has quickened us who were dead in trespasses and sins, for never, never could we have given life to our own dead soul. As well might a corpse raise itself from the grave and come forth to breathe and live in the light of the sun, and walk among living men, as a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, quicken itself out of death to live in the light of God's countenance, and walk in union and communion with his dear Son and his living people.

Death in sin is of course a figure, and must be interpreted as such; for moral death is its meaning, and by moral death we understand the utter absence of everything holy, heavenly, spiritual, and

divine; the entire lack of participation in, and conformity to the life which God lives as essentially and eternally holy, pure, wise, and good, and forever dwelling in the glorious light of his own infinite perfections. To be dead, then, is to have no present part or lot with God; no knowledge of him, no faith, no trust, no hope in him; no sense of his presence, no reverence of his dreadful Majesty; no desire after him or inclination toward him; no trembling at his word, no reliance on his promise; no longing for his grace, no care or concern for his glory. It is to be as a beast before him, intent like a brute on satisfying the cravings of lust, or the movements of mere animal passion, without any thought or concern what shall be the outcome, and to be bent upon carrying out into action every natural purpose, as if we were self-creators, and were our own judge, our own lord; and our own God. O! what a terrible state is it to be thus dead in sin, and not to know it; not to feel it; to be in no way sensible of its present danger and certain end, unless delivered from it by a mighty act of sovereign power. It is this lack of all sense and feeling which makes the death of the soul to be but a representation of, as it is the prelude to, that second death which stretches throughout a boundless eternity. But the Apostle now changes the figure—"Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world." Clearly, if a man were actually, literally dead, he could not walk; and if the soul of man were dead within him, so as to be deprived of all understanding, feeling, desire, will, or affection, it would be as incapable of any movement within the body, as a directing influence, as a dead body would be incapable of any bodily movement. The death of the soul, therefore, is its death Godwards. It is lively and active enough in the ways of sin, lively and active enough in following and carrying out every inclination and movement towards self-gratification. It knows no death there. Its death is only as regards God. It is lively enough as regards man. And as the whole world is but an aggregate of human beings, all equally dead to God, but all equally alive to self; as the same passions, desires, thoughts, feelings, lusts, and inclinations sway with more or less force every bosom, the whole forms what the Apostle calls "the course of this world." As in a river every drop flows with the rest in one course toward the sea, as in a crowd all rushing to see the same sight, each individual man makes up with the rest a continuous stream of men, all intent upon the same object, so there is "a course of this world," individuals being but drops in the stream, each man being a unit of a sum exceeding calculation; but the whole collective body forming one mass, like a concourse of people rushing forward with common aim, and each pushing on his neighbor with unresisting, irresistible force. Now, combine the two ideas of the Apostle, though we shall presently see that there is another agency to come into force; but combine and compare the two ideas of death in sin, and walking according to the course of this world, what do we gather from this combination? Is it not that to walk according to the course of this world is to be dead in sin? The course of this world is not always or perhaps often a course of that decided open transgression which is generally stamped by the name of sin. Many a worldly man cannot afford to be an open sinner. He would lose his place in society, he would forfeit character, he would damage his reputation, and with his reputation his hopes of advance in life, if he allowed himself the open, unchecked practice of those breaches of morality against which the world in general and good society in particular has affixed its mark of reprobation. But he may not be the less a wicked man—not only dead, but dead in trespasses and sins. He may be a secret infidel, though he regularly attends his church or chapel; an inward mocker and scorner of all vital godliness, though a decent observer of its form; a thorough hater of God and his people, though too prudent or too decorous to give his enmity open vent; a presumptuous rebel, a proud, covetous, stony-hearted, iron-handed oppressor of the poor, an

unkind husband, a despotic father, a rigid, unfeeling master, a scheming, unprincipled money-grubber, a selfish wretch, incapable of a noble thought or generous action; and yet all the time he may keep within the range of the strictest morality, and deal out harsh censure against the least deviation from it.

Thousands of such men, more or less approaching various points of this sketch, though we will not say embodying all its worst features, tread the London pavement every day, sit in easy-chairs in counting-houses, draw cheques on their bankers, serve their customers in shops, and fill every rank and grade of society, from the millionaire rolling home from the City in his carriage, to the sweeper at the street crossing, to whom, in the overflowing liberality of his heart for a successful stroke in business, he throws a penny. Here, too, are to be found, in thickly crowded ranks, scores of men and women who consider themselves and are usually considered very religious, and who would count it a stigma and a reproach not to profess some kind of religion, more or less marked with outward and distinctive form. Unstained by outward sins, moral and consistent in conduct, kind, generous, and liberal, active and energetic in various works of philanthropy and benevolence, really possessed of many amiable and admirable qualities, endowed in large measure with domestic and social qualities worthy of respect and imitation, most useful and honorable members of society, the very stay and support of our favored country; yet they bear the fatal mark stamped upon them, that they walk according to the course of this world. Their religion has never really separated them from, or crucified them unto it. Whatever they may be before men (and we have freely allowed their possession of many admirable qualities), before God, who sees not as man sees, and who looks to the heart, they are dead in sin, as walking according to the course of this world. In a crowd of men, all moving one way and bent on the pursuit of the same object, there may be great outward differences. Some may be clothed in rags, and others in choice apparel. Some may rush along with oath and noise, others move forward silently and steadily; some may lead and others follow; some may urge on the lagging, and others seem more driven by compulsion than full of eagerness and animation to be first and foremost in the race; but they all follow one course—a course which leads all to the same eventual end. So it is with all who walk according to the course of this world. Were they searched to the very core, were their hearts laid naked and bare before the eyes of him with whom we have to do, they would be found to have no single eye to his glory, no godly fear or holy reverence of his great name, no sincere aim to please him, or dread to offend him; no earnest longing or breathing forth of earnest desire to know his will and do it; in a word, nothing heavenly, holy, spiritual, or gracious; nothing as the fruit of a new birth, and springing out of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. Their motives, principles, aim, object, and, desire; what they live by, and what they live for; the whole tenor and drift of their words and actions, are worldly, and according to the course of this world; masked, indeed, by a thin veil of a pious profession and a religious phraseology, whereby they deceive themselves and others into the confident persuasion that they are not as other men are, but bid fair for, if they do not stand at present high in the favor of God.

How a ray of divine light, entering as a word from God’s mouth with quickening power into their heart, would rend asunder this deceptive veil, and piercing their conscience as a two-edged sword, would lay them and their profession naked and bare before him who, in his glorious Majesty, is a consuming fire. But there is another mark of "the dead in trespasses and sins" given by the Apostle, another reason assigned by him why such as walk according to the course of this

world are at present without hope and without God. They are under a Satanic influence. This is dreadful to think of, and were it fully realized, enough to appall all who are under it with dread and horror! And yet if we accept the word of God as pure infallible truth, it is as undeniable a fact as that of his own existence. The words of the Apostle are, "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." You will observe here that the word "according" is connected with their walking; and that as they are said to walk "according to," that is in union with, in obedience to the moving power, impulse, and influence of this world, so also do they walk "according to," that is, under the impulse and influence of the prince of the power of the air. But this demands a little closer and fuller examination. By "the prince of the power of the air" Satan is here intended, for he is "the spirit who works in the children of disobedience." Several things are noteworthy here—1, The solemn fact that there is such an infernal being, full of deadly enmity to God and man; 2, That his seat is in the air; 3, That he works in the children of disobedience; 4, That all who walk according to the course of this world are under his influence.

1. The very existence of such a being as Satan is now denied by many. The Scripture doctrine concerning the devil is now often viewed as a Jewish tradition, or as an oriental myth, or as merely a strong and figurative representation of evil, investing it by way of metaphor with a bodily shape, and that all belief in the personal existence of the devil should be considered in our enlightened times as on a par with crediting the existence of witches, ghosts, apparitions, and the effect of charms and magical incantations. But the personal existence of Satan, as an evil spirit, is so strongly laid down in the Scriptures, both Old and New, and so interwoven with the history of the Lord himself in the Gospels and the language of inspiration in the Epistles, that we must either believe it on the force of God’s testimony or acknowledge ourselves infidels as regards receiving the whole and undiminished word of God. It is indeed a part of Satan’s own peculiar subtlety to persuade men of his non-existence, that he may more successfully entrap them in his snares, as Hart well says:

"The devil can self-denial use, And that with devilish, selfish views; His being and his state disown; And teach that devil or hell there’s none." To deny, then, his existence, is not only to deny the word of God, but clearly shows that he has all the more successfully blinded the eyes of those whom he is leading at his will by hiding from them that he is their guide. On this point, however, we need not further dwell. It is sufficient for us on this as on every other point of revealed truth to say, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

2. But he is called in the words before us "the prince of the power of the air;" from which we gather these three things, that he is a prince, that he possesses great power, and that his seat is in the air. Our gracious Lord calls him "the prince of this world," and the Apostle Paul terms him "the god of this world." (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4.) The very words "prince" and "god" imply dominion and authority. What this dominion is, and in what this authority mainly consists, the Scripture does not clearly inform us. But we find again and again in the word of truth, both of the Old and New Testament, a dominion and authority ascribed to Satan whereby he rules and reigns over the children of men. Into this subject, however, we cannot now fully enter. Its most formidable feature is that it is unseen, and yet of amazing strength and power. Bounds indeed are set to it by the overruling providence and absolute dominion of God; and in the case of his dear children this power is broken, and only allowed to come so far near them as may be consistent with the purposes of God and their eventual benefit. Were not the power of Satan under God’s overruling

authority as regards his own family, this earthly scene would soon become a wild arena of death and destruction, and the witnesses for God’s truth be swept out of by the malice of the prince of this world and the furious enmity of his agents and followers.

3. The seat of this prince, his dwelling-place from which he surveys the wide extent of his domain, is the air above and around this earthly ball. This gives him such velocity of flight, such ready access to all spots and places, such ability to transport himself with more than the swiftness of the eagle to his quarry, or of the vulture to the fallen prey. Satan is not ubiquitous, that is, he is not present in every place; for universal presence belongs only to God. But as a spirit, and retaining, though a fallen spirit, the original qualities of an angelic nature, he can transport himself with a readiness and a velocity of which we have no conception to every point of the compass, and to every spot on which his eye is fixed as a scene of infernal action. Now these are not mere speculations, or even sound deductions from the language of inspiration, but are pregnant with warning and admonition. Are we surrounded by Satan and a whole host of infernal angels, all ready at his beck and call, and all in league with him, little perhaps inferior to him in strength and subtlety, and all equally bent to work us woe if not ruin? How careful, how watchful, how cautious should this make us in all our movements, as feeling that wherever we go or wherever we are we are watched by an infernal adversary, hovering around us in the air, like a bird of prey watching for a favorable moment to swoop down upon us, and if not destroy, to wound and maim us. And how it should lead us to be unceasingly putting ourselves, so to speak, by faith and prayer, under the protection of our Almighty Friend, that he may be our Protector and Preserver from the open assaults and inward temptations of our deadly adversary. In the last chapter of this epistle the Apostle gives us a solemn exhortation to "put on the whole armor of God;" and why? "That we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And then he adds—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12.) By referring to the margin we see that "high places" are translated "heavenly places," that is, the lower heavens, corresponding to the airy region in which Satan has his seat.

4. But the main point before us is the solemn fact that Satan "works in the children of disobedience." How wide, how comprehensive are these words. But as this subject demands a more ample consideration than we can now give it, we must reserve our comment upon it for our next paper.

03.02.02. Part Two

Part II. Our greatest dangers are usually least seen, our subtlest foes least suspected, our strongest snares least apprehended. Who of us, for instance, when dead in trespasses and sins, knew his own death, or apprehended from it any danger; when walking according to the course of this world, had the remotest idea that the whole world, the moral as well as the immoral part of it, lies in wickedness; when under the influence of Satan, was sensible of his poisonous breath, though at that very time it was diffusing itself through and tainting his life blood?

We have heard or read of a traveler, who once rode by night over an unknown but most dangerous piece of ground, and reached his destination in safety. Struck, however, by what he had seen in the dim night of the rugged and precipitous road by which he had come, and how slowly and carefully his trusty horse had here and there picked his way, he felt an inclination to survey it the next morning by the light of day. But when he saw stretched before him in the broad daylight the road, which he had traversed under the cover of night; when he perceived how he had in this place ridden on the very brink of a deep precipice, and in that place had passed over the broken arches of a bridge with a roaring river underneath, he was so overwhelmed with a sight of the fearful perils of the road, and a sense of his own preservation, that he swooned away through agitation of mind. May we not apply this little incident, be it true or false, to our own experience of the dangers which we have escaped, and the way by which we have come? How perilous was our state by nature; how dangerous our condition; how beset with steep precipices, hidden from view, was our path; and how, but for special grace and the leading and upholding of our wise and yet invisible Guide, we might have been hurled down from some giddy height and been dashed to pieces, or fallen through the broken arches of time into that roaring flood which has swallowed up so many in destruction and perdition!

These thoughts may perhaps prepare us to look a little more solemnly and feelingly into the point now before us, which we therefore resume from our last paper, that is, the inspired declaration that Satan, called "the prince of the power of the air" for reasons already explained, works as a spirit in the children of disobedience. Several things are worthy of notice in this inspired declaration:

1. The persons or characters in whom he thus works. They are termed "the children of disobedience." We need hardly observe that these are the same characters as the dead in trespasses and sins, with this difference, that the one is a negative and the other a positive mark. Their death implies the total absence of all in which consists the life of God; their disobedience implies an active principle in them of opposition to the will and word of God.

"The children of disobedience" is a Hebrew idiom, signifying those who are so thoroughly and entirely disobedient to the expressed will and word of God that they may be considered as much under its influence, authority, and power as if disobedience had given them actual birth and being, and exerted over them all the claims and demands of a parent. It is a peculiar feature of that strong and vivid language in which the Old Testament was written to invest objects with personal qualities. Thus sparks are called "sons of the burning coal" (Job 5:7, margin); an arrow, "the son of

the bow" (Job 41:28); anointed ones, "sons of oil." (Zechariah 4:14, marg.) A man sentenced to die is called "a son of death" (Psalms 79:11; 1 Samuel 20:31; 2 Samuel 12:5); rebels, "children of rebellion" (Numbers 17:10); and one deserving to be beaten, "a son of stripes." (Deuteronomy 25:2.) We shall presently meet with an almost similar expression, "children of wrath," by which is meant that as the children of death are those over whom death will reign in all its power and authority, so wrath will reign unchecked over all to whom it is due, and upon whom it is poured out. The children, therefore, of disobedience are those so thoroughly and completely under its power and dominion that they can do nothing but disobey.

2. But now observe the expression, "works." It is in the original a stronger word than "works," and means not only working, but powerful working, being in fact the word from which our term "energy" is derived. It means, therefore, a powerful, energetic, unwearied, active working—the working of one who neither fatigues nor tires, but labors at his infernal work with all the unflagging strength of an angel, and all the infuriate malice of a devil. The mode of this active energy is in a good measure hidden from us, though there are few of us probably who have not felt it—at least been painfully sensible of a spirit working in us allied to, and yet distinct from our own spirit. Thoughts, imaginations, workings, heavings of a peculiarly infernal and diabolical kind worthy of the devil, and such as only that foul, malicious, blasphemous spirit could suggest, most of us have painfully felt. But we cannot explain how he gains this access to our mind, or influences its movements. Yet there is this clear and most blessed distinction between his influences for evil and those of the Holy Spirit for good, that they are not creative or permanent—at least not in the vessels of mercy. He worked in us all in days past, but he did not seal us for perdition as the Holy Spirit seals us for salvation. He found us sinners, and acted on our sinful nature, but did not create in us a Satanic nature, as the Holy Spirit creates a spiritual nature, or assimilate us permanently to his own likeness, as the blessed Spirit assimilates us to the likeness of Christ. And when dislodged and spoiled of his goods, he never again enters the palace of the saint’s heart, though he may annoy him by his passing breath. But we have now mainly to consider his working in the children of disobedience. Satan has in them a ground on which he can work. He finds them all ready and fully prepared to fall in with his suggestions, and act under his prevailing influence. He has but to breathe, so to speak, into them his own infernal enmity, rebellion, pride, and desperate malice against God and all that God is or has, and he finds them willing to fall in with all that he suggests to their mind. Satan, as a fallen angel, retains, as we have pointed out, angelic qualities, and especially that spiritual subsistence which is the essence of angelic nature. "He made his angels spirits." "Are they not all ministering spirits?" He is therefore a spirit, though a fallen spirit, a foul spirit, an unclean spirit, and is said in the words before us to be "the spirit" that now works in the children of disobedience. This working is partly direct and partly indirect. It is direct when he breathes into the children of disobedience his own special sins, such as pride, enmity, rebellion, malice, blasphemy, and what the scripture calls "spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12) and "the depths of Satan." (Revelation 2:24.) But he works indirectly when he presents to the corrupt mind of man those fleshly temptations which he is not himself subject to or indeed capable of. These are comprehended in the words of John as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." None of these lusts is Satan capable of. He has no flesh to gratify, no carnal eye to please, no worldly pride to indulge. But he finds all these things in us, and by presenting to each of these lusts its suitable object, and we may add by darkening the mind and hardening the heart, gives them fresh prevalence and power.

It seems also that some, as a mark of God's judicial displeasure, are specially given up to Satan. Thus he entered into Judas after the sop (John 13:27), and filled the heart of Ananias (Acts 5:3), taking, as it were, full and final possession of them in body and soul. This is different from merely working in them, as we see in the case of Judas, for he first put into his heart to betray Christ. (John 13:2), and then when the temptation was received and entertained and determined to be acted upon, he entered into him, and got full possession.

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

It is worthy of observation how the Apostle would remind us of the state and condition in which we were, not only as dead in trespasses and sins, but as actually walking in those base lusts, and carrying out in practice those sensual desires which were connected with our spiritual death. And he does this for two reasons, first, that he may thereby magnify the riches of God's grace, and secondly, by bringing before us what should be a matter of the deepest humiliation and self-abhorrence, remind us of our base original. How clearly, too, does he show that there is no difference between the saved and the lost, except what grace makes between them; that all, elect and non-elect, are equally dead in trespasses and sins, that, all equally walk according to the course of this world in their unregenerate condition; and that all are equally led and acted upon by the prince of the power of the air, that foul and accursed spirit which we see even now working everywhere around us in the children of disobedience.

Observe, too, how completely the Apostle identifies himself with the vilest and the worst. We know, from his own testimony, that he was, before called by grace, a man of the strictest severity of life, and that his walk and conduct externally were so unblemished that he could say of himself, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But here he puts himself among and on a level with the heathen Ephesians, abandoned as they had been to all that outward ungodliness, which, as we see from Rom. 1, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, was common to all the Gentile world. "We all," he says, "I and you, and every one of us, without exception, had our conversation, that is, lived and walked, as the rule and habit of our life, in the lusts of our flesh, our chief, our only object being to fulfill and gratify the desires of the flesh and of the mind, whatever they were. I was by birth a Jew, brought up in the very straitest sect, that of the Pharisees, imbued from earliest childhood with the strict maxims and traditions of the fathers; and when I reached maturer age came to Jerusalem, and there sat as a pupil at the feet of Gamaliel, to learn more thoroughly and devote myself more fully to the most intense practice of all external obedience, that I might gain eternal life by my good works. You, on the contrary, were blind heathens, abandoned to the worship of idols, destitute of the commonest principles of morality, and without the least knowledge of the only true God. You, therefore, walked and lived, wallowed, rolled, and weltered in all manner of vile filth, brutality, sin, and crime. Still, whatever outward difference there was thus between us, in this point we were fully alike, that the flesh was everything with us both; and, so long as we could fulfill its lusts, and desires, we were well content. My flesh was pious flesh, and yours impious; I was the whited sepulcher on the outside, and you were the foul sepulcher inside. I, in my Jewish zeal, hated and persecuted the Church of God, and you, in your heathen zeal, would have killed all who did not worship the great Diana of the Ephesians. But we were alike bent upon serving the flesh, though in different ways and by different means."

We may observe here a distinction drawn by the Apostle between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind. Both are opposed to God and godliness, both are the fruits of our fallen nature; but the desires of the flesh seem to be those grosser and more sensual lusts and passions which are connected, so to speak, with the lower part of our nature; and the desires of the mind are those which are connected with its higher qualities. Thus some are steeped up to the very lips in all manner of vile abominations of sensual lust, in the gratification of which they find all their pleasure; while others, who would scorn or at least are not tempted to the baser lusts of the flesh, carry out with equal ardor the promptings of a more refined character and disposition. Ambition to rise in the world; thirsting after power over their fellow-men, a craving for fame and distinction in any particular branch of art or science, discontent with their present situation in life, envying every one superior to them in birth, wealth, talent, accomplishments, position, or worldly happiness; attempts, more or less successful, to rise out of obscurity, poverty, and subjection, and to win for themselves name, fame, and prosperity—how wide a field does this open to our view, as embracing "the desires of the mind!" And observe how the Apostle puts upon a level the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind, and stamps them both with the same black mark of disobedience and its consequences—the wrath of God! We look around us. We see the drunkard staggering in the street, we hear the oath of the common swearer, we view the sons and daughters of Belial manifesting in their very looks how sunk they are in deeds of shame. These we at once condemn; but what do we think of the pushing tradesman, the energetic man of business, the active, untiring speculator, the man who, without scruple, puts into practice every scheme and plan to advance and aggrandize himself, careless who sinks if he rise? Is he equally guilty in our eyes? What do we think of the artist devoting days and nights to the cultivation of his skill as a painter, as an architect, as a sculptor; of the literary man, buried in his books; of the naturalist, devoting years to the particular branch of study which he has selected to pursue; or similar examples of men, whose whole life and all whose energies are spent in fulfilling the desires of their mind? As far as society, public welfare, the comfort of themselves and their families, and the progress of the world are concerned, there is a vast difference between these two classes; and we would do violence to right feeling to put them upon the same level. But when we come to weigh the matter as before God, with eternity in view, and judge them by the word of truth, we see at once that there is no real difference between them; that the drunkard does but fulfill the desires of his flesh, and the scholar, the artist, the man of business, the literary man, in a word, the man of the world, whatever his world be, little or great, does but each fulfill the desires of his mind. Both are of the earth, earthy; both are sworn enemies to God and godliness; and could you look into the very bottom of his heart, you might find the man of intellect, refinement, and education a greater foe to God and his word than the drunkard or the profligate! The sin in both is one and the same, and consists in this, that in all they do they seek to gratify that carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. God is not in all, or indeed in any of their thoughts. Instead of living to and for him in whom, as creatures of his hand, they live and move and have their being, they live wholly unto and for themselves, and thus are practical rebels against God, as rejecting his rightful claims upon their obedience. We must have very slight and superficial, not to say altogether false and wrong ideas of sin, if we limit it to certain outward acts, condemned generally by men’s natural consciences. Sin is not to be weighed in this scale, nor measured by this standard. It is to be measured by the holiness of God and the demands of his righteous law, which extends itself to the inmost thoughts of the heart. Sin is of a much deeper,

subtler, wider nature than most men apprehend, or indeed than any can know or feel until they experimentally learn that God's commandment is exceeding broad, that it demands purity in the inward parts, a perfection of obedience of body and soul, and a thorough yielding up to the service of God of every faculty of the mind, of every member of the body, of every thought of the heart, of every word of the tongue, of every action of the hands. Measured by this standard—and the glory of God demands no less—we are brought to see what sin really is, and that whatever men be outwardly and morally, yet that inwardly, as they stand before the eyes of infinite purity, and as weighed in the balance of a righteous law, there is, as the Apostle elsewhere testifies, "no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

It is, indeed, in this coming short of the glory of God that the essence of sin mainly lies. So great, so unspeakably great is the glory of God, that to come short of it, that is, to come short in rendering that full obedience and devotion of the whole man which it requires, is to sin against God, and as the prophet speaks to "provoke the eyes of his glory" (Isaiah 3:8), as if those glorious eyes which run to and fro throughout the whole earth (2 Chronicles 16:9) viewed with holy indignation those creatures of his hand that pay him not the tribute which is his due. And as the law is the manifestation of God's holiness, and as a word which has issued from his lips in order to bind all who are under it to a perfect obedience to its commands, every mouth must be stopped by a sense of guilt and shame where that law is revealed in its spirituality and power, as the Apostle testifies—"Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Romans 3:19.)

Now what is the consequence of this universal sentence of condemnation? That which the Apostle adds, and to which we now come in our exposition—"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

We have already pointed out the meaning of the expression, the children of wrath. This point therefore need not detain us long. To be a child of wrath is to be deserving of wrath, as a child or son of death was one who deserved death; and as children are naturally heirs of their father's property, so to be a child of wrath is to be an heir of it, and to have it for a full and everlasting portion. This wrath is the just indignation of God against sin and sinners, without respect of persons, according to that testimony—"But unto those who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Romans 2:8-9.) But the question naturally arises, "Is there, then, no difference between the elect and the non-elect in this matter? You have already told us, and laid it down very fully and clearly from the first chapter of this epistle, that the elect were blessed from all eternity with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, that they were made accepted in the Beloved, and ever stood before God in the Person and work of his dear Son without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. How, then, can they be children of wrath, even as others? Was there not from all eternity a distinction between them and the rest of mankind who were to be left to fill up the measure of their iniquities?"

Now this difficulty, if indeed it is worth calling a difficulty, is cleared up by the words "by nature." The distinction between those that are saved and those that are lost is by grace; by nature distinction between them there is none. In Adam they all alike sinned by original transgression; in

themselves they have all sinned by actual transgression. Take away grace, view them only as they are by nature, there is no difference between them. Their sins are as great, if not greater, their nature as corrupt, their hearts as evil, the whole bent and course of their thoughts, words, and works, before called by grace, were as saturated with sin and crime. And as all these things deserve wrath, and but for grace, would draw down wrath as their everlasting portion, they are rightly and truly said to be by nature children of wrath, even as others.

It is very necessary ever to bear in mind that there are certain immutable laws of right and wrong, of obedience and disobedience, of things pleasing and displeasing to God as the great and glorious Jehovah, and that no acts of God in grace in the least degree alter, diminish, or supersede these immutable laws which have their birth from his glorious perfections. Grace does not alter the nature of sin, render it less damnable in itself, or turn away from it the wrath of God. It turned indeed the wrath of God from the person of the sinner to the Person of the Surety; but when it met and encountered sin in Him, it burst forth so furiously that he cried out, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; melting within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and you have brought me into the dust of death." (Psalms 22:14-15).

And, again, in the person of Heman—"You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and you have afflicted me with all your waves, I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer your terrors I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off." (Psalms 88:6-7; Psalms 88:15-16.)

It is an utter misunderstanding of grace, and of the whole wondrous scheme of salvation, to think that because the elect are accepted in the Beloved and have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, their sins are not sins, nor as such deserving of punishment, or that they themselves are not by nature children of wrath, even as others. The testimony of God’s word, and the experience of every saint, will amply contradict any such presumptuous notions. No, the very sweetness of grace lies in this, that it has put away deserved wrath; and this makes the Church sing aloud—"And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise you; though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comforted me." (Isaiah 12:1.) Such a view is, indeed, quite to lose sight of the mind of the Holy Spirit, as here expressed by the Apostle, for his object clearly is to remind us of our obligations to distinguishing, sovereign grace by showing us that we deserve nothing at God’s hands but wrath, and that had we our just due, it would be poured out upon us to the uttermost. And surely every one who has felt anything of the wrath of God as his just due, on account of his personal transgressions, will freely acknowledge that he is by nature a child of wrath, even as others, and that there are thousands in hell who have not sinned as great as he has.

We need, not, however, dwell further on this point, nor indeed should we have touched upon it, except to clear up what might have been considered a difficulty, if not a contradiction to any previous statement of divine truth. Let us rather, with the Apostle, bless and adore the rich mercy of God extended towards us in the Person and work of his dear Son, according to the words which we shall now further open—"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us." We may observe here the blessed union of mercy and love in the bosom of God, and the way in which the Apostle sets forth and exalts both as thus united. He does not simply say that God is

merciful, but that he is "rich in mercy;" nor does he merely declare that he loved us, but that the love with which he loved us was "great love." As love was the first moving cause in the mind of God, according to that testimony, "God so loved the world—that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16); and again—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10); we will consider that point first.

1. The testimony of the word of truth is that "God is love" (1 John 4:8)—pure, perfect, holy, eternal love. Love is one of his brightest, most blessed, and glorious perfections, softening, if one may so speak with all holy reverence, the severe and more dreadful features of his Divine Majesty, such as his justice, holiness, wrath against sin, and inflexible resolve by no means to clear the guilty. But it is specially to be remarked that this alike glorious and amiable perfection of love shines forth to us only in the Person of his dear Son. Whatever love God has to the creatures of his hand, as to the holy angels who stand in his presence, or to the stranger to whom he gives food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:18) as an act of pure beneficence, we poor sinners, as sinners, can only know him as pure love in the Person and work of the Son of his love. When, then, under divine teaching, in favored moments, we can look up to God as manifesting himself in the Person of his dear Son, we see in him nothing but pure and perfect love; and as this love is manifested to faith, and shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, it raises up and draws forth love to God in return, as being in himself pure Love in its fountain, of which he grants to believing souls this blessed stream. But this love the Apostle would specially exalt as being great; "for his great love with which he loved us." Its greatness is to be measured by two things; first and mainly by the gift of his dear Son, secondly by our miserable, undone, and most wretched condition as sinners in his sight. The Scriptures are very full, clear, and blessed upon the love of God as manifested in the gift of his dear Son. Thus, besides the testimonies which we have already quoted, we find the Apostle declaring—"But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8.) And, again—"He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32.) How great this love is to the people of his choice is declared by our Lord in that most remarkable expression in the prayer which he offered up just before his sufferings and death, which we have thought sometimes is the greatest word in the whole book of God—"And have loved them, as you have loved me." (John 17:23.) The love of God to his dear Son must be so infinite as to exceed all conception of men or angels. Now, that he should love the people of his choice with the same love—the same in nature, the same in degree as that with which he loves his dear Son, is one of the most overwhelming thoughts which can move and stir a human bosom! Indeed, so overwhelming is it in its sublime mystery and unapproachable depth, that as it can only be received by faith, so faith itself can only fall down in reverent astonishment and admiration before it, and cry out, "O the depth! O the blessedness of this love!"

Love does not, however, necessarily imply mercy. This latter attribute regards us as sinners, and is the flowing out of love in a way of pity and compassion to us as cast by sin into a most miserable and truly deplorable condition. We may know something of the blending of love and pity as two distinct and yet united affections in our own experience. A parent loves his child distinct from and independent of any feeling of compassion or pity for it; for the child may not be in circumstances to draw out any such latent feeling. But if the child is sick or afflicted, or in any circumstances of distress, then pity and compassion flow forth out of the bosom of love; and the deeper the love, the

more tender will be the pity. This blending of love and pity is beautifully represented in that lively comparison of the Church to an outcast child—"No one had the slightest interest in you; no one pitied you or cared for you. On the day you were born, you were dumped in a field and left to die, unwanted." (Ezekiel 16:5.) No eye pitied this poor outcast child, and it was too senseless to pity itself. But the Lord pitied it, and had compassion upon it! With his pity there was love, and with love came acts of love—"Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness; yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine." (Ezekiel 16:8.)

We see this mingling of love and pity illustrated also by the parable of the prodigal son. The father loved him because he was his son—independently of his conduct, good or bad. But when his repenting prodical came back with grief in his heart, and confession of his sin and unworthiness in his lips, we read that "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." What a blending was here of love and pity. Pity moved the father to run to meet the returning prodigal, and love to fall upon his neck and kiss him. Had there been no previous love, and we might add no previous relationship of father and son, and had he not been in so miserable a plight, there would have been no pity; but loving him as his son, and because he was his son, pity and compassion flowed forth, as he came home in poverty, hunger, and rags, in guilt, and shame, and sorrow, and the two combined to bring forth the gracious command to clothe him in the best robe, to kill the fatted calf, and to rejoice over him who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found.

Now, as God is great in love, his love in fact being infinite, so his mercy is rich, or rather, he is rich in mercy. Mercy well suits a sensible sinner; and the riches of God’s mercy especially suit those who are brought down in real extremity of soul to see and feel how abundant he must be in mercy, how overflowing in the exceeding riches of his grace, that they may venture to entertain a hope of an interest in it, as freely coming down to them in their low and lost estate. We know mercy, feelingly and experimentally, before we know love. Love is first in God, but it is not first in our experience of it; nor do we go to God when made first to feel our need of mercy, as if we were objects of his love, or could venture to entertain the remotest idea that a God so holy could love a sinner so vile; but we go to him to obtain mercy, as the Apostle speaks—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16.)

Mercy is the first thing sought for at the throne of grace; and when this mercy is obtained, then grace is ever after continually sought for to help the helpless and dependent soul in every time of need, which need lasts all through life; and until grace is swallowed up in glory. Was not the simple plea for mercy the tax-collector’s prayer in the temple, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" And such has been the prayer of all and everyone, whose heart has been touched by the finger of God.

When, then, God graciously bows down his ear and listens to the sigh and cry of the repenting, confessing sinner, and manifests mercy to his soul, he at the same time sheds abroad his love in his heart, and then the mercy of God and the love of God, as they are one in him, unite and become one in the sinner’s bosom. But the point on which the Apostle chiefly dwells, as a proof and mark of the riches of God’s mercy and the greatness of his love—is the quickening of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. As this, however, opens up a fresh portion of our subject,

we shall defer our exposition of it to our next paper.

03.02.03. Part Three

Part III.

Love and mercy, as dwelling in the bosom of God to poor sinners, and especially as manifested in the gift of his dear Son, were the two leading and prominent features in this last part of our exposition of the chapter now before us, and we remarked, at the close of our paper, that the point on which the Apostle chiefly dwells, as a proof and mark of the riches of God's mercy and the greatness of his love, is the quickening of those who were "dead in trespasses and sins." At this point, therefore, resuming the thread of our exposition, we shall commence the present article. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved.)" Ephesians 2:4-5.

It will, perhaps, be observed that, according to our version, there is a little apparent ambiguity as to the connection of the words, "Even when we were dead in sins," and that they may be taken either in connection with the preceding clause, "with which he loved us," or with the following clause, "has quickened us." If taken in the former connection, we should read, removing the comma after "us," "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in sins." If we adopt the latter connection we should read it, "Even when we were dead in sins has quickened us together with Christ." Each would be equally true in doctrine, each would almost equally set forth the love and mercy of God, but one seems almost to bring before us his love more brightly and conspicuously than the other. Our translation has made the point rather ambiguous by putting the stops as they stand in our version; and as in the original manuscripts stops are never used at all, there may seem to be the same ambiguity in the Greek as in the English. And yet as that language is much more clear and precise than our own, though it would not be bad or ungrammatical Greek to adopt the first interpretation, yet after giving the point some consideration and examination, we are inclined to think that it is more consistent with the original to connect the clause, "Even when we were dead in sins," with the words which follow, rather than with those which precede. Still, as the point is ambiguous, we shall drop a few remarks upon that connection which we have spoken of as fairly admissible, and which certainly is a grand gospel truth. The doctrine, then, laid down by the Apostle, according to this view of the subject, is that God loved his people even when they were dead in sins. Now when we consider what is involved in being dead in sins, when we take a view of who and what God is, and who and what men dead in sin are, it may well make us pause and ask ourselves the question, "Does God, can God love his people, when they are dead in sins?" To this, consistently with his truth, there can be but one answer. If once you hold with the doctrine of election, if once you believe that God loved and chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, if once you believe that with God there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, you must necessarily believe that no circumstances which occur in time can alter or affect what was done in eternity. Having been loved in Christ, having been blessed in him with all spiritual blessings, and made accepted in the Beloved, however they may have lost the image of God in which they were originally created, however low they may have sunk in the Adam fall, however they may have become dead in sins

and personally defiled by actual transgression, the original and eternal love of God towards them could not be impaired or diminished, much less utterly cease. He loved them therefore when they were dead in sins. Though there was everything in them to make them hateful and loathsome in his pure and holy eyes, though he hates their sins with total hatred, though no heart can conceive or tongue of men or angels express the infinite disparity which there is between a God so holy and sinners so vile, yet if we once admit that the love of God to his people depends on their obedience to his word, and that it comes and goes according to their spiritual life and death, their holiness and unholiness, we at once overthrow the whole plan of salvation, and destroy the very foundation of electing love. But you say, "It is inconceivable that God can love sinners in all their sins, dead in them, without repentance, faith, and love, or one spark of goodness or holiness." It is indeed inconceivable, and that makes it so deep and high a mystery. Yet what would be the consequences of any other view? Ask yourself, for instance, Why did God quicken your soul when dead in sins? You will say, perhaps, "His unspeakable mercy moved him. He saw my ruined state; he knew that I could not quicken my own soul, and he therefore bade me live, because he would not let me sink into eternal death." True, most true. The mercy and compassion of God to poor sinners is a blessed truth, and is beautifully set forth by the Apostle in the words, "But God, who is rich in mercy." But we have already shown that in the bosom of God, love and mercy blend together, and that love is the moving cause of mercy. He does not love because he pities, but he pities because he loves! Was not this shown in the parable of the prodigal son? Did not the father pity his truant child because he loved him? He was his son; this drew forth his love. He was hungry and in rags; this drew forth his pity. There might be others as hungry, naked, ragged, and destitute; but they were not sons, the objects of the father’s love. As this point, however, is so obvious, we shall not further dwell upon it; though we might ask a caviler, how he would understand Paul’s declaration, when, speaking of the love of Christ, he says, "Who loved me—and gave himself for me." If Christ gave himself for Paul, it was because he loved him. Now who, where, and what was Paul when Christ gave himself for him on the cross? Was he alive unto God, or was he dead in sin? Did Christ, then, love Paul when he was holding the clothes of the witnesses who stoned Stephen, and was thus consenting to his death as a righteous act? Did he love Paul when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord? If not, will you fix the exact time when Christ began to love him? And if you put it at any period after the crucifixion, you will contradict the words, "Who loved me—and gave himself for me." However inconceivable, then, by our mind, however surpassing every thought of our heart, we must still, if we would hold the truth with a firm hand, abide by this—that God loved his people even when they were dead in sins, and that that is one reason why his love is so great. But now let us look at the other connection of which we have spoken, and let us read the passage thus, "Even when we were dead in sins—has quickened us together with Christ." This leads us to see the cause of that quickening into spiritual life which is granted to every member of the mystical body of Christ. Of the eternal union existing between the Head and the members we have before spoken, and we have also connected the resurrection of Christ with the resurrection of his members; and yet a few further thoughts upon this point may not be unprofitable or unacceptable. In the resurrection, then, of Christ from the dead, we may view the virtual and efficient resurrection of all his members. If we may use, without disparagement, such a figure by way of illustration, is there not some similarity in this point between nature and grace? Is it not our head which is the first to awake each morning out of sleep? While our head slumbers, every member of the body slumbers with it. But the head

awakes, and awakes first. In and with this awaking each sleeping member awakes also—after the head, but in union with it; and as each member is aroused into the renewed vitality of a freshly awakened life, it rises through its connection with the arising head. Of course, the figure is but an illustration, and a faint and feeble, if not wholly imperfect representation of a spiritual truth from a natural comparison. But taking the truth itself, as it stands in all the strength of its beautiful simplicity, without the aid or hindrance of any natural illustration, see what a gracious and glorious light it casts over the quickening of each mystical member of the body of Christ; and to make the matter more plain and clear to your own mind fix your attention upon some individual who, though still dead in sins, is yet, according to the supposition, a member of Christ's mystical body. Now observe how, in this particular instance, the light and life of the Spirit from above are to visit and quicken his dead soul. Fix, then, your faith firmly on this point. Though now dead in sin, though now walking according to the course of this world, though now by nature a child of wrath even as others, yet there has been that done for him in Christ, which is a sure pledge of that which shall be done in him by Christ. He was quickened together with Christ. Being, then, already a partaker of so unspeakable a blessing, when the grace of God visits and quickens his soul into divine life, it is but the passing over into his heart of that life with which he was virtually quickened when Christ rose from the dead.

If this be difficult to understand or to believe, look at it from another point of view. Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? Do you believe that when Christ comes there will be a resurrection of the body? Now what is the virtual cause and pledge of that resurrection of the body? Is it not the resurrection of the body of Christ? As this is the grand argument of 1 Cor. 15 we need not trace it out. We see then that the resurrection of the body is intimately connected with the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now why should there not be a similar connection in what we may call the resurrection of the soul? For as the dead body will rise hereafter in the literal resurrection, so the dead soul rises now in its spiritual resurrection. Observe also what a pledge is thus given to the work of grace upon every vessel of mercy—upon every member of the mystical body of Christ. A dead soul is as powerless to quicken itself as a dead body to raise itself. Whence then come both regeneration and resurrection but from a risen Christ? In his resurrection there was the grace which quickens, as in his resurrection there is the power that will raise.

We lament to see so little of what is called conversion work going on. It pains our mind to look around and see how few there are who bear marks of being called by sovereign grace. But are there more or are there fewer to be called by grace than are members of Christ's mystical body? Can that number be added to, can that number be taken from? If the soul of man is as thoroughly and actually dead—as the Scriptures declare, what short of divine power can quicken it into spiritual life? Means of grace should be employed and that without ceasing, prayer and supplication made, and the blessing of God be earnestly sought for and asked. But when all this has been done, we still need the quickening breath. Bone may come to bone, and sinews and flesh come up upon them, and the skin cover them above; but there will be no breath in them until the Spirit of God breathes upon them that they may live.

Thus though on the one hand it may seem discouraging to all our efforts that, do what we can, do what we may, we cannot make the gospel effectual to the quickening of those that hear, yet on the other hand it is equally encouraging to believe that in the resurrection of Christ there was a pledge given as well as a virtual quickening of those members of his body who are still dead in sins. A

servant of God looks around his congregation, and knowing from personal and painful experience what death in sin means, and seeing how he is surrounded on every side by such, hope seems almost to die out of his heart that any word spoken by him can so touch men's hearts, or so reach men's consciences as to make their souls alive unto God. But let him look again, and instead of looking around let him look up, and fix his believing eyes upon the risen Son of God whose servant he is, whose gospel he preaches, in whose name he stands. Will not this draw down into his soul a sweet encouragement that as the mystical members of the body of Christ were virtually quickened in and with him when he rose from the dead, there is every hope and reason to believe that he will now fulfill that pledge, and make the word of his grace life and spirit to those souls by actual regeneration who have been already mystically and virtually quickened in and together with him at his resurrection?

Now it would almost seem as if some such thoughts passed through the mind of the Apostle as he thus connected the quickening of those who were dead in sins first with the rich mercy and the great love of God, and secondly with the resurrection of Christ. He therefore throws in, by way of parenthesis, the words, "By grace you are saved." At first sight there seems to be no special reason for their abrupt introduction and the interruption which they cause in the sentence. But when we view them as gushing out of the Apostle's heart in his holy admiration of the wondrous truth which we have endeavored to unfold, then we see a beauty in them. Our readers may also perhaps observe with us the change of person from "we" and "us" to "you." It is we who were dead in sins, it is we who were quickened together with Christ—you and I, I Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and you Ephesians, abandoned to every filthy lust and vile idolatry. But perhaps this is too great a mystery for you to receive. You can scarcely believe that you were quickened together with Christ; but do you not know that by grace you are saved? Is not salvation, the whole of salvation—salvation first and last, entirely of grace? Then if it be only by grace that you are saved, why should you hesitate to believe that when you were dead in sins you were quickened together with Christ? Were salvation of works, you would have been quickened by virtue of your obedience; but salvation being not of works but grace, to have been quickened together with Christ is but a branch of that full and glorious salvation which in grace begins, which by grace is carried on, and which by grace will be fully accomplished.

One grand and blessed distinction between works and grace is this, that there is a limit to one, but no limit to the other. When a man has done his best, done his all, even assuming that his obedience is, as far as it goes, perfect, it has a limit—it can only rise to a certain height, the faculties of the creature; and its reward is limited by its extent. If you pay a workman for his work, you pay him according to the character, the amount, and the goodness of the work done. When he has that, he has all that he can demand or expect. You may give him more than his wages, but all the surplus is a gift, not pay. All work, therefore, and all reward of work, must be limited. But grace knows no limit. Whatever the love of God can embrace, whatever his wisdom can contrive, whatever his power can perform, are the only limits which can be assigned to his grace, or, taking the word in its true and primary meaning, his favor. To make this point a little more clear as well as a little more simple, contrast the love with which a husband regards and shows to his wife with the wages which he pays to a servant. There is a limit both to a servant's work and to a servant's wages; but there is no limit to love, and therefore no limit to the gifts and fruits of love but the power of the bestower. How much more blessed then is it to be under grace, to have a place in

God’s heart, a share in his favor and love, than be upon the footing of a servant, doing work and expecting wages. Ahasuerus was willing to give to Queen Esther half of his kingdom; but the highest reward granted to the man whom the king delighted to honor, was but to be arrayed in his apparel, ride his horse, and wear his crown for an hour in a passing pageant.

Now apply this to the point immediately before us. The Apostle is speaking of God’s great love in quickening us together with Christ, when we were dead in sins. This was a special act of grace, which, therefore, made the Apostle throw in that parenthetical clause, "By grace you are saved." But he goes on to show how this grace was still further manifested—"And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6.) The quickening of the natural body of Christ in the tomb was the first step toward his resurrection; for the entrance of life into his dead body must have been the first act in the raising up of that body from the temporary sleep of death. At that moment, as we have pointed out, the whole mystical body of Christ was virtually quickened. But in order that the blessed Lord might come out of the tomb in all the power and glory of his resurrection he had to be raised up as well as quickened. Now his mystical body, as it was quickened together with him when life entered into his dead body, was raised together with him when he came out of the tomb. God is said therefore to "have raised us up together with him."

We thus see that there is a distinction between being quickened together with Christ and being raised up together with him. To be raised up together with Christ is a fuller, more complete, more definite, and more glorious act than to be quickened together with him. Is not this true in the experience of God’s people? To be quickened into divine life, to be convinced of sin, to have the fear of God planted deeply in the soul, is the commencement of a work of grace. But this is not a deliverance, not a being raised up out of darkness, bondage, doubt, guilt and fear. This is not a knowledge of Christ and of the power of his resurrection; this is not a full coming out of the dark and silent tomb, into the glorious light and warmth of day. There is, therefore, a difference between being quickened and being raised; between an interest in that grace and power which give life, and an interest in great grace and power which give liberty. But here is the great blessedness of a mystical union with the Lord Jesus Christ that, as by virtue of interest in him there is a partaking of the benefit and power of his having been quickened, so there is a partaking in the benefit and power of his having been raised up. God does not quicken a soul into divine life to let it remain in the dark tomb of doubt, fear, guilt, and bondage. In raising up Christ there was not only a pledge of the spiritual, but a virtual resurrection of the members of his body. Liberty then, the liberty of the gospel, deliverance from all doubt and fear, the manifestation of pardon and peace, the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart, are blessings as much assured to the members of Christ’s mystical body as their first quickening into spiritual life. They have no more power to bring liberty into their own minds or to speak peace to their own consciences than they had to quicken themselves when they were dead in sins. But both are equally assured them in Christ their covenant Head. But the Apostle goes on still further to show the blessings and benefits of union with Christ—"And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The ascension of our blessed Lord followed upon his resurrection from the dead. He rose from the dead not to tarry here below, though he graciously continued upon earth for forty days after his resurrection, but that he might go up on high and take his seat at the right hand of the Father. Now, as the members of his mystical body were ever, and must ever continue to be, in union with him, they ascended together

with him, and this made the Apostle say, "Has made us sit together (that is, with him) in heavenly places."

Christ is gone before as their Head and Representative to prepare a place for them, that he may come again and receive them unto himself, that where he is they may be also. But as we have shown experimentally what it is to be "quickened together with Christ and to be raised up together with him," let us now show what it is, in sweet and living experience, to "sit together in heavenly places in him." This is the sitting together with him in affection as the Apostle speaks—"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1-2.) When as risen with Christ we seek those things which are above, when we set our affections on them, when our heart and conversation are in heaven, then are we made to sit together in heavenly places in him. Here is the only true rest, pleasure, and happiness of the soul, when it can live above all the carking cares, sorrows, and afflictions of this miserable world, and in anticipation of an eternity of happiness, live, speak, and act as if already through Christ in possession of it. At this point, however, we must pause for the present, leaving to our readers, if so blessed and favored, their own meditations upon this wondrous mystery of eternal love, which we trust may coincide with our own when further opened in our next paper.

03.02.04. Part Four

Part IV.

Unless, by the power of divine teaching and divine testimony, we can enter in some good measure spiritually and experimentally into the grand and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel, we can neither see their peculiar beauty, nor feel their peculiar sweetness and blessedness. Take, for instance, the grand truths on which we have been lately dwelling in our exposition of the chapter now before us (Ephesians 2:1-6). How can we enter into the heavenly truths there unfolded so as to see their divine beauty, and realize their power and preciousness, unless we can read them more or less in the light of our own experience? What we were as dead in trespasses and sins, what we are as quickened and made alive unto God, what we hope to be when enjoying in full that of which we have now the earnest—how can we see eye to eye with the man of God as he unfolds these mysteries in the verses to which we have just referred; unless we can realize them in some good measure as our own, both in faith and feeling? The main reason why men stumble at noonday as in the night, and halt and boggle both in understanding and expression when they attempt to handle these divine epistles, is from lack of an experience of the truths set forth in them. They lack the right key to fit the wards of this intricate lock, and therefore uselessly poke at it with false keys, which, though they cannot spoil the lock, plainly show the ignorance of the workmen.

Bearing this, then, steadily in mind, we now resume the thread of our exposition. Our readers will remember that three points have hitherto mainly engaged our attention as connected with the calling into life of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. These were—1. The quickening of them when dead; 2. The raising them up with Christ; 3. The making them to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places. We have more than once pointed out that these three successive steps are all in the closest and most intimate connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and are the fruits and results of the eternal and indissoluble union which exists between the Head and members. But we have just now laid it down as a vital point that there is no seeing the beauty nor feeling the blessedness of this union with Christ in his resurrection and ascension on high, except by a spiritual knowledge of, and experimental entrance into it. Before, then, we pass on to consider more fully the point at which we paused in our last article—that is, the sitting together with Christ in the heavenly places, we would observe that as there were three successive steps in the actual resurrection and ascension of Christ personal, so there are three successive steps in the spiritual resurrection and ascension of Christ mystical; in other words, that as the Head was first quickened, then raised, then taken up on high in fact, so are his members in feeling. 1. First, then, they are "quickened." This is the beginning of the work of grace upon their hearts—the first communication of divine life to their dead souls. This, therefore, comprehends and embraces all those convictions of sin, all that work of the law on their consciences, all that guilt, bondage, distress, and misery which they experience before deliverance. They are alive, yet in the tomb; quickened, but not brought forth; still in darkness, because the stone is not yet rolled away, nor the resurrection fully accomplished. In Christ personal we may well suppose this was but a moment; but that is no reason why it should

be so momentary in Christ mystical. All will allow that time is an element of little importance in a work of grace, and that as in the natural, so in the spiritual birth it is not the length or severity of the labor which makes the deliverance, but the bringing forth of a living child. It is, therefore, no objection to this view that what was accomplished in an instant in the actual body of Christ, is accomplished in a longer interval of time in the members of his mystical body; or, to speak more correctly, that the interval between quickening and deliverance is more prolonged in their case spiritually than in his case actually. It is amply sufficient for all spiritual purposes that the quickening of his dead body in the tomb was the pledge, first fruits, and initial cause of the quickening of their dead souls into spiritual life.

2. The next step, then, is actual 'resurrection'. This in Christ personal was accomplished in his coming forth out of the tomb in power and glory; but in Christ mystical is the deliverance of the soul from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel. This deliverance was not only symbolized by, but is the express fruit of the resurrection of Christ; for, in the language of the Apostle, God "has raised us up together with him." The actual coming forth, then, of Christ personal from the tomb not only symbolizes; but is the initial cause of the deliverance of the soul from the bondage of the law, into the liberty of the gospel; for as Christ personal, that is, Christ himself, in all the dignity of his glorious Person, rose from the darkness and narrow limits of the tomb into the light of day, and into all the fullness of his resurrection power and glory, so does the member of his mystical body rise out of darkness into light, and out of bondage into liberty when delivered from the condemnation of the law by a revelation of the Son of God with power.

3. But the chief point to which we would draw the attention of our readers is the third step, or the 'sitting together with Christ in the heavenly places'. This, it will be observed, was not only symbolized by the ascension of Christ, and his sitting at the right hand of God, but is the 'initial cause' of it. As this expression, which we have used several times, may not be fully understood by some of our readers, we would briefly observe that the cause of an action may be either final, or instrumental, or initial. Take the following illustration of these three causes. A man goes to work. Why? For wages. Then wages is the final cause, as being the end and object of his going to work. To earn these wages he works all day in the harvest field. This then is the instrumental cause, for by it as an instrument be gains his end—wages. But something is still needed to set him on to his work. This is the will of his employer, which is therefore the initial cause, as originating the work, and making him the instrument of its execution. If not strictly logical, this will explain what we mean when we say that the resurrection of Christ was the initial or originating cause of our regeneration. Our blessed Lord said to his sorrowing disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." When, then, he ascended up on high, and sat down in the heavenly places, the members of his mystical body ascended also, and sat down with him, for as they were buried with him, and rose with him, so they ascended with him; and, when he took possession of the seat given to him in glory, virtual possession was given them of the mansions in his Father's house, in and with him as their Head and Representative. He said, therefore, to his and their heavenly Father, "The glory which you have given me I have given them." (John 17:22.) And this will explain the meaning of those words of the Apostle, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans 8:30.) They are glorified in anticipation, as already mystically sitting with Christ in glory in heavenly places. But the chief point for us to consider is not so much, or rather not only the doctrine which we have thus endeavored to unfold, but the gracious experience connected with, and flowing out of this ascending with Christ,

and sitting together with him in the heavenly places. This is briefly, but very clearly and powerfully, set forth by the Apostle in those striking words—"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3.)

When, then, our desires and affections ascend to where the Lord Jesus Christ now is, when raised out of all the smoke and fog, din and strife, noise and bustle, cares and anxieties, pursuits and pleasures, sins and sorrows of this earthly scene, we can in faith and hope, in love and affection, live above and beyond all things here below, and beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord—this is being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. When the Lord Jesus went up on high, he entered into his glory. (Luke 24:26; John 7:39.) As then we behold him in his glory in faith and love, there is the reflection of his glory, as we have just intimated from 2 Corinthians 3:18; and saints thus favored enter into heaven when still upon earth, and have the foretaste of the glory which is to be revealed at the Lord’s coming before they are forever clothed with it. There are, indeed, comparatively few who are so highly favored, and even they only at rare intervals, and for short moments; but that does not affect the truth and certainty of the fact. It is a most blessed truth that if we are members of the mystical body of Christ, the deficiency of our experience, though it deprives us of much of the enjoyment, does not deprive us of our interest in, or union with, our great Covenant Head, and of the fruits which spring out of it. But the Apostle proceeds to unfold one main reason why God has thus quickened, delivered, and made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places the members of his mystical body. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7.)

What we now see or feel of the kingdom of grace is but a beginning of what is one day to be revealed. The counsels of God are an unfathomable depth of wisdom, love, and grace; and all that has been yet displayed of them is but a drop of that vast ocean. We, indeed, may well suppose that in the gift of his dear Son, and in the glorious mystery of God manifest in the flesh, there was more wrapped up than the salvation of a few poor souls here and there, and that there was intended to be a richer and greater display of the kingdom given to the Lord Jesus Christ than has ever been yet witnessed in this miserable world, where sin and Satan have so long reigned supreme.

We could not, indeed, unfold this subject, or rather our views upon it, without getting upon controversial or at least doubtful ground, which we wish to avoid; but it is plain, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that there will be one day a display of the exceeding riches of God’s grace, beyond all that has ever yet been seen or known. All that God can do, and has promised to do, in the riches of his grace, has not yet been fully accomplished.

We are but the first fruits of a glorious harvest. At the council at Jerusalem James well expressed the nature of the present dispensation—"Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14.) God is now in his dealings with the Gentiles taking out of them a people for his name; but a time is coming when there will be a fuller display of the riches of his grace. God’s own word, which cannot be broken, is, "But as truly

as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numbers 14:21.) And agreeably with that oath or promise, runs the declaration of the prophet, that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9) Without entering into disputed points, may we not simply ask, Have these promises been yet fulfilled? Has the earth been yet filled with the glory of the Lord? Look how the waters cover the seas from shore to shore. Has the knowledge of the Lord thus filled the earth from sea to sea, from shore to shore, so that every place has been full of the knowledge of the Lord? Are not the dark places of the earth still full of the habitations of cruelty? Not to speak of such countries as India, China, Turkey, look at France, Italy, Germany, even our own favored isle, and see how sin runs down our streets like water, and instead of the knowledge of the Lord filling the lands as waters cover the sea, see rather how ignorance of him, contempt of his word and will, open disobedience to his clear commands, and iniquities of every shape and name, fill every place and spread themselves from shore to shore.

We cannot pursue this subject, but it is sometimes refreshing to a soul wearied with the spectacle of the sins and sorrows which make this world such a scene of misery, to believe on the testimony of God himself in his holy word, that it shall not be always so, that a time is coming when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. In these ages to come God will show in a more full and complete manner the exceeding riches of his grace, of which he has already given us a pledge, and foretaste in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. The mention of grace fires, as it were, the Apostle’s soul, and therefore he drops for the moment the view which he had cast into the ages to come of the exceeding riches of grace, then to be more fully revealed, and directs his pen to the clearer opening of the nature of grace, and of salvation by grace—"For by grace are you saved through faith—and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9.)

It is hardly necessary for us to explain what grace is or means. The simplest view of it is the truest and best. View it then as simply meaning favor, and thus expressive of that special favor with which God regards his people in Christ. The point on which the Apostle chiefly dwells both here and elsewhere is the grand distinction between grace and works in the matter of salvation. It must be either by one or the other, for they are mutually opposed to each other, as he argues elsewhere—"And if they are saved by God’s grace, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s wonderful grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved." (Romans 11:6.) It is clear that if I am to be saved, it must be either by my own obedience to the law of God, or apart from that obedience as an act of pure favor on the part of God toward me. I must either be one or the other; for if works be once taken into account, then there must be a strict and rigid examination of these works to ascertain whether they are really good; and if, on examination by the holy and unswerving law of God, they be found not good, their condemnation must ensue as a necessary consequence. If I have a debt to pay, and the money which I bring is forged, false, or counterfeit, it is not only not paying my debt, but it is adding a crime to non-payment. All, then, being alike debtors, and none able to pay a farthing of their debt for lack of good and right money, those who are acquitted of their debt must be so on the footing of pure favor from their great Creditor, or else they must incur the due penalty, which is to be shut up in the prison of everlasting woe.

Now, by this grace or pure favor of God we are saved through faith, faith itself being the special gift of God; and thus the very medium by which we receive salvation, and become manifestly interested in it, is not of ourselves. The eye which sees salvation in the person and work of the Son of God, the ear which hears and receives the glad tidings, the hand which lays hold of and embraces the Savior in his atoning blood and justifying obedience, are all the special gift of God. Do we see Jesus and salvation in and through him? God has opened our eyes to see. Have we heard his blessed voice? God has given us ears to hear. Have we laid hold of him, and brought him into our heart in all his saving benefits and blessings? God gave us that faith by revealing his dear Son in us, and making him spiritually and experimentally known to our souls. But the Apostle assigns a special reason why salvation should not be of works, "Lest any man should boast." It is a peculiar feature in the revealed character and government of God that he will not allow anyone to boast himself in his presence. He is a jealous God, and will never allow the creature to arrogate to itself any part of the glory which belongs solely to him. The Apostle, therefore, assigns this as a sufficient reason why Abraham could not be justified by works, for if he were he would have whereof to glory; but this, he says, "not before God," that is, can never be allowed before and in the presence of God, for it is opposed to the whole of his character, to his revealed will, and fixed determination. (Romans 4:2.) He therefore says, in the same strain of argument, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? No—but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:27-28.) As if holding in his hand the balances of the sanctuary, and weighing in them salvation by grace and salvation by works, that which turns the scale is which of these two ways excludes boasting. As, then, salvation by works favors boasting, and salvation by grace excludes it, the matter is at once decided; that scale must weigh the heavier in which there is no human glory.

You will observe that the Apostle does not introduce into this question the point of the goodness or badness of the works. He merely takes the principle of works generally as meritorious, and enabling the worker to present them as such for acceptance. That they should allow boasting is sufficient for his argument, as an unanswerable and a priori objection to their claim being for one moment tolerated. Thus the doctrine of salvation by works is cut up in limine; as soon as it comes into court. Before the advocate is allowed to plead, the judge asks him, "Does this plea of yours admit of boasting on the part of the plaintiff? If it does, it cannot be entertained in this court, and I shall stop the trial at once. This is the King’s court, and no cause can be heard or tried here which allows of any glory except to our sovereign Lord the King." This is the whole force of the Apostle’s argument, and so strong was it that he draws from it the certain conclusion that we are justified by faith, because it excludes boasting, and not by works, which allow it. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28.) The great question has always been, "How is a man to be saved?" Now there are but two possible ways—by works or by grace, by merit or by favor. Paul declares himself for salvation by grace, by special favor, and not by merit, in which he stood alone against all the legalists of his day. And such views had he of the honor and majesty of God, and such a holy zeal for the glory of God, that it was sufficient for him to decide the whole matter that salvation by grace brought glory to God—and salvation by works brought glory to man. On this point he takes his stand; here he firmly plants his foot. There needed, therefore, no long and laborious examination of this or that man’s works, not even of Abraham’s, the very friend of God, whether they were good or bad. It is a sufficient argument to dispose of the whole question, that as the creature is not allowed to boast itself before God, a way

of salvation which, as a principle of merit, allows of that boasting, is ipso facto, primarily, thoroughly, and fundamentally wrong, and must, without further investigation, be condemned and cast out of court, as utterly opposed to the character of God and repugnant to the eyes of his glory. But we must reserve to our next paper the further consideration of salvation by grace, and not of works, lest any man should boast.

03.02.05. Part Five

Part V.

Among the innumerable displays of the infinite wisdom of God which the gospel of his grace has revealed and brought to light, must be named the special provision which he has made—that good works should hold therein a fitting and appropriate place. One of the strongest objections which cavilers and opponents have in all ages brought against the doctrine of salvation wholly and solely by grace is, that it supersedes the necessity of good works, and thus by virtually, if not nullifying, yet reducing them to insignificance, opens a door directly or indirectly for licentiousness. Could this charge be substantiated, it would be almost fatal to the claims of free grace as a divine revelation, for a holy God could not sanction, much less devise and reveal, a scheme of salvation which, by encouraging sin, should break down the very barriers of moral rectitude. Even our natural conscience—even our dim and misty notions of right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil—would be shocked at, and revolt from any conclusion which would impair the holiness of God, or represent him as sanctioning or licensing sin. In order, therefore, to secure the gospel from so fatal a charge, God has made a special provision that good works shall occupy in it a high and honorable place. That good works should save is one thing, that they should be wholly set aside is another. Not only, then, shall they, according to God’s appointment, not be set aside, but they shall be raised in worth and value. They shall be made a means of glorifying God—which sets on them a higher and nobler stamp than if they merely effected or concurred in the salvation of man. They shall be done from higher, better, and purer motives—they shall be wrought by the blessed Spirit—they shall be accepted by and approved of God as fruits of righteousness, which grow upon and manifest the living branches of the only true Vine. But let us, taking up the thread of our exposition, observe more particularly the place in which they are set by the Apostle in the chapter before us—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10.) Several points, thus placed before us, demand our attentive observation.

1. Observe, first, what is here declared of those who are saved by grace through faith—that they are God’s "workmanship." The word here translated "workmanship," means in the original not so much the act or skill of the workman as the effect and product of that act and skill, and may therefore be more simply rendered "work." "We are his work"—the fruit and product of his creative hand. All, then, that we are and all that we have that is spiritual, and as such acceptable to God, we owe to the special operation of his power. There is not a thought of our heart, word of our lips, or work of our hands, which is truly holy and heavenly, innocent and sincere, glorifying to God or profitable to man, of which he is not by his Spirit and grace the divine and immediate Author.

Now beautifully is this expressed by the Church of old, and what an echo do her accents find in every gracious heart—"But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you our potter; and we all are the work of your hand." (Isaiah 64:8.) How suitable, how expressive is the figure of the clay and the potter. Look at the moist clay under the potter’s hand. How soft, how tender, how

passive is the clay; how strong, how skillful are the hands which mold it into shape. As the wheel revolves, how every motion of the potter's fingers shapes the yielding clay, and with what exquisite skill does every gentle pressure, every imperceptible movement impress upon it the exact form which it was in his mind to make it assume. How sovereign was the hand which first took the clay, as the Apostle declares—"Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Romans 9:21.) And as divine sovereignty first took the clay, so divine sovereignty shapes it when taken into form.

Good works, therefore, properly so called, spring out of the inward operation of God's grace. By making the tree good he makes the fruit good. (Matthew 12:33.) He works in us first the will to do that which is good, and then he gives us the power. He thus works in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. (Php 2:13.) Under the operations of his grace we are transformed by the renewing of our mind to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; (Romans 12:2;) and as this will is sought after to be known and done, good works follow as the necessary fruit.

All those acts of love and affection, of kindness, sympathy, and liberality towards the Lord's people; all those instances of self-denial and willingness rather to suffer than to do wrong; all those proofs of unselfish desire to do all the good we can according to our means, position, and circumstances of life; all that striving after and maintaining integrity and uprightness of conduct in all matters of business and trust; all that strict and scrupulous adherence to our word, even to our own injury; all that Christian fulfillment of our relative duties, and the social relationships of husband and father, wife and mother, which the scripture has enjoined—in a word, all those works which by almost unanimous consent are called "good" by men, are only really and truly good as wrought in the heart, lips, and life by the power of God. But we must not linger too long on this one feature of good works, but pass on to show how they are the fruit of special ordination. Thus we are said to be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them." The performance of good works by his people, God, according to this testimony of the Apostle, is secured by three things—1. Sovereign ordination; 2. Actual creation; 3. Effectual operation. The last point we considered first, because the Apostle first names it by declaring that we are God's "workmanship." The two other points we shall now briefly consider:

2. Observe, then, that God has before ordained that we should walk in good works; that is, in the performance of them. Good works, therefore, are subjects of divine decree. This secures their performance, and they are thus as much a matter of predestination as the persons of the elect. Peter therefore declares that we are "elect unto obedience." (1 Peter 1:2.) Election unto eternal life, unto salvation, unto the blood of sprinkling many gladly hear of, receive, and profess. This, they say, is sweet and precious doctrine. And so indeed it is. But do they find or feel any similar sweetness and preciousness in being chosen and ordained to know and do the will of God? Do they see and feel the blessedness of the precept being secured by divine decree, as well as the promise—and that there is a constraining power in the love of Christ, under which they experience a holy and sacred pleasure in no longer living unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again—similar in kind, if not in degree—to the pleasure which they experience in knowing they were ordained unto eternal life?

We hear much of election unto salvation. Many preach it, more profess it. But how many of these preachers, how many of these professors of the doctrine of election gladly preach or gladly hear of being elect unto obedience, or being ordained unto the performance of good works? And why, but because, even by the verdict of their own consciences, their lack of obedience would disprove their election, and their non-performance of good works would show they had neither part nor lot in this divine ordination? But until this obedience be rendered, until these good works be brought forth, half of the sweetness and blessedness of real religion and of salvation by grace is not felt or known, nor the liberty of the gospel thoroughly realized or enjoyed—for the gospel must be obeyed and lived, as well as received and believed, that its full liberating, sanctifying influences may be experienced, as sweetening the narrow and rugged path of doing and suffering the whole will of God.

3. But observe further, that believers are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The word "unto" means "for the purpose of." Among other ends, therefore, for which believers are made new creatures in Christ, one is that they may be fruitful in every good word and work. This creation in Christ Jesus unto good works carries out their ordination unto them. As because they were ordained to eternal life, they were called by grace, and thus effectual calling follows upon and proves their predestination, so because they were ordained unto good works, they are created unto the performance of them. This creation is that new creation of which the Apostle elsewhere speaks—"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or, more literally, "creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17.) So also in this epistle—"And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24.) And again—"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Colossians 3:10.) All these texts speak the same clear, uniform language, that good works are the fruits of that new nature, that heavenly and divine principle which, as born of the Spirit, is spirit. This, therefore, sets good works in a very high, holy, and honorable place, and effectually distinguishes them from the good works of amiable, benevolent, active, and zealous men, which, however useful and beneficial to suffering humanity, are not wrought in them by the power of God, nor fruits of a new creation in Christ Jesus. By thus keeping close to the inspired language of the Apostle, we avoid two great mistakes as regards good works—1. We do not ignore them, neglect them, slight them, and by never mentioning, dwelling, or insisting upon them, virtually set them aside. 2. We do not legalize them, and thus make out of them a yoke of bondage. They are not the tree, nor the sap of the tree—but the FRUITS of the tree, by which the nature and goodness of the tree are made manifest, and openly seen and known. As the goodness of the vine is seen and known by the goodness of the grapes; as their number, color, size, and flavor manifest to all who see and taste them the exact sort, cultivation, and character of the vine itself, so it is with the good works of the saints of God. They are outward marks and proofs of the inward grace of God, and by them the true saints of God are manifested to be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And similarly by the lack of them are distinguished those dead professors, who so abound in our day, of whom Jude speaks, as "trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." But as we are not preaching on the subject of good works, but attempting to open the chapter before us in a way of simple, experimental exposition, we shall now proceed with the Apostle—"Therefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,

and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:11-12.) There is a break in the subject here. Up to this point, from the very commencement of the epistle, the Apostle had been dwelling upon the rich and wondrous blessings which God in his grace had bestowed upon the saints in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus. Commencing with their election in Christ, he had traced out blessing after blessing in him, until he had brought them out as trees of righteousness, bearing abundant fruit, and thus glorifying God. But now, lest they should be lifted up with pride, and think that there was something in them more than in others which drew down upon them those special distinguishing favors, he reminds them of their base original, and especially of this circumstance, that they were Gentiles, and as such had no interest in the promises made to the literal Israel. "The Circumcision in the flesh made by hands," that is, the literal Israel, Israel after the flesh, the lineal descendants of Abraham, the Jews, had an interest in the promises, and especially in the great promise of the Messiah, who was to come from Israel and to Israel. As physical Israel has been for a time cast off from the favor of God, we are very apt to overlook the privileges possessed by it, and much study of the Scriptures, both Old and New, and simple adherence to the testimony of God therein, in spite of our own powerful prejudices and current opinions, are necessary to understand the mind of the Spirit concerning the ancient family of God.

Paul enumerates the privileges of ancient Israel very clearly and concisely—"Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." (Romans 9:4-5.) It would take us too far from our subject to explain the privileges thus enumerated, and to show the position of physical Israel at the time when the gospel was first preached as well as now. That position is well and clearly opened in Peter’s address to them (Acts 3:22-26); and by Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13:46-47) In Christ, as chosen and blessed in him, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, as Paul speaks—"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (Galatians 4:28.) And again—"There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." (Colossians 3:11.) But there is a ’distinction in privilege’, and this distinction is clearly opened in the words—"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to you among the Gentiles, and sing unto your name." (Romans 15:8-9.) Thus what the Jew received at the first promulgation of the gospel, he received by promise—but what the Gentile received he received by pure mercy. The distinction between them may be thus illustrated.

Here are two men, equally needy. To the one I have promised help, to the other not. When, then, I give a present to the former, I give it according to promise; when I give a present to the latter, I give it of pure favor. As Gentiles, therefore, these Ephesian saints had no claim upon God. They were not children of any covenant which God had made with their fathers. Intimations, indeed, of intended mercy for the Gentiles were scattered up and down the Scriptures, some of which the Apostle quotes, Romans 15:10-12; and the grand promise made to Abraham, that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," folded in its all-embracing arms Gentile as well as Jew. But as Gentiles they were far off from God, and their wicked lives, their foul idolatries, their gross superstitions, their dense ignorance, their natural atheism and infidelity set them farther still.

The Apostle, therefore, sets before them their state as Gentiles, that he may impress more clearly and powerfully upon them their obligations to free, sovereign, and superabounding grace.

Thus he goes on to tell them—"That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12.) They were, in their natural state, before divinely quickened and made alive unto God, "without Christ," that is, without manifest union and communion with him. The word translated "without" is the same as occurs in the expression, "Without me you can do nothing;" where we read in the margin, "severed from me." Though in the purposes of God, and by their eternal election in Christ, they were members of his mystical body, they had not been baptized into Christ by the Spirit so as to be made living members of his spiritual body, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13), and therefore had not "put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27.) And as they were, such were we. We were "without Christ" in our Gentile days. He had no place in our thoughts. We knew nothing of his Person and work, blood and righteousness, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. He was to us a root out of a dry ground, and in our eyes he had no form nor loveliness. His name might have been on our lips, but his Spirit and grace were not in our hearts. And if matters be in any way different now with us, if there be any faith on him, hope in him, or love to him, grace has wrought it all. Let us never forget what we were before we were called by grace. Let the remembrance of our sins and of the whole bent and current of our lives be bitter to us, that we may all the more prize and admire the riches of that sovereign grace which stooped to us in our low and lost estate. The paschal lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs. The remembrance of Egyptian bondage should ever accompany the enjoyment of gospel liberty, and godly sorrow for sin the feeding on the flesh of Christ.

They were also "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." It is hard for us to realize now the peculiar position which Israel occupied as the outward people of God. The word "commonwealth" means rather "polity"—its literal translation; and by the polity of Israel we are to understand the whole of their civil, religious, and national fabric. God himself had built them up into a nation different from all other nations. He had assigned them a peculiar land, of which he put them into possession. He gave them a code of laws—moral, civil, and religious. He appointed rites and sacrifices, by which he was to be approached and worshiped. He set apart a peculiar tribe, that of Levi, to minister in his service, and a peculiar family of that tribe, the house of Aaron, to minister at his altar and in his tabernacle. He thus made of Israel a peculiar commonwealth, or rather a polity, and as such it had privileges peculiar to itself, and such as no other nation on earth ever possessed.

Now, the Ephesian saints, and all other Gentile believers in common with them, were "aliens from this commonwealth of Israel," and therefore had no part or lot, share or interest in the laws, privileges, sacrifices, and ceremonies of that peculiar people. When, then, the blessings of the gospel were extended to them, God went, so to speak, out of his way—not, indeed, out of the way of his secret will and the firm decrees of the everlasting covenant, but out of the way marked in the lines of his word; and when Israel, as a people, by the voice of their leaders rejected the Son of God and crucified the Lord of glory, the stream of blessing was diverted from its natural and prescribed course, and turned into the Gentile wilderness, to make the desert rejoice and to blossom as the rose.

Similarly they were "strangers from the covenants of promise." There is a little apparent difficulty in the word "covenant," as being in the plural, not the singular number; for God’s covenant with Israel after the flesh was really but one, and is so spoken of by the Apostle, Galatians 3:15-17; Galatians 4:24; Hebrews 8:9; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:1. But he speaks also, Romans 9:4, of the "covenants" as Israel’s peculiar privilege. We explain the difficulty thus—The covenant made with Israel was really and truly but one, but as given and renewed on more than one occasion, it may be viewed as several. There were two special occasions on which this covenant with Israel was made. 1. It was made first with Abraham (Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:2-8.) 2. It was made secondly with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. (Exodus 34:10; Exodus 34:27; Deuteronomy 5:2.) Thus though the covenant with Israel was really but one, yet as thus repeated and enlarged, and stored with fuller and clearer promises, it may be spoken of as more than one. In a similar manner we speak of "the charters" of our early English kings, though really and truly Magna Charta is the great and only charter, of which all subsequent charters were but the renewing, enlarging, and re-establishing.

These covenants contained promises, some absolute and others conditional, and therefore are called "the covenants of promise." The original promises made to Abraham were absolute and unconditional. These were mainly three. 1. That the Lord would be a God to him and to his seed after him. 2. That in his seed Christ (Galatians 3:16) all the nations of the earth should be blessed. 3. That he would give the land of Canaan to him and his posterity for an everlasting possession. These promises were absolute and unconditional, and have never been revoked, though the first and third are in abeyance. But the promises made at Mount Sinai were conditional. See, for instance, Deuteronomy 28:1-68, and observe how conditional the promises contained in it are. Every blessing was promised them if obedient; every curse threatened if they were disobedient. The conditional character of those blessings is well summed up, Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Now the Gentiles were strangers to those covenants of promise. They were not altogether without promises, for they had an interest in the one great promise, besides scattered promises of intended mercy; but they had no promises made to them in and by a specially revealed covenant. Mercy, therefore, comes to them out of the overflowings of God’s grace, and this makes it doubly precious.

03.02.06. Part Six

Part VI.

How graphic, how forcible is the language of Scripture! How a few simple words, inspired and dictated by the holy Spirit, describe our condition by nature, and especially that of the heathen world, as uninspired man could never have expressed it, with the utmost of his boasted wisdom, knowledge, or skill. "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "By nature the children of wrath even as others;" "Strangers from the covenants of promise;" how forcible are these expressions, and how, by a few simple touches, they lay out, as it were, for open view, the whole length and breadth of man’s fallen state. And now come two expressions which seem almost more than any other to describe the forlorn and miserable condition of man as alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart—"Having no hope, and without God in the world."

Pursuing, then, our fixed track, we shall now proceed with our exposition of the chapter before us.

1. The first expression which demands our attention is "having no hope," as specially descriptive of the state and condition by nature of the Gentile world before God. By "having no hope" is meant that they had no well-grounded hope, no hope such as God would recognize, or to which salvation was attached (Romans 8:24); and the reason was because no special promises had been given to them or prospect of deliverance held out to them by the word of God from their state of death in sin, or from the wrath of God, which was their due as sinners. For them there was no covenant of which God could be mindful. They might groan under their misery. The whole earth might be filled with the habitations of cruelty; widows and orphans might be plundered and oppressed; torrents of innocent blood be shed; wickedness triumph; crime go unpunished, and earth be a charnel house, in which the victims of ambition and war should be slaughtered by myriads without help or hope. As Elihu said, "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none says, Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?" (Job 35:9-10.) None of the oppressed could say, "Where is God my Maker?" To none of them were given "songs in the night," in the hope of deliverance; but they perished in sullen silence, or reckless despair. Whatever misery they suffered, it was not with them as with the children of Israel in Egypt—that God heard the groaning of the prisoners, for there was no covenant that he had made with or for them which he had to remember. (Exodus 2:24.)

Thus on the side of God, the Gentiles had no hope, for he was not bound to look upon them, or have respect unto them; and on their own side they had no covenant to look to (for a covenant implies two parties,) as containing any promises of mercy for them. Nor had they any written revelation of the mind and will of God afforded them, and nothing beyond the faint remains of tradition, such as sacrifices, which they abused, or what they could learn of his eternal power and Godhead—those invisible things which were to be seen and understood by the things that were made, but which not retaining in their knowledge, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:20-21.)

How different from this condition was that of Israel! An Israelite under oppression or trouble had a covenant to which he could look, full of promises; sacrifices which, to an enlightened mind, spoke of atonement by the blood of Messiah to come; a written revelation which he could read, as unfolding to him the mind and will of God; priests who could teach him (Malachi 2:6-7); and prophets who could warn, admonish, or encourage him. The prayer of the Levites (Nehemiah 9:5-37) most beautifully and touchingly unfolds the peculiar privileges of Israel, with their abuse of them, and yet the infinite, unchangeable mercies of God in spite of their disobedience. If individually and personally, or even to a great extent nationally, the children of Israel abused all these privileges, and made God's name blasphemed among the heathen (Romans 2:24), that did not affect their relationship to God by outward covenant, nor cancel his promises to them. To the Jew, therefore, there was hope, for to him belonged the promises. But to the Gentile there was no hope, for with him God had made no covenant, and to him, therefore, there were, on that ground, no promises.

We find, therefore, the apostles preaching the gospel in a different way to the Jews and the Gentiles. To the Jews it was preached as a fulfillment of the covenant and the promises made to their fathers. Thus Peter, after telling them that "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, had glorified his Son Jesus," whom they had denied and killed, at the close of his discourse says—"You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:25-26.) In almost a similar way Paul preached to the Jews at Antioch, in Pisidia—"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, You are my Son, this day have I begotten you." (Acts 13:32-33.) But when they preached to the Gentiles, they preached simple faith and repentance—"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent; because he has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the dead," (Acts 17:30-31.) Our space does not admit of our dwelling further on this point, but, unless clearly seen and understood, much of the Acts and the Epistles will be dark and obscure. In fact, it was the great and absorbing question of that day. To return, then, to our exposition. "Having no hope." What a knell do these words seem to ring to the whole of the Gentile world! "Having no hope." Picture to yourself an emigrant ship, crowded with passengers, which has just struck on a hidden rock in the middle of the sea, and is now slowly sinking in the deep waters; figure to yourself their terror when the captain, abandoning all further effort to save the ship, says, "There is now no hope!" Or take the idea of a beloved husband on his dying bed, and picture the agony of the poor distressed wife, soon to be a forlorn widow, when the physician says, "There is no hope!" Or, what is nearer still, figure to yourself a dying man, almost if not wholly in the jaws of despair, feeling and crying out, "There is no hope! I must go to hell, with all my sins on my head!" How forlorn, how dreadful are all these cases! To have lost all hope is to have lost what often is our chief support under pain, trouble, and affliction, which we only bear with some degree of patience as looking forward in hope to a change for the better. But suppose, just as the ship is about to sink, deliverance comes in the

near approach of a vessel; or a favorable turn is given to the sickness of the dying man; or the Lord breaks in on the soul of the poor despairing sinner. There is now hope, and this is a hope which makes not ashamed. The passengers and crew are saved; the dying husband restored to health; the despairing sinner blessed with pardon and peace. Such is the gospel to the poor Gentile, when it becomes to him the power of God unto salvation, and all the more prized and precious because it comes to him when without hope.

2. But now comes the last and as if finishing touch to this powerful description of the Ephesian Gentiles before called by grace—"And without God in the world." The word rendered "without God," is literally "atheists." But what a description does this one lifelike touch give of the carnal, godless, atheistical state of the heathen world. Ignorant of him in whom they lived and moved and had their being, and who had given them life and breath and all things, they thought, spoke, and acted as if they had had no Creator who had called them into existence, no Preserver who had maintained their being, no Judge to whom they were accountable for their actions, no Avenger of oppression, no Protector of the oppressed. They were atheists in the true and proper sense of the word, for their gods were either mute idols of wood and stone, or deified representatives of every lust and crime which had debased human nature below the beasts. Jupiter, their head god, at whose nod Olympus trembled, was guilty of incest, adultery, rape, and other crimes for which, in this country, he would have been hanged; Bacchus was a drunken profligate; Mercury was an accomplished thief; and Venus a prostitute. Thus their very religion, such as it was, debased and degraded their minds, fostered every vile lust and passion by the example of their deities, and was really, as the Apostle declares (1 Corinthians 10:20-21), a service and a sacrifice to devils. But we need not pursue this point further, as it is sufficiently plain.

Let us then apply this description of the state of the Gentiles by nature to our own case. It is true that, viewed outwardly, we do not stand exactly in the same position with the heathen nations. Living in a nominally Christian land, the word of God having come to us in both Old and New Testaments the gospel being preached with more or less clearness in our midst, many examples of Christian men and women being daily before our eyes, having had parents, or teachers, or friends who knew something of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, our case by nature was not outwardly so hopeless, or our state so thoroughly atheistic as that of the Ephesian Gentiles. We would be unmindful of, and ungrateful to the providence of God which has cast our birth in this highly favored land, if we despised as worthless and valueless all such privileges; and yet, spiritually and experimentally viewed, as far as the salvation of our souls is concerned, there was but little real difference between us and them, for we had no well-grounded hope of eternal life, and, if not speculatively and avowedly infidels or atheists, practically and really we were without God in the world. Acknowledging him by our lips, we denied him in our hearts and by our lives; and if we did not worship gods of wood and stone, or deify our lusts, yet idols filled every niche of our heart, and we lived in rebellious defiance of the God of heaven. Thus practical, if not speculative infidels and atheists, we thought, spoke, and acted as if there were no God who searched our heart, heard our words, marked our actions, hated our sins, or would bring us into judgment for them. Such we were, such we would have continued to be, such we would have lived, and such would we have died, but for the sovereign, superabounding grace of God.

"O to grace how great a debtor!"

It is only by taking a view of our state by nature, and seeing and feeling what grace has delivered us from, that we learn how free, how full, how superabounding grace is.

Having thus beautifully and graphically described the state by nature and practice of these Gentile Ephesians, the Apostle now goes on to show how mercy, pure mercy, reached their case—"But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13.) How continually does the Apostle bring before us union with Christ Jesus as the foundation of all spiritual blessings! If you will read carefully the first chapter of this Epistle, you will see how again and again he says, "in Christ Jesus," "in Christ," "in the Beloved," "in whom," as if he would dwell on this union as a bee dwells on a flower to suck all its sweetness, and fetch away the honey for others also. And observe also, as to be "without Christ" is to have no hope, and to be without God in the world, so to be "in Christ" is to be made near unto God by his precious blood. As poor Gentile sinners we were "far off." Sin had set us at an infinite distance from God. For us there was no hope; and being dead in trespasses and sins, under the influence and guidance of the Prince of the power of the air, children of wrath, even as others, without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world, we were as far from God as sin and Satan could set us. Whence, then, and why did mercy come to us in our low and lost estate? The key to it lies in the words "in Christ Jesus." These three simple words harmonize the two chapters. Taking us back to eternal election in Christ, and to redemption through his blood, they tell us why these poor hopeless and godless heathens, and we among them, who were once (that is, formerly) afar off have been made near by the blood of Christ. Thus it is not the whole of the heathen world who are made near by the blood of Christ, either by universal redemption, or as put, as modern divines teach, in a salvable condition. But it is those who had been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the foundation of the world, and therefore were interested in that everlasting covenant which was both anterior and superior to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There was no covenant made with the whole body of the Gentiles as with the whole body of the Jews; and therefore the whole body of the Gentiles was not brought near by the blood of Christ as the whole body of the Jews by the blood of the sacrifices. The blood of the everlasting covenant was shed for elect Gentiles, and elect Jews, and these only are brought near unto God by it.

It was, therefore, only as having an eternal union with Christ, as being chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and having redemption by his precious blood as a fruit of that union, that these poor, godless Gentiles were brought near unto God. These, and these only, are called by grace; these, and these only, are quickened from a death in sin, for it is by grace only, that is the free, distinguishing favor of God, that they are saved.

We, therefore, read—"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," or, as the word might be rendered, "Those who were to be saved." (Acts 2:47.) And again—"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48.) We must carefully distinguish between the world at large and the elect, whether Jew or Gentile, or we shall fall into confusion. Whatever distinction there was between Jew and Gentile as to outward privilege, distinct from, and independent of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, no such distinction exists between them as viewed in union with him. In him all such distinctions vanish. As chosen in his dear Son, as blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, accepted in the Beloved, and redeemed by his precious blood, all the elect of God, whether Jew or Gentile, stand before him one in Christ Jesus. But how are they brought near by the blood of Christ? They are so in two senses—1. As regards

their persons; and 2. As regards their experience.

1. As redeemed by the blood of Christ, the separation and distance from God, caused by sin, are put away and removed. It was sin which separated between them and God. (Isaiah 60:2.) Being enemies in their mind by wicked works, they were far off from him. But when Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26), he by his precious blood reconciled their persons unto God, and thus brought them near unto him.

2. And when they receive the atonement (or "reconciliation," margin, Romans 5:11), that is into their hearts and consciences, then they are brought near unto God in their own happy experience. There is no other way of being made near unto God, either as regards the acceptance of our persons or access to his presence. But now observe what further benefits and blessings spring out of being thus brought near by the blood of Christ—"For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." (Ephesians 2:14.) He is our peace. This necessarily springs from being reconciled and brought near by the blood of Christ. Sin has not only made us enemies to God, but made God an enemy to us. What peace, then, can there be between us while thus mutual enemies? Peace is between friends, not between foes. During this state of hostility and warfare, as there is no real peace, so there can be no felt or enjoyed peace. But the removal of the cause of the war brings about peace, first really and then experimentally. Christ has made peace through the blood of the cross. (Colossians 1:20.) There is now no enmity on the part of God, for it was a law enmity. God always loved his people in Christ; and as he is unchanging and unchangeable, he never could or did hate them. But as a judge is an enemy to a criminal, even were that criminal his own son, so as Judge and Lawgiver, God was an enemy to his own elect, viewed as law-breakers. But when the law was fulfilled, and all the breaches of it atoned for by the obedience and death of his dear Son, then this law enmity was removed, and the anger of God against sin and the sinner pacified. Sin, therefore, being put away, the whole cause of that law enmity is removed; and when we believe in the Son of God, and receive the atonement by his precious blood, then there is no enmity on our side; for the goodness, mercy, and love of God melt the heart into the sweetest humility, affection, and love to and before him. But Christ "is our peace" in another sense, and this seems to be the chief drift of the Apostle here. There existed a deadly enmity between Jew and Gentile. The Jew loathed and abhorred the Gentile, and the Gentile hated and despised the Jew. To the Jew—the Gentile was an unclean dog, with whom he would neither eat nor drink, whose very touch was profanation, and his presence in the land of Judea a hateful and intolerable burden. To the Gentile—the Jew was odious from his narrow bigotry, his obstinacy, his refusal of all communion, his grasping covetousness, and his hatred of a foreign yoke. When, then, elect Jew and elect Gentile were alike brought near by the blood of Christ, they needed to be reconciled to one another as well as unto God, and as all those distinctions which had kept them separate were done away in Christ, they were to be united in the closest bonds of affection and love. As one in Christ they must also be one with each other. In this sense Christ is "our peace." The Apostle therefore adds—"And has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." There seems to be some allusion here to the temple at Jerusalem, in which there was a low wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the inner court, which none but Jews might enter. There is a similar allusion to this in Revelation 11:1-2, where the outer court of the temple is given to the Gentiles. This middle wall of partition symbolized, therefore, the separation between Jew and Gentile, which was one cause of the enmity between them. The Jew,

as we see from Acts 21:28-31, viewed the entrance of a Gentile into the temple, or even beyond the outward court, as polluting the holy place, and a crime worthy of death. And the Gentile so resented this exclusion that the object of every foreign conqueror, as in the case of Antiochus, Heliodorus, Pompey, etc., was to break through this restriction, and personally enter into and profane the most holy place. As long, then, as the middle wall of partition stood, Jew and Gentile were kept asunder. But the blessed Lord, as our peace, and by uniting into his own mystical body elect Jew and elect Gentile, and thus making them one in himself, broke down (it is literally "loosened," or "dissolved") the middle wall of partition between them. Thus all distinction between Jew and Gentile is dissolved and gone. No middle wall of partition now separates them, for they are one in Christ Jesus.

All this may seem very plain and simple to us, but it was not so when first revealed and made known. Indeed it was the mystery made known to Paul by special revelation. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." (Ephesians 3:3-6.) This mystery, or, as the word means, heavenly secret, hidden in the bosom of God from the beginning of the world, was the union of elect Jews and elect Gentiles into one mystical body, of which Christ should be the ever-living and glorious Head. He had, therefore, to remove out of the way all causes of separation between them, and thus break down the middle wall of partition. But there was another cause of separation of which the middle wall in the temple was but a symbol—"By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new person from the two groups." (Ephesians 2:15.) The Jews had a law which the Gentiles had not. This law the Apostle calls "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." By this we understand chiefly the ceremonial law, which he calls "the enmity," as being the main cause of the enmity which existed between Jew and Gentile. It was by the ceremonial law that the Jew was peculiarly separated from the Gentile. At Mount Sinai God gave not only the ten commandments, or moral law, but all those ordinances of worship which we call ceremonial, as chiefly consisting in the performance of a number of prescribed rites and ceremonies. These rites and ceremonies being for Israel only, and intended not only to give them a right and acceptable worship of God, but to keep them separate from all other nations, fostered, through the depravity of man’s heart, enmity against the Gentiles. God bade separation, as needful for their preservation as his peculiar people; but their national and religious pride turned separation into enmity. Similarly, the Gentile burnt with enmity against the Jew for his exclusive spirit, and against the ordinances which caused it and fostered the enmity which sprang out of it. This law of commandments, then, contained in ordinances Jesus abolished in his flesh, that is in and by his incarnation, for by his sufferings, blood shedding, and death he not only fulfilled the moral law, but the ceremonial. All the sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies of that burdensome law he fulfilled by his one great sacrifice. All these types and figures he, the anti-type, accomplished, and they then, having served their appointed purpose, were virtually abolished. When, then, he abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances, he abolished at the same time the enmity between Jew and Gentile by abolishing the cause of that enmity. All that had separated them and kept them separate was now removed. Circumcision, sacrifice, temple

worship, meats clean and unclean, fasts and feasts, and the whole Jewish ritual, were virtually abolished; and these causes of separation being removed, the mutual enmity between Jew and Gentile fell with them. All causes of enmity being thus removed, the Lord now could "make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." But we must defer the consideration of this point to our next paper.

Chapter 66

03.02.07. Part Seven

Part VII.

Among the many sad and dreadful fruits of the Adam fall, the enmity between God and man, and the enmity between man and man which sprang out of it, for we class them both together as produced by the same cause, was not the least or last. Sin, which set man at variance with God his Maker, set man also at variance with man his brother; and, as a proof of the breach thus made, the original sin which drove Adam out of Paradise speedily manifested itself in the actual sin which armed the hand of Cain against Abel. As long, then, as sin, the cause, remains, enmity, the effect, must remain too; and nothing but the removing of sin can remove the enmity which sprang out of it, whether it be between God and man, or between man and his fellow. But as the expression "enmity between God and man" may strike some of our readers as harsh, let us explain what we mean by the term.

We have already observed that the enmity on the part of God is what we have called "a law enmity." There is not, there never was on the part of God any real enmity against the people of his love and choice, for enmity and love are incompatible with, and mutually destroy each other; but infinite Justice viewing them as sinners, God was of necessity an enemy to their sins. But this enmity against their sins is not enmity against their persons, no, is perfectly consistent with the purest, deepest love toward them. And here we may, for the sake of clearness, draw a distinction between enmity and anger. Anger reaches the person as well as the sin; but enmity may reach the sin without reaching the person. The Lord was angry with Moses (Deuteronomy 1:37), with Aaron (Deuteronomy 9:20), with Solomon (1 Kings 11:9)—angry with them personally on account of their sins, but was never at enmity with their persons. Moses was still God’s servant, faithful in all his house (Numbers 12:7); Aaron was still the anointed high priest, and the saint of the Lord (Psalms 106:10); and Solomon was still beloved of the Lord (2 Samuel 12:24). We have a very simple, yet forcible illustration of this distinction between anger and enmity in the case of a father and his disobedient, unruly, or profligate son. The father is an enemy to his son’s sins, but not to his son’s person; and the more deeply and tenderly that he loves his son the more is he at enmity with those sins and that conduct which make a separation between them. But as regards his anger, not only is he angry with the sins of his son, but he is angry with his son also on account of those sins. But assume that his son has been drawn into bad courses by the arts of some vile tempter. How does the father feel toward this base wretch through whose instigation or example his son has been drawn aside into sin or crime? Does he not feel enmity against his person, against the man himself, as well as against his vile practices? We thus see that God is an enemy to the persons of the ungodly as well as to their sins; but as regards his people, he is an enemy to their sins, but not to their persons. But assume further that his son repents of and forsakes his sins, and to make our illustration more complete, let the father be a gracious man, and let grace manifestly touch the son’s conscience, and let him come home, like the repenting prodigal, with weeping eyes and a broken heart, confessing his crimes, will there be enmity or even anger between father and son any longer? We would confidently appeal to any gracious father who reads these lines, and whose

grief and affliction it is to have an unruly son, if all his anger would not at once melt away like a snow wreath before the sun at the sight of his boy, and could he well refrain from falling on his neck and kissing away all his doubts and fears of a kind reception? But suppose still further that this prodigal son had run deeply into debt, and that it was necessary that these debts should be paid before he could resume his place in his father's house, would there be any sacrifice which his father would not be willing to make that all those debts might be fully discharged, and that his repenting and reclaimed son might live with him honorably and happily without fear of creditor or jail?

All illustrations must, of course, necessarily be imperfect—but there is still a sufficient analogy between an earthly and a heavenly father which may be available to throw a clearer and fuller light upon the relationship in which God stands to his people and his consequent dealings with them. When, then, our gracious Lord rendered full satisfaction to offended Justice by his obedience, blood shedding, and death, this law enmity on the part of God was removed out of the way, and eternal love could now freely and fully flow forth from his bosom without let or hindrance. It is so necessary for our walking with God in peace and equity to understand, believe, and realize this that we have been induced thus to dwell upon it. The word rendered (Malachi 2:6) "equity" means properly "straightness," and thence signifies, as it is sometimes translated, "righteousness," and "uprightness." To walk, then, with God in equity as well as in peace is to walk with and before him as justified by Christ's righteousness, and with that uprightness of heart, lip, and life which is the fruit and effect of it. But closely connected with the removal of enmity on the part of God, is the removal of enmity on the part of man, both against God and against his brother; and as this is not only a point of great importance, but the main subject of the Apostle's argument in that portion of the chapter which is now before us, we shall here resume our exposition. "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near." (Ephesians 2:14-17.)

There was apparently in the Apostle's mind a blending of several things together which has given to his language a degree of difficulty. It will be, therefore, our pleasing task to unravel, as far as we have light and wisdom bestowed upon us, his mind and meaning, and thus set the whole matter in a clearer point of view before our readers. His grand topic here is reconciliation between God and man and between man and man by the blood of the cross. We shall have, therefore, to unfold the nature and means of this reconciliation in both these instances. The enmity between God and man, and the enmity between man and man, of which we have spoken as springing out of the fall, is of the widest and most desolating nature. When this spark was first lighted it was the kindling of a fire which burns to the lowest hell, the first breaking out of a deadly disease, which has filled earth with the deepest misery and peopled with millions of inhabitants the gloomy regions of eternal despair. No thought or tongue of men or angels can conceive or describe what it is for a man to be at enmity with God; and the records of misery produced by the enmity of man against man might well be written in characters of blood. The havoc, the ruin, the misery, produced by this state of enmity none but the Son of God could repair, and he only by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and by enduring in his own Person the wrath of God justly due to us. The

reconciliation thus effected by his blood shedding and death is beautifully described by the Apostle in the words, "And you that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." (Colossians 1:21-22.) But as reconciliation necessarily implies the removal of all enmity, or it would not be complete, it is needful to observe that this work of reconciliation consists mainly in these three things—(1) the reconciling of the persons of the elect unto God; (2) the reconciling of their understanding, their conscience, their will, and their affections; and (3) the reconciling of them to each other. These three fruits of redeeming blood are expressed or implied by the Apostle in the words before us, which we have already quoted. The reconciliation of their persons, whether Jew or Gentile, is expressed by the words, "And that he might reconcile both unto God." The reconciling of our understanding, conscience, will, and affections is implied by the words, "For he is our peace." And the reconciling of man to man, and especially of Jew to Gentile, is expressed by the words, "For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." But these points need and deserve a fuller explanation, not only for a clearer unfolding of the mind and meaning of the Apostle, but as also involving blessed experimental truth. Upon the first point, the reconciling of our persons unto God, we shall not dwell, as we have already sufficiently touched upon it. But the reconciliation of our understanding, conscience, will, and affections, and the reconciliation of us to one another, are subjects which well deserve our closest attention.

Reconciliation implies the removal of enmity both in its cause and effects, and the uniting of the contending parties in amity, friendship, and peace. The blood of the cross by the atonement made thereby for sin removed the law enmity on the part of God; and the same blood as experimentally revealed, applied, and sprinkled removes also the enmity which there is in our understanding, in our conscience, in our will, and in our affections, and thus produces in them harmony, amity, and peace. But as this enmity must be seen, known, and felt before it can be sensibly removed, we shall, at the risk of a little digressing from our subject, show how it is discovered and brought to light. And here we see the effect of the moral law as distinct from the effect of the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law, as we showed in our last number, provoked and stirred up enmity between Jew and Gentile; but the moral law, entering into the conscience, stirs up and provokes the enmity of the heart against God. This enmity against God, which is the very breath and being of the carnal mind, lies for the most part benumbed and torpid in the heart until roused up as a sleeping lion from his lair, or as a serpent awaked out of its winter’s sleep by a ray of light shining into its hole. How many amiable persons do we find who, never having seen or felt the enmity of their heart against God, would be shocked if they were told that they by nature hated him with absolute hatred.

And, on the other hand, into what deep distress, guilt, and bondage is many a dear child of God thrown by the hissing of the venomous serpent within, by the awful rebellion and enmity which seem to break forth at times as with an overwhelming flood, as if the end would be eternal misery and despair.

Now it is the entrance of the law into the conscience which not only discovers, but stirs up, provokes, and, as it were, puts life into this dreadful enmity of the carnal mind. So Paul felt and found it. "Without the law," he says, that is, without the application of it, "sin was dead." Lust, and enmity, and every other evil lay in him as if dead, without breath or motion; and being able to

discharge all his moral and religious duties without hindrance, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," that is, its external performance, he "was blameless." Thus he was "alive without the law once;" "but when the commandment came," that is, when the law in its spiritual meaning, power, and authority came into his heart, sin, which before was dead, revived, and taking occasion by the commandment deceived him and slew him. And thus he died before God, smitten down by the curse and condemnation of the law, without help or hope. The enmity thus discovered, and irritated also and provoked by the application of the law to the conscience, must be removed before any inward reconciliation can be felt or known. The Apostle, therefore, tells us that it is slain, and shows us how—"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Ephesians 2:16.) The "one body" of which he here speaks is his mystical body, and as this mystical body is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and they are alike enemies to God by wicked works, there was a necessity that both should be alike reconciled unto God, that being knit together as living members of Christ they might have union and communion with him their head, and with each other in him. But this union and communion cannot be felt or realized as long as there is enmity in the heart either against God or against one another. Hence arises the need of reconciliation internally as well as of reconciliation externally—internally of the soul, as externally of the person. It is by the cross, and by the cross alone, that this twofold reconciliation is effected. On the cross and by the cross the blessed Lord slew the enmity, the law enmity which severed God from man, and the carnal enmity which severs man from God.

We have shown how the law in its application to the conscience discovers and provokes this enmity of the carnal mind. As, then, it was needful to remove the law out of the way as being a bar to God’s friendship with man, so it was needful to remove it out of the way as being a bar to man’s friendship with God. This the Apostle beautifully unfolds in those striking words—"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Colossians 2:14.) These words, taken in connection with the passage which we are now attempting to open (Ephesians 2:16), throw a clear and blessed light on the wondrous way by which this enmity is slain. "The handwriting of ordinances" spoken of as being "blotted out" is not the ceremonial, but the moral law, for it is this which is "against us" as sinners, and "contrary to us," as condemning us for transgressing it in thought, word, and deed. It is called "the handwriting of ordinances" because written by the finger of God on the two tables of stone which he gave to Moses; and we may observe that what the finger of God wrote nothing but the finger of God could blot out. When, then, the Son of God fulfilled the law both by his perfect obedience and by enduring its curse, he, so to speak, with his own divine fingers blotted out the handwriting by sprinkling it all over with his most precious blood, and he thus "took it out of the way," so that it should no longer stand against us as a bill of charges, but become null and void; and not only so, but "he nailed it to his cross," that none might take it down as a condemning law, but that it might ever stand and be seen as blotted out, and to be to all ages a permanent trophy of his victory over the curse and condemnation of the law.

When, then, under a sweet and blessed revelation of the Person and work, blood and righteousness of the Son of God to the soul, it is seen by the eye of faith that this cursing, condemning law was blotted out and taken away by the blood of the cross, then the enmity of the carnal mind stirred up by the law is slain, the bar between God and man removed, peace proclaimed, and sin forgiven. The Apostle, therefore, connects the forgiveness of sin with the

blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances, clearly showing thereby that "the handwriting of ordinances" is not the ceremonial, but the moral law; for it is that, and not the ceremonial law, which brings us in guilty before God. "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting," etc. (Colossians 2:13-14.) To know and enjoy this reconciliation is to receive the atonement (Romans 5:11, margin), and to be reconciled unto God internally, feelingly, and experimentally by receiving the ministry and word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19-20.)

Now this reconciliation as an inward blessing spreads itself, so to speak, over every faculty of the soul, and reconciles everything in it which before was at variance with God. Thus 1. It reconciles the understanding by showing how "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus," filling it with a heavenly light and a holy admiration of the wisdom of God in contriving such a way of saving sinners through the blood of his dear Son, and thus making mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other. 2. Secondly, it reconciles the conscience, which before was full of guilt, and purging it by the blood of sprinkling, gives it peace with God. 3. Thirdly, it reconciles the will, removing out of it its frowardness and disinclination to submissive obedience, and brings it into harmony with the will of God. 4. And fourthly, it reconciles the affections by dethroning all idols, and filling the heart with the tenderest love to him who is the altogether lovely. It thus makes a complete conquest of the soul, reconciling and harmonizing every inward faculty to move in sweet unison with the will and word of God, and to enjoy peace in believing. But from this inward reconciliation with God flows reconciliation with all the dear family of God, and the removal of that enmity which set the hand of man against his brother, and, as we showed in our last paper; especially set at variance Jew and Gentile. For, as these were to be reconciled in one body by the cross, so as to be knit together in one harmonious body, they must also have peace one with another that this harmony and union might be complete. The Apostle therefore says, "To make in himself of twain (that is, the two, that is, the Jew and Gentile) one new man, so making peace." The Apostle seems to draw here a distinction between the "one body" and the "one new man;" at least, as the expressions differ, we may well assume that the meaning intended by them is different also. By the "one body," then, we may understand that mystical body of Christ of which elect Jews and elect Gentiles are alike members; and by the "one new man" that possession by them of a new and divine nature whereby, as baptized into and made to drink of one Spirit, they have spiritual union and communion with one another. To set this point in a clearer light, let us ask, What is the main cause which separates between, and divides asunder the living family of God? What is it which rends churches to pieces, often separates chief friends, causes coldness, shyness, and even variance between those who once walked in love and affection, and thus mars harmony and peace? Is it not the flesh? Pride, ambition, covetousness, wrath, stubbornness, obstinacy, self will, prejudice, slander, hasty tempers, cutting speeches, unkind actions, are not these and other similar fruits of the flesh almost the sole causes of division and disunion among the family of God? Did any circumstance ever arise to divide a church or separate bosom friends which cannot be traced to the old man, the body of sin and death which we carry about with us? And ask again, What brings together, unites and cements soul to soul, heals divisions, restores peace when broken, and knits together in sweet harmony and love the living members of Christ? Is it not the new man of grace—that "new man which after God (that is, after the image of God) is created in righteousness and true holiness?" If ever we have felt in our own bosoms the bitterness, the misery, the bondage, the sadness, the mournful days and sleepless

nights, produced by disunion and strife in churches or between Christian friends; or if, on the other hand, we have ever felt the happiness, the sweetness, and the blessedness, the spiritual profit and comfort, of walking in love and union with the dear family of God, we know by our own experience that the old man in ourselves or others has been the cause of all the misery, and that the new man in ourselves and in others has been the spring of all the sweetness we have ever felt in the company and conversation of the living saints of the Most High. We see then and know from our own experience both of the bitter and the sweet what is the Apostle's meaning when he speaks of our gracious Lord making in himself "of twain one new man, so making peace." It is thus that he makes peace between those who were once at variance by communicating to them of his own grace and Spirit, and thus knitting them together by the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We see from these remarks, if, at least, we have rightly interpreted the mind and meaning of the Spirit, how inward reconciliation unto God brings with it reconciliation to man, and unites all the mystical members of Christ, not only into one body, but also into the possession of one Spirit, as the Apostle speaks—"There is one, body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4), and to the same purpose—"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13.) In Christ, and by fellowship with him, all those distinctions which separate man from man, and are of the flesh, are lost. Rank, sex, age, station, all natural and worldly distinctions, melt away before a spirit of love and union. When this is felt toward any dear child of God, we think no longer of any difference that there may be naturally between us. The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, the master and the servant, the mistress and the maid, are all one in Christ. All natural distinctions are swallowed up and lost by virtue of union with him and with one another in him. As we experience and realize this sweet union of heart with heart and spirit with spirit, we "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision; Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." (Colossians 3:10-11.) And again—"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female—for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27-28.) O how clearly and blessedly does the Holy Spirit in these passages of inspired truth set forth the nature of that spiritual union which knits together in Christ the living family of God! And O that it were more fully realized, felt, and known, that there might be a visible fulfillment in us of that wondrous prayer of our gracious Lord—"Neither do I pray for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one—as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-21.)

Chapter 67

03.02.08. Part Eight

Part VIII. The main theme of our last paper was Reconciliation by the blood of the cross, embracing 1, chiefly and primarily, Reconciliation of man unto God; and 2, as its fruits and consequences, Reconciliation of man unto man. We shall now, therefore, at this point resume the thread of our subject. "And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to those who were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Ephesians 2:17-18)

Having made peace through the blood of the cross, the blessed Lord came and preached it, not personally, but ministerially. Personally he had gone up on high, and had entered into his glory. The world should see him no more in his visible presence, nor behold him going about doing good. Israel, to whom he specially came, had rejected him by the voice of its rulers, had denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. (John 1:11; Acts 3:14; Acts 13:27-28.) Jerusalem knew not the time of her visitation, and therefore never again would he personally tread her streets, or should she hear the accents of his voice. But he would come spiritually and ministerially, and preach peace to those who were afar off and to those who were near. It was, then, by pouring out the Holy Spirit first on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards by the continual supplies of his Spirit and grace, clothing their word with power, that the Prince of Peace came by his Spirit and presence, and thus ministerially preached peace by his apostles. They were his "witnesses" (Acts 1:22; Acts 2:32; Acts 5:32) and "ambassadors," to whom he had given the word and ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20), whom he had put in trust with his gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:4), that as preached by them it might be the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16.) In this sense, therefore, the Lord came by the mouth and ministry of his apostles, and preached peace to those who were afar off, that is, the Gentiles, and to them that were near, that is, the Jews. Not that the one was actually nearer to God than the other; but the Jew was nearer to God by external privilege and outward covenant, and was not so debased by idolatry, so sunk into thorough ignorance of the only true God, or so foully and grossly stained by the unchecked practice of those abominations which prevailed in all the heathen nations. In this sense the Jew was relatively nearer to God than the Gentile; but as regarded his actual state, there was no difference, as the Apostle elsewhere speaks—"What then? are we better than they? No, in no way; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." (Romans 3:9.) Was the Jew, with all his privileges, better than the Gentile whom he loathed and despised? No! in no way. All alike were under sin; all alike had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Therefore, whether relatively near or relatively far off, both Jew and Gentile needed the same Savior and the same salvation. Peace was preached by Jesus Christ alike to both in the ministry of the gospel. Elect Jew and elect Gentile were alike reconciled to God, united into one mystical body, and, when called by grace, were baptized with, and made to drink into one Spirit. Thus they were one in Christ, outwardly and inwardly, actually and experimentally, in right and in enjoyment; "for through him," adds the Apostle, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Access unto God is only through Jesus Christ, and as reconciled and brought near by his blood. It is one of the first and most precious fruits of peace as preached by Jesus Christ, and experimentally received and made known in a believing heart. There is no access through a broken law, nor through any other mediator but the risen and glorified Son of God. Nor can we draw near so as to have any felt or sensible access unto the Father except through the operations, influences, and power of the Spirit. But the chief object of the Apostle in dwelling on this point here is to show that this is the privilege and the blessing alike of Jew and Gentile, and that thus it forms a ground of spiritual union, and a hallowed spot of mutual communion. This we know in vital experience, as distinct from being Jew or Gentile. Some of us seem in our feelings far off from God, and others seem near. The tempted, the tried, the burdened with sin, the cast down by reason of the difficulties of the way, feel as if they were far off. The blessed and favored, the comforted and the indulged, feel to be near. But whether far off or near, all meet at the mercy seat. Is not that the sacred ground, the hallowed spot where all differences cease, and all believing hearts are knit together into one? There are not two spirits in praying souls. It is "one Spirit," as there is but "one Lord." There is no approach, no access, no drawing near, no acceptable worship, no communion with the Father but through his dear Son, for he is the Mediator, the only Mediator between God and men. (1 Timothy 2:3.)

We continually find it by experience a solemn truth that whether on our bended knees privately, or in the worship of God publicly we attempt to draw near to the Majesty of heaven, we have no sensible access unto the Father but by Jesus Christ; and we know also in the same way and by the same means, that it is only as the blessed Spirit helps our infirmities, and himself makes intercession for us according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27), that we can offer a spiritual sacrifice, or sensibly feel any communion with the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort. We may use words, and there may be what is called a gift of prayer, enabling the possessor to pray with much fluency and propriety; but this is a very different thing from that inward access of the whole heart and soul unto God, when, solemnly impressed with a sense of his holiness and majesty, and deeply penetrated with a feeling of our own sinfulness and unworthiness, we yet approach him through his dear Son under the sweet and sacred influences of the Holy Spirit. But so to draw near is the special privilege of the children of God; and on this ground, therefore, all the redeemed and regenerated, all the reconciled and accepted sons and daughters of the heavenly Father meet. This, then, is the grand point of union—the blessed meeting place, the hallowed spot, the consecrated ground where all true believers meet, and are of one heart and one soul. As through sin, all being alike sinners, there is no difference, so through grace, all being alike saved, there is no difference. No one on his bended knees can say to his kneeling brother, "You are a greater sinner than I," or, "I am more saved than you." But as alike reconciled to God through the blood of the Lamb, as alike believing in the Son of God, as alike approaching the throne of grace in earnest prayer and supplication, and thus alike finding access by one Spirit unto the Father, both those that are afar off and those that are near meet together as children of one Father, who is above all, and through all, and in them all. But we must not enlarge further on this point, as much lies before us worthy of our attention and meditation. "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Ephesians 2:19.) By nature we all are strangers to God and godliness. Our understanding is darkened, and we are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart. (Ephesians 4:18.) We neither know God nor want to know him, and say in thought, if not in

word, "Depart from us, for we desire not a knowledge of your ways." (Job 21:14.) But when grace touches our heart, and especially when by faith in the Son of God we receive the atonement, then this alienation or estrangement, as the word means, from the life of God is removed, and we are no longer strangers to him, to his word, to his will, or to his ways. A divine light shines upon his word, for the entrance of the word gives light; divine life is felt in the soul, making the conscience alive and tender in his fear; and what he speaks with divine authority and power is received by faith into a reverent, submissive, and obedient heart. We thus come "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent;" and though this divine light is often beclouded by the darkness, unbelief, infidelity, and carnal reasonings of our natural mind, and this divine life often sadly interrupted by the workings of sin, temptation, guilt, and legal fear, yet it still holds good that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18.) The word translated "perfect" properly signifies "steady, fixed," and thus means the steady light of a clear bright noon, so compared with the struggling misty light of a cloudy morning. But as points of divine truth are sometimes set in a clearer light by contrast, we shall show first what it is to be a stranger to God, before we show what it is not to be a stranger to him. To be a stranger to God, then, is to be a stranger to his character as revealed in the word, and as made known through the word with a divine power to the soul. It is to be a stranger to his holiness, majesty, heart-searching eye, and universal presence, so as not to be affected or influenced by it in our thoughts, words, or works. It is to be a stranger to his gracious dealings, divine leadings, spiritual teachings, and gentle, yet powerful intimations of his holy will. It is to be a stranger to his fatherly corrections, wise yet tender chastisements, inward reproofs, secret rebukes, and the various ways whereby he searches the heart, and tries the thoughts. It is to be a stranger also to the visitations of his mercy, the consolations of his gracious presence, and the sheddings abroad of his love. In fact, it is to be a stranger to everything in which the power of true religion and vital godliness consists. And as to be a stranger to God is to be a stranger to everything which can make the soul holy or happy, and to everything which it is our chief, our only blessedness to know and to enjoy, so not to be a stranger is to be admitted to all that friendship, intimacy, familiarity, communion, and communion with God, and enjoyment of him, which is the special privilege of his redeemed and regenerated family. Those whom he has reconciled unto himself by the blood of his dear Son, he draws to his bosom by the cords of his love, that they may no longer be strangers to him, but be made near, and may walk with him and before him in the light of his countenance. O what wonders of grace, what depths of unspeakable mercy, what riches in possession, what treasures in prospect, are stored up in being reconciled to God through the blood of the cross! Truly we may say, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32.) And as reconciliation through the blood of the cross opened a way whereby those who are thus reconciled should be no more "strangers," so also it provided and accomplished that they should be no more "foreigners." A "foreigner" is one who cannot speak the language, is unacquainted with the customs, is bound by no ties of allegiance, is imbued with no love and affection to the country in which he takes up his abode. Many such foreigners we have in this country, who, though they are in it, yet are not of it, to whom it is not their country or their home, and who, though they may mix with Englishmen, have not an English heart in their bosom, or any of those English feelings which are found so strong in the natives of our beloved isle. Such is the state and character, spiritually, of one who moves among the family of God without belonging to that family.

Many such foreigners, in a religious sense, fill our chapels, and go in and out among the living people of God. But though with them, they are not of them. They cannot speak their language, at least, not from the heart; they do not really and truly love the same things; have not the same hopes or the same fears; are unacquainted with their joys or their sorrows; have not their faith, or their godly fear; nor their reverence of God, nor their spirit of prayer, nor their contrition for sin, nor their brokenness of heart under a sense of God's goodness and mercy; nor their tenderness of conscience, desire for, and love to holiness; nor their anxiety to be right, and dread of being wrong. In all these, and similar points, they are foreigners, who speak inwardly, if not outwardly, a different language, live under different motives and influences, and do not serve, worship, obey, or love the same God. But now let grace reach the heart of any such foreigner who has gone in and out, it may be for years, among the family of God, hearing the same truths and attending the same house of prayer, and yet untouched, unaffected, uninfluenced by the word, because he has never felt its power—what a change will it make in him. We need not trace out the work of grace upon his soul, for that would take us too far from our subject. But let us assume that he is reconciled and brought near unto God by the blood of the cross, that he who is our Peace comes to him in the ministry of the word and preaches peace to his soul, and that he finds access through Jesus by one Spirit unto the Father. He is now no longer a stranger and a foreigner. He can now understand and learn to speak the language of Canaan; and, though it may be at first with a broken accent and imperfect utterance, yet, as it is the real language of his heart, those who know what is the language of a broken heart and contrite spirit can feel a union with him and he with them, and thus he is a foreigner no more. But this brings us to still further blessings and privileges which he is made to enjoy. And as those which we have already considered are indirectly negative, so these are directly positive. "But fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Two blessings are spoken of here—1. A participation in all the rights and privileges of the city of God, and 2, a place in his house and family.

1. The city here spoken of is the city of the saints, of which by grace those who once were strangers and foreigners, being now reconciled unto God, and having access by one Spirit unto the Father, have become citizens, and thus possess all those rights and privileges which belong to the free-born inhabitants. One peculiar feature of Greek and Roman civilization was the gathering of communities into usually walled and fortified, and, as thus capable of self-defense, enjoying special privileges and immunities. It was something analogous to our borough towns under a municipal government, but much more complete and organized, society being in those days, in many points, widely different from our own. Now, when a foreigner was admitted to the rights of citizenship of any of these free communities, he was at once put into possession of every privilege enjoyed by the free-born natives. There seems to be some allusion in the words of the Apostle here to Israel as the city of God both by privilege and possession. Until the middle wall of partition was broken down, the city of the saints was limited to the Jews. Of that city the Gentiles were not citizens, for they had no hope, and were without God in the world. But now, as reconciled by the blood of the cross, and having access by one Spirit unto the Father, believing Gentiles become incorporated into the city of God, and are thus fellow-citizens with the saints. This city, as being the city of the saints, represents the Church of God under two aspects—1. Its present state of grace; 2. Its future state of glory. Glorious things are spoken of this city of God. (Psalms 87:3.) Thus it has foundations, as it is said of Abraham, that "he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10.) It has also walls and bulwarks—"We have a strong

city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." It has also gates—"Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." (Isaiah 26:1-2.) It has also a river—"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (Psalms 46:4.) This river is the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"—a river of life and love, emblematic of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. This city belongs wholly to the saints—that is, those who were sanctified and set apart by God the Father (Jude 1:1), sanctified by the blood of God the Son (Hebrews 13:12), and sanctified by the operations and influences of God the Holy Spirit. Even in its present state, as the Church of Christ upon earth, it is the city of the saints; for none but saints really participate in, or spiritually enjoy, its blessings and privileges. Others may walk about Zion, count the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks; but they are not citizens who have right to the tree of life, and may freely enter in through the gates of the city. But there is a state of glory to come, of which John had a view when he saw in vision "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The beauty and glory of this city John describes—"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21:23.) Our space forbids us to enter further into this glorious subject. We must leave to our spiritual readers their own meditations upon the glory of this heavenly city; and if the Lord is but pleased to shine into their soul and give them a view of the glory which is to be revealed, and a blessed testimony of their interest in it, how it will support and comfort them under all their afflictions and tribulations, and make them admire and adore that free and distinguishing grace which has made them fellow-citizens with the saints, and given them a home with them here in grace, and the blessed anticipation of a home hereafter with them in glory. Are they not at home with them now in the best, warmest, and happiest feelings of their soul? And is not this a proof and evidence that they are fellow-citizens with them? Are they not their choice and only companions now? Are not the saints in their estimation, however the world despises and hates them, "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all their delight?" Now, to be no more a stranger and a foreigner, a poor, miserable outcast, wandering here and there, without house or home, friendless, and forsaken of God and man, as we might justly have been, on account of our sins—instead of thus reaping our deserts on earth until we sank under the wrath of God into hell—to be made and welcomed as a fellow-citizen with the saints of God in their present state of grace and their future state of glory—what wonders of grace are here, and how, as realized by faith and feeling, they melt the heart into admiring love and gratitude. Of such unspeakable blessings both now and for evermore may we not say, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him?" (1 Corinthians 2:9.)

2. And as they are "fellow-citizens with the saints," so also they are members of the house and "family of God." The figure is here changed. The Church of God which he had just compared to a city, he now compares to a house or family, terming it "the household of God." It will be observed that both these figures imply much the same thing, and express each of them the idea of community. Thus a city of which all the citizens partake of the same rights and privileges, and a household or family of which all the members stand in the same relationship to its head, agree in this, that the citizens of the city and the members of the family are bound together by certain ties, in which they, and they alone, have a common and mutual interest.

Thus as the Church of God is sometimes symbolized by the figure of a city, so it is also in other places represented under the figure of a house. We read, for instance—"But 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 unto the end." (Hebrews 3:6.) And again—"But if I tarry long, that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15.) Now as we found that the city represented the Church of Christ in its present militant state of grace, and in its future triumphant state of glory, so it is as regards this house. At present, in this house of God here below, though none are really members of it but those who are brought near by the blood of Christ, yet there are many who go in and out of it who do not spiritually and vitally belong to the family. To this there is some allusion in those striking words of the prophet—"In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts," implying that such is the case now. And to the same effect speaks the Apostle in those warning words—"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." (2 Timothy 2:20.)

One feature of a family is the difference of ages in the children. In the same family, there are often the grown-up son and the babe in arms. In the spiritual family there is a wider reach still, for that contains fathers, young men, little children, and babes. Indeed, we may say that in this house there are children of all ages, and all sizes; and yet all standing in the same relationship to one common Father. The same rich grace which admitted those who once were strangers and foreigners into the city of God, and made them fellow-citizens with the saints, admits them also into his living family. They have listened to the gracious call—"Come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing;" and they have found and realized the truth of the promise—"And I will receive you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18.)

All that a Father’s heart can feel, a Father’s love bestow, and a Father’s hand can accomplish, is their happy portion. And what is their happiness, their wisdom, their mercy, and we may add their duty, but to walk in all holy obedience to their heavenly Father, who has received them into his family; and in all love, tenderness, kindness, forbearance, and affection to their brothers and sisters, who have been loved by the same love, redeemed by the same blood, called by the same distinguishing grace, and are journeying onward with them to the same happy and everlasting home?

Chapter 68

03.02.09. Part Nine

Part IX. In resuming our exposition of the chapter before us (Ephesians 2:1-22), we would draw the attention of our readers to the wonderful contrast presented to us in it between the natural and original state of a sinner, and especially a Gentile sinner, as sunk in the depths of the fall, and manifesting in his life and conduct its dreadful fruits and effects—and the state of a sinner redeemed, restored, and saved by free and sovereign grace. As sunk in the depths of the fall, and manifesting in his life and conduct its awful fruits and practical effects, he is dead in trespasses and sins, walks according to the course of this world, is under the dominion and influence of Satan, the prince of the power of the air, has his conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfills the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and is by nature a child of wrath, exposed to, and deserving the terrible and eternal anger of God as a consuming fire. What a picture is here drawn of the state of man by nature, and especially of those Gentile sinners to whom the Epistle was addressed. But how true a description also of what we ourselves were in days past, when dead in sin, and how we walked, lived, and acted before we were arrested in our mad career by sovereign and distinguishing grace. It is good and profitable often to call to mind and ponder over our base original, and what our state by nature was, that we may see in it, as in a glass, the awful depths of sin and ruin in which we were sunk. It is thus that we see, in the light of our own experience, as a confirmation of the word of truth, what death of soul Godwards; what reckless, callous insensibility to his will and word; what total lack of godly fear; what determined resolution to have our own way and carry out our various plans of pleasure or profit; what willful rejection and proud scorning of all control, possessed our whole minds, even if we were not abandoned to excess of crime or all manner of open and outward ungodliness. It is thus also that we learn to wonder at and admire the loving-kindness, tender pity, and infinite compassion of a blessed Redeemer who had mercy upon those who had no mercy upon themselves, and who, but for his grace, would have gone on adding sin to sin and iniquity to iniquity until they dropped into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone!

Israel was bidden to confess, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father" (Deuteronomy 26:5); and when the Lord would, by a most striking and effective figure, specially represent to the Church of old the riches of his grace, he paints her as a helpless, forlorn babe, "cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born" (Ezekiel 16:5), that by the contrast of this miserable condition with his pity and love to her, and the fruits of it, he might recall to her mind the unparalleled debt of gratitude due to himself, and her base returns for all his favors and loving-kindness bestowed upon her.

Shallow professors, and formal, dry, dead preachers may cry out against it as poring over ourselves, brooding over our miseries, making an experience of, or even priding ourselves upon our corruptions; but we are well satisfied that a believing sight and sense, and a feeling, experimental knowledge of the depths of the fall and the state of ruin, misery, and degradation into which it has personally and individually sunk us, must ever precede a spiritual, experimental knowledge of the efficacy of atoning blood as applied to the conscience and the heights, lengths,

depths, and breadths of pardoning love as revealed to the soul; and that those who are ignorant of the one are ignorant of the other.

It is, indeed, for lack of being deeply and thoroughly exercised upon these solemn matters, and because they have known and felt so little of the dreadful evil of sin, of the holiness and justice of God, and of their own utter helplessness to deliver and save themselves, that we have so many self-righteous, presumptuous, light and trifling, vain and empty professors among us. Had they really seen and felt what man is by nature and practice, and had their souls been long and deeply exercised with a burden of sin and guilt, and then been blessed with some manifestation of God's mercy and love, how it would have cured them both of their self-righteousness and of their presumption, driven out of them, or at least much subdued, their light and trifling spirit, and left such a deep, solemn, and permanent impression on their mind of what they have been and are toward God, and what he has been and is toward them, as would have wrought in them a solidity, humility, contrition, and brokenness of spirit, a tenderness of conscience, separation from the world, and spirituality of mind, of which at present we see so little in the professing Church of God. But now having looked down into the horrible pit and miry clay into which sin has sunk us, in common with the whole human race, let us, with the Apostle, take a view of the other side of the question, and see to what heights of blessedness sovereign grace has restored and raised the elect of God. How wonderful is the contrast between the depths of the fall and the heights of the recovery; between the misery of man and the mercy of God; between the state and character of sinners dead in sin and saints blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But as in our exposition of the chapter now before us we have already attempted to unfold the spiritual blessings and exalted privileges described by the Apostle, and to trace out one by one the mercies and favors to which the saints are advanced spoken of in it, we need not go over that ground again, or even briefly recapitulate them, as it would be but a repetition of our previous papers. We shall, therefore, at once address ourselves to the exposition of the remaining verses of the chapter. Our readers will remember that the point at which we paused in our last paper was to show how the saints of God, and especially the Gentile saints, were "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with saints, and of the household of God." (Ephesians 2:19) The point, therefore, to which we are now come, is the way in which they are built up, that they may be a habitation of God through the Spirit. i. The first thing which we have to unfold is that which lies at the basis of the whole, that is, the foundation—"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20.)

It will be observed that they are here said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." This does not mean that the apostles and prophets form themselves the foundation of the spiritual building, as if it were actually and really built upon them, but that it was laid ministerially by them. No man, or order of men, however distinguished by ability, gift, or grace, however called or favored of God, could be a foundation able to bear up the Church of Christ. Neither Peter, nor Peter's successors, true or false, could be a rock on which Christ has declared he will build his Church. Such a foundation would be sand, not a rock against which the gates of hell would not prevail, and those who trusted in it and built upon it would come under the curse—"Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." (Jeremiah 17:5.)

Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation. This point is well explained by the Apostle himself in another epistle—"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder,

I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:10-11.) He here speaks of himself as "a wise master-builder," that is, a skillful architect who knew both the certainty and value of the foundation, and the fit materials for the superstructure. According, then, to the grace of God which was given unto him, instructing him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of Christ by a revelation of him to his soul (Galatians 1:16), and bestowing upon him the gift of utterance to open his mouth boldly, and make known the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19), he ministerially laid the foundation by preaching Christ and him crucified.

He, therefore, plainly tells us that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This foundation God laid actually, according to his own words—"Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he who believes shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16); but Paul laid it ministerially. Thus when we read of "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," and being built on that foundation, it does not mean that the apostles and prophets were themselves the foundation, but that they laid it ministerially when they declared, by the word of their testimony, in the language of Peter—"The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." (Acts 4:11.) This foundation, then, was laid by "the apostles and prophets" when they testified in their ministry of the Person and work of Christ, preaching him as the Son of God (Acts 9:20), and set him forth as the Rock, the only Rock, on which the Church is built. If we carefully read the various sermons and discourses of Peter and Paul recorded in the Acts, we shall clearly see how in them all Christ in his sufferings, death, and resurrection is laid as the foundation of all forgiveness of sin, and of all hope of salvation. (Acts 2:32-39; Acts 3:26; Acts 4:10-12; Acts 13:38-39.) There is no difficulty, therefore, in ascertaining the meaning of the word "apostles." They were those who were entrusted with a peculiar mission, and an office distinct from all others. Thus among the specially-gifted members of the body of Christ, enumerated by the Apostle, they occupy the first place—"And God has set some in the church; first, apostles." (1 Corinthians 12:28.) Such were the twelve disciples—"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:13); and such was Paul, who declares of himself that he was "not appointed by any group or by human authority. My call is from Jesus Christ himself and from God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead." (Galatians 1:1.) The apostles were distinguished from all other teachers and officers in the Church by having their commission and doctrine immediately and directly from Christ himself. The literal meaning of the word apostle is "one who is sent." Thus they were, in a peculiar and especial way, sent by Christ himself, either by express call when he was on earth, or, as in Paul’s particular case, by express revelation from him in heaven. To them was also given a power to work miracles as proofs of their divine commission; and they only could, by the laying on of hands ministerially, give the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19:6.) They also alone had authority to plant churches; nor was their mission confined to any particular church; but they had power and authority in all the churches to preach the word and administer the ordinances, give counsel, advice, reproof, exhortation, and censure, either personally or by letter. None, therefore, but they could write, under divine inspiration, epistles to the churches to form a part of the sacred Scriptures. The foundation, therefore, laid by men so eminent in grace, endowed with such divine authority, and furnished with such extraordinary gifts, must needs be a foundation laid in the power of the Holy Spirit, and worthy of

our faith and acceptance. But the Apostle speaks of this foundation as laid also by "the prophets." By those we understand, not the prophets of the Old Testament, though we would not exclude them, according to Peter's testimony (Acts 10:43), but the prophets of the New; for the Apostle tells us, in a passage already quoted, that they occupied a position in the Church next to the apostles—"And God has set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets." He also speaks in almost similar language in the epistle now before us—"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." (Ephesians 4:11.) By the word "prophets," however, we are not to understand, in the usual sense of the term, men who predicted future events, though there were such in the primitive Church, as Agabus (Acts 11:28; Acts 21:10), but preachers, as we now term them, who are called "prophets," because they spoke in the name of and from the Lord, being, as it were, his mouth. This, indeed, is the true and proper meaning of the word "prophet;" his distinguishing character being that he speaks for God, being his mouth (Jeremiah 15:19), and one to whom the word of the Lord has come. That he predicts future events is but a secondary part of his mission, and connected with his primary office, more as a confirmation than its chief intention. In this point of view, therefore, the prophets of the New Testament resemble the prophets of the Old, who spoke such words, whether predictions or not, "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21.) We see this very clearly from the language of the Apostle in another place—"But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believes not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all." (1 Corinthians 14:24.) By prophesying is evidently meant here, not predicting future events, but preaching with power to men's consciences; for it is in this way that the unbeliever is convinced of sin, judged as guilty, and the secrets of his heart made manifest. Prophecy, therefore, in the true and proper sense of the word, includes instruction and consolation, reproof, and, indeed, the whole work of the ministry—"Let two or three prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged." (1 Corinthians 14:29-31.) For these reasons, therefore, we understand the prophets who are said, in conjunction with the apostles, to have laid the foundation on which the Church is built to be the prophets or preachers, not of the Old Testament, but of the New, and thus to include those servants of the living God who preached the gospel as being divinely commissioned and enabled to do so by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the authority of God. But now let us look at the expression, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." The meaning of this expression, which frequently occurs in the New Testament, is, we think, often misunderstood. It is taken in the first instance from the declaration concerning our Lord in the Psalms, which he in the gospels (Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17) specially claimed and appropriated to himself—"The stone which the builders refused has become the head stone of the corner." (Psalms 118:22.) The "head of the corner," or "the chief corner stone," the meaning of both expressions being one and the same, signifies not the stone which stands at the top of the building, uniting the corners of the two walls just under the roof, but the broad foundation stone, which is firmly fixed at the very bottom; and it is called the "corner stone" or the "head" or "chief of the corner," because being laid as a huge and broad stone for a foundation of the whole building, each wall meets upon it at the corners, it equally supporting and upholding them all. The two walls which thus meet together represent Jew and Gentile; but each of these walls equally rests upon the broad foundation stone which is common to both, and not only supports them separately but unites then together at the corner,

where each meets and rests upon it. It is the expression "head" which has caused the misapprehension of the word "corner stone" to which we have alluded; but the word "head" in Hebrew properly signifies the first or chief; and thus as the foundation is not only the chief stone as supporting the whole, but the first which is laid, so our gracious Lord is not only chief in dignity, but was laid first in place, for the Church was chosen in him. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. Thus he is first in dignity, as the Son of the Father in truth and love; first in choice, God choosing the elect in him; first in suffering, for what sorrows were like his sorrows? first in resurrection, for he is "the first-fruits of them that slept;" first in power, for "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth;" first in glory, for he is gone to prepare a place for his people; and we may well add, he is first in their hearts and affections, for he who loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than him is not worthy of him. But the chief point of the passage now before us is the way in which the Lord Jesus is the chief corner stone to those who are built upon him; and in it we see the connection between the foundation as laid ministerially by the apostles and prophets, and the actual foundation itself, which is Christ the Lord. And to understand this connection better, take your own case, or that of any other poor guilty sinner quickened into divine life and looking about him on every side for something to support his guilty soul, his troubled mind, his fearful anxious heart, his burdened spirit. If he look up, what does he see but the justice of a holy God? If he look to the law, what is there in it but curse and condemnation, misery, wrath, and bondage? If he look to his past life, what is it but one continued course of wickedness and sin? If he look into his own heart, what does he find it but "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" What, then, shall he do? Where shall he go? On what can he build his hope?

Now, when Christ the foundation is set before him as laid in the Scriptures of truth by the apostles, or is preached in his hearing by one of God’s prophets, and by the application of the word to his heart, he is enabled to believe for himself in the Son of God, then he comes off himself to rest upon Christ the foundation. It is thus that the very first stone of his hope is laid upon Christ. This is effected by the shining in of divine light into the soul, giving him a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6.) And as he thus beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is delivered from the power of darkness and is translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 1:13.) He now finds a foundation, on which his soul can safely and happily rest. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, by the discoveries of his Person and work, and the manifestations of his mercy, and being drawn by the cords of a man and the bands of love (Hosea 11:4; Jeremiah 31:3), he comes unto him, as unto a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen of God and precious; and by coming unto him, is lifted up, so to speak, out of sin and self, out of bondage, darkness, and confusion, and is set down upon him as a tried stone, a sure foundation; and thus finds rest and peace. To rest thus upon Christ as a foundation carries with it the sensible approbation of God; for he has laid this foundation in Zion, that it might be "a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isaiah 28:16.) As the child of God, therefore, by faith rests upon Christ, he has the testimony of the blessed Spirit in his heart that it is a sure foundation, and that he who believes on him shall not be confounded, either in this world, or in the world to come. (1 Peter 2:6.) ii. Having thus spoken of the foundation as laid ministerially, by the apostles and prophets, and laid actually by Jesus Christ being himself the chief cornerstone, the Apostle goes on to show how the living stones are built up upon and in him—"In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:21.) By "the building," we are to understand the whole Church of Christ as comprehending all the members of

his mystical body, chosen in him, and given to him before the foundation of the world. But this building is raised here below, before it is taken up to be eternally in all its completeness above; and thus, though there is an eternal union between the Lord Jesus Christ and his people, which is the foundation of every other, there is also a grace union in time as each successive member is brought forth and is baptized by the Holy Spirit into his mystical body. The union between Christ and his people is represented in the Scripture sometimes by the figure of a vine and its branches, sometimes by that of a body and its head, sometimes by that between a man and his wife, and sometimes, as in the passage before us, by that of a building of which he is the foundation, and they the superstructure. It is with the latter we have now to do. The union between the foundation and the superstructure is very close and intimate naturally, but in the case of Christ and his people embraces a closeness of communication, of which no earthly material building is capable.

1. First, then, it is one of support. Every stone in a building has a virtual union with a foundation on which it rests, for if that foundation were removed from under them, every stone in every part of the building would at once fall to the ground with a crash. So, could the foundation which God has laid in Zion be removed, the gates of hell would prevail and the whole Church sink into eternal perdition. But here is the blessedness of "a sure foundation," that every stone which is built upon it is so supported by it that it cannot fall as long as the foundation stands.

2. But besides the union of support between the foundation and the stones which rest upon it, there is, in this case, what is not and cannot be found in a material building, a union consisting in mutual life. This is very clearly and sweetly brought before us by Peter—"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5.) In a material building both the foundation stone and those which are built upon it are dead. There is, therefore, between them no other union but the union of support. But in the spiritual building, there is a union between the foundation and the stones built upon it, not only of support, but of life. It is this which makes the union between them so close and intimate. The Lord Jesus is "a living stone," inasmuch as in him is life (John 1:4); and this life is a mediatorial life, given to him, that he may give it to us; "for as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26.) It is as the possessor of this mediatorial life that "the Son quickens whom he will" (John 5:21); and by the reception of this life, out of his fullness, our souls are made and maintained alive unto God. (John 1:16; John 5:40.) This mediatorial life he now lives and exercises at the right hand of God. He therefore said to John in vision—"I am he who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18); and to his disciples he gave this promise before his departure from them—"Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me—because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19.)

As, then, we are severally quickened into spiritual and eternal life, we come unto him, who is a living stone, ourselves as living stones, and being lifted up, and out of the foundation of dead self, to rest upon him, as the foundation which God has laid in Zion, we become built up a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:5.) The life which is in the foundation spreads and diffuses itself through the living stones which are built upon it; and as this life is felt in them and by them, it makes them cling closer and closer to the Rock, with all the weight of their souls, and all the strength of their affections. And as they find the foundation firm and good, and able to bear them up, amid all their

trials and temptations, for it is "a tried stone," they embrace it more and more in faith and love, and thus give back the life which they receive in prayer, praise, and adoration. In the mind of God, in his eternal purposes and determinate decrees, every stone of this spiritual house already has its fixed place. There is an expression in the prophet Ezekiel which may illustrate this. The man of God is shown in vision "the frame of a city." The city was not yet built, but it was to be built, and he saw the frame of it already set up and complete. (Ezekiel 40:2.) It was, therefore, to his mind's eye, as if the city were already complete, before a single stone of it was laid. So it is in this spiritual house. The whole frame of it, as complete as it will be when "the head stone is brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it," was ever before the mind of God; and thus every stone, as it is successively added to the building, occupies in it its fixed and predetermined place in the Church militant and suffering below, as it will in the Church triumphant and glorified above.

3. But we may also observe that the union between the living foundation and the living stones which are built upon it gives the latter union and communion with each other, as well as with the foundation itself. This point is beautifully brought out in this epistle by the figure of a body in union with its Head—"But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16.) The whole body is here spoken of as "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies." In almost similar terms the Apostle speaks in another place—"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God." (Colossians 2:19.)

We here see the union of the different members of the body with each other through their union with their common Head, and that this union with him not only gives them union with one another, but is also a means of inward grace and strength, nourishment being ministered to the body by the joints and bands of the different members. It is in this way that all the building is "fitly framed together," each living stone being in union both with the foundation and with its fellow living stones, and thus having life and grace diffused through the whole as a means of mutual support and nourishment, they are not loose stones lying about the mouth of the quarry, nor severed members, but compacted together by cement, as stones, and by joints and bands, as members; and thus they mutually strengthen and nourish one another by the life derived from their common Head. What motives to love and union!

What a beautiful representation is this of the Church of Christ! and though it is much hidden from our eyes, and so obscured by sin and unbelief, and the low state of things among us, as often to be scarcely visible, yet it is not less real. We never can fully know the blessings and benefits which we owe to our brethren in the Lord, and especially to those of them with whom we are brought into immediate spiritual contact, by church fellowship or other band of union. Their conversation, their example, their prayers, the various ways in which they minister to our natural or spiritual necessities, the secret restraints from sin, the encouragements to believe, the springings up of hope, the drawings forth of love and affection, the sympathy manifested by them in trial and affliction, and the sweet persuasion that we have of the power and reality of their religion—all these helps and aids to the life of God in the soul spring out of the union which there is between the living stones with each other. And were the Church of God more blessed and favored with life

and power, were there in it more sensible union and communion with the Lord, so that there was a larger, fuller, and deeper communication of the life that is in him, the more would the benefit and blessing of the mutual union of his members with each other be known and realized. It was so in those early days when "the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and of one soul." Then was the body more closely and sensibly knit together, and larger nourishment was therefore ministered to it by the joints and bands. And as union is strength, so this mystical body was then more closely compacted together by that which every joint supplied, and thus they were strengthened by each other's example, sympathy, prayers, counsel, exhortations, and, when needed, by rebukes and reproofs, to suffer persecution and the loss of all things for Christ's sake. But when love waxed cold, then the body declined in strength, and, as it declined in strength, the joints and bands were less firmly compacted together, hanging, as it were, loosely, like a dislocated limb or a paralyzed arm; and, for lack of their former closeness, nourishment was not ministered as it had been when the members were in nearer union and communion. iii. Now, this may prepare us to understand how "all the building grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." It grows so in two ways—1, By the constant accession of fresh stones; and 2, By the personal individual growth of the stones themselves.

1. It is in the first way, that every natural and material building is made to increase. As stone after stone is added to it, the building makes progress until at last it is complete. But the larger the structure, the choicer the materials, and the more beautiful the architecture, the longer time it almost necessarily takes to finish. Compare, for instance, the building of the palace at Westminster with the running up of a house in a London suburb; for so it is with this spiritual building. Innumerable are the living stones which compose it, for they will form at last a multitude which no man can number. Slowly also, but surely, invisibly to man, but not less really with God, are the living stones brought out from the quarry, and laid upon and united unto the foundation. But as we have already sufficiently opened this point, we shall now attempt to show how the building grows into a holy temple by the spiritual increase of the individual stones in it.

2. Growth is the sure mark of life. We see this in vegetation, in the animal creation, in the growth of our own bodies, and of every other thing in which there is life. Where, then, there is the life of God in the soul, there will be a growth in that life. Paul says to the Thessalonian church—"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fit, because that your faith grows exceedingly" (2 Thessalonians 1:3); and Peter says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18.) There is "an increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10), and "a coming 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 fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13.) It was for this increasing knowledge of the Son of God that Paul stretched every desire of his soul when he followed after, if that he might apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus; and this reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Php 3:12-14.) This is not what is called progressive sanctification, as if the flesh got holier and holier, for that is still ever "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" but this is a growth of that "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." After this growth in grace, this closer conformity to the image of Christ, should we ever be striving with all the powers of our soul; not satisfied with a low and lean state before God, but with unceasing prayer and

supplication, begging of the Lord that we might be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9-10.)

It is only as we are thus taught, led, and blessed that we can enter into the meaning of the words with the consideration of which we shall close our present Meditations—"In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22.)

These words will apply both to the whole body of Christ viewed collectively, and to each separate member of that body viewed individually. In this double sense we shall now, therefore, consider them. i. View them first, then, as referring to the whole body of Christ as complete in him. We have shown that the Church of Christ, viewed as a body, is spoken of as "compacted together," and that, viewed as a building, it is "fitly framed together." In this fullness of the whole and the harmony of the parts, as in the human body and as in an architectural building, much of its beauty consists. A body of which a member is deficient or disproportionate, and a building incomplete as a whole or deficient in symmetry in its parts, alike disgust and repel the eye. But who can conceive or describe the beauty and harmony of that body of which Christ is the Head, and of that building of which he is the chief corner-stone? Both are now imperfect, for the body is still lacking some of its members, and the building some of its stones; but each, though, in fact, they are but one, being but figures, not the reality, shadows, not the substance, will one day be complete, for the Church of Christ is gradually growing up into its full proportions.

Now, the object of this building, so beautifully and fitly framed together, is that it might be "a holy temple in the Lord." The glory of the tabernacle was the presence of God in it, as dwelling on the ark between the cherubim; and, therefore, when the ark was taken "the glory of the Lord departed from Israel." (1 Samuel 4:21.) So was it also in the temple erected by Solomon. When the Lord came into his temple, we read "that the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chronicles 5:13-14.) We thus see a connection between a temple and the habitation of God in it. It is his indwelling presence which makes the temple both holy and glorious. God sought for himself, so to speak, a habitation, a visible dwelling-place, that he who inhabits eternity, who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen, nor can see, might yet present himself visibly to the eyes of men, and not only so, but might have a permanent dwelling-place among them. He therefore said to Moses—"Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8.) This sanctuary typified, in the first instance, the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, in which dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; for he in his human nature is "the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man." But in a secondary sense the Church, as being the mystical body of Christ, is also the temple of God, for in it he dwells by his Holy Spirit. It is the place of his habitation upon earth sanctified by his power and glorified by his indwelling presence.

2. But what is true of the Church collectively is true of every individual member separately. Every gospel church here below may be considered as a holy temple in which God lives and dwells. The Apostle, therefore, writing to the church at Corinth "as the Church of God" (2 Corinthians 1:1) says to them—"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they

shall be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16.) It was because the church of God at Corinth was collectively the temple of the living God that he dwelt in them and walked in them.

Now, what the Church of God is in its completeness in Christ, as it will be in heaven above, and what it is in its visible and militant state on earth now, so is every individual member of that Church in this time state; and it is this solemn truth which makes the words before us to have such a forcible application to every individual believer. Not only, then, is a church, that is, a gospel church, built together by the ordinances of God's house, by a continual accession of living members, and by a growth in grace of each individual member, to be a habitation of God through the Spirit, but every one in it who fears and loves God is built into it for the same blessed purpose, that God may dwell in him and walk in him, making his body his own temple.

But, alas! how little is this realized and acted upon. Were pastors, were deacons, were members of gospel churches more deeply and powerfully impressed with the solemn truth that they are built together, that God himself might dwell in them through the Spirit, how much more careful they would be than they now are to maintain purity of doctrine, truth and reality, life and power in experience, and godliness and holiness in life! What a reverential fear would possess their minds, that they might not defile the Lord's temple, or sin against and before so holy and all-seeing a Guest! As a modest woman guards her chastity, or one who loves cleanliness in person, dress, and house shrinks from and hates dirt and filth, so will a conscience made and kept tender and alive in godly fear dread the defilement of sin and guilt. And as we shall all have to answer for ourselves, "to die," as one said, "alone," and as religion is a personal matter, how careful should it make each individual believer so to walk before God and man that he may have both an inward and outward evidence that his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and that he is a habitation of God by the Spirit. If he realizes this, and live under its solemn weight and influence, how careful he will be not to defile that body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit; how desirous and anxious not to defile his eyes by wandering lusts, nor his ears by listening to worldly and carnal conversation, nor his lips by speaking deceit, or indulging in light and frothy talk, nor his hands by putting them to anything that is evil, nor his feet by running on errands of vanity and folly; but to view his body as a member of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15), and therefore sanctified to his service and to his glory.

We would gladly and willingly pursue this sacred and holy theme, as it is one of daily, hourly application; one which deeply concerns our state before God and the peace of our own consciences; but we forbear, as we think we must have sufficiently drawn upon the kindness and attention of our readers. Yet we cannot bring our task, though we hardly like to call it by such a term, to a close, without remarking that if we have rightly opened the mind of the Holy Spirit in our Meditations upon these two chapters, it will be seen how every doctrine which we have endeavored to open, every truth to unfold, every branch of experience to dwell upon and enforce, have each and all a sanctifying power and influence upon the believing soul; and thus we would gladly hope that, through the blessing of God on what we have written, it may leave its sanctifying influence upon every heart that truly desires to know, experience, and live "THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS."

Chapter 69

04.00. Meditations on the Adorable Redeemer

Meditations on the Adorable Redeemer by J. C. Philpot

Contents: The Knowledge of Christ The Nature of the Redeemer’s Humanity The Redeemer’s Humiliation The Death of the Cross The Effects of the Redeemer’s Sufferings & Death The Burial of Christ Union and Communion with Christ The Resurrection The Effects of the Redeemer’s Resurrection The Ascension

King of Kings Our Great High Priest His All-Prevailing Intercession His Sympathy and Compassion Blessing the People The Second Coming

04.01. The Knowledge of Christ

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST In that wondrous prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father on the eve of his sufferings and death, there is a declaration which demands of all who fear God the deepest and most attentive consideration. It is this—"And this is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3.) These words are often incorrectly quoted, by which much of their force and meaning is lost, "And this is life eternal, to know you," etc. But the Lord's words are, "that they might know you." In the original the article stands before "life eternal," so that the meaning of the whole passage is, "And this is the life eternal which he has to give, that they whom you have given him may know you," etc. He thus explains what this eternal life is, and that it is given to the objects of his Father's love and choice, that they, and they only, might have the inward and unfailing possession of it in time and for eternity. In the preceding verse the blessed Lord had told his heavenly Father that he had "given him power over all flesh," for this express purpose, "that he would give eternal life to as many as God had given him." But for the instruction of the Church of God for all time, that she might clearly understand and know what this eternal life is which he has to bestow, and that on a matter so vital, so essential, no mistake might be made, he graciously adds the explanation to which we have already referred. By this plain and decisive declaration, he would forever show that the eternal life which he has to give is no visionary, imaginary, dim, and dreamy heaven—no mere deliverance at death from illness, pain, and suffering—no narrow escape from hell, just at the last gasp—no reward of merit, or purchase of a deathbed repentance—no fruit of juggling ceremonies or absolving priests, gotten in the very throws of death, by a drop of oil or a little bread and wine—no entrance for unregenerate souls into a paradise of unknown bliss, of which on earth there had been no foretaste, and for which no previous fitness or spiritual preparedness had been inwardly wrought. All such carnal views of heaven, all such natural notions of a state of happiness after death of deceivers and deceived—the blessed Lord at once and for ever cast out by declaring with his own lips of truth and grace that the eternal life which he had to bestow consisted in two things—1. The knowledge of the only true God; and, 2. The knowledge of himself as the sent of the Father. The importance and significancy of this declaration it is impossible to overstate. Its infinite weight is determined by eternal life being laid in the opposite scale; its immeasurable breadth by the commencement of heaven dating from a life on earth. For eternal life begins below, to be consummated above; is sown in grace, to be harvested in glory. Thus Enoch walked with God before he was translated; Abraham was the friend of God; and Moses saw the Lord face to face. These and all the Old Testament saints "desired a heavenly country" before they reached it. (Hebrews 11:16.) But how could they desire a country of which they had no knowledge, foretaste, or enjoyment? Can we desire that of which we know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, enjoy nothing? "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you," is the experience of every soul that by the letting down of heaven upon earth finds earth itself the very portal of heaven. But how can it know there is a God in heaven, unless it has found that God on earth; or desire none besides him even here below, unless here below it has felt and known his love? But it

is not our purpose to open or enlarge upon this declaration of the blessed Lord in its general bearings, or as comprehending the whole of the important truth couched therein. The part which rests with weight upon our own mind at this present moment is that which places the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ on the same level with the knowledge of the only true God. How deep, then, how mysterious, and yet how blessed must that knowledge be to obtain, to possess, to enjoy which is to be put into possession, while here below, of life everlasting. Science, learning, knowledge, general or special, mental ability, mechanical skill, political wisdom, intellectual refinement, and every attainment which, in a state of high civilization, elevates men above the slaves of drunkenness and debauchery, are well for time. Who can despise such a wonder of science and skill as the Great Eastern, though he that fears God and trembles at his word may call to mind the woes denounced against ancient Tyre for her riches and her pride, (Ezekiel 26:1-21, Ezekiel 27:1-36, Ezekiel 28:1-26) and may see with fear that what she was, England is, and that the same sins may call down the same doom. But what are all the attainments of science, all the wonders of art, all the triumphs of engineering skill—for eternity? Yes, were all the science and art, all the skill, wealth, and power, now divided among thousands, concentrated in one individual, what would the whole collective array be compared with—one grain of grace, one ray of divine teaching, one drop of atoning blood in the conscience, or one gleam of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit? If, then, this spiritual and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ whom God has sent is a free gift, and yet is only bestowed upon those whom the Father has given to his dear Son—how precious the possession, but O how exclusive the boon! How as with a two-edged sword this word out of the mouth of the Son of God (Revelation 1:16) cuts both ways; how, as a key worn on his shoulder and wielded by his divine hand, it shuts as well as opens; how, while with one hand it raises millions to hope and heaven, with the other it sinks millions into despair and hell. As a healing word from the Lord’s lips it brings rest and peace to prayerful hearts, wounded consciences, and contrite spirits; but, as a word of truth and righteousness, it forever seals the doom of the ignorant and unbelieving, the self-confident and the self-righteous, the dead in sin and the dead in profession. As all true Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man, this spiritual, saving knowledge of his Person and work, his love and grace, his blood and righteousness, divides itself into two branches—1. A gracious acquaintance with his DEITY as the eternal Son of God; 2. A gracious knowledge of his HUMANITY as the Son of man. In some of our late Numbers we ventured to lay before our spiritual readers some of those scriptural views of the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord which we have seen and felt in our own soul as the solemn truth of God. And as we have reason to believe that what we were enabled to write upon that subject has been received with a measure of acceptance by those who know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we have felt encouraged now to bring before them some reflections on the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer. To know him as God, to know him as man, to know him as God-man, and this by a divine revelation of his glorious Person, blood, and love, to our souls—this is, indeed, to have eternal life in our bosoms. Nor can he be savingly known in any other way but by divine and special revelation, "For no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any one the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matthew 11:27.) The Apostle, therefore, prays for the saints at Ephesus, that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." (Ephesians 1:17-18.) He prayed for the same blessing for them as he had enjoyed for himself, as he speaks, "But when it pleased God,

who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." (Galatians 1:15-16.) He knew, therefore in himself in his own blessed and happy experience, what it was to be "filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" (Colossians 1:9;) and to be blessed with "all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:2-3.) Thus he travailed in birth again for the Galatians until "Christ was formed in them;" (Galatians 4:19;) and prayed for the Ephesians, that "Christ might dwell in their heart by faith." (Ephesians 3:17.) He speaks also of their having "learned Christ," "heard of Christ," and "been taught of Christ," (Ephesians 4:20-21,) all which expressions point to a divine discovery of his Person and work to the heart. The blessed Lord also assured his sorrowing disciples that he would "come to them," and that they would "see" him, and "live" upon him; that they would "know that he was in them," and that he would "manifest himself to them and make his abode with them." (John 14:18-23.) Nor were these blessings and favors limited to the Lord’s own immediate disciples. As "the precious ointment which was poured upon the head" of our great High Priest "went down to the skirts of his garments," (Psalms 133:2,) so there is "an anointing which teaches" the lowest and least of the members of the mystical body of Christ "of all things, and is truth, and no lie." (1 John 2:27.) By this unction from above every one that has heard and has learned of the Father comes unto Christ; (John 6:45;) and knows for "himself that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." (1 John 5:20.) If, then, we are favored with this teaching, and "a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven," (John 3:27,) we shall see by the eyes of our enlightened understanding "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," and what we thus see we shall believe, love, and adore. Should we not, then, with all holy awe and godly reverence, seek to approach this mystery of wisdom, power, and love? for all salvation and all happiness, as well as all grace and glory, are wrapped up in it. Right views are indispensable to a right faith, and a right faith is indispensable to salvation. To stumble at the foundation, is, concerning faith, to make shipwreck altogether; for as Immanuel, God with us, is the grand Object of faith, to err in views of his eternal Deity, or to err in views of his sacred humanity, is alike destructive. There are points of truth which are not fundamental, though erroneous views on any one point must lead to God-dishonoring consequences in strict proportion to its importance and magnitude; but there are certain foundation truths to err concerning which is to insure for the erroneous and the unbelieving, the blackness of darkness forever. In opening up, therefore, to our ability, this blessed subject, the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus, we shall arrange our thoughts under four distinct heads.

I. The wisdom, love, and grace of God as revealed in the incarnation of his dear Son.

II. The nature of that sacred humanity which the blessed Lord assumed in the execution of this wondrous plan.

III. The work accomplished in that sacred humanity while here on earth, in its state of humiliation and suffering.

IV. The exaltation of that sacred humanity to the right hand of the Father in heaven; and what it involves for the present and for the future. On a subject so deep and so important, yet so full of grace and truth, it may well behoove us to seek wisdom from above, and to take especial heed

that our pen may drop no word that may be inconsistent with the oracles of God, or sully the purity of the doctrine which is according to godliness.

Chapter 71

04.02. THE NATURE OF THE REDEEMER'S HUMANITY

THE NATURE OF THE REDEEMER’S HUMANITY The wisdom, love, and grace of God as revealed in the incarnation of his dear Son. To glorify his dear Son has from all eternity been the purpose of the Father; and both in the plan and in the execution has he manifested the depths of his infinite wisdom, power, and love. That the eternal Son of God should take into intimate and indissoluble union with his divine Person the flesh and the blood of the children, that in that nature he might manifest the riches of the sovereign grace, the heights and depths of the everlasting love, and the fullness of the uncreated glory of a Triune Jehovah, has been from all eternity the determinate counsel and purpose of the great and glorious self-existent I AM; and all creation, all providence, and all events and circumstances of time and space were originally and definitely arranged to carry into execution this original plan.

Creation, with all its wonders of power and wisdom, was not necessary either for the happiness or the glory of the self-existent Jehovah. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had, from all eternity, that holy, intimate union and intercommunion with each other, that mutual love and ineffable fellowship of three distinct Persons and yet but one God, which creation could neither augment nor impair. Time, with all its incidents, is but a moment; space, with all its dimensions, is but a speck, compared with the existence of a God who inhabits eternity, and therefore fills all time and all space. That a self-existent God should be amply sufficient for his own happiness and his own glory is a truth as self-evident to a believing heart as the very existence of God himself. But it pleased the sacred Triune Jehovah that there should be an external manifestation of his heavenly glory; and this was to be accomplished by the incarnation of the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity. The Father, therefore, prepared him a body, which in due time he would assume. Thus addressing his heavenly Father, he says, "A body have you prepared me." (Hebrews 10:5.) That he would take this prepared body into union with his divine Person was the eternal will of God; so that when the appointed time arrived for the decree to be accomplished, the eternal Son could and did come forth from the bosom of the Father with these words upon his lips, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me (the volume of God’s eternal decrees), to do your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7.)

Now, the word of truth declares that "God manifest in the flesh" is "the great mystery of godliness." (1 Timothy 3:16.) Therefore, without an experimental knowledge of this great mystery there can be no godliness in heart, lip, or life; and if no godliness no salvation, unless we mean to open the gates of bliss to the ungodly, who "shall not stand in the judgment;" (Psalms 1:5;) and to count for nothing that "ungodliness" against which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven." (Romans 1:18.) It is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone "makes free;" and it is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone sanctifies as well as liberates, "Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17.)

How important, then, how all-essential to know the truth for ourselves, in our own hearts and consciences, by divine teaching and divine testimony, that, set free from bondage, darkness,

ignorance, and error, liberated into the blessed enjoyment of the love and mercy of God, and sanctified by his Spirit and grace, we may walk before him in the light of his countenance. And as in the Person of the incarnate Son of God "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," how blessed is it to look up by faith to him at the right hand of the Father, and to receive out of his fullness those communications of wisdom and grace which not only enlighten us with the light of the living, but cause us to be partakers of his holiness, and thus make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. As thus taught and blessed, we desire to approach this solemn subject, and to look with the eyes of an enlightened understanding and of a believing heart at the mystery of an incarnate God. And if Moses at God's command put off his shoes from off his feet, when he looked at the burning bush, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, (Exodus 3:5,) much more should we, when we look on the mystery of God made manifest in the flesh, of which the burning bush was but a type, put off the shoes of carnal reason from off our feet. The nature of that sacred humanity which the blessed Lord assumed in the execution of this wondrous plan. The sacred humanity of the blessed Lord consists of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, taken at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operation and influence of the Holy Spirit. This is very evident from the language of the angel to the Virgin—"The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35.) i. The first thing to be borne in mind is, that it was a real and substantial human nature, consisting of a real human body and a real human soul, both of which were assumed at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin. It was necessary that the same nature should be taken which had sinned, or there could have been no redemption or reconciliation of that nature, or of those that wore that nature. Thus the apostle argues, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" (Hebrews 2:16;) implying, that if fallen angels had to be redeemed and reconciled, the Son of God must have taken angelic nature; but as man had to be redeemed, he assumed human nature. It was not, then, a shadowy form which the son of God assumed in the womb of the Virgin, as he had appeared in human shape before his incarnation to Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, but a real human nature, as real and as substantial as our own. Thus the Son of God "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" (Php 2:7;) "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John 1:14;) "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh;" (Romans 8:3;) "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." (Hebrews 2:14.) These Scripture testimonies abundantly show that the Son of God assumed a real human nature, but not a fallen, peccable, mortal nature. He was "made flesh," therefore real flesh; "in the likeness of sinful flesh," therefore not in the reality of sinful flesh. He took flesh of the Virgin, or he could not have been the promised "seed of the woman," which was to bruise the serpent's head; (Genesis 3:15;) or of "the seed of Abraham," to which the promise was especially made, (Galatians 3:16,) and from whom the Virgin Mary was lineally descended. And this nature he so assumed, or to use a scriptural expression, so "took hold of," (Hebrews 2:16, marg.,) that it became his own nature as much as his divine nature is his own. It was not assumed, as a garment, to be laid aside after redemption's work was done, but was taken into indissoluble union with his divine Person. Nor did his death on the cross dissolve this union, for though body and soul were parted, and his immortal, incorruptible body lay in the grave, his soul was in paradise, in indissoluble union with his Deity. Thus, as each of us is really and truly man, by human nature being so personally and individually

appropriated by us as our own subsistence, that it is as much ours as if there were no other partaker of it on earth but ourselves; so the Son of God, by assuming that nature which is common to all men, (therefore called "the flesh and blood of the children,") made it his own as much as ours is our own nature. He is, therefore, really and truly "the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5.) ii. The next thing to be believed in and held fast is, that this humanity was not a person, but a nature. This point may not seem at the first glance of deep and signal importance; but as all God's ways and works are stamped with infinite wisdom, it will be seen, on deeper reflection, that it involves matters of the greatest magnitude—of the richest grace and the highest glory. For look at the consequences which would necessarily follow, were the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord a person and not a nature. Were it a person, the Lord Jesus Christ would be two Persons, one Person as God, and another Person as man, and thus would be two distinct individuals. But being a nature, which had of itself no distinct individuality, but was assumed at the very instant of its conception into union with his divine Person, the Lord Jesus is still but one Person, though he possesses two distinct natures. The angel, therefore, called it "that holy thing"—that is, that holy nature, that holy flesh, that holy substance—a "thing," because it had a real substance, "holy," because not begotten by natural generation, but sanctified in the moment of conception by the Holy Spirit, so as to be intrinsically holy, impeccable, immortal—capable of dying, but not tainted with the seeds of sickness or death. It was not a body like ours, "shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin;" (Psalms 51:5;) but was begotten by a divine and supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, and was therefore "holy," not relatively, and partially, as we, but really, thoroughly, and intrinsically holy; "harmless," or as the word might be rendered, "free from all ill;" "undefiled" with any taint of corruption in body or soul, original or actual, in any seed, inclination, desire, feeling, or movement of or toward it; "separate from sinners" in its conception and formation, in every thought, word, or deed, so that it was as separate from sin, and sin as separate from it, when on earth as it is now in the presence of God; "and made higher than the heavens," by the exaltation of that human nature to the throne of glory; higher than the visible heavens, for what is the glory of sun, moon, or stars to the glory of the sacred humanity of Christ in the courts of heaven? and higher too than the invisible heavens, for in his human nature as the God-man, he is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Romans 7:26; Ephesians 1:20-22.)

Among the heresies and errors which pestered the early church, was the Nestorian heresy, which asserted that Christ's human nature was a Person, and thus made two persons in the Lord, and the Eutychian, which declared that there was but one nature, the humanity of Christ being absorbed into his divinity. Against both these errors the Athanasian Creed, that sound and admirable compendium and bulwark of divine truth, draws its two-edged sword. "Who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the Manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." The Nestorian heresy is cut to pieces by the declaration that "he is not two," (that is, persons,) but one Christ; and the Eutychian by the words, "one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person." But consider the BLESSINGS that are connected with and flow out of this heavenly truth. The glory and beauty of this mystery, it is true, can only be seen and known by faith; for faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," alone gives to these divine realities a substantial existence in the believer's heart. But looking by faith

into this heavenly mystery, we may see in the two points we have thus far touched upon signal beauty and blessedness. The human nature which the blessed Lord assumed into union with his divine Person hungered, thirsted, was weary, wept, sighed, groaned, sweat drops of blood, agonized in the garden and on the cross, was tried, deserted, tempted, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and, by a voluntary act, died. Had it not been a real human nature, the sufferings and sorrows of the holy soul, the pains and agonies of the sacred body, the obedience rendered, the blood shed, the sacrifice offered, the life laid down would not have been real, at least not really endured and offered in that very nature which was to be redeemed and reconciled. This is beautifully unfolded by the apostle—"Therefore, it was necessary for Jesus to be in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:17-18.) But again, were the human nature of our blessed Lord a Person, its acts would have been personally distinct, and the virtue and validity of Deity would not have been stamped upon them. We may thus illustrate the distinction between a nature and a person. Man and wife are mystically by marriage one flesh, but they still remain two distinct persons. Their acts, therefore, as persons, are individually distinct, and each is morally and really responsible for his or her individual actions. But were they so incorporated, like a grafted tree, as to become two natures and only one person, then the acts of the weaker nature, assuming for the moment that the female is the weaker, being the acts of one and the same person, would be stamped with all the strength and power of the stronger.

Thus it is with the two natures of our blessed Lord. The human nature, though essentially and intrinsically holy, impeccable, incorruptible, and immortal, being the weaker and inferior nature, yet becomes stamped with all the worth, virtue, and validity of the divine nature, because though there are two natures there is but one Person. Thus the grand, vital truth of the two natures yet but one Person of the glorious Immanuel is no mere dry or abstract doctrine, no speculative theory spun out of the brains of ancient fathers and learned theologians, but a blessed revelation of the wisdom and grace of God. iii. But much beauty and heavenly glory are wrapped up in the way in which that humanity was assumed. In the forming of this holy humanity we see the three Persons of the blessed Trinity engaged. The Father prepared the body, the Son assumed it, the Holy Spirit formed it. By the preparation of the body, as the act of the Father, we understand not its actual forming or framing in the womb of the Virgin, but its eternal designation, its preparation in the council, wisdom, and love of the Father."A body have you prepared me;" (Hebrews 10:5;) margin, "you have fitted me," literally, "put together joint by joint." To design, to contrive, to put together in his own eternal mind, not merely the framework of the Lord’s body and the constitution of his soul, but so to prepare it that, conceived in the womb of the sinful Virgin, it should not partake of her sin, of her fall, of her sickness, of her corruptibility—this was a greater wonder to appear in heaven than what holy John saw in vision. (Revelation 12:1.) This body, thus prepared, the eternal Son of God assumed. By its assumption by the Son we understand not a creating act, as if the Son of God himself created the body to be assumed, but that ineffable act of condescension and grace whereby he took at one and the same instant of its formation, that sacred humanity, consisting of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, into union with his divine Person. We say "at one and the same instant," for we reject with abhorrence that vain figment, that idle tale, that pestilential and dangerous error of the pre-existence of the human soul of the Lord Jesus. He was

made in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted; (Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 4:15;) and unless it can be proved that our soul was created before our body, and pre-existed ages before it, it cannot be shown that the human soul of the Lord Jesus had any such pre-existence. This human nature, prepared by God the Father, and assumed by God the Son, God the Holy Spirit formed. By the forming of that sacred humanity by the Holy Spirit we understand that act of miraculous power whereby he overshadowed the Virgin by his operations and influence, and created, of her flesh, a holy human nature, which he sanctified and filled with grace in the very instant of its conception. iv. But this leads us onward to a fourth point, not less full of truth and blessedness. And we may put it in the form of a solemn question. How was it possible that in a nature so prepared, so assumed, and created, there could be any taint of sin, corruption, disease, or mortality? The Father contemplated that human nature which he had prepared for his dear Son from all eternity with ineffable complacency and delight. Could he who made man in his original creation so pure and innocent, creating him in his own image, after his own likeness, have prepared for his own Son, his only-begotten, eternal Son, a body fallen, tainted, and corruptible, or even capable of corruption and decay? Could the Son, who is "the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his Person," assume into union with his eternal Godhead any other but a pure, holy, immortal, and incorruptible nature? It was not a body to decay with sickness and die of disease, and then be thrust away out of sight as the food of corruption, but taken into intimate union with Deity itself, as its immortal and incorruptible companion. Could the Holy Spirit form anything but a holy nature for the Son of God to assume into a union so close, intimate, and indissoluble? But it may not be unprofitable to examine these points of divine truth a little more closely.

1. And first, as to the intrinsic holiness and purity of the Lord’s human nature. It was essentially a nature impeccable, that is, not only not tainted with sin, but absolutely incapable of being so tainted. As we read of its being "impossible for God to lie," (Hebrews 6:18,) so we may say of the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, it was impossible it could sin. The testimonies in the word of truth are most full and clear to the impeccability of the human nature of the blessed Lord. "He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." (2 Corinthians 5:21.) He knew no sin; that is, in his own Person, in its taint or defilement, or in any approach thereunto. "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me." (John 14:30.) Satan, the prince of this world, came to tempt and to assail him; but he had nothing in him, as he has in us; that is, no internal material on which to work. If we may use such a figure, he had no ground within the walls on which to plant his infernal artillery. He might assault the blessed Lord from without, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," which had neither birth nor being, root nor stem, nor the possibility of any, in the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer. The late Dr. Cole, in the work before us, published many years ago, has exposed, in the most clear and forcible manner, the awful blasphemies of the once popular Edward Irving on this point. Well may we call them "awful blasphemies," for Dr. Cole declares that he heard with his own ears this poor, miserable, ranting orator, for he called his own sermons "Orations," term the holy humanity of the blessed Lord "that sinful substance." The sacred beauty, the ineffable blessedness of that holy humanity mainly consisted in the Lord’s being "a lamb without blemish and without spot," (1 Peter 1:19,) as was typified by the paschal lamb, (Exodus 12:5,) and indeed by every other ceremonial sacrifice. (Leviticus 22:19-24; Deuteronomy 15:21.) We must never lose sight of the peculiar nature of the blessed Lord’s humanity. The nature of Adam was peccable, that is, capable of sinning, because, though created pure, it was not generated by any supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. It was a

pure created nature, but not a holy begotten nature. The two things are essentially distinct. Besides which, the humanity of Adam was a person, and therefore could fall; but the humanity of Jesus is a nature taken into union with his divine Person, and therefore could no more sin or fall away from Godhead than his Godhead could sin or fall off from his manhood.

2. It was therefore, as Dr. Cole has well shown, incorruptible. The body of the blessed Redeemer lay three days and nights, according to the Jewish mode of calculation, in the sepulcher, but it knew no corruption. As the apostle expressly declares, "He whom God raised again saw no corruption." (Acts 13:37.) The sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus had no seeds in it of decay. Though a real body, like our own, though it ate and drank and slept as we do, not being under the original curse, nor involved in the Adam fall, it was not subject to sickness or corruption, as our body is. The voluntary death of the blessed Lord severed for a while body and soul; but the body was no more tainted with corruption in the sepulcher than the soul was tainted with sin in paradise.

3. This sacred humanity of the adorable Lord was therefore essentially immortal. Dr. Cole, in his letter on the subject, has admirably shown this. The body of the Lord was capable of death; indeed, as dying was the main part of every sacrifice, it was taken that it might die. It did not die from inherent necessity, as our bodies die, which are essentially mortal, because involved in Adam's transgression; but it died by a voluntary act. This is most plain from the Lord's own words, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18.) It was not the pain of the cross, the nails driven through the hands and feet, the exhaustion of nature, or the agony of soul that killed, so to speak, the Lord Jesus. When he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do, so that he could say, "It is finished," "he bowed his head"—the head did not decline of itself, weighed down by death, but he himself, full of life and immortality, bowed it; and then, by a voluntary act, "gave up the spirit," or breathed out his life. As in our next Number we hope, with God's help and blessing; to dwell more fully on this part of the subject, in our remarks on the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord in its state of humiliation, we shall enlarge no further upon it at present, but conclude with an extract from Dr. Cole's book:

"The awful and inevitable consequences of applying this term 'mortal' to the body of Christ."

"1. If the body of Christ was 'mortal' in the unalterable meaning of that term, his death, as we have already hinted, was not voluntary but of necessity. He did not die of his own free will, but died, because, being a personal sinner, (tremble my soul at the thought!) he could not save himself from death! He had no power to 'lay down' his life, but was compelled to yield it up, because he had forfeited it by his own sins! He did not 'give his life a ransom for many;' but the just judgments of God took it from him for his own transgressions—'The soul that sins it shall die.' (Ezekiel 18:4.) But is this the truth as it is in Jesus Christ? Is this the doctrine concerning the adorable Person of the Son of God that is revealed in the Word? Is this the instruction which the Holy and Blessed Spirit seals upon the heart of the redeemed? No, no! The scriptures declare, and those that have been brought to experience the benefits of the death of Christ know and believe that his death was not of necessity, but a free and voluntary gift. How plainly does he declare, and how expressively describe this himself—'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I

have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' (John 16:11; John 17:18.) His sacrifice is everywhere called 'a sacrifice of himself, a voluntary gift.' 'He offered up himself;' (Hebrews 7:27;) 'By the sacrifice of himself;' (Hebrews 9:26;) 'Who gave himself a ransom.' (1 Timothy 2:6.) And so universally. But all these scriptures are flatly contradicted, all this cloud of testimonies is utterly nullified, if the body of Christ was 'mortal.'"

04.03. THE REDEEMER'S HUMILIATION

THE REDEEMER’S HUMILIATION In approaching the solemn subject of the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, as engaged in the work of redemption when here below, we desire to do so under the special teaching and unction of the Holy Spirit, not only that nothing erroneous, inconsistent, or unbecoming may escape our pen, and that what we write may be in the strictest harmony with the oracles of God and the experience of his saints, but that life, and power, and savor may attend our reflections to those believing hearts which may desire to walk with us in these fields of heavenly meditation. To guide into all truth, to take of the things of Christ and to show them to his disciples; and thus glorify Jesus, is the especial work of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:13-15.) To have this divine teaching is to have "an unction from the Holy One whereby we know all things;" (1 John 2:20;) and is to be blessed with that anointing which "teaches of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (1 John 2:27.) Prayer and supplication, reverent thoughts and feelings towards the sacred Majesty of heaven, inward prostration of spirit before his throne, submission of mind to the word of truth, faith in living exercise upon the Person and work of the Son of God, hope anchoring within the veil, and love flowing forth to the adorable Redeemer, will all accompany this heavenly anointing. So unspeakably holy, so great, and so perfect is that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; one not made with hands, as the tabernacle in the wilderness, but prepared by God the Father, assumed by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Spirit, that we should as much dread to drop any word derogatory to, or inconsistent with its grace and glory as the high priest under the law would have trembled to carry swine’s blood, or the broth of abominable things into the most holy place. The sacred humanity of his dear Son, as the temple of his Godhead, and as irradiated with the beams of his eternal glory, the eyes of the Father ever contemplate with ineffable complacency and delight. Nor was this tabernacle less glorious in his holy eyes who sees things as they really are, not as they appear to man, even in Jesus’ deepest humiliation and shame, when he was "a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." When dogs compassed him, when the assembly of the wicked enclosed him, when they pierced his hands and feet, when he could count all his bones as they hung stripped on the cross, when his enemies looked and stared upon him, parted his garments among them, and cast lots for his vesture, (Psalms 22:8; Psalms 22:16-18,) he was as much delighted in by the Father, and was as glorious in his eyes as he now is at the right hand of his throne.

He ever was from the hour of his incarnation, he ever will be the same Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, when he hung upon the cross, today as he sits at the right hand of God, and forever in the eternity of his kingdom, power, and glory. May we, then, who believe in his name, and cleave to him with purpose of heart, as beholding the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, feel such a sacred communion with him in his suffering humanity that we may be able to say, with holy John, in the flowing forth of faith and affection, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.) The foundation of this sacred mystery was laid in the eternal purposes of God, and determined by a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The creation of this lower world, and indeed we may say, of the higher world of bright,

angelic beings, was but a first step to the bringing to light of these hidden purposes of Jehovah. When he formed man in his own likeness, it was not merely after his moral image, (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10,) but after the likeness of that man who was set up in the mind of God from everlasting, or ever the earth was. (Proverbs 8:23.) It was utterly impossible that a holy God could create a sinful man. He, therefore, made man upright, but able to fall. During the period of man's innocency the promises of the covenant of grace, so to speak, slept. They were in the bosom of the covenant, ready to appear, but were not yet needed. But immediately that man sinned and fell, as soon as Justice, which, as the revelation of the intrinsic holiness of Jehovah, had the first claim to speak, had pronounced sentence on the head of the guilty criminals, Mercy, as already laid up in the Covenant of grace, stepped in with the first promise which issued from the lips of a sin-pardoning God, that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Here was the first intimation of the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The bruiser of the serpent's head was to be of the seed of the woman; and the sufferings of the sacred humanity to be assumed of the woman were at the same moment foreshadowed in the declaration that the seed of the serpent would bruise his heel. As a further development of the sacred mystery of the slaughtered Lamb, the gracious Lord then instituted worship by sacrifice; for it is evident from Abel's offering "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof," which he doubtless burned on the altar, in strict accordance with the Mosaic ritual afterwards appointed, (Numbers 18:17,) that the Lord then instituted the rite of sacrifice, and himself clothed our first parents with the skins of the sacrificed victims as emblematic of the righteousness of the slain Lamb of God, who was thus revealed to their faith. Let us not think that these solemn transactions in the garden of Eden were a sudden thought in the mind of God—an expedient then and there for the first time devised to patch up the fall. The Covenant of grace between the three Persons of the sacred Trinity was entered into with a foreview of the fall; and therefore the blessed Lord is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8.) It is, indeed, derogatory to the character of him who "declares the end from the beginning," (Isaiah 46:10,) who "looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heaven," (Job 28:24,) to think that the Adam fall took him, so to speak, by surprise, was an unlooked-for, unexpected event, of which there had been no foresight, and for which there had been made no provision. Far from our mind be such low, groveling thoughts of the great and glorious self-existent I AM. Such views would root up the very foundations of our faith in his omniscience and omnipotence. If God did not foresee the fall, an event charged with the eternal destiny of millions, what minor circumstance can he foresee now? If God did not provide a remedy for the fall as foreseen, where is his wisdom as well as his prescience of the circumstances whereby we are at present surrounded? Such a blind God groping, as it were, for a remedy amid the ruins of the fall, which he never foresaw, is worse than a heathen idol. At any rate it is not the God of the Bible—it is not the God whom living souls believe in, worship, and adore. They admire with holy reverence his eternal foresight, and bow with submission before his fixed decrees; they adore his sovereignty in the election of the vessels of mercy and the rejection of the vessels of wrath; and when favored with a sip of his love, bless his holy name for having loved them with an everlasting love from before the foundation of the world. If these foundations of our most holy faith be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalms 11:3.) But blessed be God, his prescience and his providence, his wisdom and his grace, his mercy and his love, are all from everlasting to everlasting, secured by a covenant ordered in all things and sure, fixed by firm decree and ratified by his word and by his oath, two immutable things in which it was impossible

for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). In this everlasting covenant it was appointed that the Son of God, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, would take our nature into union with his own divine Person, that he might offer it as a sacrifice for the sins of his elect people, and thus redeem them from all the consequences of the fall, and reconcile them unto God. The WORK accomplished in that sacred humanity while here on earth, in its state of humiliation and suffering.

We have already shown that this sacred humanity of our adorable Lord was a real human body, and a real human soul, taken at one and the same instant into union with the divine Person of the Son of God, and that it was essentially impeccable and immortal. We have, with God's blessing, in pursuance of our sacred theme, and as a further opening up of "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," to show the work accomplished in that sacred humanity while here on earth in its state of humiliation and suffering. i. The first consideration is, what he became by this voluntary act of taking our nature into union with his divine Person. In opening up this part of our subject we shall tread closely in the footsteps of that portion of holy writ where the apostle Paul unfolds the sacred mystery of the humiliation of the blessed Lord. (Php 2:5-8.)

1. He emptied himself of all those outward adjuncts of his glorious Person with which he had forever shone as the eternal Son of the Father in the courts of heaven. We use the word "emptied himself," as being the literal translation of the word rendered in our version, "made himself of no reputation;" but we do not mean thereby that he deprived himself of any one of the perfections of the divine nature. Not a single essential attribute of Deity was, or indeed could be in the least degree diminished by his assumption of our nature, for he could no more cease to be all that God is than he could cease to be God. But he emptied himself of them before the eyes of men by laying aside their outward and visible manifestation. As an earthly king may lay aside for a while his regal state, and yet not cease to be a king, so the Son of God laid aside for a season those bright beams of his glory which would otherwise have shone forth too brightly and gloriously for human eyes to look upon; for no man can see God and live. (Exodus 33:20.) Besides which, there was a secret purpose in the mind of God, whose glory it is to conceal a thing as well as to reveal it, (Proverbs 25:2,) that the glorious person of his dear Son would be veiled from all eyes, but those of faith. As, then, the sun is sometimes veiled in a mist, or by passing clouds, through which his light shines and his orb appears, though dimmed and shorn of those rays which the human eye cannot bear, so the Son of God veiled his divine glory by the tabernacle of the sacred humanity in which be dwelt. He is therefore said to have "tabernacled among us," as the word "dwelt" (John 1:14) literally means; for as the Shechinah, or divine presence, dwelt in a cloud of glory, upon the mercy-seat, in the tabernacle erected in the wilderness, (Leviticus 16:2,) so that the most holy place needed not the light of the golden candlestick which illuminated the outer sanctuary, and yet was veiled by the curtains of the tabernacle, (2 Samuel 7:2,) so the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord was as a tabernacle to his divine nature, veiling it from the eyes of men, and yet by its indwelling presence filled with grace and glory.

Thus, to common eyes, he had no form nor loveliness, was as a root out of a dry ground, was despised and rejected of men, and when they saw him there was no beauty in him that they would desire him. (Isaiah 53:2.) It is true that sparkles of his eternal Sonship and glorious Godhead shone through the veil of his humanity to believing eyes and hearts, for John says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) And the Father not only outwardly, with a voice

from heaven, twice declared that he was his beloved Son, (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5,) but revealed him inwardly as such to the heart of his disciples, according to the Lord's own testimony in the case of Peter. (Matthew 16:16-17.) As long as he was in the world he was the light of the world, (John 1:9; John 8:12; John 9:5,) as the sun, however veiled by clouds, is still the light of the earths. Though rejected and abhorred of men, he could, therefore, still look up to his heavenly Father, in the lowest depths of his humiliation, and speak in the language of filial love and confidence, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." (Isaiah 49:5.)

2. The second act of humiliation of the eternal Son of God in assuming our nature was to take upon him the form of a servant. Some are born servants, as Abraham had three hundred and eighteen trained servants born in his house; (Genesis 14:14;) and some are made servants by others, either taken captive in war (Deuteronomy 21:10) or bought with money. (Leviticus 25:44-46.) But the blessed Son of God took upon him the form of a servant, as a voluntary act of grace; and not only the form, but the reality, for the word form respects not only his outward appearance while here below, but his inward subjection of soul to God. Therefore the Father said of him, in the language of prophecy, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights," (Isaiah 42:1,) and unto him, "You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. (Isaiah 49:3.) He was formed from the womb to be God's servant, (Isaiah 49:5), so that he became a servant at the very instant that he took our nature into union with his own divine Person in the womb of the Virgin. Thus the apostle, quoting the words of Psalms 40:6, "My ears have you opened," (marg. "dug,") that is, "Have made me your willing servant," in allusion to Exodus 21:6, renders them, "A body have you prepared me;" for by taking the prepared body he became the willing servant of the Father, according to his own words, "I delight to do your will, O my God." (Psalms 40:8.)

3. By taking this prepared body, he was therefore made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man, that is, though his sacred humanity was intrinsically different from ours, as being holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, impeccable, and immortal, yet, in outward form and appearance, as in reality and truth, it perfectly resembled man's. It ate, it drank, it slept, was weary, sweat drops of blood, endured pain of body and travail of soul. The early church was much pestered with what is called the Gnostic heresy, which, under the plausible assumption that real flesh was too gross and material a substance for the Son of God to assume, asserted that he took a shadowy, etherial form, in which there was no real flesh or blood, but only the appearance. It is against this heresy that holy John draws his sword, when he declares that "the Word was made flesh," and gives this as a test of saving truth and damnable error—"This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world." (1 John 4:2-3.) We must hold fast, then, to this vital truth, that it was real flesh and blood, though holy flesh and blood, that the Son of God assumed in the womb and offered on the tree.

4. Having, then, thus voluntarily assumed the form of a servant, the blessed Lord took that in which the very essence of servitude consists, that is, obedience, and that not only to the word, but to the will of his heavenly Father. As this obedience forms our justifying righteousness and is a part of his finished work, it claims at our hands the most attentive, prayerful, and meditative

consideration. Not, however, to dwell too long on this part of our subject, we may briefly name these five particulars as most marked and blessed features of the obedience of Jesus, while here in this state of humiliation. It was voluntary, delighted in, perfect, vicarious and meritorious.

1. It was voluntary. "Lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God," (Hebrews 10:7,) were, so to speak, the words in his heart and mouth when he came out of the bosom of the Father to take flesh in the womb of the Virgin. There was no compulsion to bring him down from heaven to earth but the compulsion of love. As the love of Christ is said to constrain us not to live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again, (2 Corinthians 5:14,) so, in a sense, we may say that the love of his people constrained him to live and die for them. They were his inheritance, the portion given him by his Father when he appointed him heir of all things, (Hebrews 1:2,) that they might be his eternal possession. (Deuteronomy 32:9; Psalms 2:8.) "Yours they were," he therefore meekly reminds his Father, "and you gave them to me," adding, to show the unity of mind, will, purpose, and possession in the Father and the Son, "And all mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them." (John 17:6; John 17:10.)

He, therefore, loved the church as his own bride, the spouse of his heart, whom he had betrothed unto himself as the gift of the Father before time was. (Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 2:19-20.) Yes; before the mountains were settled; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, even then was he rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth—that part which his saints would inhabit, and his delights were with the sons of men. (Proverbs 8:25-26; Proverbs 8:31.) When, then, in and by the fall, the church had become defiled and polluted beyond all thought and expression, when sunk beyond all other help and hope, the image of God in which she had been created, marred, and defaced—she an enemy and an alien by wicked works, the willing captive of sin and Satan, with hell opening its mouth to swallow her up in the same gulf of eternal woe where the fallen angels were already weltering—then, even then, O miracle of grace! O wonder of unutterable love! the Son of God, by a purely voluntary act, yet in accordance with the will and counsel of the Father and the Holy Spirit—gave himself for her! This free, voluntary gift of himself, with all its blessed fruits and consequences, is beautifully unfolded by the apostle in that striking passage, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it would be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27.) The forlorn, abject, helpless, and hopeless state of the church by the fall, and the pitiful compassion of the blessed Lord as her covenant Head and husband, are beautifully set forth by the prophet Ezekiel, where he compares her to a poor, deserted, abandoned infant, cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born. No eye pitied it, no hand was stretched forth to do it any necessary office, or give it food, warmth, or shelter. Abandoned to die, had not he who is "very pitiful and of tender mercy" pitied her, (James 5:11,) had not he whose love passes knowledge loved her, into what an unfathomable depth of everlasting woe must she not have sunk! But in this very hour of need he passed by, and the time was the time of love, for he spread his skirt over her, and swore unto her, entered into a covenant with her, and she became his. But before she could pass into his arms, he had himself to wash away all her filth in the fountain of his own blood, to anoint her with the oil of his grace, and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Blessed Spirit, and to clothe her with embroidered work, even the righteousness that he wrought for her by his own active and suffering

obedience—the three blessings of which the apostle speaks as the present portion of the saints of God—"And such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (Ezekiel 16:5-10; 1 Corinthians 6:11.)

2. It was an obedience that the blessed Lord delighted in. His own words, in the language of prophecy, as if in holy anticipation of his coming from heaven to earth, a thousand years before the incarnation, were, "I delight to do your will, O my God." (Psalms 40:8.) Thus he could say, when faint and weary at Samaria's well, his love and delight in doing the will of God absorbing all feeling of the natural needs of the body, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34.) In this spirit also he said, a year before his actual sufferings and death, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with,"—and O what a baptism of suffering and blood! of what agonies of body, and of what travail of soul! "and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke 22:50,)—as though his holy soul panted with intense desires for the overwhelming baptism of garden sorrows, and pressed forward to meet it, and the sufferings of the cross, as the fulfillment of his Father's will. So, on his last journey out of Galilee towards Judea, "he went before," as if he would exceed his usual pace, and outstrip his lagging disciples, "ascending up to Jerusalem," where the will of his Father was to be obeyed, and the atoning sacrifice to be offered. (Luke 13:33; Luke 19:28.)

Blessed Lord! would that we could follow you in this holy example, and delight to do your will as you did delight to do your Father's will. And such surely would be our desire and delight were we more conformed to your suffering image, and more molded after the pattern of your obedience. (Romans 12:1-2.) Animated by the same holy delight, he said to his disciples, on the eve of his sufferings and death, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15.) And when the solemn hour drew near when the waters came in unto his soul, when he sank in deep mire where there was no standing, when he came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him, (Psalms 69:1-2,)* in the gloomy garden, when he had to drink of the cup of wrath put into his hand, what meek submission, what holy resignation he showed to his Father's will! Where can we look to see such sorrows? But where can we look to find such holy obedience, such meek submission, such patient endurance of them.?

* It is in the Psalms, especially Psalms 22:1-31, Psalms 40:1-17, and Psalms 69:1-36. that the inward experience of the blessed Lord as a man of sorrows is set forth.

3. Again. It was a perfect obedience. Every thought, every word, and every act of that holy and sacred humanity were perfect, not only as proceeding from a nature intrinsically pure, but as filled with all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, that glorious Person in the undivided Godhead who not only begot by a divine operation the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord in the womb of the Virgin, but filled it with all his gifts and graces, descending upon him more visibly at his baptism, and anointing him as Prophet, Priest, and King, (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 3:22; Luke 4:1; John 3:34; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 1:9,) but abiding in him in all his fullness during the whole of his ministry, sufferings, and death. The Law demanded a perfect obedience; it could, indeed, from its very nature, accept no other; and this obedience must be unwavering, flowing on in one uninterrupted stream from the heart, and that stream, like Jordan, all the time of harvest, overflowing all its banks with love to God and man. As the Lord promised that rivers of living water would flow out of the

belly (or heart) of him that believed in his name, so the rivers of living obedience flowed from his own heart and lips, as he himself believed in God and did his will from the heart.

4. The obedience of Jesus to the Father's will was vicarious, that is, rendered on behalf of his church, and imputed to her for righteousness. He stood in her place and stead as her Surety and Representative. She owed a debt which she could not pay, an obedience to the Law which she could not render. The Father accepted his Son's, and thus his obedience became hers. Thus, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous; (Romans 5:19;) for God made the Lord Jesus to be sin for us who know no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21.)

5. This obedience was meritorious. Here we see the beauty, grace, and glory of the incarnation of the Son of God. As God, he could not suffer; as man he could not merit; but as God-man he could suffer as man, and merit as God. And as though he has two natures he has but one Person, his doing and dying, his sufferings and obedience, his blood and righteousness, are stamped with all the value and invested with all the validity of Godhead, because he who obeyed and suffered as man, is truly and verily God.

Here, then, is "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." Here flow through this consecrated channel pardon and peace. Here God can be just and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. Here every attribute of God is harmonized, the law magnified, the gospel revealed, the sinner saved, and God glorified.

04.04. THE DEATH OF THE CROSS

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS

Well might the apostle, as if in a burst of holy admiration, cry aloud, as with trumpet voice, that heaven and earth might hear, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16.) A mystery indeed it is, a great, a deep, an unfathomable mystery; for who can rightly understand how the divine Word, the eternal Son of God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us? "Who shall declare his generation?" (Isaiah 53:8;) either that eternal generation whereby he is the only-begotten Son of God, or the generation of his sacred humanity in the womb of the Virgin, when the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her? These are the things "which the angels desire to look into;" which they cannot understand, but reverently adore. And well may we imitate their adoring admiration, not attempting to understand, but believe, love, and revere; for well has it been said, "Where reason fails, with all her powers, There faith believes, and love adores."

Nor, if rightly taught and spiritually led, shall we find this a barren, dry, or unprofitable subject. It is "the great mystery of godliness;" therefore all godliness is contained in it, and flows out of it. There never was, there never will or can be a truly godly thought, feeling, or desire—no, not one godly word or work, a godly heart or a godly life which does not a arise out of, and is not sustained by, the great mystery of an incarnate God. There may be, indeed frequently is, a legal holiness, a fleshly piety, a tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, and a profusion of good works, so called, independent of the grace that dwells in the Lord the Lamb; but godliness, as consisting in a new and heavenly birth, with all its attendant fruits and graces, can only flow from the fullness of a covenant Head, communicating life to the members of his mystical body. And this covenant Head, we know, is the Son of God, once manifest in the flesh and now exalted to the right hand of the Father.

How clear on this point, that all life is in him and out of him, are his own words of grace and truth—"Because I live, you shall live also;" "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me;" "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you;" "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." If, then, our hearts, as touched with an unction from above, are bent after godliness, as a felt blessing; if, as made daily more and more sensible of our miserable emptiness and destitution, and the drying up of all creature springs of happiness and holiness, we long more and more to realize the inward possession of that promised well of water, springing up into everlasting life, we shall desire to look more and more into this heavenly mystery, and to have its transforming power and efficacy more feelingly and experimentally made known to our souls.

"If any man thirst," said the blessed Lord, "let him come unto me and drink;" and to show that not only would he drink for his own soul’s happiness, but for the benefit of others, he graciously added, "He who believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of

living water." (John 7:38.) The whole of God's grace, mercy, and truth is laid up in, is revealed through, is manifested by the Son of his love; for "it pleased the Father that in him would all fullness dwell;" (Colossians 1:19;) and this as Immanuel, God with us. Thus his sacred humanity, in union with his Divine Person, is the channel of communication through which all the love and mercy of God flow down to poor, guilty, miserable sinners, who believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. If blessed then with faith in living exercise, we may draw near and behold the great mystery of godliness. To tread by faith upon this holy ground is to come "to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to thousands of angels in joyful assembly. You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge of all people. And you have come to the spirits of the redeemed in heaven who have now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which graciously forgives instead of crying out for vengeance as the blood of Abel did." (Hebrews 12:22-24;) for every blessing of the new covenant, if we are but favored with a living faith in an incarnate God, is then experimentally as well as eternally ours.

If, then, we dwell at a little further length on the heavenly mystery of the human nature of our blessed Lord, we trust we shall not be found wearisome to our spiritual readers. We freely confess that the more we look into it, the more the subject opens to our view. We feel it, therefore, impossible to limit ourselves to a few hurried thoughts and brief sentences. Our chief cause of lamentation is that we cannot adequately set it forth, nor even fully and clearly express what we have seen in it ourselves. In our last paper we stopped abruptly short at the very threshold of the last acts of the suffering obedience of our adorable Redeemer as couched in the words of the apostle, "And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Php 2:8.) The death of Christ was the fulfillment of the purpose for which he came into the world, which was, "to give himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a swept-smelling savor."(Ephesians 5:2.) "Now once in the end of the world has he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26.) The sufferings, blood shedding, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ were a sacrifice offered for sin and are therefore spoken of as a propitiation (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10) and an atonement. (Romans 5:11.) But in a sacrifice two things are absolutely necessary; 1. That the blood of the victim would be shed, for "without shedding of blood is no remission." "It is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul." (Leviticus 17:11;) and 2. That the victim would die; for death being the penalty of disobedience, (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4,) the sacrifice offered as an atonement for sin cannot be complete without the death of the victim. In the sacrifice of himself, offering up his sacred humanity on the altar of his Deity, the blessed Lord accomplished these two essentials of a propitiatory offering. 1. His blood was shed upon the cross—the actual living blood of his sacred humanity. It is therefore called "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," (1 Peter 1:19,) and "his own blood." (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 9:12.) It was precious as flowing from his sacred humanity; precious, as stamped with all the validity and merit of Deity; precious in the sight of God as a sweet-smelling savor; and precious in the hearts of his people as cleansing them from all sin.

Sin is an evil so dreadful, so hateful and abhorrent to his righteous character, so provoking to his justice and holiness, that God could not pardon it unless an atonement were made adequate to its fearful magnitude. Thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil could not atone for sin.

Did all men consent to give their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul, (Micah 6:7,) all could not suffice to outweigh the magnitude of sin. Lebanon is not sufficient for a burnt offering. Nothing short of the blood of the only-begotten Son of God could be an atonement of sufficient worth, of equivalent value.

2. But the death of the victim was also required. He who freely and voluntarily stood in the sinner's place must die in his place, or the substitution could not be effectual. Here, then, we see the mystery of the death of Jesus. There was no natural mortality* in that sacred humanity which the Lord assumed in the womb of the Virgin. And yet he took a nature which could die by a voluntary act. The whole of his obedience in his state of humiliation was voluntary. Therefore the last act of it was as voluntary as the first—the death on the cross as much as the assumption in the Virgin. The Lord's own words are decisive here—"Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18.) The very merit of his obedience unto death whereby it became capable of being imputed for righteousness to the church of God consisted mainly in two things, 1. The dignity of the obedient Sufferer; 2. The voluntariness of the sacrifice as an act of obedience to the will of God. Had our blessed Lord not been God, and that as the eternal Son of God, there would have been no merit in his sufferings, blood shedding, and death. As the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person, as his co-eternal Son, he thought it not robbery—no unhallowed, disallowable claim, to be equal with God; (Php 2:6;) and therefore the very infinity of Deity itself attached to his words and works, so as to stamp efficacious merit upon them. It was not because his humanity was perfect that it was meritorious. Had his humanity been as perfect as it was, if Deity were not in conjunction with it, no merit could have been attached to it any more than there was merit in the obedience of Adam, or in that of an angel. But being God as well as man, the merit of Deity was stamped upon all the acts of the obedient suffering humanity, so that, as we have sometimes said, Godhead was in every drop of his precious blood. Again, if the life of the blessed Lord had been violently taken away, contrary to his will, where would have been the obedience unto death? Had he been killed, so to speak, by the cross—had died because he could not help dying, had his life been violently torn from him, where would have been the laying down of his life as the last act of his voluntary obedience? What power could man have had over him? Had he so willed, he could have freed himself from the hands of his enemies. Therefore he said unto Pilate, "You could have no power at all against me except it were given you from above." (John 19:11.) And again, "Do you think that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53.) When, then, the band of men and officers from the chief priests came to take him with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, he freely "went forth" to yield himself up; but when he said, "I am he," or rather, as the words literally mean, "I AM," the glory of his eternal Deity so flashed forth, that "they went backward, and fell to the ground."(John 18:3-6.)

* Though we have in our preceding chapters used the word "immortal" as applicable to the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, we are well aware that it is a term not fully appropriate; for the word immortal strictly means not capable of death, and is in this sense applied to the soul of man as not only not dying with the body, but not capable of dying. In this sense, the humanity of the blessed Lord was not immortal, for it could and did die. If such a word were admissible, "unmortal," or

"non-mortal," would be a preferable term—denying that it was mortal, and yet not asserting that it could not die. The main difficulty arises from the inherent defect of human language as applied to heavenly mysteries. The mind naturally contemplates only two states of existence, 1. What must necessarily die; and, 2. What cannot possibly die. The first it terms "mortal," the second it calls "immortal." A third idea, that is, that of a body which does not necessarily die, and yet is capable of dying, as being a conception lying out of its reach, it has invented no word properly to express.

Thus truly was he "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he opens not his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7.) What heart can conceive, what tongue express what his holy soul endured when "the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all?" In the garden of Gethsemane, what a load of guilt, what a weight of sin, what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall as sweat from his brow. The human nature, in its weakness recoiled, as it were, from the cup of anguish put into his hand. His body could scarce bear the load that pressed him down; his soul, under the waves and billows of God’s wrath, sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him. (Psalms 69:1-2.) And how could it be otherwise when that sacred humanity was enduring all the wrath of God, suffering the very pangs of hell, and wading in all the depths of guilt and terror? When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin-offering) for us, he endured in his holy soul all the pangs of distress, horror, alarm, misery, and guilt that the elect would have felt in hell forever; and not only as any one of them would have felt, but as the collective whole would have experienced under the outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God. The anguish, the distress, the darkness, the condemnation, the shame, the guilt, the unutterable horror, that any or all of his quickened family have ever experienced under a sense of God’s wrath, the curse of the law, and the terrors of hell, are only faint, feeble reflections of what the Lord felt in the garden and on the cross; for there were attendant circumstances in his case which are not, and indeed cannot be in theirs, and which made the distress and agony of his holy soul, both in nature and degree, such as none but he could feel or know. He as the eternal Son of God, who had lain in his bosom before all worlds, had known all the blessedness and happiness of the love and favor of the Father—his own Father, shining upon him, for he was "by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." (Proverbs 8:30.) When, then, instead of love he felt his displeasure, instead of the beams of his favor he experienced the frowns and terrors of his wrath, instead of the light of his countenance he tasted the darkness and gloom of desertion—what heart can conceive, what tongue express the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Surety under this agonizing experience? A few drops of the wrath of God let down into the conscience of a child of God have made many a living soul cry out, "While I suffer your terrors I am distracted; your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off." (Psalms 88:15-16.) But what is all that Job, Heman, Jeremiah, or Jonah experienced, compared with the floods of anguish and terror which all but overwhelmed the soul of our blessed Lord? We therefore read of him in the garden, when the first pangs of his agony came on, that he "began to be filled with horror and deep distress," and this made him say to his three disciples, who were to be eye-witnesses of his sufferings, (1 Peter 5:1,) "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (Mark 14:33-34.) So great was that load that his human nature must have sunk beneath the weight—his body and soul would have been rent asunder, but for four sustaining props—1. The power of his Deity, for though that purposely did not display its strength, it remained in firm union with his sacred humanity; 2.

The help, and support of the Holy Spirit sustaining his human nature under the load laid upon it; 3. The joy set before him, which enabled him in the prospect to endure the cross, despising the shame; (Hebrews 12:2;) and 4. The strengthening of the ministering angel sent from heaven. (Luke 22:43.)

Thus supported and sustained, our gracious Redeemer sank not in the deep waters, but, as our great High Priest, "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7)—not as some have foolishly thought and said, fearing the miscarrying of his undertaking, or that he would sink into hell, but because he feared his heavenly Father with the reverence of a Son,* for filial fear, with every other grace, was in the heart of Jesus as his treasure. (Isaiah 11:2-3.) Let us ever bear in mind that the sufferings of the holy soul of Jesus were as real, that is, as really felt, as the sufferings of his sacred body, and a thousand times more intense and intolerable. Though beyond description painful and agonizing, yet the sufferings of the body were light indeed compared with the sufferings of the soul.

It is so with the saints of God themselves, when the Lord lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet in their conscience, and lets down a sense of his anger and displeasure into their soul. What is all bodily suffering compared to a sense of God’s displeasure and the arrows of his wrath sticking in the conscience? So it was with our great High Priest, when both as sacrificer and sacrificed, alike priest and victim, he was bound with the cords of love and obedience to the horns of the altar. (Psalms 118:27.) Surely never was there such a pang since the foundations of the earth were laid as that which rent and tore the soul of the Redeemer when the last drop of agony was poured into the already overflowing cup, and he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Nature herself sympathized with his sorrow, and was moved at his cry, for the earth shook, the sun withdrew his light, and the graves yielded up their dead. Yet thus was redemption’s work accomplished, sin atoned for and blotted out, the wrath of God appeased, everlasting righteousness brought in, and the church forever reconciled and saved. When, then, the Lord had been fully baptized with his baptism of suffering and blood, when head drunk the cup of sorrow and anguish to its last dregs, and had rendered all the obedience which the law demanded and the will of God required, he cried out with a loud voice that heaven and earth might hear, "It is finished!" and then, and not until then, he meekly bowed his head, laid down his life, as the last act of his voluntary, suffering obedience, and gave up the spirit.

* Those who deny the eternal Sonship of Jesus rob him of his grace as well as of his glory, by diminishing his sufferings, and thus really strip away the greatness, and consequently much of the merit of his sacrifice. It was because he was God’s own true and proper Son he so deeply, so keenly felt his wrathful displeasure. A Son by office, by mere name—without any filial relationship but a bare title which might have been any other—could not feel towards his adopted Father what the true, the proper, the only-begotten Son of God felt to his heavenly Father. One error always lets in another, and thus we see that the denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ lowers and disparages the greatness, and consequently the merit of the atonement. Let the deniers of the eternal Sonship look to this.

** The margin reads, "for his piety," but the truer and more literal meaning is, "on account of his reverential fear." "Had God in honor."—Luther.

04.05. THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS & DEATH

THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER’S SUFFERINGS & DEATH

We might now pass on to the consideration of that sacred humanity as taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, where it lay in all its innate purity, sanctity, and incorruptibility, perfuming the grave, and consecrating the tomb as the sleeping-place of those who die in the Lord. Thence we might pass to the resurrection of that incorruptible body, whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power; (Romans 1:4;) thence to the continuance of the blessed Lord upon earth during the forty days of his tarrying here below; thence to his ascension on high when he led captivity captive; thence to his sitting at the right hand of God in our nature; and thence to his second coming at the great day. All these successive steps are full of blessedness to believing hearts, when they can meditate upon them, and through faith, hope, and love in them, rise up into sweet union and communion with their most gracious and glorious Lord, as their once suffering but now risen and exalted Head. We purposed briefly to look at these gracious features of our Lord’s sacred humanity; but they are subjects of such deep importance, and so full of grace and glory, that we feel we cannot thus lightly pass over them. We have, indeed, already much exceeded our intended limits when we sat down to meditate on this fruitful theme. We are, then, in a strait, whether abruptly to close this subject with the departing year, or embrace the opportunity of resuming it in a different form in the opening season; and we have decided, if spared to see a returning year, to devote a few pages to these divine realities; not, however, as the continuation of the Review which we shall finish with this Number, but as a series of distinct independent papers. But as we are still at the cross of our suffering Lord, we cannot leave that sacred spot without dwelling for a few moments on several points most intimately connected with it. Three at this present moment offer themselves to our mind.

1. The work accomplished by the sufferings, blood shedding, obedience, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the benefits and blessings which spring out of it. It was a finished work. Here is all our salvation and here is all our hope. When were such words ever uttered on this earth as those which his gracious lips spoke from the cross, "It is finished?" Well may we cry, in the language of our sweet Christian Psalmist, "Holy Spirit, repeat the word, There’s salvation in it."

Standing, then, at the cross of our adorable Lord, and hearing these gracious words from the lips of him who cannot lie, if blessed with living faith, we may see the law thoroughly fulfilled, its curse fully endured, its penalties wholly removed, sin eternally put away, the justice of God amply satisfied, all his perfections gloriously harmonized, his holy will perfectly obeyed, reconciliation completely effected, redemption graciously accomplished, and the church everlastingly saved. Here we see sin in its blackest colors, and holiness in its fairest beauties. Here we see the love of God in its tenderest form, and the anger of God in its deepest expression. Here we see the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer lifted up, as it were, between heaven and earth, to show to angels and to men the spectacle of redeeming love, and to declare at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act of the suffering obedience and bleeding sacrifice of the Son of God,

the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of his inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of his heart to the election of grace.

Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace; here, and here alone, penitential grief and godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes; here, and here alone, is sin subdued and mortified, holiness communicated, death vanquished, Satan put to flight, and happiness and heaven begun in the soul. O what heavenly blessings, what present grace, as well as what future glory flow through the sacred humanity of the Son of God! What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners and a sin-pardoning God! What a healing-place for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders; what a door of hope in the valley of Achor for the self-condemned and self-abhorred; what a safe spot for seeking souls; and what a blessed resorting-place for the whole family of God in this valley of grief and sorrow!

2. Another most blessed fruit of the sacred humanity of our adorable Redeemer is that in that nature he learned the experimental reality of temptation and suffering, and thus became able to sympathize with his tempted and afflicted people. It was necessary under the law that the high priest "would have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity." (Hebrews 5:2.) Our great High Priest was not compassed with infirmity, like the high priest under the law, and therefore had no need to offer sacrifice for his own sins; (Hebrews 5:3;) but that he might be "a merciful" as well as "faithful" high priest—faithful to God and merciful to man, "He had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:17-18.) "We have not, therefore, a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15.)

Here we see the wisdom and grace of the Father in preparing, and the love and pity of the Son in assuming a nature like our own, sin only excepted, that he might have a real experience of every form of suffering and of temptation. Those only can feel for others in trouble and sorrow who themselves have walked in the path of tribulation; nor can any one really sympathize with the tempted but those who have themselves been in the furnace of temptation. Thus our blessed Lord became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; hid not his face from shame and spitting; endured poverty, hunger, thirst, and nakedness; was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by all; was oppressed and was afflicted, not only as a part of his meritorious, suffering obedience, but that by a personal experience in his holy humanity of sorrow and affliction he might sympathize with his mourning, afflicted people. And as with affliction, so with temptation; the gracious Redeemer endured every sort of temptation which Satan could present to his holy soul, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," (Hebrews 4:15,) that he might feel for and sympathize with the tempted. But this is not all. The blessed Redeemer had not only to sympathize with the sorrows and temptations, but experimentally to learn the graces of his believing people. He had therefore to learn obedience in the same way that they learn it, for "he learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" (Hebrews 5:8;) was taught in the school of affliction the inward experience of submission to God’s will, meekness under injury and oppression, and lowliness of heart as a heavenly grace. Therefore he could say, "Learn of me, for I

am meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29.) Let us not think that the blessed Lord had no inward experience in his holy soul of spiritual graces, or that his divine nature supplied to his human the grace of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit that was given him without measure, (John 3:34,) who not only anointed him as Prophet, Priest, and King, but dwelt in him in all his fullness, bestowed upon him every spiritual grace, as faith, trust, hope, love, prayer and supplication, patience, long-suffering, zeal for the glory of God, and with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, all counsel and might, all heavenly knowledge and the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11:1-2.) All these gifts and graces dwelt in his sacred humanity,* and were drawn into exercise by the Holy Spirit, so that the blessed Lord believed, hoped, and loved; prayed, sighed, and groaned; trusted in God and lived a life of faith in him, just in the same manner and by the same Spirit and power, though in an infinitely higher degree, and wholly unmixed with sin, as his believing people do now. So that just in the same way as his sacred body was fed and nourished by the same food as ours, so was his holy soul sustained by the same communications of grace and strength as maintain in life the souls of his people now.

Thus he learned experimentally not only their trials and temptations, their griefs and sorrows, both natural and spiritual, but their joys and deliverances, their manifestations, their waiting hope, their trusting confidence, their patient expectation, their obedient submission, and in a word the whole compass of their experience.** If any think it is derogatory to the Deity of our blessed Lord, to believe that he had a spiritual experience of the same graces that his people have, for being God, they might argue he could not need them, let them explain why his body needed human food, or why his soul had an experience of sorrow and temptation. Could not his divine nature, as in the wilderness, have supported the human without food? And is it not equally derogatory to say that the blessed Lord had an experience of affliction and temptation, as of joy and deliverance? As our great Exemplar, as our suffering Head, the blessed Lord was delivered as well as tempted, rejoiced in spirit as well as sighed and wept, was made glad with the light of his Father’s countenance as well as felt the hidings of his face.***

* If space admitted, we could easily show from those Psalms in which, beyond all controversy, Christ speaks that all the graces which we have here enumerated dwelt in him and were expressed by him. Lot our spiritual readers examine Psalms 18:1-50, Psalms 22:1-31, Psalms 40:1-17, Psalms 69:1-36, all of which the most indubitable external and internal evidence assigns to Christ, with an eye to this particular point, and trace it for themselves.

** Thus in reading David’s deliverances and blessings, though we know that they were really David’s, and truly felt and acknowledged by him as such, yet we may often say, "A greater than David was here." Thus compare Psalms 18:16-19. with Psalms 18:43-44.

*** Our blessed Lord had no experience of regeneration or of repentance; for the one is the quickening of the soul out of death, and the other implies the existence of sin. These two things are to be carefully distinguished from his experience of faith, trust, etc.

III. The third point connected with the sacred humanity of Jesus as obedient unto death, is the example he has left to his believing people that they would walk in his steps. It will little profit us to have the clearest views of the Lord’s suffering humanity if it produce no impression on our hearts and lives. At the foot of the cross there stood those who mocked the sufferings and shame of the blessed Redeemer; there were those who looked on with callous indifference; and there were

those who mourned and wept, believed and loved. So now there are those who mock the eternal Sonship and suffering humanity of the blessed Jesus; and there are those who look upon his suffering Majesty without faith and without feeling, without any sorrow for sin or any thirst after holiness. And there is a small remnant who look and believe, and as led into the fellowship of his sufferings, mourn and weep. These see and feel that there is a knowing him and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; (Php 3:10;) a bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body; (2 Corinthians 4:10;) a being crucified with Christ; (Galatians 2:20;) a determination to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified; (1 Corinthians 2:2;) and a glorying in his cross as the only effectual means whereby the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world; (Galatians 6:14.) We need not wonder that in our day there is such a form of godliness and such a denial of the power. It must ever be so when men are ignorant—willingly ignorant of the suffering humanity of the blessed Lord, and know so little of the mystery of the cross.

One word more, and for the present we close the subject. All union and communion with God is only through the humanity of Jesus. The God-man unites God and man. In union with God by his Deity, in union with man by his humanity, the Lord Jesus is the Arbitrator who lays his hand upon them both. (Job 9:33.) This made holy John say, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:2-3.) Happy are those who can say with him, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" but this those only can experimentally say who having been blessed with a manifestation of his Person and work can add—"He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself—he who believes not God has made him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son." (1 John 5:10.)

04.06. The Burial of Christ

THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

We last stood at the foot of the cross, where we saw by faith the blood-shedding and death of our adorable Lord; we viewed him yielding up his life by a voluntary act of his holy will, and heard his gracious words, "It is finished," just before he bowed his head and gave up the spirit. But we leave him not there. We have seen him die and by faith now view his sacred body still on the cross. But he did not long hang there as a spectacle to angels and men. [As the blessed Lord breathed out his life about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, and the preparation of the Passover begun about four o'clock, it would seem that his dead body did not remain above, and most probably under an hour upon the cross before taken down for burial.] His immediate disciples had fled, but there were those who came to perform those offices of love by which a safe and secure place was provided wherein that sacred body might lie. We see, then, by faith, that pallid body of which not a bone was broken though hands and feet were mangled and torn, and side pierced, taken down with all believing reverence and adoring affection by Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, aided, doubtless, by those holy women whose names the Holy Spirit has recorded as afterwards beholding and sitting over against the sepulcher where that pure body was laid. As the original penalty was, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die," and as "the wages of sin is death," the Surety and Sin-bearer must endure the penalty, and literally, actually die in the sinner's stead and place. Thus there was a necessity that the Redeemer of sinners should die; but as the Son of God could not die, Deity being incapable of suffering and death, the blessed Lord took a nature which could die—not by inherent mortality or external violence, but by a voluntary act [It is remarkable that three of the evangelists use three distinct words in the original, to express the voluntary way in which the Lord Jesus yielded up his life. In Matthew 27:50, it is "yielded up the spirit," literally, "dismissed his spirit;" in Mark 15:39. and Luke 23:46. it is the same word, "he gave up the spirit," literally, "breathed it out," and John 19:30, "gave up the spirit," literally, "delivered it," all implying a voluntary act.]—as voluntary as that by which he assumed that nature in the womb of the Virgin, or resumed his body at the resurrection. Our thoughts, then, now lead us to the body of Jesus in the GRAVE; and here we see much to engage our meditations. The first thing that strikes our mind in beholding this lifeless form, is the separation of body and soul which took place when the adorable Lord by a voluntary act laid down his life. The last words that the Redeemer spoke were, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." By his "spirit" we are to understand his human soul which at once went into paradise, into the immediate presence of God, as he intimated in the words, "And now come I to you." John 17:13. Nor did he go there that day alone. A trophy was soon to follow him—the soul of that repenting, believing malefactor, who, a partner with him in suffering, had become by his sovereign grace a partner with him in glory.

There was, then, an actual separation of the Redeemer's body and soul; but this did not destroy or affect the union of his Deity with his humanity. That union remained entire, as his holy soul went into paradise in union with his Deity, and thus he was still God-man as much in paradise as he was at the tomb of Lazarus, or at the Last Supper. But his sacred body, though by the act of death life

was gone out of it, still remained as before, "that holy thing." Death did not taint that sacred body any more than sin did not taint it in the womb of the Virgin. The promise was, therefore, "You will not leave my soul in hell (rather, in Hades, or that paradise in which it was after death), nor allow your Holy One to see corruption." Psalms 16:10. This holy body was essentially incorruptible, as being begotten of the Holy Spirit, by special and supernatural generation, of the flesh of the Virgin; but as in all other acts of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were all engaged that no taint of corruption should in death assail it. The Father promised, and, as a God who cannot lie, performed by his almighty, superintending power; the Son, by the same innate, active, divine energy by which he assumed that body in the womb of the Virgin preserved it untainted, uncorrupted in the grave; and the Holy Spirit, who formed that body in its first conception, breathed over it his holy influence to maintain it, in spite of death and the tomb, as pure and as incorruptible as when he first created it. These things are indeed difficult to understand or indeed conceive; but they are heavenly mysteries, which faith receives and holds fast in spite of sense, reason, and unbelief. For see the tremendous consequences of allowing any taint of corruption to assail that blessed body. Could a tainted body be resumed at the resurrection? Corruption would have marred it as it will mar ours; and how could a corrupt body have been again the habitation of the Son of God? We are often instrumentally preserved from error not only by knowing and feeling the sweetness and power of truth, but by seeing, as at a glance, the tremendous consequences which a denial of vital, fundamental truths involves. But we pass on to Jesus in the TOMB. A sepulcher hewn out in the rock, and therefore pure, clean, and dry, and "wherein never man before was laid," so as to be free from any taint of corruption; a great stone rolled to the door of the sepulcher to preserve the sacred deposit from external violence or unbecoming intrusion; Roman soldiers forbidding all access of strange feet into the sacred precinct; a guard of angels watching over that body in which their God and Creator had dwelt—how all these circumstances tended, and all worked together to the same result—the safe guardianship and inviolable preservation of that holy body which the Lord had assumed for the redemption of his people. But may we not gather up profitable instruction here? The holy women who mourned and wept at the cross did not forget their dear Lord at the sepulcher. There their thoughts ran during that Sabbath Day on which they rested according to the commandment; and with the first dawn of the next day—the first day of the week, they sped their steps, with spices, to anoint that dear Object of their faith and love. The mystery of the resurrection was indeed hidden from their eyes; but they ceased not to love in death and in the sepulcher that sacred form which they had loved in life. May not our thoughts turn to the sepulcher too; and may we not, with these gracious women, resort there as to the sleeping-place of the body of Jesus? Nature shrinks from death, even apart from that which following after death makes it to so many a king of terrors. Even where grace has set up its throne, and mercy rejoices over judgment, many unbelieving, infidel thoughts at times will cross the mind and perplex the judgment about the separation of body and soul, and the launching of the spirit into an unseen, unknown world. Faith, it is true, can subdue these perplexing thoughts, better hinted at than described, but faith needs some solid ground on which to build and rest. If, then, the soul is blessed with any assured hope or sweet persuasion of interest in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to remove guilty fears, how strengthening to faith is a view of his death, not merely as the only sacrifice for sin, but as the exemplar so to speak, of our own!

We all shall have to die, and therefore to look by faith at the death of Jesus may be a profitable subject of meditation as a relief against the perplexing thoughts to which we have before alluded.

Into his Father's hands the dying Lord commended his spirit. The Father received it, for him the Father hears always; John 11:42, and thus his spirit returned unto him who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7. Thus, by the act of dying, the soul and body of the blessed Redeemer were, for a time, fully and actually separated—as fully and actually as ours will also be at death. But follow by faith that soul of Jesus when he breathed it forth, and view it at once and immediately entering paradise, into the blissful presence of God. What food for faith is here! How strengthening, how encouraging to a believing heart which has often been perplexed by such thoughts as we have named, to view the soul of Jesus thus passing at once into paradise. And may we not, by faith, view the soul also of the believing malefactor, when the time of release was come, winging its flight into the same paradise where the soul of Jesus had preceded it? If we know anything painfully and experimentally of the assaults of unbelief, the arrows of infidelity, and the fiery darts of the wicked one, and how they are all quenched by the shield of faith, we have found that faith, in order to stand firm, must have the word of truth, a "Thus says the Lord," upon which to rest.

Let us now, then, see how this stands as connected with the death of the blessed Lord. Fortified by his holy example, if blessed with faith in his Person, blood, and righteousness, the dying believer may commend his spirit into the hands of Christ as did martyred Stephen, in the same confidence that the Lord Jesus commended his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

But, there is another sweet and blessed thought connected with the grave in which Jesus lay. We may have seen the grave open its dark mouth to receive a dear friend and brother, or some fondly-loved relative, who has left a sweet testimony behind of his interest in the finished work of the Son of God; and as we have looked down into that narrow cell, seen the coffin lowered slowly into it, heard the clods fall heavily on its lid, and felt how the beloved object was buried out of our sight, no more again to walk with us here below, how nature has shrunk from each gloomy sight and sound! What could then relieve the burdened mind, and soothe the sorrowing spirit, but a sweet persuasion by faith of these two things—First, that the soul of the departed one was with the Lord, which was far better than again to be burdened with the body of sin and death, now forever laid down; and second, that the Lord Jesus, by lying himself in the grave, had consecrated it as his people's sleeping-place, and perfumed it, as it were, by permitting it to be the deposit of his own incorruptible body.

What a trial to their faith must the death of Jesus have been to his disciples and believing followers! When their Lord and Master died, their hopes, for the time at least, seem almost to have died with him. This seems evident from the language of the two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus. "But we had hoped that it had been him who would have redeemed Israel." Luke 24:21. How staggering to their faith that the Lord of life should be put to death; the King of glory be covered with shame and ignominy; and that he, whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, should lie in the narrow precinct of a garden sepulcher. But another thought strikes our mind as arising out of this fruitful subject of spiritual meditation—the apparent triumph of evil and of the powers of darkness, in the death and burial of the Lord Jesus. To the eye of sense—truth, holiness, innocence, all fell crushed by the arm of violence as Jesus hung on the cross. To the spectator there—all his miracles of love and mercy, his words of grace and truth, his holy spotless life, his claims to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, with every promise and every prophecy concerning him, were all extinguished when, amid the triumph of his foes, in pain, shame, and ignominy, he yielded up his life. We now see that, by his blood-shedding

and death, the blessed Lord wrought out redemption, finished the work which the Father gave him to do, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciled the church unto God, triumphed over death and hell, vanquished Satan, magnified the law and made it honorable, exalted justice, brought in mercy, harmonized every apparently jarring attribute of God, glorified his heavenly Father, and saved millions with an everlasting salvation. But would we have seen this as we see it now, had we stood at the cross with weeping Mary and broken-hearted John, heard the railing taunts of the Scribes and Pharisees, the crude laughter of the Roman soldiery, and the mocking cries of the Jewish mob, viewed the darkened sky above, and felt the solid earth beneath rocking under our feet? Where would our faith have been then? What but a miracle of Almighty grace and power could have sustained it amid such clouds of darkness, such strength of sense, such a crowd of conflicting passions, such opposition of unbelief? So it ever has been, so it ever will be, in this time state. Truth, uprightness, godliness, the cause of God as distinct from, as opposed to error and evil, have always suffered crucifixion, not only in the person, but in the example of a crucified Jesus. It is an ungodly world; Satan, not Jesus, is its god and prince; and, therefore, not truth but falsehood, not good but evil, not love but enmity, not sincerity and uprightness but craft and deceptiveness, not righteousness and holiness but sin and godlessness prevail and triumph as they did at the cross. This tries faith; but its relief and remedy are to look up, amid these clouds, to the cross, and see on it the suffering Son of God. Then we see that the triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment; that though truth is now suffering, it is suffering with Christ; and that as he died and rose again, so it will have a glorious resurrection, and an eternal triumph.

One or two thoughts more before we close this part of our present subject of meditation. To be partakers of Christ’s crown, we must be partakers of Christ’s cross. Union with him in suffering must precede union with him in glory. This is the express testimony of the Holy Spirit—"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:17. "If we died with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Timothy 2:11-12. The flesh and the world are to be crucified to us, and we to them; and this can only be by virtue of a living union with a crucified Lord. This made the apostle say, "I am crucified with Christ—nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me—and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. And again, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14. An experimental knowledge of crucifixion with his crucified Lord made Paul preach the cross, not only in its power to save, but in its power to sanctify. But as then so now, this preaching of the cross, not only as the meritorious cause of all salvation, but as the instrumental cause of all sanctification, is "to those who perish foolishness." 1 Corinthians 1:18. As men have found out some other way of salvation than by the blood of the cross, so have they discovered some other way of holiness than by the power of the cross; or rather have altogether set aside obedience, fruitfulness, self-denial, mortification of the deeds of the body, crucifixion of the flesh and of the world. Extremes are said to meet; and certainly men of most opposite sentiments may unite in despising the cross and counting it foolishness. The Arminian despises it for justification, and the Antinomian for sanctification. "Believe and be holy," is as strange a sound to the latter as "Believe and be saved," to the former. But, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is as much written on the portal of life as, "By grace are you saved through faith." Through the cross, that is, through union and communion with him who suffered upon it, not only is there a fountain opened for all sin, but for all uncleanness. Zechariah 13:1.

Blood and water gushed from the side of Jesus when pierced by the Roman spear. This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart;

Unlocked by the spear, it gushed from the heart, With blood and with water; the first to atone, To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one.

"All my springs are in you," Psalms 87:7, said the man after God's own heart; and well may we re-echo his words. All our springs, not only of pardon and peace, acceptance and justification, but of happiness and holiness, of wisdom and strength, of victory over the world, of mortification of a body of sin and death; of every fresh revival and renewal of hope and confidence; of all prayer and praise; of every new budding forth of the soul, as of Aaron's rod, in blossom and fruit; of every gracious feeling, spiritual desire, warm supplication, honest confession, melting contrition, and godly sorrow for sin—all these springs of that life which is hid with Christ in God are in a crucified Lord. Thus Christ crucified is, "to them who are saved, the power of God." And as he "of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," at the cross alone can we be made wise unto salvation, become righteous by a free justification, receive of his Spirit to make us holy, and be redeemed and delivered by blood and power from sin, Satan, death and hell. Nor is there any other way to become dead to the law, our first husband, so as "to be married to another, even him who is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4. By the baptism of the Holy Spirit of which water baptism is a type and figure we are baptized into Jesus Christ, and specially into his death. Romans 6:3. By his blood-shedding and death he fulfilled the law, bearing its curse, and thus he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, nailing it to his cross." Colossians 2:14.

HOME QUOTES SERMONS BOOKS

Chapter 76

04.07. Union and Communion with Christ

UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST In our Meditations on the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer we must never, even in thought, separate his human nature from his divine. Even when his sacred body lay in the grave, and was thus for a small space of time severed from his pure and holy soul by death and the tomb, there was no separation of the two natures, for, as we have before shown, his human soul, after he had once become incarnate in the womb of the Virgin, never was parted from his Deity, but went into paradise in indissoluble union with it. It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had no existence independent of his divine. In the Virgin's womb, in the lowly manger, in the lonely wilderness, on the holy mount of transfiguration, in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate's judgment hall, on the cross, and in the tomb—Jesus was still Immanuel, God with us. And so ineffably close and intimate is the conjunction of the human nature with the divine, that the actings of each nature, though separable, cannot and must not be separated from each other. Thus, the human hands of Jesus broke the seven loaves and the fish; but it was God-man who multiplied them so as to feed therewith four thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 15:38. The human feet of Jesus walked on the sea of Galilee; but it was the Son of God who came on the waves to the ship. Matthew 14:33. The human lips of Jesus uttered those words which are "spirit and life;" John 6:63. but it was the Son of the living God who spoke them. John 6:69. The human hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; but the blood shed by them was indeed divine, for all the virtue and validity of Deity were stamped upon it. Acts 20:28 But there is another thought connected with a believing view of the Lord Jesus Christ as Immanuel, God with us, and that is, the union of the Church with him in all that he did and suffered for her. He being the Head, all the members of his mystical body in covenant union with him shared in his sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. Thus Paul speaks of himself as crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20. and of believers generally as dying with Christ; Romans 6:8. 2 Timothy 2:11. being buried with Christ; Romans 6:4. Colossians 2:12. as rising with him, Colossians 3:1. and sitting together with him in heavenly places. Ephesians 2:6

Now, as the Blessed Spirit is pleased to guide us into an experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to give us a measure of union and communion with his sacred Majesty, he leads us into a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. This is what the apostle speaks of as typified by the ordinance of baptism as a standing figure and permanent representation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit—"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection." Romans 6:3-5. The ordinance of baptism is thus represented as the figure of that higher, more sacred, and spiritual baptism whereby, in living experience, believers are made one with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. And here his humanity is indeed seen in its special grace and distinguishing glory, for it is only as "members of his body, of his

flesh, and of his bones," Ephesians 5:30. this being the foundation of the union, that they are baptized into this spiritual communion with him. But this part of our subject may demand a little further opening up. The Church, then, has a mystical, but not less real, union with Christ, from his having taken the flesh and blood of the children into union with his own divine Person. By virtue of this union with him, as members with the head, she participated with him in all he did and suffered for her sake. But this mystical union all the elect have, even those still unregenerated or unborn. This union does not, therefore, of itself give communion, though it is the foundation of it. Another kind of union, then, is needed, which is peculiar to the regenerated, and which they have in exact measure to their participation of the Spirit of Christ, for "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," that is, by inward or outward manifestation. By being made partakers, then, of Christ's Spirit, the members of his mystical body have a living union with him, for "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." 1 Corinthians 6:17. Being thus baptized by the Blessed Spirit, they are made one spirit with the Lord, and thus have a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. As, then, he died under the curse of the law and the guilt and burden of sin, and yet by death died unto the law and unto sin, being by death freed from the curse of the law and the penalty of sin, so the believer dies under the curse of the law and the burden of guilt and sin in his conscience; and yet by virtue of his union with Christ as a member of his body, and of communion with him as baptized by his Spirit, he dies also unto the law and unto sin, no more to suffer the penalty of the one or to live under the power of the other. But though thus delivered, yet to the end of his days, as mourning and groaning under sin, as suffering from the hidings of God's countenance, as tempted and assailed by Satan, as hated and persecuted by the world, and often forsaken by followers and friends, he is crucified with Christ, and has fellowship with him in his sufferings and death. His sorrows, his trials, his temptations, and his sufferings, all, as sanctified to his soul's good, lead him to the cross of his suffering Lord, to get life from his death, pardon and peace from his atoning blood, justification from his divine obedience, and resignation to the will of God from his holy example. Here the world is crucified to him, and he to the world; Galatians 6:14. here sin is mortified, Romans 6:6. Romans 8:13. and its reigning power dethroned; Romans 6:12. the old man crucified and put off, Romans 6:6. Ephesians 4:22. and the new man put on. Thus, having a spiritual union with his suffering, dying Lord, the heaven-taught believer suffers and dies with him, and by this fellowship of his sufferings and death becomes here below conformed to his suffering image, Romans 8:17. Romans 8:29. 2 Timothy 2:12. and is made conformable to his death. Php 3:10 This is no mere doctrine, an article only of a sound creed, but a fountain of life to every believer's soul in proportion to the measure of the Spirit whereby he is baptized into the death of Jesus. But for the most part it is only through a long series of afflictions, bereavements, disappointments, vexations, illnesses, pains of body and mind, hot furnaces, and deep waters, as sanctified to his soul's profit by the Holy Spirit, that the child of God comes into this part of Christian experience.

These things are indeed death to the flesh, and are meant to be so, that it may be crucified and mortified; and are killing blows to all schemes of earthly joy, worldly happiness, and temporal prosperity and pleasure, as well as to all legal hopes and pharisaic righteousness; but they are, in the Spirit's hand, the very life of the believing soul. For "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of their spirit." Isaiah 38:16. Crucifixion is a long, painful, lingering death. Nature dies hard, and struggles, but struggles in vain, against the firm but blessed hand that nails it to the cross of Christ; but grace, cleaving all the more closely to him who suffered and bled there, draws

life and power from his blood and love. This experience made the apostle say of himself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:10-11.

Here was the secret of all his strength, of all his holiness, and all his happiness. This inward experience of the power and blessedness of the cross inspired him with a firm and holy determination to know nothing among men, except Jesus Christ and him crucified; and this made him say, as the grand distinguishing test of the lost and of the saved, "For the preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18 For this was not Paul's experience only, a hidden secret of which he alone was made by grace the happy partaker. All who are taught by the same Spirit, and have the same union and communion with a crucified Lord, whether Jew or Greek, know him to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:24.

We read of believers being "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isaiah 61:3. and this planting is a being planted into Christ so as to have that union and communion with him which the living branch has with the vine. The apostle therefore speaks of our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." Romans 6:5. What the vine is, the branches are. Where the vine is, there will the branches be. The vine was once prostrate on the ground; the branches were prostrate with it. The vine rose from earth to heaven; the branches rise with it. As then a tree planted into good soil drinks of its juices, or rather as a grafted scion becomes so incorporated with the stock as to be one with it, not merely in outward strength and firmness of union, but so one with it as to draw virtue, sap, and fruitfulness out of it, so the true believer, being planted into the likeness of Christ's death, draws supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness.

Here, then, we see the blessedness of the bleeding, suffering, dying humanity of our adorable Redeemer. By virtue of his suffering humanity he has union with a suffering people, and by virtue of being baptized with his Spirit they have union and communion with a suffering Lord. He died that they might live, bore the curse of the law that it might not come on them, and suffered "the just for the unjust" that they having fellowship with him in his sufferings and death might have every gracious motive communicated, and the supply of all spiritual strength imparted, to crucify them to sin, to the world, and to self.

04.08. The Resurrection

THE RESURRECTION But we pass on to the resurrection of the blessed Lord from the dead; and here we shall have to establish the doctrine before we enter into its experimental fruits.

1. The first thing that we notice is, what we may call the grand fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this the whole verity of the Christian faith may be said to be suspended. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was not what he declared he was, "the Son of the living God." But if he rose from the dead, it was God’s own attestation that he was his only begotten Son, for all will admit that nothing short of the power of God can raise the dead. For this reason we find in the Acts of the Apostles the resurrection of the Lord Jesus made a leading feature in every sermon and every address.

Whether Peter preached to the inquiring Jews, Acts 2:23-24. Acts 3:15. to the opposing Sanhedrin, Acts 4:10. Acts 5:30-31. or to Cornelius and his friends; Acts 10:39-40. or whether Paul addressed the synagogue of Antioch, Acts 13:30. the Athenian Areopagus Acts 17:31. or king Agrippa and the most noble Festus, it might be said of them what the Holy Spirit declares of all the rest; "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Acts 4:33

Look for a few moments at this remarkable circumstance, that these blessed men of God made the resurrection of Jesus, as it were, the very foundation of all their sermons and addresses; for we may be sure that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles thus to preach. And see the reason why they bore this firm testimony in the very forefront of the battle which they waged in the name of God against the kingdom of darkness and death. The Lord of life and glory had been condemned to death by the Jewish council on a charge of blasphemy, first, because he had said that "he would destroy the temple made with hands, and within three days build another made without hands;" Mark 14:58. and, secondly, that he had declared, in the very presence of the council, that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Mark 14:61-64. He therefore died under the charge of blasphemy, in pain and ignominy, crucified openly for that alleged crime in the face of the assembled thousands who had come from all parts to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

Now, had Jesus not risen from the dead that charge would have been substantiated, and he would have been justly convicted by the voices of many thousands as having been put righteously to death. It was necessary, then, not only for the whole economy of redemption, but for the very veracity of Jesus himself, and for the whole truth of the gospel, that he should be raised from the dead by the power of God as the seal of his mission, as the standing, undeniable, irrefutable truth that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, as he claimed to be.

We see, then, the force and meaning of the apostle’s words, where he says that the Lord Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:4. It was God’s attesting witness to his divine Sonship, the visible, ratifying seal to his heavenly mission. And not only so, but God’s own assurance to the church that his atoning sacrifice had

been accepted, that the debt due to law and justice was fully discharged, and her justification complete, for he "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification;" Romans 4:25. that is, he, as the head and representative of the church, was raised by God from the dead as justified from all law charges, and the church was thus visibly and authoritatively declared to be justified in him. This was the attesting witness from heaven that her justification was complete, and that Jesus lives at God's right hand to reveal that justification to her heart, put her into experimental possession of its unspeakable blessedness, and seal it effectually by the Holy Spirit upon her heart.

2. The next thing that we notice is that each Person of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was engaged in the blessed work of raising Jesus from the dead. Though the Persons of the Trinity are essentially distinct, and their acts in the great economy of redemption separate, yet as one God they participate in the putting forth of every act of divine power. Thus God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, as we learn from almost innumerable passages; but see the following, which we need not quote at length, but simply refer to; (Acts 2:24. Acts 3:15. Acts 4:10. Acts 5:30. Acts 10:40. Acts 13:37. Acts 17:31. Ephesians 1:20. Colossians 2:12) But the Son of God raised himself from the dead, according to his own words of grace and truth, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17-18. He is "the resurrection;" John 11:25. and as he raised Lazarus from the tomb, and will at the last day raise up the sleeping dust of all that the Father gave unto him, John 6:39-40. so, by the exercise of the same divine power, did he raise his own incorruptible body from the grave. The Holy Spirit also had a blessed participation in the same divine act. We therefore read that the Lord Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:18 -the same Holy and Blessed Spirit who will also quicken the mortal bodies of the saints at the great resurrection. Romans 8:11

3. The next thing that we notice is, the identity of the Lord's risen body. It is a cardinal, fundamental article of our most holy faith that the same actual, identical body was raised from the grave which was deposited in it. If erroneous men had not indulged their vain speculations about the risen body of the Lord Jesus, we might well wonder at their daring attempts to pull up the landmarks which the Holy Spirit has so plainly set up in the word of truth. The Lord never had, never could have, two different bodies, one before, another after the resurrection. We might as well talk of his having two different souls—one soul for earth, and another soul for heaven. The identity of his body is as indispensable to his still being Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and forever," as the identity of his soul, no less certain, no less necessary, and no less precious. But because, after the resurrection, the Lord came miraculously into the place where the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut, and vanished out of the sight of the disciples at Emmaus, and because they cannot conceive how he can wear a human body in heaven, such as he had upon earth, men who would be wise above what is written have assumed that a change took place in that body, and that it no longer consisted of flesh, and bones, and blood, as before, but was, as it were, transmuted into some ethereal, celestial substance, they know not what, but such as they imagine would be more fitting to inhabit the courts of heaven.

Now, nothing can be more plain, if we are willing to follow the footsteps of the Holy Spirit, than that it was the same identical body which hung on the cross that rose from the dead. It would seem, as if to stop all cavil, and crush in the very bud all such erroneous speculations as we have alluded to,

the Lord himself gave again and again the most incontrovertible proofs after his resurrection that he was the same Jesus as before, and not another, and that he wore the same body in all respects without change or alteration. He did not appear for a few moments only, as if "showing himself through the lattice," and then hastily withdrawing, but conversed with them most familiarly, and ate with his disciples after the resurrection; Luke 24:42-43. Acts 10:41. and for this very purpose, that they might be standing and undeniable eye and ear witnesses that it was indeed the very same Jesus with whom they had consorted before his crucifixion.

Now we all know what a marked change a little alteration makes in a person’s form and features, so that a severe illness, or the lapse of a few years, makes him scarcely recognizable as the same person by even his most intimate friends. If, then, any visible change had taken place in the body of the Lord Jesus, it would not only have destroyed its identity, but its identification. The whole chain of evidence that it was indeed the same Jesus who had been crucified that was risen from the dead would have been broken to pieces unless it was clearly and undeniably the same form, the same features, the same feet and hands, the same voice—in a word, the very same Jesus whom they knew so well and loved so dearly. Did not Mary Magdalene know his form and features well? Could she have been deceived? Was not John, who leaned on his bosom at the last supper, well acquainted with his voice, gestures, and countenance? Could he have been deceived? So with Peter and James, not to name the other disciples who had attended him daily from the baptism of John. Acts 1:22. One witness might be deceived, but not so many. But besides this, there were several special seasons on which the Lord did not only appear for a short time to his disciples, but was with them for some time. Look at the instance of Thomas. What can exceed the clearness of the testimony mercifully produced by his very unbelief? So firmly fixed was he in his disbelief of the resurrection that he would not believe that the disciples had seen the Lord as risen from the dead; and declared that except he should see in his hands the print of the nails; and, lest his eyes should deceive him, unless he put his fingers into the print of the nails; and even lest he should be deceived then, except he should thrust his hand into the very side which had been pierced by the Roman spear, he would not believe. But how condescendingly to him, and how graciously for the saints in all ages, did the blessed Lord, eight days after this unbelieving declaration, appear again gently to reprove him for his unbelief, but at the same time to afford to the church through him the memorable testimony that he wore still the same body; that the hands were the very same hands, still bearing the print of the nails which had fastened them to the cross, and that it was the very same side which still wore the thrust-mark of the Roman spear.

If this were not a proof of actual identity where shall we find one? If this evidence be rejected, what remains but to reject the whole mystery of the resurrection as an idle tale? Learned men have, by comparing scripture with scripture, ascertained that the blessed Lord appeared ten times to eye-witnesses after his resurrection {1} and that at some of these appearances, as that memorable one recorded in John 21:1-25, he conversed with his disciples as closely and as intimately as before his resurrection. And that his human body in which he ate and talked with them was not a shadowy appearance, which had neither flesh nor bones, he spoke to them, those ever-memorable words, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have." Luke 24:39. "Behold," said he, "my hands and my feet"—they are real hands, they are real feet; "that it is I myself," the same, the very same Jesus, having the same body which you saw him wear before; "handle me, and see," feel, if you

will, whether it be real flesh or an aerial body, "for a spirit," such as you take me to be, a disembodied soul, or an airy, unreal phantasm, "has not flesh and bones, as you see me have." Can anything be stronger than this the Lord’s own testimony to the actual identity of his body before and after his resurrection? And if it be objected that, whatever the body of the Lord was then, it is now so exceedingly glorified that it has lost in that glory all the distinctive features of its former humanity, we reply. How was it with that same body before the resurrection, on the holy mount, when it was transfigured before the three disciples, so that "his face did shine as the sun, and his very clothing," as borrowing luster from his glorious humanity, "was white as the light?" Matthew 17:1-2. There we see that the brightest glory no more altered the identity or changed the substance of the Lord’s body than the glory of the face of Moses altered his. When we come to the ascension of our blessed Lord, we shall see this perhaps more clearly and distinctly still, or at least view more at length the blessings and benefits connected with it.

FOOTNOTES:

{1} The Lord’s first appearance was to Mary Magdalene— (Mark 16:9-11. John 20:14-18) his second to the disciples journeying to Emmaus—(Mark 16:12. Luke 24:13-32) his third to Simon Peter; (Luke 24:33-34. 1 Corinthians 15:5) his fourth to the eleven disciples in the absence of Thomas; (Luke 24:36-43. John 20:19-25) his fifth to the eleven again, when Thomas was present; (Mark 16:14. John 20:27-29) his sixth to the women who had at first visited the sepulcher; Matthew 28:9-10. his seventh to the apostles and five hundred brethren at once in Galilee; (Matthew 28:16-20. 1 Corinthians 15:6) his eighth to the disciples when fishing on the lake of Galilee; John 21:1-24. his ninth to James the Lord’s brother; 1 Corinthians 15:7. and his tenth and last to all the apostles assembled at Jerusalem just before his ascension. (Luke 24:44-49. Acts 1:4-8. 1 Corinthians 15:7) These are the "many infallible proofs" of which the Holy Spirit speaks Acts 1:3. that he was really and truly risen from the dead.

Chapter 78

04.09. THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER'S RESURRECTION

THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER’S RESURRECTION

We shall attempt now to show the spiritual bearing and influence which the resurrection of the Lord has upon the believing soul. The apostle’s earnest desire and prayer were that he might "know the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of his resurrection." Php 3:10. It was not, then, the bare fact of his resurrection, or the mere doctrine of it as revealed in the scripture, which would satisfy his panting soul, though both of them in themselves as foundation truths full of unspeakable blessedness; but what his believing heart intensely longed to enjoy was the inward experience of its power, fruits, and effects. What was that power? Let us see, if we can, with God’s blessing, what it was to know and enjoy that which drew forth such intense desires from Paul’s inmost soul. The prayer which this man of God offered for the church of God at Ephesus (Ephesians 1:16-23) will, we think, form a blessed key to this experimental secret. Among the heavenly blessings which he there prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would grant unto them, he begs that "he would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that they might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 1:19-20. If we read the whole of that blessed prayer we shall see that the Lord Jesus is there spoken of as the Head and Representative of his body, the church—a multitude which no man can number. When, then, he died on the cross, he sank, so to speak, under the load of millions of sins, for "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree." We know, indeed, that by the shedding of his precious blood the sins of the church were purged away, and that he himself said, "It is finished," before he gave up his life; but as under the law the death of the victim was the essential part of the sacrifice, so, until the Lamb of God died, the sacrifice was not complete. In this sense, then, he died and sank into the grave under the tremendous weight of sin laid on his sacred head. By these, as dead under the law, he was bound fast in the tomb—faster than by the burial-clothes, the Roman guard, or the stone rolled to the door of the sepulcher; and by these he was held fast until the resurrection morn. These, then, were the "pains (or cords) of death" of which Peter speaks, which held him fast. (Acts 2:24). But God "loosed" these cords, because he being the Son of God and the Prince of life, "it was not possible that he should be held" by death; and therefore he raised him up as the justified Head of his body the church, leaving in the grave the sins under the guilt and weight of which he had died. Being thus raised up as the head of the church, and openly acquitted and justified, she rose in and with him. This view of Christ’s resurrection may prepare us to enter more clearly and fully into the experimental meaning of that blessed prayer for the Ephesian believers, to which we have already referred; and to show us why the apostle prayed that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is here spoken of as a most miraculous display of the mighty power of God. Why was it such? Not surely in merely raising the dead body of the Lord Jesus to life, for that miracle had been before done in the case of Lazarus and the widow’s son, and in

many other instances. But it was because in raising up Christ from the dead God raised up millions of redeemed sinners with him, and that, too, out of all their sins and miseries, which had sunk his sacred head, as bearing them all, into death and the grave. The church is, therefore, said to be "quickened together with Christ," and "raised up together with him;" Ephesians 2:5-6. Colossians 2:12-13; and believers are spoken of as "risen with Christ." Colossians 3:1.

Now, what a living child of God longs to experience is the felt power of this resurrection—that as having been mystically and virtually quickened together with Christ at and in his resurrection from the dead, he may feelingly enjoy the spiritual power of that resurrection in his own soul, enabling him to rise up out of the cords of death which so often hold him firm and fast. This putting forth of the power of Christ to quicken, renew, and deliver the soul is so exceedingly great that it is compared by the apostle to the display of that mighty power which God put forth in raising Jesus from the dead. For though the believer was virtually and really quickened together with Christ when he rose from the dead, and has already risen out of the grave of death and sin by this power regenerating and making him alive unto God, yet he often sinks back into the gloomy grave of carnality and deadness. He therefore needs a mighty power to be put forth in his soul—the power of Christ's resurrection; for he feelingly needs the same almighty power which raised Jesus from the dead to raise him up once more to faith, and hope, and love. The resurrection of Jesus, and his interest therein as a quickened member of his body, is indeed the sure pledge that he shall again be blessed with this renewing, reviving grace; but O the power!—inwardly and experimentally to feel this power from time to time coming into his soul as the power of God came into the tomb of Christ and raised him from the dead; and by the experience of this power to rise with Christ to light, life, liberty, and love—this is indeed to have the kingdom of God which is not only "in power," but is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." 1 Corinthians 4:20. Romans 14:17

As, then, by the resurrection of Christ the church was mystically "quickened together with him,", Ephesians 2:5. so regeneration is the first proof, the initial pledge, of the resurrection of each individual believer with him. This is the first act of the power of Christ's resurrection as a felt, experimental reality in each member of his mystical body. As, then, the regenerated soul experiences more and more of the putting forth of this risen power, and feels more and more deeply and sensibly the contrast between the workings and movements of this hidden life and its own miserable darkness, bondage. And death when this divine fruit of Christ's resurrection is not realized, it hungers and thirsts after its renewed enjoyment.

Regeneration in itself is an instantaneous act which cannot be repeated, but its effects are permanent. A child can be born but once; but having once breathed it breathes again; and without breath and food cannot live. So every sweet revival, gracious renewal, soft word, melting touch, comforting look, heavenly smile, applied promise, encouraging testimony, or blessed manifestation of or from the risen Lord of life and glory is not, indeed, regeneration, but the fruit and effect of it; and to experience it in the soul is to experience the power of his resurrection. The more we view by faith the resurrection of our adorable Redeemer, the more grace and glory shall we see shining through it; and the more we feel of our own sinfulness and helplessness, the more shall we desire to realize the power of that resurrection in our own personal experience. The guilt of sin makes us cleave to a dying Christ; the power of sin makes us hang upon a risen Christ. The Holy Spirit, therefore, in the scripture sometimes exhibits Jesus to our view as a slaughtered Lamb, and sometimes as the church's glorious risen Head. Holy John blessedly unites them both

in one verse, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Revelation 1:5.

Though he had such a view of his glorious Person as a risen Jesus that he fell at his feet as dead, yet his faith departed not from the cross, or from the fountain opened therein for sin and for uncleanness. So blessed Paul, in the longing aspirations of his soul, breathes forth at one and the same moment his desires to know Christ risen and to sympathize with Christ suffering—"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." Php 3:10. Even in the courts of heaven, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, John had a view of a Lamb, standing "as it had been slain," and heard the song of the representatives of the redeemed as they fell down before him—"And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof—for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!" Revelation 5:9

Whether, then, dying on the cross, or risen from the dead, or ascended up on high, he is still Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and forever," wearing still the same sacred humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin. We cannot separate Jesus' cross from Jesus' crown; the slaughtered Lamb from the risen Conqueror; the High Priest offering sacrifice from the High Priest carrying the blood within the veil; the church's suffering Surety from the Church's glorified Representative. We need him as much for what he was as for what he is. Without a dying Jesus there could be no redemption; without a living Jesus there could be no salvation. It is sweet to lie at the foot of the cross that the drops of his atoning blood may fall on the conscience; it is sweet to see his languid eyes sealed in death, and to know that he died the just for the unjust that he might bring us unto God; it is sweet to see the prisoner of death break through the barriers of the tomb and come forth into the light of heaven as the Church's justified Head; and it is sweet to see him ascended up on high to take possession of the kingdom given him by the Father before the foundation of the world. And well it is for poor sinners, and especially for those who are burdened with the guilt of sin, that it is so. For though we are said to be "come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, . . . and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," all which blessings spring from Christ risen, yet we are said also to be come "to the blood of sprinkling," which, as issuing from Christ crucified, "speaks better things than the blood of Abel." Hebrews 12:22-24

We have dwelt a little largely upon this lest any apprehension might arise in our readers' minds that we are looking away from the cross by speaking so much of the resurrection. In thought they may be separated, but not in blessing; for as without the cross there could have been no atoning blood, so without the resurrection there could be no prevailing intercession.

1. One of the greatest blessings that spring out of an experimental knowledge of the power of his resurrection is the manifest justification thereby of every one who believes in the Son of God, according to those words, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Romans 4:25. We have used the expression, "the manifest justification," for the elect are not really and actually justified by Christ's resurrection, but by the imputation of his active and passive obedience, as the apostle speaks, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all

men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Romans 5:18-19. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is not, then, the procuring cause, but the manifest proof that his obedience to the law was accepted on their behalf, and that they were raised up together with him as justified persons; for "in the Lord," that is, by virtue of union with him, "shall all the seed of Israel be justified;"; Isaiah 45:25. and this they were manifestly when their covenant Head was raised up and openly acquitted of all law charges.

Now as the resurrection of Christ was the manifest justification of their persons, so a knowledge of its power is the manifest justification of their consciences. For until Christ is revealed to the soul as risen from the dead, it is shut up under the law, full of guilt and condemnation, a prisoner in the pit where there is no water; but when he is manifested, or rather, when he manifests himself—which he could not do unless he were alive from the dead—he seals a sense of justification on the conscience. "I bring near," he says, "my righteousness," Isaiah 46:13. which he does when he experimentally clothes the soul with the garments of salvation, and covers it with the robe of righteousness. Isaiah 61:10

Then the power of his resurrection experimentally felt raises the child of grace out of the grave of bondage and death, and by faith in him as a risen head, he is "justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:39. Christ is thus sensibly made of God unto every believing soul righteousness; and in the language of faith he can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isaiah 45:24. This made the apostle say, "And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins." 1 Corinthians 15:17. Why are you not, he might ask them, yet in your sins as regards their condemnation by the law? Because Christ is risen from the dead. Why are you not yet in your sins as regards their condemnation in your own conscience? Because by faith in him as risen from the dead you are justified experimentally from them.

It is thus the apostle connects, in another place, the two blessings of manifest and experimental justification—"Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 4:25. Romans 5:1. Why that "therefore" connecting the two chapters, but to show that as by Christ's resurrection we are manifestly justified, so by faith in him as risen from the dead we are experimentally justified, of which the proof is to have peace with God? This justifying faith gives manifest union with Christ, and, opening up a divine channel of communication with him, produces another blessed fruit of the power of his resurrection:

2. Communion with him as a risen Head. In his last consoling discourse Jesus said to his disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless—I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me—because I live, you shall live also." John 14:18-19. But being able only to view him with the natural eye, when his personal presence was withdrawn, the world could see him no more. "But you see me," said the blessed Lord to his disciples. And how should they see him? In the same way as is recorded of Moses—"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:27. Faith is the eye of the soul, for it is "the evidence of things not seen" by sense; and thus by faith they would see him at the right hand of the Father. But as they saw him there, would they not see him as a living Head, for he says, "Because I live, you shall live also?" And would not life, flowing into them from union

with him, flow back unto him in sacred communion? But he also said, "I will not leave you comfortless," as mourning my death and your own disappointed hopes; "I will come to you." But how? By personal manifestation. "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John 14:21.

Thus communion with Christ rests on three things—seeing him by faith, living upon his life, and experiencing his manifested presence. But all these three things depend on his resurrection and a knowledge of its power. As risen from the dead, the saints see him; as risen from the dead, they live a life of faith upon him; as risen from the dead, he manifests himself unto them; and as life and feeling spring up in their souls from sweet communion with him, the power of his resurrection becomes manifest in them. The sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, as seen by faith, has a blessed effect in drawing the soul up unto himself. We cannot have communion with pure Deity. Our fallen condition and miserable state as guilty sinners has forever shut out that way. But eyeing by faith the pure humanity of our adorable Redeemer, in union with his eternal Deity, we may now draw near to God in all holy boldness. The blood of Jesus gives us access within the veil, as the apostle urges, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19-22. And again, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16

Now, just in proportion to our faith in him as a risen Head shall we feel the holy boldness of which the apostle speaks; and as thus venturing near and enabled to plead with him, pour out our heart before him, show him all our troubles, confess our sins, bewail our backslidings, and seek some manifestations of his pardoning love—will communion with him be sensibly experienced, for he will more or less manifest himself, apply some comforting word, and melt and soften the heart into humility and love. This communion, therefore, with the Lord Jesus as a risen Head all the reconciled and justified saints of God are pressing forward after, according to the measure of their grace and the life and power of God in their soul. It is indeed often sadly interrupted and grievously broken through by the sin that dwells in us. But the principle is there, for that principle is life; and life is the privilege, the possession, and the distinction of the children of God. You need none to assure you that Jesus is risen from the dead if he manifests himself to your soul. You need no evidence that you are a sheep if you have heard and know his voice. So you may say, "Jesus is risen, for I have seen him; Jesus is risen, for I have heard him; Jesus is risen, for I live upon him."

Communion with Jesus is the life of religion, and indeed without it religion is but an empty name. If without him we can do nothing; if he is our life, our risen covenant Head, our Advocate with the Father, our Husband, our Friend, our Brother, how are we to draw sap out of his fullness, as the branch from the vine, or to know him personally and experimentally in any one of his endearing relationships—unless by continual communion with him on his throne of grace? In fact, this is the

grand distinguishing point between the living and the dead, between the true child of God and the mere professor, that the one has real union and communion with a risen Jesus and the other is satisfied with a form of godliness. Every quickened soul is made to feel after the power of God, after communion from above, after pardon and peace, after visitations of mercy and grace; and when he has had a view of Christ by faith, and some revelation of his Person and work, grace and glory, nothing afterwards can ever really satisfy him but that inward communion of spirit with Jesus whereby the Lord and he become one; "for he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." 1 Corinthians 6:17

3. Another fruit of Christ's resurrection, and closely and intimately connected with the foregoing, is, the rising with him of the spiritual affections of his believing people, as the apostle urges on the Colossian saints—"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:1-2. By nature we cleave to earth and to earthly objects. Our affections are buried in the grave of death, nor are we able of ourselves to raise them up to high and heavenly things. We need, then, the power of Christ's resurrection to be inwardly felt and realized, that, as risen with him our covenant Head, we may no longer lie buried in the things of time and sense, the vain and fleeting objects here below, but may set our affections on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Our Head is risen from the dead. Why, then, should we, the members of his body, still grovel here below in the dust of the earth? He is gone up on high. Let our affections mount with him. He is in heaven. Let our hearts be with him.

Now, just in proportion as we realize the power of Christ's resurrection do we rise in our heart and affections up from this miserable earth, with all its cares and all its passing vanities. Nothing seems to be a greater evidence of the low, sunken state of the church in the present day than the manifest lack of this heavenly grace. How few there are whose affections are set on things above. How few can really say, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Php 3:20. How few there are who, either by their conversation or their life, manifest that their heart is in heaven—we will not say continually, but ever there at all. How few seem to have any affectionate thoughts toward Jesus, any longing for his manifested presence—"O, when will you come unto me?"—any delight in him as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one, any breaking forth of heart after him as the deer pants after the water-brooks, any adoring contemplation of his glory, any inward retirement of spirit, whereby their wandering affections are gathered home and fixed upon heavenly things!

We know, indeed, how cold, stupid, and carnal the heart often is, and how the affections stray after the things of time and sense; but to be always so, never to have any sweet incoming of divine life and power drawing the affections heavenward—how do such people differ from those altogether dead in a profession? Where there is life, it will work; where there is faith, it will act; where there is love, it will flow. Such people, to say the least, are in a very perilous condition, for if not wholly dead, their affections being so set on things of earth, they lie open to the worst snares of the devil and the flesh. Even some of the Lord's more clearly-manifested people are verily guilty in this matter. Some of them are bowed down with a daily load of care. Worldly anxieties fill their mind and occupy their thoughts from morning to night. Can these be said to be spiritually risen with Christ? Would not the power of his resurrection experimentally felt, lift them up from their family cares, their business cares, their too often imaginary, their self-tormenting cares? Were their faith

more firmly fixed on a risen Christ, their affections more set on a living Christ, what a load of carking cares would be removed from their shoulders!

Others of the Lord's family are bowed down with worldly grief and sorrow. Some beloved object has been removed out of their sight, and their affections linger round the tomb which holds his earthly remains. The sorrow of the world is working death in them, nor can they look beyond the sepulcher to the resurrection. But is not Christ risen from the dead? Has he not destroyed death and him that had the power of death, and as having felt the power of his resurrection, should not their affections rise with him, and there find their happiness and their home, instead of seeking the living among the dead?

Others, again, who once did run well, and whose heart and affections once seemed fixed on heavenly things, through that root of all evil, the love of money, are now eagerly pursuing the world, intent upon gain, thinking they never can have enough, elated with every flush of success, and correspondingly depressed with failures and reverses.

Knowing what we are by nature, and how surrounded by temptation on every side to do evil, we cannot wonder that even those who have some marks of the fear of God in their hearts may be, for a time, left to live so far from the power of Christ's resurrection. But it will not always be so with them. There are in reserve for them heavy crosses, hot fires, deep waters; and by these, as so many chastening rods, they will be brought once more to feel the power of Christ's resurrection raising them out of their carnality and death, and then once more they will set their affections on things above.

4. Closely connected with the setting of our affections on things above, as the fruit of the resurrection of Jesus and of our union with him as a risen Head, is the being made spiritually-minded; that heavenly grace which contains in its bosom these two blessed fruits, "life and peace." Romans 8:6. Just in proportion as our heart and affections are engaged on heavenly objects, shall we feel a sweet savor of heaven resting upon our spirit; and as we can only give back what we receive, every going forth of divine life from the soul below is but the fruit and effect of the incoming of that life from above. Christ is our life above; Colossians 3:4. and as he by his Spirit and grace maintains the life of faith in the soul, it manifests itself in gracious actings upon himself. This movement of the life within up to its divine Author and Object is the breathing of the spirit from under its house of clay, the ascension of the soul up unto God, the taking possession beforehand of its mansion above, and sitting down with Christ in heavenly places before the glorious celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:7; Revelation 19:9.

Without this spirituality of mind religion is but a mere name, an empty mask, a delusion, and a snare. There must be wrought in the soul of every heir of glory before he departs out of this time-state what the apostle calls a being "made fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Colossians 1:12. God does not take into heaven, into the fullness of his own eternal bliss, those whom he does not love, and who do not love him. It is a prepared people—for prepared mansions. And this preparedness for heaven, as an inward grace, much consists in that sweet spirituality of mind whereby heavenly things become our only happiness, and an inward delight is felt in them, which enlarges the heart, ennobles the mind, softens the spirit, and lifts the whole soul, as it were, up into a holy atmosphere in which it bathes as its choice element. This is "life," not the cold, dead profession of those poor, carnal creatures who have only a natural faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ and the truths of his gospel; but that blessed life which shall never die, but live in the eternal presence of God when earth and all it holds shall be wrapped in the devouring flames. And it is "peace"—the Redeemer's dying legacy—whereby, as he himself fulfills it, he calms the troubled waves of the soul, stills every rebellious movement, and enthrones himself in the heart as the Prince of peace.

5. The last fruit of the resurrection of the blessed Lord that we shall mention is that it is the first fruits and pledge of the resurrection of the saints at the last day. So speaks the apostle in that chapter which has comforted thousands of mourners when they have laid in the tomb the remains of their beloved husbands, wives, children, or friends who have departed in the Lord. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of those who slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. Christ risen is the first fruits of that mighty crop of buried dead whose remains still sleep in the silent dust, and who will be joined by successive ranks of those who die in him, until all are together wakened up in the resurrection morn. The figure is that of the sheaf of the first fruits which was waved before the Lord before the harvest was allowed to be reaped. Leviticus 23:10-11. This offering of the wave sheaf was the consecration and dedication of the whole crop in the field to the Lord, as well as the manifest pledge that the harvest was fully ripe for the reaper's sickle. The first fruits represented the whole of the crop, as Christ is the representative of his saints; the offering of them sanctified what was still unreaped in the field, as Christ sanctified or consecrated unto God the yet unreaped harvest of the buried dead; and the carrying them into the tabernacle was the first introduction therein of the crop, as Christ entering heaven as the first fruits secures thereby the entrance of the bodies of the saints into the mansions prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Thus Christ rising from the dead presented himself before the Lord as the first fruits of the grand harvest of the resurrection yet unreaped, and by so doing consecrated and dedicated the whole crop unto God. As, then, he rose from the dead, so shall all the sleeping saints rise from the dead at the last day, for his resurrection is the first fruits, the pledge of theirs. His risen body also is the type to which the risen bodies of the saints are to be conformed, "for as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Corinthians 15:49. This is that glorious image to which the saints are to be all conformed. "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Romans 8:29. But though fully retaining all the essential characteristics of humanity, for otherwise it would cease to be manhood in conjunction with Godhead, yet so unspeakably glorious is this risen body of the blessed Lord, to the image of which the risen saints will be conformed, that in this time-state we can not only form no conception of its surpassing glory, but not even of that inferior degree of glory which will clothe the bodies of the saints at the resurrection. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does 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." 1 John 3:2. But of this we may be sure, that there will always be an essential and unapproachable distinction between the glory of Christ's humanity and theirs. His humanity, being in eternal union with his Deity, derives thence a glory which is distinct from all others, and to which there can be no approach, and with which there can be no comparison. The glory of the moon never can be the glory of the sun, though she shines with his reflected light. "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" but though like, it will not be the same. It will be the saints' eternal happiness to see him as he is,

and to be made like unto him; but it will be their everlasting joy that he should ever have that pre-eminence of glory which is his birthright, and to adore which will ever be their supreme delight. To have a body free from all sin, sickness, and sorrow, filled to its utmost capacity of holiness and happiness, able to see him as he is without dying under the sight, and to be re-united to its once suffering but now equally glorified companion—an immortal soul, expanded to its fullest powers of joy and bliss—if this be not sufficient, what more can God give?

04.10. THE ASCENSION

THE ASCENSION

There is this peculiar blessedness in the Person and work of the adorable Redeemer, that, like the sun which shines in every climate, he is ever beaming forth out of his inexhaustible fullness rays of grace and glory, under every aspect, to believing eyes and hearts; so that the more we look to him the more we see in him to adore and love, the more we believe in his name the more it becomes as the ointment poured forth, and the more we experience of his grace the more we feel of its power. "Have I been," he asks his people, "a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" Jeremiah 2:31. No, Lord, we may well answer; not "a wilderness," for from you is all our fruit found; not "a land of darkness," for with you is the light of life. If, then, no fruit be gathered by us from that portion of the heavenly garden through which we now purpose, with God’s help and blessing, to walk with our readers, it is not because no fruit grows there, but because our eyes are too dim to see, or our hands too weak to reach it down from the tree of life. In this, as in everything else that we speak, write, or do in his name, we willingly acknowledge our shortcomings; for though we would wish to set forth to the utmost of our power the grace and glory of the incarnate Son of God; and though what has lately engaged our pen has not been without some amount of careful thought and consideration, yet we feel miserably to fail both in conception and expression, and must confess with Berridge, But we lisp and falter forth Broken words, not half his worth. And if this be true as regards our past Meditations on the holy humanity of Jesus in his state of humiliation here below, how much more must it be so when we have to view him as he now is—enthroned on high in all the fullness of his mediatorial grace and glory. Still, we attempt the task, in the hope that our meditation of him may be sweet, and be attended with a blessing from on high to those who love his name and long for his appearing. For though he is exalted far beyond all present conception, yet in the word of truth we have a sure guide, by following which we may obtain some believing apprehensions of what he is to those who see him by faith at the right hand of the Father.

1. The first point, then, that will now engage our thoughts is the ASCENSION of the blessed Lord; and the first step in our meditation upon it will be to prove the fact. This, in the depth of his wisdom, God has been pleased to place beyond all doubt or controversy, at least to all who receive the scriptures as an inspired revelation; and by so doing he has given us much reason to admire his infinite condescension and grace. The Lord might have ascended to heaven immediately after his resurrection, without showing himself to his disciples; or after appearing to them, to prove that he was risen from the dead, he might have gone up on high without any eye-witnesses of his ascension. But that so stupendous and yet so indispensable a fact might rest on an immovable foundation, the Lord did not ascend until forty days after the resurrection, that by his repeated appearances to his disciples he might afford them so many "infallible proofs" Acts 1:3. that indeed he was risen from the dead; and when he went up on high it was in the presence and in the open sight of his eleven apostles, that not only they themselves might have the evidence of their own eyes, the strongest of all possible proofs, but that through all ages the church might be able to rest with sure confidence on such indubitable testimony. The fact, then, of the Lord’s ascension we

have now more particularly to show from the scriptures of truth. On the morning of that day on which he ascended to heaven the blessed Lord appeared for the tenth and last time to his followers. The eleven apostles met together at his command in Jerusalem, and there Jesus appeared in their midst. As we read—"And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, says he, you have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Acts 1:4-5. During this last solemn interview the Lord conversed at some length with his disciples, as recorded, for we need not quote the passages at length. Mark 16:15-18. Luke 24:44-49. Acts 1:4-8. He thus afforded them not only the sweet consolation of his actual, living presence before he as parted from them, but the clearest possible evidence that he was the very same Jesus whom they had so well known and so dearly loved in the days of his flesh, during the whole time that he had consorted with them. Having, then, afforded them this confirming evidence that it was indeed he himself, he ascended visibly before their eyes to give to them—and to the church of God through all ages by them—the surest testimony that he had gone up into heaven in the same bodily form, the same identical humanity, in which they had ever known him. As this is so important a feature of our present subject, and must form the foundation of our Meditations upon it, we will quote the very language of the Holy Spirit as we find it written in the inspired page—"Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. They worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God." Luke 24:50-53. "It was not long after he said this that he was taken up into the sky while they were watching, and he disappeared into a cloud." Acts 1:9

Consider for a moment the strength of this testimony. Could these eleven men have been deceived or mistaken in what they thus personally witnessed? Most of them afterwards laid down their lives in confirmation of what they then saw. When, then, they viewed him with whom they had been for some time holding sweet converse taken up before their eyes, and they watched his ascension until a cloud received him out of their sight, could they have had a more indubitable testimony of the fulfillment of his own words, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world—again, I leave the world and go to the Father?" John 16:28. And again, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." John 20:17. But to leave not a shadow of doubt on their minds, and to seal it more effectually on their hearts, as well as to assure them of his future return, the Lord was graciously pleased to add to their own eye-witness angelic testimony—"They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:10-11

It may seem, perhaps, to some of our readers, almost unnecessary for us to have brought forward so much scripture testimony on a point which no believer doubts. But, through some little acquaintance with the unbelief and infidelity of the human heart, and continued assaults from that quarter, we have long seen and felt in our own mind that faith needs the strongest and surest foothold that God has given, on which it may stand during seasons of darkness and temptation. Some never seem to doubt either the certainty of the rock or their own standing on it; but we freely confess that there are times and seasons with us when hell, with all its infernal artillery, and the

infidelity of the human mind combine together to shake our faith to its very center. But we have learned this lesson in the school of temptation—that faith needs the firmest possible foothold on which it may stand while the storm rages. As, then, the shipwrecked sailor, washed ashore by the heaving billow, cleaves with all his strength to the rock which he has happily reached, lest the receding wave should sweep him out to sea, so does the believing soul, landed on the rock of truth, cleave with all its might to the word of God's grace, lest the wave of infidelity sweep it away to the sea of destruction.

Now, when by divine grace faith can stand upon facts so clearly attested as the resurrection and ascension of the blessed Lord, it feels that there is firm ground beneath its feet; and that in believing in a risen and ascended Lord it does not "follow cunningly-devised fables," but receives the truth as it is in Jesus from the sure witness of those who "have made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as eye-witnesses of his majesty." 2 Peter 1:16.

Faith, too, needs food as well as foothold; and it is upon these divine verities, so plainly revealed and so clearly established in the word of truth, that faith feeds as its choice provision. The time may come with you, dear reader, when you may feel as if clambering up a steep and lofty mountain, whose top you must reach or die; and yet, with all your exertion, every stone on which you would place your foot rolls away from under you, filling you with dread at every step lest life be lost, or limb be broken. Under such circumstances how you would prize a solid rock on which, step by step, you could set your trembling, staggering feet. This rock is Christ, which God has laid in Zion; but that faith may stand upon it unmoved, immovable by the assaults of unbelief and infidelity, he has in the word of his grace laid this foundation firm and sure by the strongest testimony.

2. Having, then, seen the strong foundation on which the ascension of the blessed Lord rests as an ascertained fact, we may now proceed to view him by faith as entering the courts of bliss. And the first most obvious view that faith obtains of him is that he entered heaven in the same identical human body in which he last communed with his disciples, and which they had seen taken up before their eyes; for one part of "the great mystery of godliness" is that "God manifest in the flesh" was "received up into glory," and therefore in the same flesh as that in which he was thus manifested. 1 Timothy 3:16

John Owen has so clearly expressed the faith of the church on this vital point that we prefer giving his words to any of our own:

"All perfections whereof human nature is capable, abiding what it was in both the essential parts of it, body and soul, do belong unto the Lord Jesus Christ in his glorified state. To ascribe unto it what is inconsistent with its essence is not an assignation of glory unto its state and condition, but a destruction of its being. To affix unto human nature divine properties, as ubiquity or immensity, is to deprive it of its own. The essence of his body is no more changed than that of his soul. It is a fundamental article of faith that he is in the same body in heaven wherein he conversed here on earth; as well as the faculties of his rational soul are continued the same in him. This is that 'holy thing' which was framed immediately by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin. This is that 'Holy One' which, when it was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that body which was offered for us, wherein he bore our sins on the tree. To fancy any such change in or of this body, by its glorification, as that it should not continue essentially and substantially the same that it was, is to

overthrow the faith of the church in a principal article of it. We believe that the very same body wherein he suffered for us, without any alteration as to its substance, essence, or integral parts, and not another body of an ethereal, heavenly structure, wherein is nothing of flesh, blood, or bones, by which he so frequently testified the faithfulness of God in his incarnation, is still that temple wherein God dwells, and wherein he administers in the holy place not made with hands. The body which was pierced is that which all eyes shall see, and no other." The clearness, wisdom, holy and heavenly sobriety of the above extract need no commendation from us. It speaks sufficiently for itself to those who know and love the truth, and are willing to submit themselves to the oracles of God as its own infallible source. We must have no tampering, then, with that fundamental article of our most holy faith, that the Lord Jesus took into heaven the identical humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin. But this thorough identity of his holy humanity does not impair or detract from every perfection as now made manifest in that glorified human nature which is consistent with its preserving its real form and essence. And of this we seem to have a very clear proof in the word of truth. When holy John had a revelation of his glorified humanity, in the Isle of Patmos, it was not of an ethereal body, retaining no traces of the human form, a Jesus whom he could not at once recognize as having seen him before in the flesh, but "one like unto the Son of man"—that very same Son of man whom he had known here below—one, too, who had "head, and hair, and eyes, and feet, and hands," these human members all still retained in their entirety, but all unspeakably glorious; and whose "countenance" still the same human countenance "was as the sun shines in his strength." Revelation 1:13-16.

It is necessary, indeed, to bear in mind that while we speak of the identity of the risen and ascended body of the Lord, we utterly separate from it what the apostle calls "the weakness" of Christ; "he was crucified through weakness;" 2 Corinthians 13:4. for though this weakness was compatible with, and even necessary unto, his state of humiliation, it is not consistent with a heavenly condition, or his exaltation to eternal glory. The body of the blessed Lord ate, and drank, and slept, was weary and thirsty here below. But no such infirmities, or, to speak more correctly, no such sinless contingencies of a state of humiliation were taken with him into heaven. His body and soul are still identically and unalterably the same as they were upon earth; but heavenly glory, without destroying or even impairing the reality of his human nature, has eternally swallowed up all those mere passing and contingent circumstances which necessarily attended his humanity in a time-state. This will also be the case with the risen bodies of the saints at the great day, as the apostle so beautifully speaks—"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 But though they will be fashioned after the likeness of the risen body of Jesus, we must ever bear in mind that the glory of Christ’s human nature in its mediatorial state essentially differs from that glory which will clothe the souls and bodies of the risen saints at the great day; for his humanity, as existing in intimate union with his divine Person, is there—by eternally distinguished from theirs, and exalted infinitely beyond any glory which the risen bodies of the saints shall wear. They will indeed see his glory face to face with—out a veil between, Job 19:27. John 17:24. 1 Corinthians 13:12. and be partakers of it, which will be their eternal joy; John 17:22. Luke 22:29-30. Revelation 3:21. they will be conformed in body and soul to his glorified image, so as to be eternally resplendent in all the beauties of holiness; Psalms 17:15. 1 Corinthians 15:49. Php 3:21. and as such they will "shine as

the brightness of the skies, and as the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:3 But with all this eternal weight of glory, the glorified humanity of the blessed Lord, from its ineffable union with his Deity, will ever differ from theirs not only in degree, but in nature. For this reason, his human nature, as being so glorious from its conjunction with his Deity, is the object of adoration and worship of all creatures the very same worship which is paid to the Person of the Father—"And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying. Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Revelation 5:13. This glory it has from its subsistence in his divine Person, therefore inherent in it, and thus essentially distinct from the inferior glory of the risen saints, who have it as a gift and not a necessary adjunct. All the glory which they will have is from him as a gift of his grace, and as being members of his mystical body; but it dwells in him in all its fountain fullness, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." What we have here, or shall have hereafter, is only by gift; but what he is and has he is and has by right.

Besides which, though his sacred humanity in its glorified state still remains a creature, and neither is nor can be deified, yet, from its intimate conjunction with his Deity it receives emanations of power and glory which we may apprehend by faith, but of which no adequate conception can ever be formed by a finite intellect, not even of the highest angel. His eternal Deity irradiates his humanity with a luster beyond its own, and shines through it with resplendent glory, as the sun shines through a cloud, or as at the moment of his transfiguration the glorious Person of the God-man made "his clothing become shining exceeding white as snow." Mark 9:3. If such a comparison be admissible, as our soul ennobles our body, and thus, even in our fallen state, as being an immortal principle, separates us from the lower creation, so the essential Deity of the Son of God ennobles his humanity, and separates it from all approach or comparison of the inferior glory of his risen saints. But we pause, lest we seem to intrude too much on high and speculative subjects, though, as far as we have gone, we cannot but feel they are blessed mysteries when apprehended by a living faith.

3. We may pass on, then, to examine in what way, and to accomplish what special purposes of wisdom and grace, the blessed Lord entered upon his present state of mediatorial exaltation at the right hand of the Father. And viewing him as ascending on high that, in his complex Person as God-man, he might be "set at God’s own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," Ephesians 1:20-21. we may consider his entrance into his glory Luke 24:26. under these two different aspects—as a triumphant King, and as a gracious High Priest.

He entered heaven, then, in glorious triumph, to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom, as Zion’s anointed King, and "to sit and rule upon his throne." Psalms 2:6. Zechariah 6:13. Luke 1:32-33. God the Father had appointed unto him a kingdom Luke 22:29. as the reward of his incarnation and humiliation, Php 2:9-10. Hebrews 2:9. and this he went into heaven to take possession of. Luke 19:12. Revelation 3:21. Immediately, then, that he left earth, and was received out of the sight of the eleven apostles in a cloud of glory, his royal progress began. Surely, if a chariot of fire and horses of fire were dispatched to take Elijah up to heaven, 2 Kings 2:11. the blessed Lord had no inferior convoy. Was the servant so honored, and was no honor

paid to the Master? Should the subject be taken gloriously to heaven, and the King have no train of celestial glory? Did "his train fill the temple" when Isaiah "saw his glory and spoke of him?" Isaiah 6:1. John 12:41. and did no train of glory follow him as he ascended on high to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom? But we are not left to conjecture upon this point. The scripture affords the clearest proof of the triumphant manner in which the Lord of life and glory went up on high. In Psalm 68. there is a blessed description of the glorious convoy of angels which attended him on his royal progress up to heaven's gates; for as, when "he shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation," he will be "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," 2 Thessalonians 1:7. and shall "come in the glory of his Father, with his angels," Matthew 16:27. so thousands upon thousands of ministering angels attended upon him at his triumphant ascension. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high; you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them" Psalms 68:17-18. This triumphant ascension of the blessed Lord is also clearly intimated in Psalms 47:1-9. "O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph; for the Lord most high is awesome; he is a great King over all the earth. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises; for God is the King of all the earth; sing you praises with understanding." Psalms 47:1-2. Psalms 47:5-7 Nor are we left without scriptural intimations even of the blessed Lord's reception at the very courts of bliss. When he reached the gates of heaven the celestial courts were, as it were, moved at his approach, for then was accomplished that memorable transition recorded in Psalms 24:1-10. As thus represented to our faith, it was as if the attendant angels that formed his glorious convoy shouted aloud before him, as the heralds of his approach, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Psalms 24:7. But from within is made the inquiry, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is given from without by the attendants of his train, "The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle." Then comes forth the universal chorus, from without and from within, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord Almighty, he is the King of glory." Psalms 24:9-10. We do not say, it might be rash to assert it, that all this was literally and actually transacted, for heavenly realities are beyond the range of human conception; but it is so represented to our faith in the word of truth; and as such we receive it in the simplicity of little children. Nor were good angels the only attendants of his train. Ancient kings, returning home after triumphant wars, brought back conquered enemies as well as congratulating friends. In a similar way the blessed Lord is represented in scripture as then manifestly triumphing over Satan and all his angels, as if in his glorious ascension, when "he led captivity captive," he dragged at his chariot-wheels the infernal hosts of hell, and openly showed them to all the holy angels as vanquished prisoners. Thus, at least, the apostle speaks, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," that is, the cross, or, to adopt the marginal rendering, "in himself." Colossians 2:15. The ancient promise was that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." When Satan, by entering into Judas, and by instigating the chief priests and the people to demand that Christ should be crucified, had, as he thought, effectually succeeded in destroying Jesus, he little imagined that this was to be, by God's eternal design, the very means of accomplishing that prediction. On the cross the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head the

seat of his poison-fangs, as well as of his infernal craft and cruelty. There Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, and cast them out of their usurped dominion. But when he ascended on high he "led captivity captive;" Psalms 68:18. Ephesians 4:8. that is, he led captive those who had led poor fallen man captive, in the open sight of all the angelic host, that the elect angels might be eye-witnesses of the ruin and misery which had fallen on the heads of their apostate brethren in the defeat of all their schemes against the Holy One of Israel.

It would appear, from the testimony of scripture, that the holy angels were partially, if not wholly, ignorant of the designs of God in the mystery of the incarnation until all was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus; and even now are waiting for further developments of the wisdom of God as therein displayed in the present grace and future glory of the church of Christ. This was represented in the Levitical dispensation by the cherubim looking toward the mercy-seat of the ark, as Peter explains the figure, "which things the angels desire to look into;" 1 Peter 1:12. and observe that the apostle does not say that they "desired," but that they "desire," that is, still desire, to look into these heavenly mysteries, to afford them renewed discoveries of the wisdom and glory of God; for it is not by creation, with all its wonders, nor by providence, in all its displays, that the wisdom of God is made known to angelic minds, but by redemption. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:10-11 With what surpassing and resplendent glory, then, was the infinite wisdom of God displayed to these bright, angelic intelligences when, at the ascension of their Lord and ours, they personally witnessed how, in that very nature which "was made a little lower than the angels," in his state of humiliation, he had defeated all the designs of Satan, vindicated the honor of God, glorified his justice, magnified the law given by their ministration and made it honorable, revealed the grace, mercy, and love of the Father in the salvation of millions of redeemed sinners, and was now returning triumphant into heaven to reign and rule at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

4. And this leads us to consider the ends for which Jesus ascended thus triumphantly into glory. They may be briefly viewed as two, which may be severally characterized by the two different instruments of regal power which the enthroned King of Zion bears as the insignia of his authority.

1. The rod of iron whereby he rules over his enemies. This has been put into his hands by his Father—"You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel." Psalms 2:9. "Rule in the midst of your enemies," was the charter of his authority, when the Father said unto him, "Sit you at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." Psalms 110:1-2. Thus power is given him "over all flesh;" John 17:2. yes, "all power in heaven and in earth;" Matthew 28:18. for "God has put all things," and therefore "all enemies," "under his feet." 1 Corinthians 15:25-27. All persons and things are subject to his control; and though "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed; he who sits in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." Psalms 2:4

2. But there is the scepter of his grace, by which he rules in the hearts of a willing people; Psalms 110:3. bows them at his feet in sweet submission to his will; and becomes enthroned in their heart and affections as the Prince of peace. But as we shall have occasion to speak more particularly of the exercise of this twofold kingly power when we come to the consideration of our Lord’s present state in heaven, we shall not dwell any longer on this branch of our subject, but proceed to view

the adorable Redeemer as:

5. Ascending on high that he might be a High Priest over the house of God, and that "not after the law of a carnal commandment," as the priests under the law, "but after the power of an endless life." Hebrews 7:16. It was prophesied of him that he should be "a Priest on his throne." Zechariah 6:13. as uniting in his glorious Person the regal and priestly dignities. Of this conjunction of king and priest in one Person, Melchisedek was a type, who was "king of Salem and priest of the most high God;" Hebrews 7:1. and we know that the testimony of God to his dear Son was, "You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedek." Psalms 110:4. Hebrews 7:17. When, then, the blessed Lord had fulfilled one part of his priestly office here below by offering the sacrifice of his sacred humanity, his pure body and his holy soul, on the cross, thereby making an expiation for the sins of his people, he went up on high to accomplish on their behalf the second part of the priestly office, which is to make intercession for them. Romans 8:34. Hebrews 7:25. This was beautifully typified by what took place on the solemn day of atonement, when the high priest, wearing the holy linen garments, a type of the pure humanity of Jesus, first offered sacrifice in the outer court and made atonement for sin, and then, with the blood of the bullock and of the goat, and the smoke of incense beaten small, lighted by coals taken from the bronze altar, entered into the most holy place. This most holy place was a type of heaven, Hebrews 9:24. and the ascension of our great High Priest there was represented by the steps up which the high priest went when, after offering sacrifice, he entered with the blood into the temple.

We may also observe that when the high priest thus ascended the steps of the temple to present himself before the Lord in the most holy place, this was the very time when the jubilee trumpet sounded through the land, and proclaimed liberty to all slaves and captives, and to those who had sold their houses and lands that they might freely return and take possession of them. Thus when Christ ascended up on high to enter heaven with his own blood, proclamation was made of pardon and peace, for then began the spiritual jubilee, when those who lay captive under the law, in bondage to doubt and fear, and who had sold themselves and all their possessions for nothing were to be liberated by the joyful sound of a free grace gospel preached by the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

04.11. KING OF KINGS

KING OF KINGS

If favored with that "anointing" from above which "teaches of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," dropping into our heart and from our pen, our "meditation of him will be sweet" to both writer and reader. And indeed, if in any part of our Meditations on this sacred subject we especially need the unction of his grace to lead us into the truth, to endue us with the spirit of faith so as to receive into a believing heart what the Holy Spirit has revealed in the inspired word, to be kept from unhallowed, presumptuous speculation, while treading such sacred ground, and to unfold with any measure of holy and heavenly wisdom the mysteries of the kingdom of grace and glory of our risen and ascended Lord—it is now, when we approach that part of our subject where we have to contemplate him as seated at the right hand of the Father. We have seen him rising from the dead and ascending up on high, and our last view of him was his triumphant entry into the courts of heaven, or, as the Holy Spirit expresses it, "received up into glory." 1 Timothy 3:16. The subject, then, of our present Meditation will be a view by faith of what Jesus now is at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But before we enter upon this most blessed theme, as the proposed subject of our Meditations was "The Sacred Humanity of our adorable Redeemer," it may not be out of place to cast a glance at this sacred humanity in its present exalted state of majesty and glory. The exaltation of human nature, what the scripture calls "the flesh and blood of the children," Hebrews 2:14, meaning thereby the whole of our humanity, body and soul, as a necessary but most blessed consequence of its intimate and indissoluble union with the divine Person of the Son of God, is the greatest display of the wisdom, love, and grace of a Triune Jehovah that could be afforded to men or angels. In our present time-state, while groaning in our earthly house of this tabernacle, surrounded by evils innumerable without, and burdened with a body of sin and death within, we can only apprehend and realize by faith what our nature now is in union with the Person of the Son of God, and what it hereafter will be in that great day when he shall come "to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all those who believe," when he "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Php 3:21.

Viewed, however, by mortal eyes, as an object of existing sight and sense, human nature can now only be seen in its debased, degraded condition. The original beauty and glory of man, as made in God’s image, after his own likeness, were utterly lost in the Adam fall. Sin has marred body and soul, filling the former with disease and pain, and the latter with pollution and corruption. Of this we have daily experience, not only in its most pressing and painful form as the poison in our own body and soul, often making us groan, being burdened, as regards ourselves, but as witnessing also with grief the pain and misery of others by which we are surrounded, and seeing spread before our eyes the vile abominations which run down our streets like water. But this is not all. Though even of this world’s present misery and sin but an infinitely small fraction has pressed on our heart or entered our eyes or ears, we have not seen, and God grant we never may see, how human nature thoroughly let loose can both sin and suffer. What sins it is capable of we feel in ourselves, for in

our own hearts lie deeply imbedded and struggling for life and growth the vital seeds of every foul and damnable crime; what it has done, and is ever greedily, exultingly, remorselessly doing in others, abandoned to its lusts, we see or read in daily act. Even in this civilized land what foul crimes are continually surging up to view, as if from a bottomless deep, where sin is ever seething and boiling as in a flaming cauldron. But in this present life human nature is no more what it will be hereafter in the unregenerate, than what it will be hereafter in the regenerate. Its future capacity for sin is no more known by the iniquities which it now throws up into open view than the depths of the sea by the seaweed cast upon the shore. Take all the depths unfathomed, unfathomable, of your own heart, or look at the vilest wretch whom sins of every shape and name have debased to the lowest pitch, steeped to the neck in blood and crime, so sworn a foe of all laws, human and divine, that, if to be taken in no other way, he must be shot down like a wild beast for the security of the lives of the community; when you have probed the depths of your own heart, or painted in your own imagination the blackest wretch that the hulks have ever held, or vomited forth on a penal colony, you have not then seen or imagined in your mind the millionth part of what human nature really is as sunk and debased by the Adam fall. The very present constitution of the human body, the limited powers of the mind, the laws of society, the restraint of God's providence, and a thousand other visible or invisible checks, now keep human nature shut up in itself, as a wild beast in an iron cage. Nor will earth ever witness the full outburst of the fury of sin as blazing forth in the body and soul of man to its utmost height. Hell, and hell alone will fully manifest, as hell, and hell alone will fully develop human nature as burning with the most intense and unquenchable enmity and blasphemy against God and the Lamb. But take the converse. We have taken a glimpse at human nature debased and degraded, polluted by sin and set on fire of hell. Now view human nature pure and holy, unspotted, unfallen—and especially look at it as exalted above angels, principalities, and powers in the glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. There we see humanity in intimate personal and indissoluble union with Deity. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in allowing man, made after his own image, to sink so low, and in the Person of his dear Son to exalt it so high that the same nature should be in hell and in heaven; in hell, outvying devils in blasphemy in heaven, in union with Deity. It is at human nature thus exalted that we would now chiefly look; and if we have thus briefly touched upon man as debased and degraded by sin, we have thrown in these gloomy colors merely by way of contrast. As in a picture the dark shades set off and more clearly bring out the bright lights, so the very degradation of human nature by sin and its miserable consequences only more clearly brings out into open view the stupendous grace displayed in its glorious exaltation in the Person of the Son of God.

These thoughts, though at first sight perhaps somewhat discursive and foreign to our subject, may, with God's blessing, prepare our minds to approach that portion of our heavenly theme on which we now attempt to enter.

We have, in our past Meditations, beheld the blessed Lord ascend up on high, and have by faith traced his course up to the very gates of heaven; we have seen his angelic convoy, viewed his dismayed foes, and heard the shouts of exultation from the heavenly host which welcomed him home. We have now, then, to consider the place to which he thus triumphantly ascended, and the end and object of his triumphant entry there. The PLACE into which he ascended is heaven, by which we mean the immediate residence of God in all his majesty and glory. The blessed Lord is

said Hebrews 4:14. to have "passed into," or rather, as the word literally means, " through the heavens," that is, the material heavens, both the earthly atmospheric heavens, Genesis 7:11. Deuteronomy 28:12. Job 38:29. Job 38:37, and the starry heavens; Psalms 8:3. Psalms 19:1; and to be "made higher" than they, that is, not only actually but locally. Hebrews 7:26. It is, then, into "the heaven of heavens," Psalms 148:4, or "the third heaven," 2 Corinthians 12:2, that the Lord ascended when he went up on high. He is therefore said to be "set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." Hebrews 8:1.

We shall chiefly direct our present thoughts to theblessed Lord in the immediate presence of God as Zion’s enthroned King.

Just before the Lord ascended up on high he "came and spoke" unto his eleven disciples—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18. Previous to his resurrection his was a state of humiliation and suffering, for "he was made a little lower than the angels;" Hebrews 2:9; "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death;" Php 2:8; was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" Isaiah 53:3; yes, "a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Psalms 22:6. But when he arose from the dead, his humiliation was past, and his glory began, as Peter speaks, "Who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory." 1 Peter 1:21. Thus his resurrection was the commencement of his mediatorial reign, and his ascension and going up into heaven was the entering into possession of it, as he himself said to the two disciples, when journeying with them to Emmaus—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke 24:26.

When, then, he entered into glory, he took possession of the throne of David, according to the promise made of him unto the Virgin Mary—"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:32-33. He was then "called the Son of the Highest," that is, openly proclaimed as the Son of God, at and by his resurrection, for he was then "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead;" Romans 1:4; and when he went up on high, and was set "at God’s right hand in the heavenly places," Psalms 47:4. Psalms 68:18. Ephesians 1:20, he "received the kingdom," as he intimated in the parable of the nobleman and his ten servants—"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Luke 19:12. The "far country" is heaven; the "kingdom" received is his present mediatorial reign; and his returning is his second coming. He received the kingdom not only as a kingdom of grace and glory, but as a kingdom of authority and power. All things were then put under his feet, and all power given him in heaven and earth. The universal power, the spiritual nature, and the eternal duration of this kingdom are no less clearly than beautifully unfolded in Psalms 72:1-20—"He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. For he shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

And that this exaltation to the right hand of God is for the good of his people, and that he might be the spiritual, ever-living Head of his church, is blessedly unfolded by the apostle where, speaking of Christ's resurrection, he says that God "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all." Ephesians 1:20-23.

Men have unhappily thrown discredit upon this most blessed doctrine of the kingship of Christ, which, as revealed in the scriptures, is full of sweet consolation to the exercised family of God, by carnalizing it into a future earthly millennium. No doubt there are glories in this sovereign rule of Jesus to be one day more fully manifested, but it is proposed to our faith all through the New Testament as an object of our present spiritual experience; for as Zion's enthroned King he is the Head of his body the church, and as such supplies her out of his own inexhaustible fullness. He died that we might never die. To him, as raised from the dead, we are married that we might "bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4. . "Because he lives we shall live also." John 14:19. To him, as our enthroned King, we give the allegiance of our hearts; before his feet, as our rightful Sovereign, we humbly lie; and we beg of him, as possessed of all power, to subdue our iniquities, subdue our rebellious lusts, and sway his peaceful scepter over every faculty of our soul. That he should thus reign and rule, and that over all flesh, Matthew 28:18. John 17:2. 1 Corinthians 15:25-26. Hebrews 2:8, was the promise made unto him in Psalms 2:1-12, the subject of which is the exaltation of the Son of God as the anointed King of Zion. This exaltation of the Son of God in our nature made "the heathen rage, and the people [that is, the Jewish people] imagine a vain thing," which was, that by their rebellion and disobedience they could "break the bands asunder, and cast away the cords" in which they were bound by God's firm decree, when he said, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." This exaltation of the Son of God in our nature, as of the seed of David, Peter preached in that Pentecostal sermon which the Holy Spirit so inspired and so honored—"This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this which you now see and hear; for David is not ascended into the heavens; but he says himself. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit on my right hand until I make your foes your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:32-36. Jesus is here declared to be made by the Father "both Lord and Christ," that is—King and Priest "Lord," as invested with sovereign and supreme dominion, "Christ," as the anointed High Priest over the house of God. This exaltation of the Lord Jesus was given him as a reward for his incarnation, humiliation, and suffering obedience, as the apostle so beautifully speaks, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God has also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Php 2:8-11. This exaltation with which God has so "highly exalted him," is to his own right hand; and "the name which he has given him, which is above every name," is that of "Lord," that in our nature as God-man he might rule and reign, and exercise supreme dominion and sovereign authority over things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. The mystery of grace and glory contained in and made manifest by this

exaltation of the Son of God is not that he reigns and rules as one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for this he did as one with them in essence, power, and glory before the foundation of the world; but that he reigns and rules as God-man as the Son of God and yet the Son of man, as David's Lord and yet as David's Son. See the following scriptures—(Matthew 22:42-45. John 10:26-27. Acts 7:55-56. Romans 1:3-4. Romans 14:9. Ephesians 1:20-23. Hebrews 2:9). This exaltation of Jesus to the throne of glory was typified by the glorious throne which Solomon made for himself, and on which he sat in royal state—"Then the king made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps and a rounded back. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with the figure of a lion standing on each side of the throne. Solomon made twelve other lion figures, one standing on each end of each of the six steps. No other throne in all the world could be compared with it!" 1 Kings 10:18-20. It was "a great throne," to show the greatness of his power and dominion; made of "ivory," to denote purity and perfection; and "overlaid with pure gold," to signify value and preciousness. It had "six steps," to denote elevation; and "a rounded back," to signify that past and present were alike open to view, that there was no escaping the sight and power of him who sat on it, for the throne being round, he could turn his eyes and hands in all directions. There were "on both sides of the seat were armrests," to signify the firmness of the throne; and the two lions beside the armrests, and the twelve lions on the six steps denoted the power and authority of him who sat thereon, for he is the Lion of Judah. Revelation 5:5. Genesis 49:9. This aspect of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus as the enthroned King of Zion is a blessed subject of meditation when we consider its bearing upon the helpless, defenseless condition of the church of God. She stands surrounded by foes, internal, external, infernal; and all armed against her with deadly enmity. "Behold, I send you forth," said the blessed Lord, "as sheep among wolves." Matthew 10:16. What would have become of the flock, especially in those early times, when persecution so raged on every side, unless the Lord Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, had guarded the fold? Never could the church have more loudly sung the song of preserving power—"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul." Psalms 124:1-5. And even now, when the strong arm of the law protects them from external violence, what would become of the saints of God had they no sovereign Protector, who, in their nature, as their Head and Husband, rules and reigns on their behalf in the courts of heaven? We are encompassed with foes; for "we wrestle" not only "against flesh and blood"—strong in others, but far more strong and subtle in ourselves but—"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. What hope or help, then, can we have but in that all-seeing eye, which sees; that all-sympathizing heart, which feels; that all-powerful hand, which delivers the objects of his love from all the snares and wiles, and defeats all the plans and projects of these mighty, implacable foes? As our enthroned King, also, Jesus is the especial object of our faith. We daily and hourly feel the workings of mighty sins, raging lusts, powerful temptations, besetting evils, against the least and feeblest of which we have no strength. But as the eye of faith views our blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father, we are led by the power of his grace to look unto him, hang upon him, and seek help out of him. Trials in providence, afflictions in the family, sickness and infirmities in the body, crooked things in the church, opposition and persecution from the world, a vile, unbelieving heart, which we can neither sanctify

nor subdue, a rough and rugged path, increasing in difficulty as we journey onward, doubts, fears, and misgivings in our own bosom, inward slips and falls, wanderings, startings aside, and hourly backslidings from the strait and narrow path, jealous enemies watching for our halting, with no eye to pity, nor arm to help—but the Lord's how all these foes and fears make us feel our need of an enthroned King, Head, and Husband, whose tender heart is soft to pity, whose mighty arm is strong to relieve! "The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save! He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:17.

It is good also to bear in mind that Jesus, as Zion's exalted King, has received "gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." This Peter puts prominently forward in that sermon which he preached on the memorable day of Pentecost. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this which you now see and hear." Acts 2:33. It was as our enthroned King, that he received and shed forth the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, the promised Comforter. The same blessed truth is asserted and unfolded by the apostle Paul—"When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) Ephesians 4:8-10 The apostle is here alluding to the prophetic declaration in Psalms 68:18. One expression in this declaration is very sweet and beautiful, according to the marginal rendering. "You have received gifts for men" is in the margin, "in the man," that is, in his human nature, in which he is exalted as our anointed King. The gift of the Comforter was, so to speak, dependent on the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." John 16:7. Thus he is said to send the Comforter, John 15:26, which he only does by virtue of his exaltation and glorification at the right hand of God, as holy John speaks—"But this spoke he of the Spirit, which those who believe on him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." John 7:39. No heart can conceive or tongue describe the blessedness of this gift—the gift of the Comforter. How effectual his teachings! how divine his operations! how heavenly his influences! how sacred his anointings! how sweet his consolations, and yet how deep his convictions! how earnest his cries! how fervent his breathings! how unutterable his groanings! What could we know, or feel, or be, or have, or do; what could we think or say; how could we believe, or hope, or love; repent, or watch, or pray; submit, or suffer; preach, or hear, or write; how could we live; and, above all, and last of all, how could we die, without this holy and blessed Comforter? But were Jesus not exalted as Zion's King, this shedding forth of the gifts and graces of the blessed Spirit could not and would not be. It is because God "has given him power over all flesh, that he gives eternal life to as many as God has given him." This "eternal life" is spiritual life; for its very being and blessedness is that they to whom he imparts it "may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." John 17:2-3. But this life, and this saving knowledge of the Father and of the Son, are given by the Spirit, whom Jesus sends, and who glorifies him by coming to testify of him; for he receives of Christ's and shows it to his people. John 16:14.

Thus, as Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, he becomes a gracious and glorious head of influence to the mystical members of his body. This was prophesied of him under the

figure of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, "And then I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah to replace you. He will have your royal robes, your title, and your authority. And he will be a father to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in the royal court. He will open doors, and no one will be able to shut them; he will close doors, and no one will be able to open them. And he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house, for I will drive him firmly in place like a tent stake." Isaiah 22:20-23 The Lord, therefore, who appeared in so glorious a manner to John, Revelation 1 as the exalted Head of the church, (for though he was still the Son of man, Revelation 1:13, his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength; and though he was once dead yet he lives and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death), and said of himself, in his message to the church at Philadelphia, "And to the angel of the church at Philadelphia write, These things says he who is holy, he who is true, he who has the key of David, he who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens." It were good for us to be looking up to the blessed Lord as our enthroned King not only that he might sway his scepter over our hearts, controlling our rebellious wills, and subduing us to his gentle might, but as Lord over all our enemies, external, internal, infernal. But one point we must ever bear in mind, for indeed it will surely be taught us if we are among the number of his loyal subjects, that however great may be the benefits and blessings of having such a King as our gracious and glorious Sovereign, we can only truly know, and experimentally realize them as we are brought into the obedience of faith. Let us not deceive ourselves by merely seeing and acknowledging his dominion when our heart is destitute of 'submission to his scepter'. "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. The Holy Spirit, in Psalms 18:44, draws a distinction between the true obedience of Christ's "people" and the "strangers" to God and godliness. "As soon as they the people hear of me they shall obey me; the strangers shall cringe before me." But the same grace which makes the heart honest, and bows it in willing obedience to Christ's scepter; the same holy anointing which, by revealing the love and blood of the cross, reconciles the stubborn will and softens and meekens the obdurate spirit, opens also the eyes of the child of God to see and his soul to feel his daily need of Jesus as his gracious King. His scepter is felt to be a scepter of grace; his kingdom an inward kingdom, Luke 17:21, which is "not in word but in power;" 1 Corinthians 4:20; "not food and drink"—not legal observances and fleshly obedience—"but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17. But that this blessed kingdom may be set up with power in our hearts, we are led into trials and temptations, and thrust, as it were, into a very multitude of foes, that we may prove for ourselves the reality and blessedness of such a kingdom and such a King. Every child of God is surrounded by a multitude of enemies without and within, who, unless they be overcome for him and by him, will most certainly overcome him. There is no neutrality in this warfare; it is a fight for life or death; for certain victory or certain defeat. All the promises are made to him that overcomes, Revelation 3:12, and that most glorious one of all—"To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21. But to be overcome is to be lost, forever lost, and to perish under the wrath of God. How then shall we overcome but by faith in our risen Head; but by calling upon our enthroned King to fight our battles, who must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet?

If we belong to Jesus and walk in obedience to his will and word we shall surely have many outward foes, "for all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. But

let them pass; they cannot really hurt us, for "who is he who will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?" 1 Peter 3:13. There are much more numerous and mightier enemies within, than any foes without; and of these we may truly say with Judah of old, in the presence of the embattled army, "O, our God, will you not judge them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to do, but we are looking to You for help." 2 Chronicles 20:12. And well it is when we can look up in faith and prayer to the blessed Lord as our risen Head and enthroned King, and, from a believing view of his surpassing grace and almighty power, ready to be stretched out on our behalf, can say, "Our eyes are upon you." When we feel the power of sin, the tyranny of our vile lusts and passions, and what our nature is capable of if left to its own will and way, how sweet and suitable is the promise, "He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19.

When, then, our blessed Joshua brings the captive kings out of the cave, and by his Spirit and grace puts our feet upon their necks, Joshua 10:24, then he becomes endeared to us as our sceptered King; for in these favored moments we can truly say, "O Lord our God, other lords beside you have had dominion over us; but by you only will we make mention of your name." Isaiah 26:13. "Lord," we say, "subdue our iniquities; bend our wills to yours; reign and rule over and in us as our Lord and God; bring into captivity every rebellious thought to the obedience of Christ; come into our soul in your love, and blood, and grace; conform us to your image; make us to walk in your footsteps, and let not any sin have dominion over us." When thus subdued by the scepter of his all-conquering grace, we can lie humbly and resignedly at his feet, and, yielding the obedience of a believing, loving heart, commit all we are and have into his sacred hands as our most blessed rightful Sovereign; then we prove that the present kingship of Jesus at the right hand of the Father is no dry doctrine, nor mere speculative notion, but, as received into a feeling, believing heart, is a matter of vital and daily experience. This is the reign of grace; Romans 5:21; the building of the spiritual temple, in which there is heard neither hammer nor axe, 1 Kings 6:7, but noiselessly carried on in believing hearts by our glorious Joshua, of whom we read—"Tell him that the Lord Almighty says: Here is the man called the Branch. He will branch out where he is and build the Temple of the Lord. He will build the Lord’s Temple, and he will receive royal honor and will rule as king from his throne. He will also serve as priest from his throne, and there will be perfect harmony between the two." Zechariah 6:12-13

04.12. His All-Prevailing Intercession

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST A. His All-Prevailing Intercession

We are now led to another character of our blessed Lord, as wearing our nature in the courts of heaven, for in the prophecy of him just quoted, it is promised that "he shall be a priest upon his throne." The high priest under the law never sat upon a throne. He was a servant, not a sovereign; for he "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Hebrews 8:5. But Jesus is a royal Priest, and as such was typified by Melchizedek, who united in himself the two characters of priest and king, for he was "King of Salem, and Priest of the most high God." Hebrews 7:1. This was "the order of Melchizedek," according to which Jesus was made a high priest by virtue of the ancient oath—"The Lord has sworn, and will not repent. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalms 110:4. There were three especial features in the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, which distinguished it from the Levitical order:

1. It was a royal priesthood; for Melchisedek was "by interpretation King of righteousness that being the meaning of his name, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace." Hebrews 7:2.

2. It was made by an oath. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest; 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. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Hebrews 7:20-22.

3. It was forever, for so ran the promise, "You are a Priest forever." Jesus was, therefore, not a temporary high priest, as the high priests under the law, whom sickness struck and death removed, for "there truly were many priests, because they were not allowed to continue by reason of death." Hebrews 7:23. But Jesus being "made not after the law of a carnal commandment," as was the high priest under the law—"but after the power of an endless life," continues ever, as having an unchangeable priesthood. And in this consists much of the suitability and blessedness of his priestly office as now carried on in heaven, as the apostle speaks—"therefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25.

Let us, then, as the Lord may enable, now take a view by faith of the Lord Jesus, as the high priest over the house of God, and this may give us holy boldness to venture near. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Hebrews 10:19-20. If thus enabled to draw near with a true heart, we may find a benefit in meditating upon our blessed Lord in this relationship to his church and people. The high priest, under the law, on the great day of atonement, which occurred once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, made a solemn atonement, first for the sins of himself and his house, and then for the iniquities of the children of Israel. Leviticus 16:34. But this he did in two ways by offering a bullock as a sin offering for himself,

and a goat, upon which the Lord’s lot fell, as a sin offering for the people; Leviticus 16:6; Leviticus 16:9; Leviticus 16:11; by taking a censer full of burning coals from off the altar, and filling his hands with sweet incense beaten small, and entering therewith into the most holy place. This was that sacred spot called "the holy of holies" or "the holiest of all" Hebrews 9:3; which contained the ark of the covenant on which, between the cherubim, was the Shechinah or visible manifestation of the presence and glory of God. Into this holiest of all, the high priest never entered but on the great day of atonement; and even on that day he was forbidden, under the penalty of death, to come within the veil which separated it from the holy place, unless he had washed his flesh, had put on the holy linen garment, taken with him the blood of the sacrifice, and put the incense upon the burning coals in the censer.

All these things were highly typical of Jesus as the great high priest. The washing of the flesh denoted his purity as high priest; the holy linen garments, the holiness of his human nature; the blood, his atoning blood shed upon the cross; and the incense, his meritorious intercession. The most holy place was typical of heaven, and the veil typical of the separation between God and us, and that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." Hebrews 9:8. When Jesus died, this veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom Matthew 27:51; to show that there was no longer a separating veil between God and his people. But the high priest going within the veil, with the blood and the incense, was a special type of Jesus, our risen High Priest, entering into the courts of heaven. There was a connection between the intercession of the high priest without, and within the veil. Outside the veil the sacrifice was offered, but the blood was taken inside it. The bronze altar was without the veil, but the ark of the covenant was within. The high priest shed the blood without, but sprinkled it within. The burning coals were taken from the bronze altar which stood in the open court; but the incense was put upon them as he entered into the most holy place, that the cloud of its fragrance might cover the mercy seat on and before which he sprinkled the blood of the bullock, offered for his sins, and that of the goat, for the sins of the people.

Thus our most blessed High Priest, after he had offered his holy body and soul as a sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended up on high to enter into heaven in his pure and sacred humanity, typified by the holy linen garments worn by Aaron, when he went within the veil, that he might there fulfill that part of his priestly office—to make intercession for us. This was beautifully typified, as we have already hinted, by the high priest taking the incense beaten small within the veil, together with the atoning blood. The incense was beaten small—bruised, not cut, not only that the fragrance might more freely flow forth when lighted by the coals, but as typical of the sufferings and sorrows of our agonizing High Priest. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Isaiah 53:10. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." The coals from off the bronze altar typified the wrath of God, for the fire on the bronze altar, kindled in the first instance by the Lord himself, Leviticus 9:24, was never put out; and on it were burnt not only all the whole burnt-offerings, but every part of the other sacrifices, as the fat of the sin-offering, which was laid thereon for that express purpose. The cloud of incense which filled the most holy place, and covered the mercy seat, represented the fragrances of the present intercession of our great and glorious High Priest in heaven. And the blood, sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, typified "the blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel;" Hebrews 12:24; even that precious blood "which cleanses from all sin;" which he took with him into heaven when he entered

there in his holy humanity, and the efficacy of which to purge a guilty conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works, to serve a living God, he still makes manifest when the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the soul with his own divine power. A believing view of Christ, as typified by the high priest under the law entering within the veil, on the great day of atonement, will prepare our minds more clearly and fully to contemplate him as now carrying on his priestly office in the glorious temple above; for he "is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Hebrews 9:24. The entering in of the high priest within the veil was one special part of his sacred office, by which he was distinguished from his priestly brethren, who might offer the ordinary sacrifices, Leviticus 1:5, but not go into the most holy place with the blood of the bullock and the goat. Leviticus 16:1. Thus part of his priestly office was without, and part within the veil; and yet the two parts were continuous, connected, and inseparable. So it is with our great and glorious High Priest now within the veil—hidden, indeed, from mortal eyes, as the high priest was from the children of Israel by the veil of the tabernacle, but as really and truly still ministering in our nature there as Aaron ministered in the holy of holies, when he sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat, and filled the place with the smoke and fragrance of the incense. We have already traced a connection between the blood of the sacrifice shed without the veil and the same blood carried within, and a similar connection between the coals taken from the bronze altar and the incense beaten small, the smoke of which covered the mercy-seat. So there is a necessary and most blessed connection between the blood-shedding and sacrifice of Christ on earth and his intercession in heaven. The fragrance of his intercession rises from the altar of his sacrifice, as typically from the burnt offering of Noah "a sweet smelling savor" ascended up to the Lord; and as he is ever presenting his blood-shedding and death on behalf of his people here below, he, in this sense, "ever lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25.

We need not suppose, therefore, that the intercession of our blessed High Priest is a vocal intercession, carried on by actual prayers and supplications. In the typical intercession of the high priest, on the great day of atonement, it was not his vocal prayers which prevailed with God, for of them no mention was made or commandment given, but the blood of the sacrifice and the smoke of the incense. Thus his office is described by the apostle—"For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Hebrews 5:1. And as a remarkable illustration of this we may instance what occurred when the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord was about to consume them as in a moment—"And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people." Numbers 16:46-47. Moses did not bid Aaron pray for the people, but make an atonement for them; so that it was not the prayers of Aaron, as the interceding high priest and typical mediator, but the incense lighted with fire from the bronze altar, which prevailed with the Lord, and stayed the plague which had already begun. Numbers 16:45-48. So it is the presence of Jesus in heaven in our nature, and the continual presentation of his blood-shedding and sacrifice on earth before the eyes of his Father in which the power and prevalence of his intercession consist. Thus he is represented as "clothed with a vesture dipped in

blood;" Revelation 19:13; and John had a view of him in the courts of heaven as a slaughtered lamb, for he says, "And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." Revelation 5:6. His office as an interceding High Priest was thus represented, for as "a lamb as it had been slain" is a type of his sacrifice for sin, so his standing as a slain lamb in the midst of the throne denotes that his precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, 1 Peter 1:19, yes, of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," in the predestinating counsels and purposes of God, Revelation 13:8, now continually avails for the salvation of the redeemed, and is ever presented before the eyes of the Father. The present intercession of our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father, as viewed by the eye of faith, is full of encouragement and consolation to every believing heart. There are but few of the Lord's living family who do not at various times and seasons sigh and groan under a load of sin and sorrow. Now there are two especial features in the intercession of Jesus within the veil which meet this twofold burden—the prevalency of his intercession; the sympathy and compassion of his loving heart. The former suits the burden of their sins; the latter that of their sorrows. We will, with God's help and blessing, consider these two points separately.

Let us first, then, take a glance at the prevalency of his intercession, and see how suitable it is to relieve the soul under a burden of sin. "If any man sins," says John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. What can we do with our sins?—their burden, their guilt, their filth, and their power? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but to sink under them; for we can neither put them away nor subdue them. But Jesus can do both, for he "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. To him, then, a poor, guilty, miserable, sinking sinner may look to plead his case, for in him he has "an Advocate with the Father," one of God's own appointing, and therefore sure of the ear of the Judge, a wonderful Counselor, Isaiah 9:6, who can stand up in the court of heaven on his behalf; one who never lost a cause, rejected a humble petition, or disappointed a client. But the power and prevalency of this advocacy in heaven rest on his atoning sacrifice offered on earth; for John immediately adds, "And he is the propitiation for our sins." It is because "he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and "was once offered to bear the sins of many," Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 9:28; it is because he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" Colossians 2:14; it is because his is a finished work; John 17:4. John 19:30; and he has made peace through the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:21, that he is now our prevailing Advocate and successful Intercessor in heaven, where the cause is heard and decided.

We are very apt to lose sight of these most blessed truths, and that we have such a Friend above. We believe them, indeed, firmly and fully, anchor in them, and have no hope but what is connected with and springs out of them. But in seasons of darkness and distress, when guilt from repeated backslidings lies hard and heavy on the conscience; when the mists and fogs of unbelief gather over the foundations of our hope; when our evidences are beclouded and our signs but dimly seen, then we need a living Advocate who can plead our cause, we being unable to do it ourselves, and by presenting on our behalf his blood and obedience, his sufferings, sacrifice, and death, may bring us off more than conquerors against every accusing plea and every opposing adversary. As Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest, to resist him; Zechariah 3:1; as the accuser of the brethren accuses them before God day and night; Revelation 12:10; and

neither Joshua nor the brethren could plead a word in their own defense, and yet both came off conquerors by the help of the Lord and the blood of the Lamb; so poor guilty sinners now prevail through the power of their heavenly Advocate.

It is, then, because we feel the weight and burden of sin, yet see by faith that our great High Priest has passed within the veil, that our eyes, hands, and hearts are all up unto him. As thus realized by faith, there is a peculiar power in this believing view of our heavenly Advocate, which draws desire and supplication out of the soul unto and after him. No, it is this living and daily communion with Jesus in heaven in which the very life and power of godliness consist. "Because I live, you shall live also." John 14:19. He, as exalted above all principality and power, is the church's glorious Head, Ephesians 1:22, "from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God." Colossians 2:19. This union with him as a living Head brings about communion with him; for as he communicates grace out of his own fullness, there springs up in the soul a sweet and sacred fellowship with him, as viewed by faith on his throne of grace as the Mediator between God and man. And these communications of divine light and life out of his fullness, enlightening the eyes of the understanding, and being attended by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him Ephesians 1:17-18, there arises in the heart a gracious view of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and his glory. Psalms 112:4. Isaiah 33:17. Luke 1:78-79. 2 Peter 1:19. This is drinking at the fountain of life and seeing light in God's light; Psalms 36:9; and is the very "light of life," which the Lord gives to those that follow him. John 8:12.

As, then, the soul walks in the light of these gracious teachings, the blood of Jesus is seen as a fountain of infinite value and unspeakable efficacy for sin and uncleanness; his righteousness as a most blessed covering for all its shame and nakedness; his bleeding, dying love as a most healing balm for a wounded conscience, and a heavenly cordial for a fainting spirit. It is by these teachings that the reality of true religion and of vital godliness is learned; and in no other way. No truly exercised soul can be satisfied with seeing salvation as a mere doctrine of the gospel—a fixed and certain truth that shines in the inspired page. Glad, indeed, he is that the way of salvation is so clearly revealed in the word of truth; and that there is the light, and life, and power of the Spirit within to bear his inward witness to the truth and certainty of the written testimony; but all this light and knowledge in the letter of truth falls short of a salvation revealed and manifested to his own heart and conscience.

Here, then, comes in the blessedness of an ever-living Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father, who, by applying his blood and love with power, says to the soul, "I am your salvation." It is therefore said of him, "therefore he is able also to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." Who shall describe, as who shall limit God's "uttermost?" David, "from the ends of the earth;" Psalms 61:2. ; Heman, when "laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" Psalms 88:6; Hezekiah, "from the gates of the grave and the pit of corruption;" Isaiah 38:16-17; Jeremiah, "out of the low dungeon," where "the waters flowed over his head, and he said, I am cut off;" Lamentations 3:54-55; Jonah, "out of the belly of hell;" Jonah 2:2; all these deeply-taught and deeply-tried saints of God knew both man's uttermost and God's uttermost, and that man's uttermost was sin, hell, and despair; and God's uttermost was mercy, salvation, and heaven.

Never is the prevalency of our Great High Priest’s intercession so proved as when it thus saves to the uttermost. And who that knows anything of himself as a sinner, or in whose heart the fountains of the great deep have in any measure been broken up; who that has ever had a view of sin as seen in the light of God’s infinite purity and holiness, and trembled before him; who that has ever felt the guilt of backslidings, the pangs of slips and falls, and his own miserable helplessness, not only in the hour of temptation, but to remove the load of transgression off his conscience—who of all these but has his "uttermost," if not really so deep and desperate as Heman’s and Jonah’s, yet, in his own feelings, such an uttermost as none can save him from but that High Priest and Advocate who lives at God’s right hand to make intercession for him? It is here we prove the experimental reality and felt blessedness of having such an Advocate with the Father, against whom and before whom we have sinned. May the Lord enable us to commit our cause into his hand, however deep or desperate, and wait and watch for him to appear and save!

Chapter 82

04.13. His Sympathy and Compassion

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST B. His Sympathy and Compassion

Having attempted, then, to show the nature and prevalency of the intercession of Jesus at the right hand of the Father, and how mercifully and graciously it meets our case as burdened with countless sins and pressed down with innumerable infirmities, we come now to the consideration of the blessed Lord as our most compassionate and sympathizing High Priest in the courts of heaven. Sympathy and compassion are necessary qualifications of a high priest, as sustaining the office of a mediator. A priest implies a sacrifice; a sacrifice implies a sinner; a sinner implies a guilty, burdened wretch, justly deserving of the wrath of God, and therefore in a most pitiable condition. For such a one the high priest offers a sacrifice, that he may obtain thereby the pardon of his sins. He must, therefore, compassionate the case of this guilty sinner, that, as feeling sympathy with him, he may present prayer and supplication on his behalf, that the sacrifice offered for his sins may be accepted. The apostle, therefore, says, "For every high priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people so also for himself, to offer for sins." Hebrews 5:1-3. The high priest under the law differed in this point from the blessed Lord in that he was himself a sinner, and as such had to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people. By this offering for his own sins two things were intimated—that as a sinner he himself needed a propitiating sacrifice; and, he was reminded thereby that, though a high priest, he was really no better than the sinner for whose sins he offered sacrifice. By this sense, then, of his own sinfulness, thus vividly and distinctly brought before his eyes, he was taught to have compassion on his fellow-sinners, and especially on those who had sinned ignorantly, and were "out of the way" through backsliding or infirmity, for there was no sacrifice provided for presumptuous sinners. Numbers 15:27-31. Our blessed Lord, then, as the great High Priest over the house of God, would not have been suitable to us, as encompassed with infirmities, unless he could compassionate our case, and sympathize with us in our troubles and sorrows. It is true that, as perfectly free from sin, both in body and soul, he had no necessity to offer sacrifice for himself; but, as a most loving and tender High Priest, he could compassionate the sinner without partaking of his sins. But this was not all—for even in eternity, before he gave himself for his people, he had pity on them; and we read that, apart from electing love or saving grace, in the days of his flesh, he had compassion on the hungry multitude. But that he might become a merciful and compassionate High Priest he had to learn sympathy with his people in a very different way. In the wondrous depths of the wisdom and grace of God, he learned to sympathize with us in our afflictions by a personal experience of them. This is the apostle’s declaration—"For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. And what a most encouraging conclusion does he draw from this most blessed view of the compassion of our once suffering Head—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain

mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16.

We showed in the last chapter the close and intimate connection that exists between the two main branches of our Lord's priestly office—the sacrifice which he offered in the days of his flesh on earth and his present intercession in heaven. So there is a similar connection between the personal experience of suffering and temptation which the Lord endured here below and his present sympathy above—with his tempted and suffering people still in the wilderness. We must not, however, suppose the personal experience of suffering was essential to his knowledge of it. As omniscient in his divine nature, the Lord perfectly knows what his people suffer, for "he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust." Psalms 103:14. In this sense he searches and knows us, for he understands our thought afar off; he compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. Psalms 139:2-3. As the all-seeing, heart-searching God, he sees and knows all our afflictions and sorrows as he knows everything in heaven and earth. But he could only have the personal experience of suffering by becoming himself a sufferer. This is a deep mystery; but as it is revealed to our faith in the word of truth and is full of blessed consolation to the afflicted family of God, we will approach it with all reverence as a part of our Meditations.

It was the eternal will of God that his dear Son should take the flesh and blood of the children, and that he should take it without sin, but not without suffering. Suffering was a part of the atonement—"For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18. Our blessed Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," not only that by these sorrows and griefs he might redeem us from the depths of the fall—but that he might experimentally learn to feel for, and sympathize with us in our troubles and afflictions.

None can really sympathize with the afflicted but those who have passed or are passing through similar afflictions. We might as well expect an unmarried woman to sympathize with a bereaved widow, as for the unafflicted to sympathize with the afflicted. The very word "sympathy" means a "suffering with"; but how can there be a suffering with another if the suffering itself be personally unknown? The primary element of the whole feeling is lacking, if suffering be absent on the part of the sympathizer. Thus, in order that our blessed Lord might personally, feelingly, and experimentally sympathize with his suffering people, there was a necessity that he must himself suffer. O mystery of mysteries! O wondrous heights and depths of redeeming love! that the Son of God should suffer, not only that he might redeem, but that he might personally feel for and experimentally sympathize with his suffering people! But though we feel our inability and inadequacy to open up this sacred subject, yet, as we have proposed it as a part of our Meditations, let us now examine this point a little more closely, and see what sufferings the blessed Lord endured that he might learn thereby to sympathize with his afflicted ones, who drink of his cup and are baptized with his baptism. In viewing these, we cannot well distinguish between the Lord's sufferings as meritorious and his sufferings as intended to teach him compassion and sympathy; for all his sufferings were a part of his atoning sacrifice—"By his stripes you were healed." 1 Peter 2:24. He that was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" has also surely "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Isaiah 53:4-5. In fact, by the sorrows and sufferings of the blessed Lord several purposes, according to the sovereign will and wisdom of God, were at once accomplished, and principally these following:

1. God was glorified, as the Lord himself said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." John 13:31. "I have glorified you on the earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do." John 17:4. By his meek endurance of the sufferings laid upon him, and by his voluntary and patient obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, through the whole course of his suffering life, from the manger to the cross. God was supremely glorified.

2. The work of redemption was fully accomplished.

3. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Hebrews 5:8.

4. He left us an example, that we should follow his steps. 1 Peter 3:21.

5. He was made perfect; Hebrews 5:9; that is, he became by suffering perfectly qualified to sustain his high office as a merciful and faithful High Priest, who, "in that he himself has suffered being tempted, is able to help those who are tempted." Hebrews 2:17-18.

It is the last point which chiefly demands our present consideration, as contemplating him now in our nature at the right hand of the Father. The sympathy and compassion of the blessed Lord, as now exercised in the courts of heaven, are chiefly shown under the following circumstances:

1. To his people under affliction.

2. To his people under temptation.

1. The Lord’s people are all, without exception, an afflicted people. This was their promised character from the days of old—"I will also leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Zephaniah 3:12. Their afflictions, indeed, widely vary as regards nature, number, length, degree, but all find the truth of that solemn declaration that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

1. Thus, some are afflicted in body, racked with continual pain, or suffering perhaps for years from some severe illness which may not much shorten life, yet render life often a burden. If health be the greatest, as all must admit, of temporal blessings, the lack of it must be the greatest of all temporal miseries. The blessed Lord, indeed, had no personal experience of sickness, for in his holy, immortal body there were the seeds neither of sickness nor death; but he experienced bodily pain, as when scourged by Pilate’s command, when he wore the crown of thorns, when struck and buffeted by the crude Roman soldiery, and more especially when nailed to the cross. Thus, even in the matter of bodily suffering, our gracious Lord can sympathize from personal experience with his poor afflicted family still in the flesh who are racked with pain on their bed of languishing.

2. Many again of the Lord’s people are deeply tried in providence. Poverty is the daily cross of many of the excellent of the earth. But what a personal experience their gracious Lord had of this sharp trial, who had neither purse nor bag, but was maintained by the contributions of the women who ministered to him of their substance. Luke 8:3. Did he not hunger in the wilderness, and before the barren fig-tree? Did he not thirst at Samaria’s well and on the cross? And did he not say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head?" Matthew 8:20. He who for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be rich, not only spiritually made himself poor by laying aside his divine glory, but actually and literally made himself poor by voluntarily submitting to the pain and pressure of bodily

poverty.

3. Others of the Lord’s people are subject to cruelpersecutions. This, indeed, has been the lot of all the saints from the days of righteous Abel, and will be to the end of time, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Fire and faggot are now unknown, and the spirit of the times, at least in this country, will not allow fine and imprisonment, and the other acts of violence which our godly forefathers endured for conscience sake; but the scourge of the tongue is still wielded, heads cut off instead of ears, and reputations branded instead of foreheads. But what a deep and personal experience had the blessed Lord of persecution from the day that Herod sought his life until he was nailed to the cross! How every word was watched which fell from his lips, every action misinterpreted, his character calumniated as a glutton and a wine-bibber, and shame and contempt poured upon him until, as the consummation of hatred, and to cover him, as they thought, with everlasting ignominy, they crucified him between two thieves.

4. Others of the Lord’s people suffer from the treachery of false friends. Had not our blessed Lord an experience of this in the treachery of Judas, so that he could say, "He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." But it is not necessary for us to dwell longer on those temporal afflictions which press down so many of the Lord’s people, but in which their gracious Head still sympathizes with them. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus; he who had compassion on the widow of Nain, Luke 7:13, on the beseeching leper, Mark 1:41, on the man possessed with a devil, Mark 5:19, on the blind, Matthew 20:34, and on the fainting, scattered multitudes, Matthew 9:36, surely pities and sympathizes with his people in all their temporal sorrows, however diversified.

These, though heavy, are not the severest afflictions which befall the saints of the Most High. We will now, therefore, divert our thoughts to those spiritual sorrows and troubles which all the family of God experience, though these, too, vary widely in number and degree, yet are allotted to each living member of the mystical body of Christ, according to the appointed measure. In these, as peculiar to the Lord’s people, Jesus has a special sympathy with his afflicted people, for of this cup he drank to the very dregs, and with this baptism he was baptized with all its billows and waves rolling over him. Whatever spiritual troubles and sorrows the Lord’s people may be called upon to endure, their gracious Lord and Master suffered much more deeply than their heart, however deeply lacerated, can feel or their tongue, however eloquent, can express. But we will look at some of these SPIRITUAL AFFLICTIONS, and endeavor to show how the blessed Lord had a personal experience of them, and thus learned to sympathize with his people under them.

1. The chief burden of the Lord’s living family is sin. This is the main cause of all their sighs and groans, from the first quickening breath of the Spirit of God in their hearts until they lay down their bodies in dust. But it may be asked, what experience could the blessed Lord have had of sin. Seeing he was perfectly free from it both in body and soul? It is indeed a most certain and a most blessed truth that our gracious Redeemer "knew no sin;" 2 Corinthians 5:21; was "a lamb without blemish and without spot;" 1 Peter 1:19; and was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Hebrews 7:26. Still, sin was so imputed to him, and the Lord so "laid on him the iniquities of us all," that he felt them just as if they had been his own. "He was made sin for us;" its guilt and burden were laid on his sacred head, and so became by imputation his, that it was as if he had committed the sins charged upon him.

Take the following illustration. View sin as a debt to the justice of God. Now, if you are a surety for another, and he cannot pay the debt, it becomes yours just as much as if you had yourself personally contracted it. The law makes no distinction between his debt and yours; and the creditor may sell the very bed from under you to pay the debt, just as if you were the original debtor. So the blessed Lord, by becoming Surety for his people, took upon him their sins, and thus made them his own. How else can we explain those expressions in the Psalms, which are evidently the language of his heart and lips, such as the following? "For innumerable evils have compassed me about; my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me." Psalms 40:12. Does not the Lord here speak of his iniquities taking hold upon him, so that under their weight and burden he could not look up, and that they were more in number than the hairs of his head?

2. With the burden and weight of sin comes the wrath of God into the sinner's conscience; and this is the most distressing feeling that can be well experienced out of hell. So the blessed Lord, when he took the burden and weight of sin, came under this wrath. This was "the horrible pit" into which he sank, Psalms 40:2, "the deep mire in which there was no standing," "the deep waters where the floods overflowed him." Psalms 69:2. This made him say, "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth. My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of your indignation and your wrath; for you have lifted me up and cast me down." Psalms 102:3-4; Psalms 102:9-10. None who read the word of truth with an enlightened eye can doubt that these Psalms refer to the blessed Lord, and that it is he who speaks in them.

3. Then there is the curse of the law, which peals such loud thunders, and sinks so deeply into the heart and conscience of the awakened sinner. But did not Jesus endure this too? Surely he did, both in body and soul, as the apostle declares, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written. Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." Galatians 3:13.

4. Then there are the hidings of God's countenance, the withdrawings of his presence, and his forsakings of the soul that still hangs upon him and cleaves to him. But cannot our gracious Lord here deeply sympathize with his people who are mourning and sighing under the hidings of God's countenance, for was not this the last bitter drop of the cup of suffering which he drank to the very dregs? Did heaven or earth ever hear so mournful a cry as when the darling Son of God, in the agony of his tortured soul, cried out, "My God, my God! why have you forsaken me?"

Thus, whatever in number or degree be the spiritual griefs and sorrows of the Lord's people; whatever convictions, burdens, sorrows, distresses, pangs of conscience, doubts, fears, and dismay under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the hidings of his face, and the withdrawings of the light of his countenance they may grieve and groan under. Jesus, their blessed Forerunner, experienced them all in the days of his flesh, and to a degree and extent infinitely beyond all human conception. Can any heart conceive, or any tongue express what the dear Redeemer experienced in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; when he thrice prayed that the cup might pass from him, and being in an agony, prayed more earnestly, so that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground? Might he not truly say, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow

like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Lamentations 1:12. An awakened sinner, under divine quickening, has to bear but the weight of his own sins; but Jesus had to bear the sins of millions. It is at best but a few drops of the wrath of, God, and that wrath as already appeased, that fall into a trembling sinner's conscience; but Jesus had to endure all the wrath of God due to millions of ransomed transgressors. It is but the distant peals of the law which sound in a convinced sinner's soul; but the whole storm burst upon the head of the Surety. In a little wrath God hides his face from his Zion for a moment; but in great wrath he hid his face from his dear Son. Thus, whatever be the spiritual sorrows and troubles of afflicted Zion, even though she be "tossed with tempest and not comforted," in all she has a Head who suffered infinitely more than all the collective members. They do but "fill up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ;" Colossians 1:24; but O how small is that measure of affliction compared with his! It was, then, his personal experience of these spiritual afflictions which makes the blessed Lord so sympathizing a High Priest at the right hand of God. Though now exalted to the heights of glory, he can still feel for his suffering saints here below. The garden of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, are still in his heart's remembrance, and all the tender pity and rich compassion of his soul melt towards his afflicted saints; for, His heart is touched with tenderness. His affections melt with love. But the gracious Lord can also sympathize with his saints under all their TEMPTATIONS. This is a deep mystery, but not more deep than blessed; and as it is pregnant with consolation to the tried and tempted children of God, we will attempt to unfold it to the best of our ability. The Holy Spirit expressly declares that our blessed Lord "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. This, then, we must accept as a most solemn and, as viewed by faith, a most blessed truth. Nor must we limit the language of the Holy Spirit, but as he has said "in all points," so must we receive it on the testimony of him who cannot lie. But as the word "temptations" has in the original two significations, including in its meaning "trials" as well as "temptations" properly so called, we will extend the sense of the term, and view our Lord's trials, and our Lord's temptations. The distinction between them is sufficiently evident. Trials may have God for their author, but not temptations, for we are expressly told that God tempts no man. James 1:13. Indeed, as temptation implies the presentation of sin to the mind, it would make God the Author of sin to make him the Author of temptation. But do we not read, it may be asked, that God "tempted Abraham?" Genesis 22:1. The word "tempted" there should be rendered "tried," for in Hebrew as well as Greek the same word means to tempt and to try. God did not tempt Abraham to sin, as Satan tempted Eve, or as he tempted David, but "tried" him, as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 11:17, whether his faith was genuine.

Thus our blessed Lord was tried, and tried by God himself; for he is "a stone, a tried stone," of God's own laying. Isaiah 28:16. When the Father provided him with a body in which to do his will, he became God's servant, as he speaks, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights." Isaiah 42:1. As a servant he yielded obedience, for he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Php 2:8. His obedience was a tried obedience. God tried it; men tried it; devils tried it; enemies tried it; friends tried it. The weakness and ignorance of his disciples; the treachery of Judas; the desertion and denial of Peter; the craft and malice of the Scribes and Pharisees; the unbelief and infidelity of the people; the sins by which he was surrounded; the sinless infirmities of the flesh and blood which he had assumed—as hunger, thirst, and weariness, the long journeyings, nightly watchings, the daily spectacle of sickness and

misery—all these, and a thousand other circumstances beyond our conception tried the blessed Lord during his sojourn here below. But he bore all that was laid upon him. The purity of his human nature, in which were no seeds of sin actual or original, the strength of his divine nature with which it was in union, and the power of the Holy Spirit, which rested on him without measure, all concurred to bring him through every trial, and give him victory over every foe. But by these trials he learned to sympathize with his tried people. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15. We may then freely go to him with our trials, may spread them before his face, as Hezekiah did the letter of Sennacherib in the temple, may feel a sweet persuasion that he sympathizes with us under our heavy burdens, and will alleviate them, or support us under them, or if they be not removed will sanctify them, and make them work for our spiritual and eternal good. Thus faith in the sympathy of our blessed Lord is wonderfully calculated to subdue fretfulness, murmuring, and self-pity, to teach us submission and resignation under afflictions, and to reconcile us to a path of sorrow and tribulation. It brings before our eyes the sufferings of the blessed Lord here below, the trials which he endured, and his holy meekness and submission under them when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. If we compare our sorrows and troubles with his—how light they seem! This works submission to them, and when we can look up in faith and love, and see the once suffering Lord now sympathizing with us under our afflictions, it makes even sorrow sweet. A conformity to the dying image of Jesus is hereby wrought into the soul, a fellowship given of his sufferings, a crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts, a deadness to the world, a mortification of the whole body of sin, a separation of heart and spirit from everything ungodly and evil, and a communion produced with the blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father.

Thus we may bless God for our afflictions and trials, our sicknesses, our bereavements, our losses and crosses, our vexations and disappointments, our persecutions, our being despised by the world and graceless professors, our doubts, fears, and exercises, our sighs and groans under a body of sin and death, and, in a word, for every footstep in the way of tribulation which brings us nearer to Jesus, and opens to us more and more of his love and blood, grace and glory, sympathy and compassion, and all that he is as a merciful and faithful High Priest, whom God has raised from the dead, and seated at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all. Ephesians 1:21-23.

Chapter 83

04.14. Blessing the People

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST C. Blessing the People

One important part of the ministry of the blessed Lord, as the great High Priest over the house of God, we have not yet touched upon. This is his blessing the people.

This, we know, was committed to the typical high priest under the law as one of the functions of his ministerial office. "Instruct Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing: 'May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.' This is how Aaron and his sons will designate the Israelites as my people, and I myself will bless them." Numbers 6:23-27 The chief season when the high priest blessed the people according to this formula was on the great day of atonement, when, after having carried the blood of the bullock and the goat into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it on and before the mercy-seat, he laid aside his linen garments, and, putting on the garments of glory and beauty, showed himself to the people who were praying outside. Luke 1:10. In all this there was a beautiful propriety. The high priest had two distinct sets of consecrated garments. One set was made wholly of linen, which he wore on the great day of atonement. This was simplicity and purity itself, and as such is elsewhere used as a type of the pure humanity of the Son of God in the flesh, as Ezekiel 9:2. Ezekiel 9:11. Daniel 10:5. The other set of consecrated garments was worn on days of high and great solemnity; and being made of gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, was called "golden," or "garments of glory and beauty." The linen garments, then, which the high priest wore when he offered the bullock and the goat, and took their blood into the most holy place, were not only typical of the pure and perfect human nature of the Lord Jesus, but of that nature in its state of humiliation on earth. Similarly, the garments of glory and beauty, such as the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue, with its hem adorned with bells of pure gold and pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen, and the ephod on the breast, with the twelve precious stones on which the names of the tribes were engraved, Exodus 39. typically and figuratively represented the glorified humanity of the blessed Lord, which he now wears at the right hand of the Father.

As, then, the high priest, when he had laid aside his linen garments, and assumed the garments of glory and beauty, blessed the people from the court of the tabernacle—so the Lord in his glorified humanity blesses his waiting people here below from the courts of bliss. In him, as the church's risen Head, all spiritual blessings are lodged—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3. He is the living Fountain whence all the streams flow to water his church here below. The ancient promise made to Abraham was, that "in his seed," that is, Christ, as the apostle explains the word, Galatians 3:16, "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." Every blessing, then, which the elect enjoy either for time or eternity, in providence or in grace, comes from him as their covenant Head. They are blessed in him as they are chosen, adopted, and accepted in him. Ephesians 1:4-6. Not to speak of his blessings in providence, though in these "he daily loads us with

benefits," Psalms 68:19, how unspeakable are his blessings in grace!

Look at the blessing of eternal life which hangs before the eyes of the poor way-worn pilgrim in this world of sin and sorrow, as the prize of his high calling, the prospect of which, at the end of his race, animates his drooping spirits—this rich and glorious crown, without which all others would cease to be blessings, is given in Christ. "And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." 1 John 5:11. This blessing the risen Lord bestows on his people when he first quickens their souls into spiritual life, for he is "the resurrection and the life," John 11:25, and "quickens whom he will;" John 5:21; and the life thus given he ever maintains, for his own words are, "Because I live you shall live also." John 14:19. As, then, he ever lives at God's right hand, for he says, "I am he who lives and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore;" Revelation 1:18; and again, "Seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them;" Hebrews 7:25; he sends down the blessing of eternal life into their soul. And this blessing of eternal life which he thus bestows has a sweet connection with the anointing which he received as the consecrated High Priest; for the droppings of that rich unction went down to the very skirts of his garments, and falls in regenerating grace upon the hearts of his people, like the dew of Hermon—"It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Psalms 133:2-3. How sweet to carry in the bosom the pledge and foretaste of eternal life, and to feel it to be the gift of God; Romans 6:23; stored up in Christ, who is himself "the true God and eternal life;" 1 John 5:20. ; manifested and brought to light in the Person of Jesus; 1 John 1:2; and firmly secured by covenant oath and everlasting promise. Psalms 21:2-4. Psalms 89:34-37. Titus 1:2. 1 John 2:25. From this ever-flowing and overflowing fountain of eternal life proceed all other spiritual blessings, such as—reconciliation to God by the blood of the Lamb; free and full justification by his imputed righteousness; deliverance from all condemnation, past, present, and to come; and, as a consequence of these glorious mercies, manifested pardon of sin; peace of conscience; fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ; revelations of his presence, power, loveliness, glory, and beauty; sips and tastes of his dying love; spiritual affections; heavenly desires; holy longings after conformity to his image, for grace and strength to imitate his example and walk in his footsteps, for power to do that which is pleasing in his sight, and to live to his praise—in a word, all that sweet and sacred communion with the blessed Lord which is the very life and power, sum and substance of all vital godliness; and without which all religion is but an empty form, a name, and a notion.

It is thus that the reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father is made experimentally known. He is seen, felt, and believed in as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; for he is walked in as the Way of access unto God; sought unto as the Truth, the knowledge of which makes free; and cleaved unto as the Life, from whom it was first received, and by whom it is ever maintained. Our blessed Lord was to be "a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec." It will be remembered that Melchizedec met Abraham returning from the conquest of the kings, and blessed him. Genesis 14:19. In the same way our great High Priest blesses the seed of Abraham; for "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;" Galatians 3:9; and as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they walk in his steps who "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Romans 4:3; Romans 4:12. But Melchizedec the type could only ask God to bless

Abraham. He could not himself confer the blessing; but Jesus, the antitype, our great Melchizedec, whose priesthood is after the power of an endless life, Hebrews 7:16, blesses his people, not by merely asking God to bless them, but by himself showering down blessings upon them, and by communicating to them out of his own fullness every grace which can sanctify as well as save. Even before his incarnation, when he appeared in human form, as if anticipating in appearance that flesh and blood which he should afterwards assume in reality, he had power to bless.

Thus we read that when Jacob wrestled with the angel—which was no created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, even the Son of God himself in human shape—he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." And in answer to his wrestling cry we read that "he blessed him there." Jacob knew that no created angel could bless him. He therefore said, when he had got the blessing, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Genesis 32:26-30. To this blessing Jacob afterward referred when, in blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, he said, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys." Genesis 48:16.

Thus, also, our gracious Lord, immediately before his ascension to heaven, as if in anticipation of the gifts and graces which he was to send down upon them when exalted to the right hand of the Father, "lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples;" and as if to show that he would still ever continue to bless them, "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven," even "while he blessed them," as if he were blessing them all the way up to heaven, even before he took possession of his mediatorial throne. Luke 24:50-51.

As, then, he sits in glory at the right hand of the Father, he sends down blessings upon his people. He blesses them "with the blessings of heaven from above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb, and unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Genesis 49:25-26. He holds all nature in his hands; the gold and the silver are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; his is the earth and the fullness thereof; all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; he holds the reins of government, doing according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What are you doing? He is the sun and shield of God’s people—their sun, ever to be their light; their shield, to be ever their defense. He gives grace and glory—grace here, glory hereafter. Psalms 84:11. He makes his strength perfect in their weakness, that they may glory in their infirmities; 2 Corinthians 12:9; nourishes and cherishes them, as being members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; Ephesians 5:29-30; and communicates to them more than heart can conceive or tongue express out of his own fullness; for it has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10. John 1:16. Colossians 1:19. He can see all the designs of their enemies, and defeat them; all the temptations of Satan, and overrule them; all his snares, and break them to pieces; all his enmity and malice, and can bruise him under their feet shortly. He can pity their case when bowed with grief and afflictions; can hear their sigh and cry out of the depths of trouble and sorrow; and can stretch forth his hand to deliver them from the worst of foes and the worst of fears. And what a matter this is of living, daily experience, so as to make the presence of Jesus at the right hand of the Father no mere doctrine seen in the letter of truth, but a very fountain of spiritual life in the heart. How continually, how, in deep trouble, almost unceasingly, is the poor, tried, tempted, and afflicted child of God, looking up to this merciful and faithful High Priest and begging of him to appear and bless his soul! This is all that he needs. For the Lord himself to bless him comprises every desire of his heart. One word, one look, one touch,

one manifestation of his love and blood, is all that he wants. But if he did not see him by the eye of faith at the right hand of the Father, and able to bless him with the blessing that makes rich and adds no sorrow with it, would his prayers, desires, tears, and supplications be so directed toward him? If, too, at times he has been blessed with a sweet sense of his presence and his love, he cannot rest satisfied without some fresh manifestation of these blessings to his soul. And how fully adapted and divinely qualified he is to communicate these rich blessings; for God, by exalting him to his own right hand, has "made him most blessed forever;" or as we read in the margin, "set him to be blessings." Psalms 21:6. He has "prevented him" (or, as the word means, anticipated him in his wishes and petitions) "with the blessings of goodness, and set a crown of pure gold upon his head." This is the reward of his sufferings, for "his glory is great in God's salvation," and therefore "honor and majesty has laid upon him." Psalms 21:5. And does he not deserve it all? Has he not "obtained eternal redemption for us"? Hebrews 9:12; and is he not "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"? 1 Corinthians 1:30. Is he not "the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes;" Romans 10:4; and "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him?" Hebrews 5:9.

How, then, can we doubt that he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him"? For what is there which he has not done for their salvation in his finished work? and what is there which he cannot do in the application of that finished work to their heart? For we need his present help as well as his present obedience. When the soul, then, sinks low into trouble or dejection; when troops of sins come to view, like so many gaunt spectres of the past; when innumerable backslidings, slips, and falls crowd in upon the conscience, bringing guilt and fear in their train, how the cast-down spirit will sometimes look at and ponder over the various cases of those sinners of every shape, and hue, and dye, whose salvation, without money and without price, is recorded in the word of truth. How it looks, for instance, at a sinning David, a blood-stained Manasseh, a dying thief, a returning prodigal, a weeping Mary Magdalene, a denying Peter, a persecuting Saul, a trembling jailer, the Jerusalem sinners who killed the Prince of life. And as it views these self-condemned, self-abhorred sinners, so freely accepted, so everlastingly saved, how it looks up to the Lord of life and glory that it may receive similar blessings out of his fullness.

It is in this and similar ways that communication is kept up with the risen and ascended Lord upon his throne of grace; and as he, in answer to prayer, from time to time drops down an encouraging word into the soul, each fresh discovery of his Person and work, of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and glory, raises up renewed actings of faith, strengthens a living hope, and draws forth every tender affection of the heart to flow unto and center in him. Seeing light in his light, and how rich and free his blessings are, it cries out with Jabez of old, "O that you would bless me indeed!" An "indeed" blessing is what the soul is seeking after which has ever felt the misery and bitterness of sin, and ever tasted the sweetness of God's salvation. And these "indeed" blessings are seen to be spiritual and eternal.

Compared with such blessings as these, it sees how vain and empty are all earthly things, what vain toys, what idle dreams, what passing shadows! It wonders at the folly of men in hunting after such vain shows, and spending time, health, money, life itself, in a pursuit of nothing but misery and destruction. Every passing death-bell that it hears, every corpse borne slowly along to the grave that it sees, impresses it with solemn feelings as to the state of those who live and die in their sins. Thus it learns more and more to contrast time with eternity, earth with heaven, sinners

with saints, and professors with possessors. By these things it is taught, with Baruch, not "to seek great things" for itself, Jeremiah 14:5, but real things—things which will outlast time, and fit it for eternity.

It is thus brought to care little for the opinion of men as to what is good or great, but much for what God has stamped his own approbation upon, such as a tender conscience, a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a humble mind, a separation from the world and everything worldly, submission to his holy will, a meek endurance of the cross, a conformity to Christ's suffering image, and a living to God's glory. Compared with spiritual blessings like these, it sees how vain and deceptive is a noisy profession, a presumptuous confidence, a sound creed in the letter of truth, without an experience of its life and power; and afraid of being deceived and deluded, as thousands are, it is made to prize the least testimony from the Lord's own lips that its heart is right before him.

Looking around then, as with freshly-enlightened eyes, it sees how the world is filled with sin and sorrow; how God's original curse on the earth has embittered every earthly good; how it has marred the nearest and dearest social relationships; how trial and affliction, losses, crosses, bereavements, vexations, and disappointments enter every home, and especially that where God is feared; how, amid these scenes of sorrow and trouble, all human help or hope is vain, that it is dying in a dying world, and must soon pass away from this time-state, where all is shadow—into eternity, where all is substance.

As, then, the gracious Lord is pleased to indulge it with some discovery of himself, shedding abroad a sweet sense of his goodness and mercy, atoning blood, and dying love, it is made to long more and more for the manifestation of those blessings which alone are to be found in him. For his blessings are not like the mere temporal mercies which we enjoy at his hands, all of which perish in the using, but are forever and ever; and when once given are never taken away. They thus become pledges and foretastes of eternal joys, for they are absolutely irreversible. When Isaac had once blessed Jacob in God's name, though the blessing had been obtained by deceit, yet having been once given, it could not be recalled. He said, therefore, to Esau, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." Genesis 27:33. So when the Lord has blessed his people with any of those spiritual blessings which are stored up in his inexhaustible fullness, these blessings are like himself, unchanging and unchangeable; for "he is in one mind and none can turn him;" "The same yesterday, today, and forever." Those whom he loves he loves to the end; and his gifts and calling are without repentance; Romans 11:29. As everlasting love is their unvarying, unceasing source, he never repents of having bestowed them. But these blessings have more than sweetness of their present communication. They stretch forward as well as reach backward; look into eternity to come, as well as from eternity past. By their communication and manifestation his people are made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light, for these blessings have a sweet sanctifying influence. Thus, believers in Jesus are said "to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" 1 Peter 1:8; and having a hope of seeing him as he is, to "purify themselves even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3. Spiritual blessings are not like mere doctrinal opinions, which often leave a man just where they found him—a slave to sin, self, Satan, and the world. They have a blessed sanctifying influence upon the heart. They prepare the soul for glory; they are pledges and foretastes of it, and are an enjoyment beforehand on earth of the delights of heaven. Thus, their effect is to separate the heart with its affections from the world; to subdue and crucify a worldly spirit; to mortify pride and covetousness; to cause the conscience to be tender and alive in the fear

of God; to make sin exceedingly sinful, its remembrance bitter, and its indulgence dreaded; to draw forth a spirit of prayer and supplication; to open up the scriptures in their spiritual meaning; to encourage holy meditation; to feed the soul with choice fruit out of the word of truth; to breathe into it that spirit of faith which gives life and feeling to every gracious movement Godwards, and in a word, to communicate, maintain, and keep alive that inward holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Can earth show a more blessed sight than a believer upon his knees before the throne of grace, looking up to the most blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father—and his sympathizing High Priest looking down upon him with love in his heart, pity in his eye, and blessings in his hand? These are, indeed, for the most part but rare seasons, and are often sadly broken through and interrupted by coldness, carnality, and death; but it is only in this way, however long the interval or dark the mind in the intermediate season, that fellowship is maintained with Jesus as the great High Priest over the house of God, and he experimentally made the soul’s all in all.

04.15. The Second Coming

The Second Coming

We have another view to take of our blessed Lord as having entered into the courts of bliss. He has gone there as his people's forerunner, as the apostle speaks, "Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the line of Melchizedek." Hebrews 6:20. How blessedly did the Lord comfort his sorrowing disciples when he said to them, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He has gone to take possession beforehand of his and their everlasting home; for he has ascended to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. He has, as it were, filled heaven with new beauty, new happiness, new glory. His glorious Deity shining through his spotless and glorified humanity illuminates heaven with a peculiar glory, for he has fought the fight and won the day; he has fulfilled all the types and figures of the Old Testament, accomplished the purposes of the everlasting covenant; glorified God by the highest obedience that could have been yielded to his will—and having finished the work which the Father gave him to do, has returned triumphantly to the courts of bliss to receive the reward of his humiliation, sufferings, and death. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. His glorious Person as Immanuel has become the object of heaven's praise and adoration. The elect angels, whom he has confirmed in their standing, adore him as God-man; and the spirits of just men made perfect worship him in company with the angelic host.

What a view had holy John of heaven's glorious worship, Rev. 5. when he saw the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb; when he heard their new song and the voice of many angels round about the throne, and all saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Revelation 5:12. Heaven itself is waiting for the completion of the great mystery of godliness, when the whole church shall be assembled around the throne; when the marriage supper of the Lamb shall come; when the top-stone shall be brought forth by the hands of the spiritual Zerubbabel, with shoutings of—Grace, Grace unto it! Earth itself is groaning under the weight of sin and sorrow; and "the souls of those under the altar who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, are crying with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Revelation 6:9-10. No, the very signs of the times themselves are all proclaiming as with one voice that it cannot be long before the Lord will come a second time without sin unto salvation. And this brings us to the last point, with which we shall close our "Meditations on the Blessed Redeemer," his second coming, and the posture in which his people should be found, as looking for and expecting his return. When the Lord ascended up on high in the sight of his disciples, "they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up," their faith, hope and love all following him up the shining way; and as they thus viewed his glorious track, they seemed to lose sight of every other consideration. But, "behold, two men," two angelic beings in human shape, stood by them in white apparel, who said, "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This

same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. It was as if the angels said to them, "Jesus, your Master, your Head, your King, is not gone away from you forever. He will one day, according to his own promise, return in the same glorious Person as that in which he is gone up, in the same divine and human nature, and in the clouds of heaven which have now received him out of your sight. For this, meanwhile, look, watch, wait, and pray." From that moment, therefore, the Lord's return has always been a leading feature in the faith of the church of Christ, especially in the early period of her history. Thus we find Peter at once proclaiming it, "And he will send Jesus your Messiah to you again. For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his prophets." Acts 3:20-21. That it ever after formed a prominent point in the teaching and testimony of the apostles is plain from the inspired epistles of the New Testament, in which it is continually brought forward and alluded to. Thus, not to quote numberless passages, the apostle reminds the Thessalonians how "they had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven;" 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, and seeks to comfort them under their persecutions with the prospect of eternal rest, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, as well as to console them under their bereavements with the sweet persuasion that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." 1 Thessalonians 4:14. To be looking, then, and waiting for the Lord's second coming was the especial hope and consolation of the saints of old. By this prospect their hearts were comforted when they could look forward to that glory which would be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ, for they knew that when he would come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, he would be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all those who believe. Matthew 16:27. 1 Peter 1:7. 2 Thessalonians 1:10. This faith and expectation had a most blessed and enduring influence on their hearts and lives. It made them feel that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; and that their Master having promised to return, and it being uncertain at what watch of the night he would come, they should "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." Luke 12:35-36

We shall not enter upon the question of the nature and circumstances of the Lord's return, or its immediate consequences, as these are disputed points, and we wish to consider the subject more with a view to edification than to controversy. It is sufficient for us to believe that Jesus will come again with all his saints, and that when he comes it will be to the salvation and joy of his friends, and the destruction and confusion of his enemies. We shall, therefore, rather address ourselves to the consideration of the posture in which the church should stand as waiting her Lord's return.

During our present time-state we are to be conformed to the suffering image of Christ, and to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body. Our present life is to be one of trial, affliction, and temptation, that we may walk in the footsteps of our blessed Lord. Luke 22:28. We are to be persecuted by the world, despised by professors, assailed and tempted by Satan, and walk in a path of tribulation and sorrow, that we may, as members of his mystical body, fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Colossians 1:24. We are to drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism; for "it is a faithful

saying. If we are dead with him, we shall also live with him;" 2 Timothy 2:11, and "we must suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:17. The world knew him not, and it is to know us not. It hated and despised him, and it will hate and despise us; for "the servant is not greater than his Lord; and if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." Matthew 10:25. John 15:18-19. But to suffer will not always be the portion of the church of God.

There is a day coming when Zion shall be raised from the dust; when she shall put on her beautiful garments; when the marriage of the Lamb shall come, and to his bride and spouse it shall be granted that she shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, and shall sit down with her Head and Husband at the marriage supper. Isaiah 52:1-2. Revelation 19:7-9. Then those who have been partakers of the sufferings of Christ shall be partakers of his glory. Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then those who be wise shall shine as the brightness of the skies, and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever. Daniel 12:3. Then the mystery of God will be finished, and there will be time no longer, for all the former things of this miserable time-state shall have passed away. Revelation 10:6-7. Revelation 21:4

Now what should be the posture of the church as looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God? and what influence should this blessed truth have upon our hearts and lives?

1. First, it should reconcile us to afflictions, as feeling with the apostle that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17. And again, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Weighed in such a balance, what are all our afflictions, though seemingly so heavy? Are they not light indeed, if they are conforming us to the suffering image of Christ, and preparing us for an eternal weight of glory?

2. It should raise up and draw forth heavenly desires and spiritual affections, as the apostle says, "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Php 3:20. Believers are called upon "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind," Romans 12:2. and to "set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" Colossians 3:2. they are said to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts; Galatians 5:24. and by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. Romans 8:13. It is true that we are severely hindered in running the race set before us, for we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, having to carry about with us a body of sin and death, which is our constant grief and plague; and the flesh lusting against the spirit, as well as the spirit against the flesh, we cannot do the things that we would. Romans 7:24. 2 Corinthians 5:4. Galatians 5:17.

We are beset, too, by innumerable temptations, have often to mourn over our darkness, deadness, coldness, and unbelief—as well as on account of the hidings of the Lord’s face, and the absence of that blessed Comforter who alone can console the cast-down spirit. Still, though in themselves grievous hindrances, spears in our side and thorns in our eyes, these things do not utterly quench that prevailing bent of the renewed heart to look up and look forward to a brighter day, when tears shall be wiped from off all faces.

As, then, a view of the glory of Christ is obtained, and his coming again is realized by a living faith, the soul looks beyond this time-state, and all the cares and sorrows of this valley of tears, to that glorious day when it shall be perfectly conformed to the glorified image of Christ, and never more sin against him. At his second coming he will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Php 3:21. And "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:54-55

Now, if these things are so, if Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, and has promised that he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also, John 14:3, will not this heavenly truth, if received into a believing heart, exercise a gracious influence upon our daily walk and life? Such, at least, is John's testimony, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And he who has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure." 1 John 3:2-3.

If we are led by divine teaching to see and feel that this present world is an evil world, from which Christ came to deliver us by giving himself for our sins, Galatians 1:4, and as such is under the wrath and curse of God; if we feel everything in it marred by sin and sorrow, and have a good hope through grace that when the Lord appears we shall appear with him in glory—will not this separate us in heart and spirit from the world, and lead us, with God's help and blessing, to walk as becomes the gospel, and to speak and act as a peculiar people, zealous of good works? But taking a general view of the professing church, can we say that such is its experience or its walk? The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are sleeping and slumbering; and a cold, lukewarm profession is everywhere prevalent. Error abounds on every side; strife and division widely prevail; and we seem fallen upon those last days when perilous times were to come. We cannot, indeed, marvel that the world is what it ever was—a foe to God and godliness, buried in carnality and death, ignorant of its misery and ruin, and unconcerned at the dreadful judgment that is awaiting it, and almost ready to burst upon it. But we may justly wonder that the church of Christ, which professes to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, should be sunk so low, and manifest so little of the life and power of vital godliness. Yet this is only what we are led to expect from the word of truth. The Lord himself said. "When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. and, "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold." Matthew 24:12. Thus, instead of expecting that the world will gradually get better and better, as men idly dream, or that bright and glorious days are awaiting the professing church, we may rather expect that things will get gradually worse and worse with both, until he comes who shall come, and will not tarry. But come when he will, come when he may, it shall be well with the righteous. Unto those who fear his name the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings; and to those who look for him the Lord shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation.

Here, then, we close our "Meditations upon the Blessed Redeemer;" and can only lament that our views of this most glorious subject have been so dim, and our expression of them so faint and feeble. But such as they are, we commend them to the God of all grace; and if they have been or should be in any way blessed to the spiritual profit of his people, to Him and to Him alone be ascribed all the glory!

Chapter 85

05.00. Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

J.C. Philpot Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST THE NATURE OF THE REDEEMER'S HUMANITY THE REDEEMER'S HUMILIATION THE DEATH OF THE CROSS THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS AND DEATH THE BURIAL THE UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST THE RESURRECTION THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER'S RESURRECTION THE ASCENSION

KING OF KINGS A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - His All-Preveiling Intercession A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - His Sympathy and Compassion A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - Blessing the People THE SECOND COMING

05.01. The Knowledge of Christ

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST By J.C.Philpot Chapter One from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

In that wondrous prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father on the eve of his sufferings and death, there is a declaration which demands of all who fear God the deepest and most attentive consideration. It is this: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3) These words are often incorrectly quoted, by which much of their force and meaning is lost, "And this is life eternal, to know thee." But the Lord's words are, "that they might know thee." In the original the article stands before "life eternal," so that the meaning of the whole passage is, "And this is the life eternal which he has to give, that they whom thou hast given him may know thee." He thus explains what this eternal life is, and that it is given to the objects of his Father's love and choice, that they, and they only, might have the inward and unfailing possession of it in time and for eternity. In the preceding verse the blessed Lord had told his heavenly Father that he had "given him power over all flesh," for this express purpose, "that he should give eternal life to as many as God had given him." But for the instruction of the Church of God for all time, that she might clearly understand and know what this eternal life is which he has to bestow, and that on a matter so vital, so essential, no mistake might be made, he graciously adds the explanation to which we have already referred. By this plain and decisive declaration, he would for ever show that the eternal life which he has to give is no visionary, imaginary, dim, and dreamy heaven; no mere deliverance at death from illness, pain, and suffering; no narrow escape from hell, just at the last gasp; no reward of merit, or purchase of a deathbed repentance; no fruit of juggling ceremonies or absolving priests, got in the very article of dissolution, by a drop of oil or a little bread and wine; no entrance for unregenerate souls into a paradise of unknown bliss, of which on earth there had been no foretaste, and for which no previous meetness or spiritual preparedness had been inwardly wrought. All such carnal views of heaven, all such natural notions of a state of happiness after death of deceivers and deceived, the blessed Lord at once and for ever cast out by declaring with his own lips of truth and grace that the eternal life which he had to bestow consisted in two things: the knowledge of the only true God and the knowledge of himself as the sent of the Father. The importance and significance of this declaration it is impossible to overstate. Its infinite weight is determined by eternal life being laid in the opposite scale; its immeasurable breadth by the commencement of heaven dating from a life on earth. For eternal life begins below, to be consummated above; is sown in grace, to be harvested in glory. Thus Enoch walked with God before he was translated; Abraham was the friend of God; and Moses saw the Lord face to face. These and all the Old Testament saints "desired a heavenly country" before they reached it. Hebrews 11:16.) But how could they desire a country of which they had no knowledge, foretaste, or enjoyment? Can we desire that of which we know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, enjoy nothing? "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," is the experience of every soul that by the letting down of

heaven upon earth finds earth itself the very portal of heaven. But how can it know there is a God in heaven, unless it has found that God on earth; or desire none beside him even here below, unless here below it has felt and known his love? But it is not our purpose to open or enlarge upon this declaration of the blessed Lord in its general bearings, or as comprehending the whole of the important truth couched therein. The part which rests with weight upon our own mind at this present moment is that which places the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ on the same level with the knowledge of the only true God. How deep, then, how mysterious, and yet how blessed must that knowledge be to obtain, to possess, to enjoy which is to be put into possession, whilst here below, of life everlasting. Science, learning, knowledge, general or special, mental ability, mechanical skill, political wisdom, intellectual refinement, and every attainment which, in a state of high civilisation, elevates men above the slaves of drunkenness and debauchery, are well for time. Who can despise modern wonders of science and skill, though he that fears God and trembles at his word may call to mind the woes denounced against ancient Tyre for her riches and her pride, (Ezekiel 26:1-21; Ezekiel 27:1-36; Ezekiel 38:1-23 and may see with fear that what she was England is, and that the same sins may call down the same doom. But what are all the attainments of science, all the wonders of art, all the triumphs of engineering skill for eternity'? Yes; were all the science and art, all the skill, wealth, and power, now divided among thousands. concentrated in one individual, what would the whole collective array be compared with one grain of grace, one ray of divine teaching, one drop of atoning blood in the conscience, or one gleam of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost? If, then, this spiritual and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ whom God hath sent is a free gift, and yet is only bestowed upon those whom the Father has given to his dear Son, how precious the possession, but O how exclusive the boon! How as with a two-edged sword this word out of the mouth of the Son of God (Revelation 1:16) cuts both ways; how, as a key worn on his shoulder and wielded by his divine hand, it shuts as well as opens; how, whilst with one hand it raises millions to hope and heaven, with the other it sinks millions into despair and hell. As a healing word from the Lord's lips it brings rest and peace to prayerful hearts, wounded consciences, and contrite spirits; but, as a word of truth and righteousness it for ever seals the doom of the ignorant and unbelieving, the self-confident and the selfrighteous, the dead in sin and the dead in profession. As all true Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and man, this spiritual, saving knowledge of his Person and work, his love and grace, his blood and righteousness, divides itself into two branches: a gracious acquaintance with his Deity as the eternal Son of God, and gracious knowledge of his humanity as the Son of man. As we have reason to believe that what we were enabled to write upon the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord has been received with a measure of acceptance by those who know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we have felt encouraged now to bring before them some reflections on the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer. To know him as God, to know him as man, to know him as God-man, and this by a divine revelation of his glorious Person, blood, and love to our souls - this is, indeed, to have eternal life in our breasts. Nor can he be savingly known in any other way but by divine and special revelation. "For 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." (Matthew 11:27) The Apostle, therefore prays for the saints at Ephesus, that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." (Ephesians 1:17-18). He prayed for the same blessing for them as he had enjoyed for himself, as he speaks, "But when it

pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." (Galatians 1:15-16) He knew, therefore, in himself, in his own blessed and happy experience, what it was to be "filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" (Colossians 1:9) and to be blessed with "all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment (or knowledge) of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:2-3) Thus he travailed in birth again for the Galatians until "Christ was formed in them;(Galatians 4:19) and prayed for the Ephesians, that "Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith." (Ephesians 3:17) He speaks also of their having "learned Christ," "heard of Christ," and "been taught of Christ," Ephesians 4:20-21 all which expressions point to a divine discovery of his Person and work to the heart. The blessed Lord also assured his sorrowing disciples that he would "come to them," and that they should "see" him, and "live" upon him; that they should "know that he was in them," and that he would "manifest himself to them and make his abode with them." (John 14:18-23) Nor were these blessings and favours limited to the Lord’s own immediate disciples. As "the precious ointment which was poured upon the head" of our great High Priest "went down to the skirts of his garments," (Psalms 133:2) so there is "an anointing which teacheth" the lowest and least of the members of the mystical body of Christ "of all things, and is truth. and no lie." (1 John 2:27) By this unction from above every one that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Christ; (John 6:45) and knoweth for "himself that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." (1 John 5:20) If, then, we are favoured with this teaching, and "a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven," (John 3:27) we shall see by the eyes of our enlightened understanding "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," and what we thus see we shall believe, love, and adore. Should we not, then. with all holy awe and godly reverence, seek to approach this mystery of wisdom, power and love’? for all salvation and all happiness, as well as all grace and glory, are wrapped up in it. Right views are indispensable to a right faith, and a right faith is indispensable to salvation. To stumble at the foundation is, concerning faith, to make shipwreck altogether; for as Immanuel, God with us, is the grand Object of faith, to err in views of his eternal Deity, or to err in views of his sacred humanity. is alike destructive. There are points of truth which are not fundamental, though erroneous views on any one point must lead to God-dishonouring consequences in strict proportion to its importance and magnitude; but there are certain foundation truths to err concerning which is to insure for the erroneous and the unbelieving the blackness of darkness for ever.

05.02. The Nature of the Redeemer's Humanity

THE NATURE OF THE REDEEMER’S HUMANITY Chapter Two from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

To glorify his dear Son has from all eternity been the purpose of the Father; and both in the plan and in the execution has he manifested the depths of his infinite wisdom, power and love. That the eternal Son of God should take into intimate and indissoluble union with his divine Person the flesh and the blood of the children, that in that nature he might manifest the riches of the sovereign grace, the heights and depths of the everlasting love, and the fullness of the uncreated glory of a Triune Jehovah, has been from all eternity the determinate counsel and purpose of the great and glorious self-existent I AM; and all creation, all providence, and all events and circumstances of time and space were originally and definitely arranged to carry into execution this original plan. Creation, with all its wonders of power and wisdom, was not necessary either for the happiness or the glory of the self-existent Jehovah. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had, from all eternity, that holy, intimate union and intercommunion with each other, that mutual love and ineffable fellowship of three distinct Persons and yet but one God, which creation could neither augment nor impair. Time, with all its incidents, is but a moment-, space, with all its dimensions, is but a speck, compared with the existence of a God who inhabiteth eternity, and therefore filleth all time and all space. That a self-existent God should be amply sufficient for his own happiness and his own glory is a truth as self-evident to a believing heart as the very existence of God himself. But it pleased the sacred Triune Jehovah that there should be an external manifestation of his heavenly glory; and this was to be accomplished by the incarnation of the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity. The Father, therefore, prepared him a body, which in due time he should assume. Thus addressing his heavenly Father, he says, "A body has, thou prepared me." (Hebrews 10:5) That he should take this prepared body into union with his divine Person was the eternal will of God; so that when the appointed time arrived for the decree to be accomplished, the eternal Son could and did come forth from the bosom of the Father with these words upon his lips, -Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me (the volume of God’s eternal decrees), to do thy will, 0 God." (Hebrews 10:7) Now, the word of truth declares that "God manifest in the flesh" is "the great mystery of godliness." (1 Timothy 3:16) Therefore, without an experimental knowledge of this great mystery there can be no godliness in heart, lip, or life; and if no godliness no salvation, unless we mean to open the gates of bliss to the ungodly, who "shall not stand in the judgment;" (Psalms 1:5) and to count for nothing that .. "ungodliness" against which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven." (Romans 1:18) It is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone "maketh free;" and it is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone sanctifies as well as liberates: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17:17) How important, then, how allessential to know the truth for ourselves, in our own hearts and consciences, by divine teaching and divine testimony, that, set free from bondage, darkness, ignorance, and error, liberated into the blessed enjoyment of the love and mercy of God, and sanctified by his Spirit and grace, we may walk before him in the light of his countenance. And as in the Person of the incarnate Son of God "are

hid all the treasures of wisdom-and knowledge." how blessed is it to look up by faith to him at the right hand of the Father, and to receive out of his fullness those communications of wisdom and grace which not only enlighten us with the light of the living, but cause us to be partakers of his holiness, and thus make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. As thus taught and blessed, we desire to approach this solemn subject, and to look with the eyes of an enlightened understanding and of a believing heart at the mystery of an incarnate God. And if Moses at God's command put off his shoes from off his feet, when he looked at the burning bush. for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, (Exodus 3:5) much more should we, when we look on the mystery of God made manifest in the flesh. of which the burning bush was but a type, put off the shoes of carnal reason from off our feet. The sacred humanity of the blessed Lord consists of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, taken at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operation and influence of the Holy Ghost. This is very evident from the language of the angel to the Virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) 1. The first thing to be borne in mind is, that it was a real and substantial human nature, consisting of a real human body and a real human soul, both of which were assumed at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin. It was necessary that the same nature should be taken which had sinned, or there could have been no redemption or reconciliation of that nature, or of those that wore that nature. Thus the apostle argues, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" (Hebrews 2:16) implying, that if fallen angels had to be redeemed and reconciled, the Son of God must have taken angelic nature; but as man had to be redeemed, he assumed human nature. It was not, then, a shadowy form which the son of God assumed in the womb of the Virgin, as he had appeared in human shape before his incarnation to Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, but a real human nature, as real, as substantial as our own. Thus the Son of God "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" (Php 2:7) "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" (John 1:14) "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh-," (Romans 8:3) "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." (Hebrews 2:14) These Scripture testimonies abundantly show that the Son of God assumed a real human nature, but not a fallen, peccable, mortal nature. He was "made flesh," therefore real flesh; "in the likeness of sinful flesh," therefore not in the reality of sinful flesh. He took flesh of the Virgin, or he could not have been the promised "seed of the woman," which was to bruise the serpent's head; (Genesis 3:15) or of "the seed of Abraham," to which the promise was especially made, (Galatians 3:16) and from whom the Virgin Mary was lineally descended. And this nature he so assumed, or to use a scriptural expression, so "took hold of," (Hebrews 2:16, marg.,) that it became his own nature as much as his divine nature is his own. It was not assumed, as a garment, to be laid aside after redemption's work was done, but was taken into indissoluble union with his divine Person. Nor did his death on the cross dissolve this union, for though body and soul were parted, and his immortal, incorruptible body lay in the grave, his soul was in paradise, in indissoluble union with his Deity. Thus, as each of us is really and truly man, by human nature being so personally and individually appropriated by us as our own subsistence, that it is as much ours as if there were no other partaker of it on earth but ourselves; so the Son of God, by assuming that nature which is common to all men, (therefore called "the flesh and blood of the children,") made it his own as much as ours is our own nature. He is,

therefore, really and truly "the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) 2. , The next thing to be believed in and held fast is, that this humanity was not a person, but a nature. This point may not seem at the first glance of deep and signal importance; but as all God's ways and works are stamped with infinite wisdom, it will be seen, on deeper reflection, that it involves matters of the greatest magnitude - of the richest grace and the highest glory. For look at the consequences which would necessarily follow, were the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord a person and not a nature. Were it a person, the Lord Jesus Christ would be two Persons, one Person as God, and another Person as man, and thus would be two distinct individuals. But being a nature, which had of itself no distinct individuality, but was assumed at the very instant of its conception into union with his divine Person, the Lord Jesus is still but one Person, though he possesses two distinct natures. The angel, therefore called it "that holy thing" i.e., that holy nature, that holy flesh, that holy substance - a "thing," because it had a real substance, "holy," because not begotten by natural generation, but sanctified in the moment of conception by the Holy Ghost, so as to be intrinsically holy, impeccable, immortal - capable of dying, but not tainted with the seeds of sickness or death. It was not a body like ours, "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;"(Psalms 51:5) but was begotten by a divine and supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, and was therefore "holy," not relatively, and partially, as we, but really, thoroughly, and intrinsically holy; "harmless," or as the word might be rendered, "free from all ill;" "undefiled" with any taint of corruption in body or soul, original or actual, in any seed, inclination, desire, feeling, or movement of or toward it; "separate from sinners" in its conception and formation, in every thought, word, or deed, so that it was as separate from sin, and sin as separate from it, when on earth as it is now in the presence of God; "and made higher than the heavens," by the exaltation of that human nature to the throne of glory; higher than the visible heavens, for what is the glory of sun, moon, or stars to the glory of the sacred humanity of Christ in the courts of heaven? and higher too than the invisible heavens, for in his human nature as the God-man, he is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Hebrews 7:26; Ephesians 1:20-22). Among the heresies and errors which pestered the early church, was the Nestorian heresy, which asserted that Christ's human nature was a Person, and thus made two persons in the Lord, and the Eutychian, which declared that there was but one nature, the humanity of Christ being absorbed into his divinity. Against both these errors the Athanasian Creed, that sound and admirable compendium and bulwark of divine truth, draws its two-edged sword: "Who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the Manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." The Nestorian heresy is cut to pieces by the declaration that "he is not two," (i.e. persons,) but one Christ; and the Eutychian by the words, "one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person." But consider the blessings that are connected with and flow out of this heavenly truth. The glory and beauty of this mystery, it is true, can only be seen and known by faith; for faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," alone gives to these divine realities a substantial existence in the believer's heart. But looking by faith into this heavenly mystery, we may see in the two points we have thus far touched upon signal beauty and blessedness. The human nature which the blessed Lord assumed into union with his divine Person hungered, thIrsted, was weary, wept, sighed, groaned, sweat drops of blood, agonised in the garden and on the cross, was tried, deserted, tempted,

buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and, by a voluntary act, died. Had it not been a real human nature, the sufferings and sorrows of the holy soul, the pains and agonies of the sacred body, the obedience rendered, the blood shed, the sacrifice offered, the life laid down would not have been real, at least not really endured and offered in that very nature which was to be redeemed and reconciled. This is beautifully unfolded by the apostle: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:17-18) But again, were the human nature of our blessed Lord a Person, its acts would have been personally distinct, and the virtue and validity of Deity would not have been stamped upon them. We may thus illustrate the distinction between a nature and a person. Man and wife are mystically by marriage one flesh, but they still remain two distinct persons. Their acts, therefore, as persons, are individually distinct, and each is morally and really responsible for his or her individual actions. But were they so incorporated, like a grafted tree, as to become two natures and only one person, then the acts of the weaker nature, assuming for the moment that the female is the weaker, being the acts of one and the same person, would be stamped with all the strength and power of the stronger. Thus it is with the two natures of our blessed Lord. The human nature, though essentially and intrinsically holy, impeccable, incorruptible, and immortal, being the weaker and inferior nature, yet becomes stamped with all the worth, virtue and validity of the divine nature, because though there are two natures there is but one Person. Thus the grand, vital truth of the two natures yet but one Person of the glorious Immanuel is no mere dry or abstract doctrine, no speculative theory spun out of the brains of ancient fathers and learned theologians, but a blessed revelation of the wisdom and grace of God. 3. But much beauty and heavenly glory are wrapped up in the way in which that humanity was assumed. In the forming of this holy humanity we see the three Persons of the blessed Trinity engaged. The Father prepared the body, the Son assumed it, the Holy Ghost formed it. By the preparation of the body, as the act of the Father, we understand not its actual forming or framing in the womb of the Virgin, but its eternal designation, its preparation in the council, wisdom, and love of the Father. "A body hast thou prepared me;" (Hebrews 10:5) margin, "thou hast fitted me," literally, "put together joint by joint." To design, to contrive, to put together in his own eternal mind, not merely the framework of the Lord’s body and the constitution of his soul, but so to prepare it that, conceived in the womb of the sinful Virgin, it should not partake of her sin, of her fall, of her sickness, of her corruptibility - this was a greater wonder to appear in heaven than what holy John saw in vision. (Revelation 12:1) This body, thus prepared, the eternal Son of God assumed. By its assumption by the Son we understand not a creating act, as if the Son of God himself created the body to be assumed, but that ineffable act of condescension and grace whereby he took at one and the same instant of its formation, that sacred humanity, consisting of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, into union with his divine Person. We say "at one and the same instant," for we reject with abhorrence that vain figment, that idle tale, that pestilential and dangerous error of the preexistence of the human soul of the Lord Jesus. He was made in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted; (Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 4:15) and unless it can be proved that our soul was created before our body, and pre-existed ages before it, it cannot be shown that the human soul of the Lord Jesus had any such pre-existence. This human nature, prepared by God the Father, and assumed by God the Son, God the Holy Ghost formed. By the forming of that sacred humanity by the Holy Ghost we understand that act of miraculous

power whereby he overshadowed the Virgin by his operations and influence, and created, of her flesh, a holy human nature, which he sanctified and filled with grace in the very instant of its conception. 4. But this leads us onward to a fourth point, not less full of truth and blessedness. And we may put it in the form of a solemn question. How was it possible that in a nature so prepared, so assumed, and created, there could be any taint of sin, corruption, disease, or mortality? The Father contemplated that human nature which he had prepared for his dear Son from all eternity with ineffable complacency and delight. Could he who made man in his original creation so pure and innocent, creating him in his own image, after his own likeness, have prepared for his own Son, his onlybegotten, eternal Son, a body fallen, tainted, and corruptible, or even capable of corruption and decay? Could the Son, who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," assume into union with his eternal Godhead any other but a pure, holy, immortal, and incorruptible nature? It was not a body to decay with sickness and die of disease, and then be thrust away out of sight as the food of corruption, but taken into intimate union with Deity itself, as its immortal and incorruptible companion. Could the Holy Ghost form anything but a holy nature for the Son of God to assume into a union so close, intimate, and indissoluble? But it may not be unprofitable to examine these points of divine truth a little more closely. i. And first, as to the intrinsic holiness and purity of the Lord's human nature. It was essentially a nature impeccable, that is, not only not tainted with sin, but absolutely incapable of being so tainted. As we read of its being "impossible for God to lie," (Hebrews 6:18) so we may say of the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, it was impossible it could sin. The testimonies in the word of truth are most full and clear to the impeccability of the human nature of the blessed Lord. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin. " (2 Corinthians 5:21) He knew no sin; that is, in his own Person, in its taint or defilement or in any approach thereunto. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John 14:30) Satan, the prince of this world, came to tempt and to assail him; but he had nothing in him, as he has in us; that is, no internal material on which to work. If we may use such a figure, he had no ground within the walls on which to plant his infernal artillery. He might assault the blessed Lord from without, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," which had neither birth nor being, root nor stem, nor the possibility of any, in the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer. The late Dr. Cole, in a work published many years ago,* has exposed, in the most clear and forcible manner, the awful blasphemies of the once popular Edward Irving** on this point. Well may we call them "awful blasphemies," for Dr. Cole declares that he heard with his own ears this poor, miserable, ranting orator, for he called his own sermons "Orations," term the holy humanity of the blessed Lord, "that sinful substance." The sacred beauty, the ineffable blessedness of that holy humanity mainly consisted in the Lord's being "a lamb without blemish and without spot," (1 Peter 1:19) as was typified by the paschal lamb, (Exodus 12:5) and indeed by every other ceremonial sacrifice. (Leviticus 22:19-24; Deuteronomy 15:21) We must never lose sight of the peculiar nature of the blessed Lord's humanity. The nature of Adam was peccable, that is, capable of sinning, because, though created pure, it was not generated by any supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. It was a pure created nature, but not a holy begotten nature. The two things are essentially distinct. Besides which, the humanity of Adam was a person, and therefore could fall; but the humanity of Jesus is a nature taken into union with his divine Person, and therefore could no more sin or fall away from Godhead than his Godhead, could sin or fall off from his manhood. ii. It was therefore incorruptible. The body of the blessed Redeemer lay three days and nights, according to the Jewish mode of

calculation, in the sepulchre, but it knew no corruption. As the apostle expressly declares, "He whom God raised again saw no corruption." (Acts 13:37) The sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus had no seeds in it of decay. Though a real body, like our own, though it ate and drank and slept as we do, not being under the original curse, nor involved in the Adam fall, it was not subject to sickness or corruption, as our body is. The voluntary death of the blessed Lord severed for a while body and soul; but the body was no more tainted with corruption in the sepulchre than the soul was tainted with sin in paradise. iii. This sacred humanity of the adorable Lord was therefore essentially immortal. The body of the Lord was capable of death; indeed, as dying was the main part of every sacrifice, it was taken that it might die. It did not die from inherent necessity, as our bodies die, which are essentially mortal, because involved in Adam's transgression; but it died by a voluntary act. This is most plain from the Lord's own words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18) It was not the pain of the cross, the nails driven through the hands and feet, the exhaustion of nature, or the agony of soul that killed', so to speak, the Lord Jesus. When he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do, so that he could say, "It is finished," "he bowed his head" - the head did not decline of itself, weighed down by death, but he himself, full of life and immortality, bowed it; and then, by a voluntary act, "gave up the ghost," or breathed out his life. We conclude with an extract from Dr. Cole's book: The awful and inevitable consequences of applying this term 'mortal' to the body of Christ. "if the body of Christ was 'mortal' in the unalterable meaning of that term. his death, as we have already hinted. was not voluntary but of necessity. He did not die of his own free will. but died, because, being a personal sinner. (tremble my soul at the thought!) he could not save himself from death! He had no power to 'lay down' his life. but was compelled to yield it up. because he had forfeited it by his own sins! He did not 'give his life a ransom for many-, but the just judgments of God took it from him for his own transgressions,: 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' (Ezekiel 18:4) "But is this the truth as it is in Jesus Christ? Is this the doctrine concerning the adorable Person of the Son of God that is revealed in the Word'! Is this the instruction which the Holy and Blessed Spirit seals upon the heart of the redeemed'? No. no! The scriptures declare. and those that have been brought to experience the benefits of the death of Christ know and believe that his death was not of necessity ' but a ftee and voluntary gift. How plainly does he declare. and how expressively describe this himself: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from ine, but I lay it down of myself. I have po wer to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' (John 10:11, John 10:18) His sacrifice is everywhere called 'a sacrifice of himself. a voluntary gift.' 'He offered up himself.' (Hebrews 7:27) 'By the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26) 'Who gave himself a ransom.' (1 Timothy 2:6) And so universally. But all these scriptures are flatly contradicted. all this cloud of testimonies is utterly nullified. if the body of Christ was 'mortal.' - *The True Signification of the English Adjective, -Mortal.- and the Awfully Erroneous Consequences of the Application of that Term to the Ever Immortal Body of Jesus Christ. briefly considered." By Henry Cole, London.

** 1792-1834. An exceedingly popular London preacher, who adopted strange and erroneous views.

Chapter 88

05.03. The Redeemer's Humiliation

THE REDEEMER’S HUMILIATION Chapter Three from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

In approaching the solemn subject of the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, as engaged in the work of redemption when here below, we desire to do so under the special teaching and unction of the Holy Ghost, not only that nothing erroneous, inconsistent, or unbecoming may escape our pen, and that what we write may be in the strictest harmony with the oracles of God and the experience of his saints, but that life, and power, and savour may attend our reflections to those believing hearts which may desire to walk with us in these fields of heavenly meditation To guide into all truth, to take of the things of Christ and to show them to his disciples, and thus glorify Jesus, is the especial work of the Holy Ghost. John 16:13-15 To have this divine teaching is to have "an unction from the Holy One whereby we know all things;" 1 John 2:20 and is to be blessed with that anointing which "teacheth of all things and is truth, and is no lie." 1 John 2:27 Prayer and supplication, reverent thoughts and feelings towards the sacred Majesty of heaven, inward prostration of spirit before his throne, submission of mind to the word of truth faith in living exercise upon the Person and work of the Son of God. hope anchoring within the veil, and love flowing forth to the adorable Redeemer, will all accompany this heavenly anointing. So unspeakably holy, so great, and so perfect is that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; one not made with hands, as the tabernacle in the wilderness, but prepared by God the Father, assumed by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Ghost, that we should as much dread to drop any word derogatory to or inconsistent with its grace and glory as the high priest under the law would have trembled to carry swine’s blood, or the broth of abominable things into the most holy place. The sacred humanity of his dear Son, as the temple of his Godhead, and as irradiated with the beams of his eternal glory, the eyes of the Father ever contemplate with ineffable complacency and delight. Nor was this tabernacle less glorious in his holy eyes who sees things as they really are not as they appear to man, even in Jesus’ deepest humiliation and shame, when he was "a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." When dogs compassed him, when the assembly of the wicked inclosed him, when they pierced his hands and feet, when He could tell all his bones as they hung stripped on the cross, when his enemies looked and stared upon him, parted his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture, Psalms 22:6; Psalms 22:16-18, he was as much delighted in by the Father, and was as glorious in his eyes as he now is at the right hand of his throne. He ever was from the hour of his incarnation, he ever will be the same Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, when he hung upon the cross, today as he sits at the right hand of God, and for ever in the eternity of his kingdom, power, and glory. May we, then, who believe in his name, and cleave to him with purpose of heart, as beholding the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, feel such a sacred communion with him in his suffering humanity that we may be able to say, with holy John, in the flowing forth of faith and affection, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3 The foundation of this sacred mystery was laid in the eternal purposes of God, and determined

by a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The creation of this lower world, and indeed we may say, of the higher world of bright, angelic beings, was but a first step to the bringing to light of these hidden purposes of Jehovah. When he formed man in his own likeness, it was not merely after his moral image, Ephesians 4:24 Colossians 3:10 but after the likeness of that man who was set up in the mind of God from everlasting, or ever the earth was. Proverbs 8:23 It was utterly impossible that a holy God could create a sinful man. He, therefore, made man upright, but able to fall. During the period of man's innocency the promises of the covenant of grace, so to speak, slept. They were in the bosom of the covenant, ready to appear, but were not yet needed. But immediately that man sinned and fell, -as soon as Justice, which, as the revelation of the intrinsic holiness of Jehovah, had the first claim to speak, had pronounced sentence on the head of the guilty criminals, mercy, as already laid up in the covenant of grace, stepped in with the first promise which issued from the lips of a sin-pardoning God, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Here was the first intimation of the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The bruiser of the serpent's head was to be of the seed of the woman; and the sufferings of the sacred humanity to be assumed of the woman were at the same moment foreshadowed in the declaration that the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel. As a further development of the sacred mystery of the Slaughtered Lamb, the gracious Lord then instituted Worship by sacrifice, for it is evident from Abel's offering "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, which he doubtless burned on the altar, in strict accordance with the Mosaic ritual afterwards appointed, Numbers 18:17 that the Lord then instituted the rite of sacrifice, and himself clothed our first parents with the skins of the sacrificed victims as emblematic of the righteousness of the slain Lamb of God, who was thus revealed to their faith. Let us not think that these solemn transactions in the garden of Eden were a sudden thought in the mind of God - an expedient then and there for the first time devised to patch up the fall. The covenant of grace between the three Persons of the sacred Trinity was entered into with a foreview of the fall; and therefore the blessed Lord is called the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" Revelation 13:8 It is, indeed, derogatory to the character of him who "declareth the end from the beginning," Isaiah 46:10 who "looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven," Job 28:24 to think that the Adam fall took him, so to speak by surprise, was an unlooked-for unexpected event, of which there had been no foresight, and for which there had been made no provision. Far from our mind be such low, grovelling thoughts of the great and glorious self-existent I AM. Such views would root up the very foundations of our faith in his omniscience and omnipotence If God did not foresee the fall, an event charged with the eternal destiny of millions, what minor circumstance can he foresee now? If God did not provide a remedy for the fall as foreseen, where is his wisdom as well as his prescience of the circumstances whereby we are at present surrounded? Such a blind God groping, as it were for a remedy amidst the ruins of the fall, which he never foresaw, is worse than a heathen idol. At any rate it is not the God of the Bible it is not the God whom living souls believe in, worship, and adore. They admire with holy reverence his eternal foresight, and bow with submission before his fixed decrees; they adore his sovereignty in the election of the vessels of mercy and the rejection of the vessels of wrath; and when favoured with a sip of his love, bless his holy name for having loved them with an everlasting love from before the foundation of the world. If those foundations of our most holy faith be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Psalms 11:3 But blessed be God, his prescience and his providence, his wisdom and his grace, his mercy and his love, are all from everlasting to everlasting, secured by a

covenant ordered in all things and sure, fixed by firm decree and ratified by his word and by his oath, two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie. Hebrews 6:18 In this everlasting covenant it was appointed that the Son of God, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, should take our nature into union with his own divine Person, that he might offer it as a sacrifice for the sins of his elect people, and thus redeem them from all the consequences of the fall, and reconcile them unto God. We have already shown that this sacred humanity of our adorable Lord was a real human body, and a real human soul, taken at one and the same instant into union with the divine Person of the Son of God, and that it was essentially impeccable and immortal. We have, with God's blessing, in pursuance of our sacred theme, and as a further opening up of "the great mystery of godliness. God manifest in the flesh," to show the work accomplished in that sacred humanity whilst here on earth in its state of humiliation and suffering. The first consideration is, what he became by this voluntary act of taking our nature into union with his divine Person. In opening up this part of our subject we shall tread closely in the footsteps of that portion of holy writ where the apostle Paul unfolds the sacred mystery of the humiliation of the blessed Lord. Php 2:5-8 1. He emptied himself of all those outward adjuncts of his glorious Person wherewith he had for ever shone as the eternal Son of the Father in the courts of heaven. We use the word "emptied himself," as being the literal translation of the word rendered in our version, "made himself of no reputation," but we do not mean thereby that he deprived himself of any one of the perfections of the divine nature. Not a single essential attribute of Deity was, or indeed could be in the least degree diminished by his assumption of our nature, for he could no more cease to be all that God is than he could cease to be God. But he emptied himself of them before the eyes of men laying aside their outward and visible manifestation. As an earthly king may lay aside for a while his regal state, and yet not cease to be a king, so the Son of God laid aside for a season those bright beams of his glory which would otherwise have shone forth too brightly and gloriously for human eyes to look upon; for no man can see God and live. Exodus 33:20. Besides which, there was a secret purpose in the mind of God, whose glory it is to conceal a thing as well as to reveal it, Proverbs 25:2, that the glorious person of his dear Son should be veiled from all eyes but those of faith. As, then, the sun is sometimes veiled in a mist, or by passing clouds, through which his light shines and his orb appears, though dimmed and shorn of those rays which the human eye cannot bear, so the Son of God veiled his diving glory by the tabernacle of the sacred humanity in which he dwelt. He is therefore said to have "tabernacled among us," as the word "dwelt" John 1:14 literally means; for as the Shechinah, or divine presence, dwelt in a cloud of glory, upon the mercy-seat, in the tabernacle erected in the wilderness, Leviticus 16:2, so that the most holy place needed not the light of the golden candlestick which illuminated the outer sancturary, and yet was veiled by the curtains of the tabernacle, 2 Samuel 7:2, so the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord was as a tabernacle to his divine nature, veiling it from the eyes of men, and yet by its indwelling presence filled with grace and glory. Thus, to common eyes, he had no form nor comeliness, was as a root out of a dry ground, was despised and rejected of men, and when they saw him there was no beauty in him that they should desire him. Isaiah 53:2. It is true that sparkles of his eternal Sonship and glorious Godhead shone through the vail of his humanity to believing eyes and hearts, for John says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14 And the Father not only outwardly, with a voice from heaven, twice declared that he was his beloved Son, Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5 but revealed him inwardly as such to the hearts of his disciples,

according to the Lord’s own testimony in the case of Peter Matthew 16:16-17 As long as he was in the world he was the light of the world, John 1:29 as the sun, however veiled by clouds, is still the light of the earth. Though rejected and abhorred of men, he could, therefore, still look up to his heavenly Father, in the lowest depths of his humiliation, and speak in the language of filial love and confidence, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." Isaiah 49:5 2. The second act of humiliation of the eternal Son of God in assuming our nature was to take upon him the form of a servant. Some are born servants, as Abraham had three hundred and eighteen trained servants born in his house; Genesis 14:14 and some are made servants by others, either taken captive in war Deuteronomy 21:10 or bought with money. Leviticus 25:44-46 But the blessed Son of God took upon him the form of a servant, as a voluntary act of grace; and not only the form, but the reality, for the word form respects not only his outward appearance whilst here below. but his inward subjection of soul to God. Therefore the Father said of him, in the language of prophecy, "Behold my servant, whom 1 uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah 42:1 and unto him, "Thou art my servant, 0 Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Isaiah 49:3 He was formed from the womb to be God’s servant, Isaiah 49:5 so that he became a servant at the very instant that he took our nature into union with his own divine Person in the womb of the Virgin. Thus the apostle, quoting the words of Psalms 40:6, "Mine ears hast thou opened," (marg. "digged,") that is, "Hast made me thy willing servant," in allusion to Exodus 21:6, renders them, "A body hast thou prepared me;" for by taking the prepared body he became the willing servant of the Father, according to his own words, "I delight to do thy will, 0 my God." Psalms 40:8 3. By taking this prepared body, he was therefore made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man, that is, though his sacred humanity was intrinsically different from ours, as being holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, impeccable, and immortal, yet, in outward form and appearance, as in reality and truth, it perfectly resembled man’s. It ate, it drank, it slept, was weary, sweat drops of blood, endured pain of body and travail of soul. The early church was much pestered with what is called the Gnostic heresy, which, under the plausible assumption that real flesh was too gross and material a substance for the Son of God to assume, asserted that he took a shadowy, aerial form, in which there was no real flesh or blood, but only the appearance. It is against this heresy that holy John draws his sword, when he declares that "the Word was made flesh," and gives this as a test of saving truth and damnable error: "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 4:2-3 We must hold fast, then, to this vital truth, that it was real flesh and blood, though holy flesh and blood, that the Son of God assumed in the womb and offered on the tree. 4. Having, then, thus voluntarily assumed the form of a servant, the blessed Lord took that in which the very essence of servitude consists, obedience, and that not only to the word. but to the will of his heavenly Father. As this obedience forms our justifying righteousness and is a part of his finished work, it claims at our hands the most attentive, prayerful, and meditative consideration. Not, however, to dwell too long on this part of our subject, we may briefly name these five particulars as most marked and blessed features of the obedience of Jesus, whilst here in this state of humiliation. It was voluntary - delighted in - perfect - vicarious - and meritorious. i. It was voluntary. "Lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, 0 God," Hebrews 10:7 were, so to speak, the words in his heart and mouth when he came

out of the bosom of the Father to take flesh in the womb of the Virgin. There was no compulsion to bring him down from heaven to earth but the compulsion of love. As the love of Christ is said to constrain us not to live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again, 2 Corinthians 5:14 so, in a sense, we may say that the love of his people constrained him to live and die for them. They were his inheritance, the portion given him by his Father when he appointed him heir of all things, Hebrews 1:2 that they might be his eternal possession. Deuteronomy 32:9; Psalms 2:8 "Thine they were," he therefore meekly reminds his Father, "and thou gavest them me," adding, to show the unity of mind, will, purpose, and possession in the Father and the Son, "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." John 17:6; John 17:10 He, therefore, loved the church as his own bride, the spouse of his heart, whom he had betrothed unto himself as the gift of the Father before time was. Jeremiah 31:3 Hosea 2:19-20 Yes, before the mountains were settled; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, even then was he rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth that part which his saints should inhabit, and his delights were with the sons of men. Proverbs 8:25-26; Proverbs 8:31 When, then, in and by the fall, the church had become defiled and polluted beyond all thought and expression, when sunk beyond all other help and hope, the image of God in which she had been created, marred, and defaced, she an enemy and an alien by wicked works, the willing captive of sin and Satan, with hell opening its mouth to swallow her up in the same gulf of eternal woe where the fallen angels were already weltering then, even then, 0 miracle of grace! 0 wonder of unutterable love! the Son of God, by a purely voluntary act, yet in accordance with the will and counsel of the Father and the Holy Ghost, gave himself for her. This free, voluntary gift of himself, with all its blessed fruits and consequences, is beautifully unfolded by the apostle in that striking passage, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25-27 The forlorn, abject, helpless, and hopeless state of the church by the fall, and the pitiful compassion of the blessed Lord as her covenant Head and Husband, are beautifully set forth by the prophet Ezekiel, where he compares her to a poor, deserted, abandoned infant, cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born. No eye pitied it, no hand was stretched forth to do it any necessary office, or give it food, warmth or shelter. Abandoned to die, had not he who is "very pitiful, of tender mercy" pitied her, James 5:11 had not he whose love passeth knowledge loved her, into what an unfathomable depth of everlasting woe must she not have sunk! But in this very hour of need he passed by, and the time was the time of love, for he spread his skirt over her, and sware unto her, entered into a covenant with her, and she became his. But before she could pass into his arms, he had himself to wash away all her filth in the fountain of his own blood, to anoint her with the oil of his grace, and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Blessed Spirit, and to clothe her with broidered work, even the righteousness that he wrought for her by his own active and suffering obedience the three blessings of which the apostle speaks as the present portion of the saints of God: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Ezekiel 16:5-10 1 Corinthians 6:11 ii. It was an obedience that the blessed Lord delighted in. His own words, in the language of prophecy, as if in holy anticipation of his coming from heaven to earth, a thousand years before the incarnation, were, "I delight to do thy will, 0 my God." Psalms 40:8 Thus he could say, when faint and weary at

Samaria’s well, his love and delight in doing the will of God absorbing all feeling of the natural wants of the body, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." John 4:34 In this spirit also he said, a year before his actual sufferings and death, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with" - and 0 what a baptism of suffering and blood! of what agonies of body, and of what travail of soul! "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Luke 12:5- - as though his holy soul panted with intense desires for the overwhelming baptism of garden sorrows, and pressed forward to meet it, and the sufferings of the cross, as the fulfilment of his Father’s will. So, on his last journey out of Galilee towards Judea, "he went before," as if he would exceed his usual pace, and outstrip his lagging disciples, "ascending up to Jerusalem," where the will of his Father was to be obeyed, and the atoning sacrifice to be offered. Luke 13:33; Luke 19:28 Blessed Lord! would that we could follow thee in this holy example, and delight to do thy will as thou didst delight to do thy Father’s will. And such surely would be our desire and delight were we more conformed to thy suffering image, and more moulded after the pattern of thine obedience. Romans 12:1-2 Animated by the same holy delight, he said to his disciples, on the eve of his sufferings and death, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Luke 22:15 And when the solemn hour drew nigh when the waters came in unto his soul, when he sank in deep mire where there was no standing, when he came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him, Psalms 69:1-2, {1} in the gloomy garden, when he had to drink of the cup of wrath put into his hand, what meek submission, what holy resignation he showed to his Father’s will! Where can we look to see such sorrows? But where can we look to find such holy obedience, such meek submission, such patient endurance of them? iii. Again. It was a perfect obedience. Every thought, every word, and every act of that holy and sacred humanity were perfect, not only as proceeding from a nature intrinsically pure, but as filled with all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, that glorious Person in the undivided Godhead who not only begot by a divine operation the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord in the womb of the Virgin, but filled it with all his gifts and graces, descending upon him more visibly at his baptism, and anointing him as Prophet, Priest and King, Isaiah 61:1 Luke 3:22 1 John 3:34 Acts 10:38 Hebrews 1:9 but abiding in him in all his fullness during the whole of his ministry, sufferings, and death. The law demanded a perfect obedience; it could, indeed, from its very nature, accept no other; and this obedience must be unwavering, flowing on in one uninterrupted stream from the heart, and that stream, like Jordan, all the time of harvest, overflowing all its banks with love to God and man. As the Lord promised that rivers of living water should flow out of the belly (or heart) of him that believed in his name, so the rivers of living obedience flowed from his own heart and lips, as he himself believed in God and did his will from the heart. iv. The obedience of Jesus to the Father s will was vicarious, that s, rendered on behalf of his church, and imputed to her for righteousness. He stood in her place and stead as her Surety and Representative. She owed a debt which she could not pay, an obedience to the Law which she could not render. The Father accepted his Son’s, and thus his obedience became hers. Thus, as by one man s disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous; Romans 5:19 for God made the Lord Jesus to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.#2 Corinthians 5:21. v. This obedience was meritorious. Here we see the beauty, grace, and glory of the incarnation of the Son of God As God, he could not suffer; as man he could not merit- but as God-man he could suffer as man, and merit as God And as though he has two natures, he has but one Person, his doing and dying, his sufferings and obedience, his blood and righteousness, are stamped with all the value and

invested with all the validity of Godhead, because he who obeyed and suffered as man is truly and verily God. Here, then, is "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." Here flow through this consecrated channel pardon and peace. Here God can be just and yet the iustifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Here every attribute of God is harmonised, the law magnified, the gospel revealed, the sinner saved, and God glorified. {1} It is in the Psalms, especially Psalms 22:1-31; Psalms 40:1-17; Psalms 69:1-36, that the inward experience of the blessed Lord us a Man of sorrows is set forth.

05.04. The Death of the Cross

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS Chapter Four from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

Well might the apostle, as if in a burst of holy admiration, cry aloud, as with trumpet voice, that heaven and earth might hear, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16 A mystery indeed it is, a great, a deep, an unfathomable mystery; for who can rightly understand how the divine Word, the eternal Son of God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us? "Who shall declare his generation?" Isaiah 53:8; either that eternal generation whereby he is the only-begotten Son of God, or the generation of his sacred humanity in the womb of the Virgin, when the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her? These are the things "which the angels desire to look into;" which they cannot understand, but reverently adore. And well may we imitate their adoring admiration, not attempting to understand, but believe, love, and revere; for well has it been said, There faith believes, and love adores. Nor, if rightly taught and spiritually led, shall we find this a barren, dry, or unprofitable subject. It is "the great mystery of godliness;" therefore all godliness is contained in it, and flows out of it. There never was, there never will or can be a truly godly thought, feeling, or desire - no, not one godly word or work, a godly heart or a godly life which does not arise out of, and is not sustained by, the great mystery of an incarnate God. There may be, indeed frequently is, as a legal holiness, a fleshly piety, a tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, and a profusion of good works, so called, independent of the grace that dwells in the Lord the Lamb; but godliness, as consisting in a new and heavenly birth, with all its attendant fruits and graces, can only flow from the fullness of a covenant Head, communicating life to the members of his mystical body. And this covenant Head, we know, is the Son of God, once manifest in the flesh and now exalted to the right hand of the Father. How clear on this point, that all life is in him and out of him, are his own words of grace and truth: "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." If, then, our hearts, as touched with an unction from above, are bent after godliness, as a felt blessing; if, as made daily more and more sensible of our miserable emptiness and destitution, and the drying up of all creature springs of happiness and holiness, we long more and more to realise the inward possession of that promised well of water, springing up into everlasting life, we shall desire to look more and more into this heavenly mystery, and to have its transforming power and efficacy more feelingly and experimentally made known to our souls. "If any man thirst," said the blessed Lord, "let him come unto me and drink;" and to show that not only should he drink for his own soul’s happiness, but for the benefit of others, he graciously added, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38 The whole of God’s grace, mercy, and truth is laid up in, is revealed through, is manifested by, the Son of his love; for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;" Colossians 1:19 and this as Immanuel, God with us. Thus his sacred

humanity, in union with his Divine Person, is the channel of communication through which all the love and mercy of God flow down to poor, guilty, miserable sinners, who believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. If blessed then with faith in living exercise, we may draw near and behold the great mystery of godliness. To tread by faith upon this holy ground is to come "unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;" Hebrews 12:22-24; for every blessing of the new covenant, if we are but favouredwith a living faith in an incarnate God, is then experimentally as well as eternally ours. The last acts of the suffering obedience of our adorable Redeemer are couched in the words of the apostle, "And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Php 2:8 The death of Christ was the fulfilment of the purpose for which he came into the world, which was, "to give himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Ephesians 5:2 "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Hebrews 9:26 The sufferings, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ were a sacrifice offered for sin, and are therefore spoken of as a propitiation Romans 3:25 1 John 2:24:10 and an atonement. Romans 5:11 But in a sacrifice two things are absolutely necessary 1. That the blood of the victim should he shed, for "without shedding of blood is no remission:" "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul;" Leviticus 17:11; Leviticus 17:2. That the victim should die; for death being the penalty of disobedience, Genesis 2:17 Ezekiel 18:4, the sacrifice offered as an atonement for sin cannot be complete without the death of the victim. In the sacrifice of himself, offering up his sacred humanity on the altar of his Deity, the blessed Lord accomplished these two essentials of a propitiatory offering. 1. His blood was shed upon the cross - the actual living blood of his sacred humanity. It is therefore called "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Peter 1:19, and "his own blood." Acts 20:28 Hebrews 9:12. It was precious as flowing from his sacred humanity; precious, as stamped with all the validity and merit of Deity; precious in the sight of God as a sweetsmelling savour; and precious in the hearts of his people as cleansing them from all sin. Sin is an evil so dreadful, so hateful and abhorrent to his righteous character, so provoking to his justice and holiness, that God could not pardon it unless an atonement were made adequate to its fearful magnitude. Thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil could not atone for sin. Did all men consent to give their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul, Micah 6:7, all could not suffice to outweigh the magnitude or sin. Lebanon is not sufficient for a burnt offering. Nothing short of the blood of the only-begotten Son of God could be an atonement of sufficient worth, of equivalent value. 2. But the death of the victim was also required. He who freely and voluntarily stood in the sinner’s place must die in his room, or the substitution could not be effectual Here then, we see the mystery of the death of Jesus. There was no natural mortality {1} in that sacred humanity which the Lord assumed in the womb of the Virgin. And yet he took a nature which could die by a voluntary act. The whole of his obedience in his state of humiliation was voluntary. Therefore the last act of it was as voluntary as the first the death on the cross as much as the assumption in the Virgin. The Lord’s own words are decisive here: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my

Father." John 10:17-18. The very merit of his obedience unto death whereby it became capable of being imputed for righteousness to the church of God consisted mainly in two things: the dignity of the obedient Sufferer and the voluntariness of the sacrifice as an act of obedience to the will of God. Had our blessed Lord not been God, and that as the eternal Son of God, There would have been no merit in his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death. As the brightness of God' s glory and the express image of his Person, as his co-eternal Son he thought it not robbery - no unhallowed, disallowable claim, to be equal with God; Php 2:6; and therefore the very infinity of Deity itself attached to his words and works so as to stamp efficacious merit upon them. It was not because his humanity was perfect that it was meritorious. Had his humanity been as perfect as it was, if Deity were not in conjunction with it, no merit could have been attached to it any more than there was merit in the obedience of Adam, or in that of an angel. But being God as well as man, the merit of Deity was stamped upon all the acts of the obedient suffering humanity, so that, as we have sometimes said, Godhead was in every drop of his precious blood. Again, if the life of the blessed Lord had been violently taken away, contrary to his will, where would have been the obedience unto death? Had he been killed, so to speak, by the cross - had died because he could not help dying, had his life been violently torn from him, where would have been the laying down of his life as the last act of his voluntary obedience? What power could man have had over him? Had he so willed, he could have freed himself from the hands of his enemies. Therefore he said unto Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." John 19:11 And again, "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53 When, then, the band of men and officers from the chief priests came to take him with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, he freely "went forth" to yield himself up; but when he said, "I am he," or rather, as the words literally mean, "I AM," the glory of his eternal Deity so flashed forth, that "they went backward, and fell to the ground." John 18:3-6 Thus truly was he "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isaiah 53:7 What heart can conceive, what tongue express what his holy soul endured when "the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all"? In the garden of Gethsemane, what a load of guilt, what a weight of sin, what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall as sweat from his brow. The human nature, in its weakness recoiled, as it were, from the cup of anguish put into his hand. His body could scarce bear the load that pressed him down; his soul, under the waves and billows of God's wrath, sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him. Psalms 69:1-2 And how could it be otherwise when that sacred humanity was enduring all the wrath of God, suffering the very pangs of hell, and wading in all the depths of guilt and terror? When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin-offering) for us, he endured in his holy soul all the pangs of distress, horror, alarm, misery, and guilt that the elect would have felt in hell for ever; and not only as any one of them would have felt, but as the collective whole would have experienced under the outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God. The anguish, the distress, the darkness, the condemnation, the shame, the guilt, the unutterable horror, that any or all of his quickened family have ever experienced under a sense of God's wrath, the curse of the law, and the terrors of hell, are only faint, feeble reflections of what the Lord felt in the garden and on the cross; for there were attendant circumstances in his case which are not, and indeed cannot be in theirs, and which made the distress and agony of his holy soul, both in nature and degree, such as none but he

could feel or know. He as the eternal Son of God, who had lain in his bosom before all worlds, had known all the blessedness and happiness of the love and favour of the Father - his own Father, shining upon him, for he was "by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Proverbs 8:30 When, then, instead of love he felt his displeasure, instead of the beams of his favour he experienced the frowns and terrors of his wrath, instead of the light of his countenance he tasted the darkness and gloom of desertion - what heart can conceive, what tongue express the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Surety under this agonising experience? {2} A few drops of the wrath of God let down into the conscience of a child of God have made many a living soul cry out, "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." Psalms 88:15-16 But what is all that Job, Heman, Jeremiah, or Jonah experienced, compared with the floods of anguish and terror which all but overwhelmed the soul of our blessed Lord? We therefore read of him in the garden, when the first pangs of his agony came on, that he "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;" and this made him say to his three disciples, who were to be eye-witnesses of his sufferings, 1 Peter 5:1, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Mark 14:33-34 So great was that load that his human nature must have sunk beneath the weight his body and soul been rent asunder, but for four sustaining props: the power of his Deity, for though that purposely did not display its strength, it remained in firm union with his sacred humanity; the help and support of the Holy Ghost sustaining his human nature under the load laid upon it; the joy set before him, which enabled him in the prospect to endure the cross, despising the shame; Hebrews 12:2; and the strengthening of the ministering angel sent from heaven. Luke 22:43 Thus supported and sustained, our gracious Redeemer sank not in the deep waters, but, as our great High Priest, "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" Hebrews 5:7 not as some have foolishly thought and said, fearing the miscarrying of his undertaking, or that he should sink into hell, but because he feared his heavenly Father with the reverence of a Son {3} for filial fear, with every other grace, was in the heart of Jesus as his treasure. Isaiah 11:2-3 Let us ever bear in mind that the sufferings of the holy soul of Jesus were as real, that is, as really felt, as the sufferings of his sacred body, and a thousand times more intense and intolerable. Though beyond description painful and agonising, yet the sufferings of the body were light indeed compared with the sufferings of the soul. It is so with the saints of God themselves, when the Lord lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet in their conscience, and lets down a sense of his anger and displeasure into their soul. What is all bodily suffering compared to a sense of God’s displeasure and the arrows of his wrath sticking in the conscience? So it was with our great High Priest, when both as sacrificer and sacrificed, alike priest and victim, he was bound with the cords of love and obedience to the horns of the altar. Psalms 118:27 Surely never was there such a pang since the foundations of the earth were laid as that which rent and tore the soul of the Redeemer when the last drop of agony was poured into the already overflowing cup, and he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Nature herself sympathised with his sorrow, and was moved at his cry, for the earth shook, the sun withdrew his light, and the graves yielded up their dead. Yet thus was redemption’s work accomplished, sin atoned for and blotted out, the wrath of God appeased, everlasting righteousness brought in, and the church for ever reconciled and saved. When, then, the Lord had been fully baptized with his baptism of suffering and blood, when he had drunk the cup of sorrow and anguish to its last dregs, and had rendered all the obedience which

the law demanded and the will of God required he cried out with a loud voice that heaven and earth might hear, "It is finished!" and then, and not till then, he meekly bowed his head, laid down his life, as the last act of his voluntary, suffering obedience, and gave up the ghost. Footnotes: {1} Though we have in our preceding chapters used the word "immortal" as applicable to the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, we are well aware that it is a term not fully appropriate; for the word "immortal" strickly means "not capable of death." And is in this sense applied to the soul of man as not only not dying with the body, but not capable of dying. In this sense, the humanity of the blessed Lord was not immortal, for it could and did die. If such a word were admissible, "unmortal," or "non-mortal," would be a preferable term - denying that it was mortal, and yet not asserting that it could not die. The main difficulty arises from the inherent defect of human language as applied to heavenly mysteries. The mind naturally contemplates only two states of existence: 1. What must necessarily die; and, 2. What cannot possibly die. The first it terms "mortal," the second it calls, "immortal." A third idea, that of a body which does not necessarily die, and yet is capable of dying, as being a conception lying out of its reach, it has invented no word properly to express. {2} Those who deny the eternal Sonship of Jesus rob him of his grace as well as of his glory, by diminishing his sufferings, and thus really strip away the greatness, and consequently much of the merit of his sacrifice. It was because he was God’s own true and proper Son he so deeply, so keenly felt his wrathful displeasure. A Son by office, by mere name - without any filial relationship but a bare title which might have been any other - could not feel towards his adopted Father what the true, the proper, the only-begotten Son of God felt to his heavenly Father. One error always lets in another, and thus we see that the denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ lowers and disparages the greatness and consequently the merit of the atonement. Let the deniers of the eternal Sonship look to this. {3} The margin reads, "for his piety." but the truer and more literal meaning is, "on account of his reverential fear" "Had God in honour"-Luther

05.05. The Effects of the Redeemer's Suffering and Death

THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER’S SUFFERINGS AND DEATH Chapter Five from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

We might now pass on to the consideration of that sacred humanity as taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, where it lay in all its innate purity, sanctity, and incorruptibility, perfuming the grave, and consecrating the tomb as the sleeping-place of those who die in the Lord. Thence we might pass to the resurrection of that incorruptible body, whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power; Romans 1:4; thence to the continuance of the blessed Lord upon earth during the forty days of his tarrying here below; thence to his ascension on high when he led captivity captive; thence to his sitting at the right hand of God in our nature; and thence to his second coming at the great day. All these successive steps are full of blessedness to believing hearts, when they can meditate upon them, and through faith, hope, and love in them, rise up into sweet union and communion with their most gracious and glorious Lord, as their once suffering but now risen and exalted Head. But as we are still at the cross of our suffering Lord, we cannot leave that sacred spot without dwelling for a few moments on several points most intimately connected with it. Three at this present moment offer themselves to our mind. 1. The work accomplished by the sufferings, bloodshedding, obedience, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the benefits and blessings which spring out of it. It was a finished work. Here is all our salvation and here is all our hope. When were such words ever uttered on this earth as those which his gracious lips spoke from the cross, "It is finished"? Well may we cry, in the language of our sweet Christian Psalmist, Holy Ghost, repeat the word, There’s salvation in it. Standing, then, at the cross of our adorable Lord, and hearing these gracious words from the lips of him who cannot lie, if blessed with living faith, we may see the law thoroughly fulfilled, its curse fully endured, its penalties wholly removed, sin eternally put away, the justice of God amply satisfied, all his perfections gloriously harmonised, his holy will perfectly obeyed, reconciliation completely effected, redemption graciously accomplished, and the church everlastingly saved. Here we see sin in its blackest colours, and holiness in its fairest beauties. Here we see the love of God in its tenderest form, and the anger of God in its deepest expression. Here we see the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer lifted up, as it were, between heaven and earth, to show to angels and to men the spectacle of redeeming love, and to declare at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act of the suffering obedience and bleeding sacrifice of the Son of God, the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of his inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of his heart to the election of grace. Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace; here, and here alone, penitential grief and godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes; here, and here alone, is sin subdued and mortified, holiness communicated, death vanquished, Satan put to flight, and happiness and heaven begun in the soul. 0 what heavenly blessings, what present grace, as well as what future glory flow through the sacred humanity of the Son of God! What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners and a sin-pardoning God! What a healingplace for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders; what a door of hope in the valley of

Achor for the selfcondemned and self-abhorred; what a safe spot for seeking souls; and what a blessed resorting-place for the whole family of God in this vale of grief and sorrow! 2. Another most blessed fruit of the sacred humanity of our adorable Redeemer is that in that nature he learnt the experimental reality of temptation and suffering, and thus became able to sympathise with his tempted and afflicted people. It was necessary under the law that the high priest "should have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity." Hebrews 5:2. Our great High Priest was not compassed with infirmity, like the high priest under the law. and therefore had no need to offer sacrifice for his own sins; Hebrews 5:3; but that he might be "a merciful" as well as "faithful" high priest - faithful to God and merciful to man, "it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he might be able to succour them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:17-18. "We have not, therefore, a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. Here we see the wisdom and grace of the Father in preparing, and the love and pity of the Son in assuming a nature like our own, sin only excepted, that he might have a real experience of every form of suffering and of temptation. Those only can feel for others in trouble and sorrow who themselves have walked in the path of tribulation; nor can any one really sympathise with the tempted but those who have themselves been in the furnace of temptation. Thus our blessed Lord became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; hid not his face from shame and spitting; endured poverty, hunger, thirst, and nakedness; was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by all; was oppressed and was afflicted, not only as a part of his meritorious, suffering obedience, but that by a personal experience in his holy humanity of sorrow and affliction he might sympathise with his mourning, afflicted people. And as with affliction, so with temptation; the gracious Redeemer endured every sort of temptation which Satan could present to his holy soul, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," Hebrews 4:15, that he might feel for and sympathise with the tempted. But this is not all. The blessed Redeemer had not only to sympathise with the sorrows and temptations, but experimentally to learn the graces of his believing people. He had therefore to learn obedience in the same way that they learn it, for "he learnt obedience by the things which he suffered;" Hebrews 5:8; was taught in the school of affliction the inward experience of submission to God’s will, meekness under injury and oppression, and lowliness of heart as a heavenly grace. Therefore he could say, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29. Let us not think that the blessed Lord had no inward experience in his holy soul of spiritual graces, or that his divine nature supplied to his human the grace of the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit that was given him without measure, John 3:34, who not only anointed him as Prophet, Priest, and King, but dwelt in him in all his fullness, bestowed upon him every spiritual grace, as faith, trust, hope, love, prayer and supplication, patience, long-suffering, zeal for the glory of God, and with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, all counsel and might, all heavenly knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:1-2. All these gifts and graces dwelt in his sacred humanity {1} and were drawn into exercise by the Holy Ghost, so that the blessed Lord believed, hoped, and loved; prayed, sighed, and groaned; trusted in God and lived a life of faith in him, just in the same manner and by the same Spirit and power, though in an infinitely higher degree, and wholly unmixed with sin, as his believing people do now. So that just in the same way as his sacred body was fed and nourished by the same food as ours, so was his holy soul sustained by the same communications of grace and strength as maintain in life the

souls of his people now. Thus he learnt experimentally not only their trials and temptations, their griefs and sorrows, both natural and spiritual, but their joys and deliverances, their manifestations, their waiting, hope, their trusting confidence, their patient expectation, their obedient submission, and in a word, the whole compass of their experience. {2} If any think it is derogatory to the Deity of our blessed Lord, to believe that he had a spiritual experience of the same graces that his people have, for being God, they might argue he could not need them, let them explain why his body needed human food, or why his soul had an experience of sorrow and temptation. Could not his divine nature, as in the wilderness, have supported the human without food? And is it not equally derogatory to say that the blessed Lord had an experience of affliction and temptation, as of joy and deliverance? As our great Exemplar, as our suffering Head, the blessed Lord was delivered as well as tempted, rejoiced in spirit as well as sighed and wept, was made glad with the light of his Father's countenance as well as felt the hidings of his face {3} 3. The third point connected with the sacred humanity of Jesus as obedient unto death, is the example he has left to his believing people that they should walk in his steps. It will little profit us to have the clearest views of the Lord's suffering humanity if it produce no impression on our hearts and lives. At the foot of the cross there stood those who mocked the sufferings and shame of the blessed Redeemer; there were those who looked on with callous indifference; and there were those who mourned and wept, believed and loved. So now there are those who mock the eternal Sonship and suffering humanity of the blessed Jesus; and there are those who look upon his suffering Majesty without faith and without feeling, without any sorrow for sin or any thirst after holiness. And there is a small remnant who look and believe, and as led into the fellowship of his sufferings, mourn and weep. These see and feel that there is a knowing him and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; Php 3:10; a bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body; 2 Corinthians 4:10; a being crucified with Christ; Galatians 2:20; a determination to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified; 1 Corinthians 2:2; and a glorying in his cross as the only effectual means whereby the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world; Galatians 6:14. We need not wonder that in our day there is such a form of godliness and such a denial of the power. It must ever be so when men are ignorant - willingly ignorant of the suffering humanity of the blessed Lord, and know so little of the mystery of the cross. One word more. All union and communion with God is only through the humanity of Jesus. God-man unites God and man. In union with God by his Deity, in union with man by his humanity, the Lord Jesus is the Daysman who lays his hand upon them both. Job 9:33. This made holy John say, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:2-3. Happy are those who can say with him, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" but this those only can experimentally say who having been blessed with a manifestation of his Person and work can add: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." 1 John 5:10. {1} If space admitted, we could easily show from those Psalms in which, beyond all controversy, Christ speaks that all the graces which we have here enumerated dwelt in him and were expressed by him. Let our spiritual readers examine Psalms 18:1-50; Psalms 22:1-31; Psalms 40:1-17; Psalms 69:1-36, all of which the most

indubitable external and internal evidence assigns to Christ, with an eye to this particular point, and trace it for themselves. {2} Thus in reading David’s deliverances and blessings, though we know that they were really David’s, and truly felt and acknowledged by him as such, yet we may often say, "A greater than David was here." Thus compare Psalms 18:16-19 with Psalms 18:43-44. {3} Our blessed Lord had no experience of regeneration or of repentance: for the one is the quickening of the soul out of death, and the other implies the existence of sin. These two things are to be carefully distinguished from his experience of faith, trust. &c.

05.06. The Burial

THE BURIAL Chapter Six from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

We last stood at the foot of the cross, where we saw by faith the blood-shedding and death of our adorable Lord; we viewed him yielding up his life by a voluntary act of his holy will, and heard his gracious words, "It is finished," just before he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. But we leave him not there. We have seen him die and by faith now view his sacred body still on the cross. But he did not long hang there as a spectacle to angels and men. {1} His immediate disciples had fled, but there were those who came to perform those offices of love by which a safe and secure place was provided wherein that sacred body might lie. We see, then, by faith, that pallid body of which not a bone was broken (though hands and feet were mangled and torn, and side pierced), taken down with all believing reverence and adoring affection by Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, aided, doubtless, by those holy women whose names the Holy Ghost has recorded as afterwards beholding and sitting over against the sepulchre where that pure body was laid. As the original penalty was, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die," and as "the wages of sin is death," the Surety and Sin-bearer must endure the penalty, and literally, actually die in the sinner’s room and place. Thus there was a necessity that the Redeemer of sinners should die; but as the Son of God could not die, Deity being incapable of suffering and death, the blessed Lord took a nature which could die - not by inherent mortality or external violence, but by a voluntary act {2} - as voluntary as that by which he assumed that nature in the womb of the Virgin, or resumed his body at the resurrection. Our thoughts, then, now lead us to the body of Jesus in the grave; and here we see much to engage our meditations. The first thing that strikes our mind in beholding this lifeless form is the separation of body and soul which took place when the adorable Lord by a voluntary act laid down his life. The last words that the Redeemer spoke were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." By his "spirit" we are to understand his human soul which at once went into paradise, into the immediate presence of God, as he intimated in the words, "And now come I to thee." John 17:13. Nor did he go thither that day alone. A trophy was soon to follow him - the soul of that repenting, believing malefactor, who, a partner with him in suffering, had become by his sovereign grace a partner with him in glory. There was, then, an actual separation of the Redeemer’s body and soul; but this did not destroy or affect the union of his Deity with his humanity. That union remained entire, as his holy soul went into paradise in union with his Deity, and thus he was still God-man as much in paradise as he was at the tomb of Lazarus, or at the Last Supper. But his sacred body, though by the act of death life was gone out of it, still remained as before, "that holy thing." Death did not taint that sacred body any more than sin did not taint it in the womb of the Virgin. The promise was, therefore, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (rather, in Hades, or that paradise in which it was after death), nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Psalms 16:10. This holy body was essentially incorruptible, as being begotten of the Holy Ghost, by special and supernatural generation, of the flesh of the Virgin; but as in all other acts of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were all engaged that no taint of corruption should in

death assail it. The Father promised, and, as a God that cannot lie, performed by his almighty, superintending power; the Son, by the same innate, active, divine energy by which he assumed that body in the womb of the Virgin preserved it untainted, uncorrupted in the grave; and the Holy Ghost, who formed that body in its first conception, breathed over it his holy influence to maintain it, in spite of death and the tomb, as pure and as incorruptible as when he first created it. These things are indeed difficult to understand or indeed conceive; but they are heavenly mysteries, which faith receives and holds fast in spite of sense, reason, and unbelief. For see the tremendous consequences of allowing any taint of corruption to assail that blessed body. Could a tainted body be resumed at the resurrection? Corruption would have marred it as it will mar ours; and how could a corrupt body have been again the habitation of the Son of God? We are often instrumentally preserved from error not only by knowing and feeling the sweetness and power of truth, but by seeing, as at a glance, the tremendous consequences which a denial of vital, fundamental truths involves. But we pass on to Jesus in the tomb. A sepulchre hewn out in the rock, and therefore pure, clean, and dry, and "wherein never man before was laid," so as to be free from any taint of corruption; a great stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre to preserve the sacred deposit from external violence or unbecoming intrusion; Roman soldiers forbidding all access of strange feet into the sacred precinct; a guard of angels watching over that body in which their God and Creator had dwelt; - how all these circumstances tended, and all worked together to the same result - the safe guardianship and inviolable preservation of that holy body which the Lord had assumed for the redemption of his people. But may we not gather up profitable instruction here? The holy women who mourned and wept at the cross did not forget their dear Lord at the sepulchre. Thither their thoughts ran during that Sabbath Day on which they rested according to the commandment; and with the first dawn of the next day - the first day of the week, they sped their steps, with spices, to anoint that dear Object of their faith and love. The mystery of the resurrection was indeed hidden from their eyes; but they ceased not to love in death and in the sepulchre that sacred form which they had loved in life. May not our thoughts turn to the sepulchre too; and may we not, with these gracious women, resort thither as to the sleeping-place of the body of Jesus? Nature shrinks from death, even apart from that which following after death makes it to so many a king of terrors. Even where grace has set up its throne, and mercy rejoices over judgment, many unbelieving, infidel thoughts at times will cross the mind and perplex the judgment about the separation of body and soul, and the launching of the spirit into an unseen, unknown world. Faith, it is true, can subdue these perplexing thoughts, better hinted at than described, but faith needs some solid ground on which to build and rest. If, then, the soul is blessed with any assured hope or sweet persuasion of interest in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to remove guilty fears, how strengthening to faith is a view of his death, not merely as the only sacrifice for sin, but as the exemplar so to speak, of our own! We shall all have to die, and therefore to look by faith at the death of Jesus may be a profitable subject of meditation as a relief against the perplexing thoughts to which we have before alluded. Into his Father’s hands the dying Lord commended his spirit. The Father received it, for him the Father heareth always; John 11:42, and thus his spirit returned unto him who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7. Thus, by the act of dying, the soul and body of the blessed Redeemer were, for a time, fully and actually separated as fully and actually as ours will also be at death. But follow by faith that soul of Jesus when he breathed it forth, and view it at once and immediately entering paradise, into the blissful presence of God. What food for faith is here! How strengthening, how encouraging to a believing heart which has

often been perplexed by such thoughts as we have named, to view the soul of Jesus thus passing at once into paradise. And may we not, by faith, view the soul also of the believing malefactor, when the time of release was come, winging its flight into the same paradise whither the soul of Jesus had preceded it? If we know anything painfully and experimentally of the assaults of unbelief, the arrows of infidelity, and the fiery darts of the wicked one, and how they are all quenched by the shield of faith, we have found that faith, in order to stand firm, must have the word of truth, a "Thus saith the Lord," upon which to rest. Let us now, then, see how this stands as connected with the death of the blessed Lord. Fortified by his holy example, if blessed with faith in his Person, blood, and righteousness, the dying believer may commend his spirit into the hands of Christ as did martyred Stephen, in the same confidence that the Lord Jesus commended his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. But, there is another sweet and blessed thought connected with the grave in which Jesus lay. We may have seen the grave open its dark mouth to receive a dear friend and brother, or some fondly-loved relative, who has left a sweet testimony behind of his interest in the finished work of the Son of God; and as we have looked down into that narrow cell, seen the coffin lowered slowly into it, heard the clods fall heavily on its lid, and felt how the beloved object was buried out of our sight, no more again to walk with us here below, how nature has shrunk from each gloomy sight and sound! What could then relieve the burdened mind, and soothe the sorrowing spirit, but a sweet persuasion by faith of these two things: First, that the soul of the departed one was with the Lord, which was far better than again to be burdened with the body of sin and death, now for ever laid down; and second, that the Lord Jesus, by lying himself in the grave, had consecrated it as his people’s sleeping-place, and perfumed it, as it were, by permitting it to be the deposit of his own incorruptible body. What a trial to their faith must the death of Jesus have been to his disciples and believing followers! When their Lord and Master died, their hopes, for the time at least, seem almost to have died with him. This seems evident from the language of the two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus. "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." #Lu 24:21. How staggering to their faith that the Lord of life should be put to death; the King of glory be covered with shame and ignominy; and that he, whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, should lie in the narrow precinct of a garden sepulchre. But another thought strikes our mind as arising out of this fruitful subject of spiritual meditation - the apparent triumph of evil and of the powers of darkness, in the death and burial of the Lord Jesus. To the eye of sense, truth, holiness, innocence, all fell crushed by the arm of violence as Jesus hung on the cross. To the spectator there, all his miracles of love and mercy, his words of grace and truth, his holy spotless life, his claims to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, with every promise and every prophecy concerning him, were all extinguished when, amidst the triumph of his foes, in pain, shame, and ignominy, he yielded up his breath. We now see that, by his blood-shedding and death, the blessed Lord wrought out redemption, finished the work which the Father gave him to do, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciled the church unto God, triumphed over death and hell, vanquished Satan, magnified the law and made it honourable, exalted justice, brought in mercy, harmonised every apparently jarring attribute, glorified his heavenly Father, and saved millions with an everlasting salvation. But should we have seen this as we see it now, had we stood at the cross with weeping Mary and broken-hearted John, heard the railing taunts of the Scribes and Pharisees, the rude laughter of the Roman soldiery, and the mocking cries of the Jewish mob, viewed the darkened sky above, and felt the solid earth beneath rocking under our feet? Where would our faith have

been then? What but a miracle of Almighty grace and power could have sustained it amidst such clouds of darkness, such strength of sense, such a crowd of conflicting passions, such opposition of unbelief? So it ever has been, so it ever will be, in this time state. Truth, uprightness, godliness, the cause of God as distinct from, as opposed to error and evil, have always suffered crucifixion, not only in the person, but in the example of a crucified Jesus. It is an ungodly world; Satan, not Jesus, is its god and prince; and, therefore, not truth but falsehood, not good but evil, not love but enmity, not sincerity and uprightness but craft and deceptiveness, not righteousness and holiness but sin and godlessness prevail and triumph as they did at the cross. This tries faith; but its relief and remedy are to look up, amidst these clouds, to the cross, and see on it the suffering Son of God. Then we see that the triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment; that though truth is now suffering, it is suffering with Christ; and that as he died and rose again, so it will have a glorious resurrection, and an eternal triumph. One or two thoughts more before we close this part of our present subject of meditation. To be partakers of Christ's crown, we must be partakers of Christ's cross. Union with him in suffering must precede union with him in glory. This is the express testimony of the Holy Ghost: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:17. "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Timothy 2:11-12. The flesh and the world are to be crucified to us, and we to them; and this can only be by virtue of a living union with a crucified Lord. This made the apostle say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. And again, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14. An experimental knowledge of crucifixion with his crucified Lord made Paul preach the cross, not only in its power to save, but in its power to sanctify. But as then so now, this preaching of the cross, not only as the meritorious cause of all salvation, but as the instrumental cause of all sanctification, is "to them that perish foolishness." 1 Corinthians 1:18. As men have found out some other way of salvation than by the blood of the cross, so have they discovered some other way of holiness than by the power of the cross; or rather have altogether set aside obedience, fruitfullness, self-denial, mortification of the deeds of the body, crucifixion of the flesh and of the world. Extremes are said to meet; and certainly men of most opposite sentiments may unite in despising the cross and counting it foolishness. The Arminian despises it for justification, and the Antinomian for sanctification. "Believe and be holy," is as strange a sound to the latter as "Believe and be saved," to the former. But, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is as much written on the portal of life as, "By grace are ye saved through faith." Through the cross, that is, through union and communion with him who suffered upon it, not only is there a fountain opened for all sin, but for all uncleanness. Zechariah 13:1. Blood and water gushed from the side of Jesus when pierced by the Roman spear. This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart; Unlock'd by the spear, it gushed from the heart, With blood and with water; the first to atone, To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one. "All my springs are in thee," Psalms 87:7, said the man after God's own heart; and well may we re-echo his words. All our springs, not only of pardon and peace, acceptance and justification, but of happiness and holiness, of wisdom and strength, of victory over the world, of mortification of a body of sin and death; of every fresh revival and renewal of hope and confidence; of all prayer and praise; of every new budding forth of the soul, as of Aaron's rod, in blossom and fruit; of every gracious feeling, spiritual desire, warm supplication, honest confession, melting contrition, and

godly sorrow for sin - all these springs of that life which is hid with Christ in God are in a crucified Lord. Thus Christ crucified is, "to them who are saved, the power of God." And as he "of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," at the cross alone can we be made wise unto salvation, become righteous by a free justification, receive of his Spirit to make us holy, and be redeemed and delivered by blood and power from sin, Satan, death and hell. Nor is there any other way to become dead to the law, our first husband, so as "to be married to another, even him who is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4. By the baptism of the Holy Ghost (of which water baptism is a type and figure) we are baptized into Jesus Christ, and specially into his death. Romans 6:3. By his blood-shedding and death he fulfilled the law, bearing its curse, and thus he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, nailing it to his cross." Colossians 2:14. {1} As the blessed Lord breathed out his life about the ninth hour, or three o’clock in the afternoon, and the preparation of the Passover begun about four o’clock, it would seem that his dead body did not remain above, and most probably under, an hour upon the cross before taken down for burial. {2} It is remarkable that three of the evangelists use three distinct words (in the original), to express the voluntary way in which the Lord Jesus yielded up his life. In Matthew 27:51, it is "yielded up the ghost," literally, "dismissed his spirit;" in Mark 15:38 and Luke 23:47 it is the same word, "he gave up the ghost," literally, "breathed it out," and John 19:3, "gave up the ghost," literally, "delivered it," all implying a voluntary act.

05.07. Union and Communion with Christ

THE UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST Chapter Seven from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

In our Meditations on the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer we must never, even in thought, separate his human nature from his divine. Even when his sacred body lay in the grave, and was thus for a small space of time severed from his pure and holy soul by death and the tomb, there was no separation of the two natures, for, as we have before shown, his human soul, after he had once become incarnate in the womb of the Virgin, never was parted from his Deity, but went into paradise in indissoluble union with it. It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had no existence independent of his divine. In the Virgin's womb, in the lowly manger, in the lonely wilderness, on the holy mount of transfiguration, in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate's judgment hall, on the cross, and in the tomb, Jesus was still Immanuel, God with us. And so ineffably close and intimate is the conjunction of the human nature with the divine, that the actings of each nature, though separable, cannot and must not be separated from each other. Thus, the human hands of Jesus broke the seven loaves and the fishes; but it was God-man who multiplied them so as to feed therewith four thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 15:38. The human feet of Jesus walked on the sea of Galilee; but it was the Son of God who came on the waves to the ship. Matthew 14:33. The human lips of Jesus uttered those words which are "spirit and life;" John 6:63; but it was the Son of the living God who spake them. John 6:69. The human hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; but the blood shed by them was indeed divine, for all the virtue and validity of Deity were stamped upon it. Acts 20:28. But there is another thought connected with a believing view of the Lord Jesus Christ as Immanuel, God with us, and that is, the union of the Church with him in all that he did and suffered for her. He being the Head, all the members of his mystical body in covenant union with him shared in his sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. Thus Paul speaks of himself as crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20, and of believers generally as dying with Christ; Romans 6:8 2 Timothy 2:11; being buried with Christ; Romans 6:4 Colossians 2:12; as rising with him, Colossians 3:1, and sitting together with him in heavenly places. Ephesians 2:6. Now, as the Blessed Spirit is pleased to guide us into an experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to give us a measure of union and communion with his sacred Majesty, he leads us into a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. This is what the apostle speaks of as typified by the ordinance of baptism as a standing figure and permanent representation of the baptism of the Holy Ghost: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Romans 6:3-5. The ordinance of baptism is thus represented as the figure of that higher, more sacred, and spiritual baptism whereby, in living experience, believers are made one with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. And here his

humanity is indeed seen in its special grace and distinguishing glory, for it is only as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Ephesians 5:30, this being the foundation of the union, that they are baptized into this spiritual communion with him. But this part of our subject may demand a little further opening up. The Church, then, has a mystical, but not less real, union with Christ, from his having taken the flesh and blood of the children into union with his own divine Person. By virtue of this union with him, as members with the head, she participated with him in all he did and suffered for her sake. But this mystical union all the elect have, even those still unregenerated or unborn. This union does not, therefore, of itself give communion, though it is the foundation of it. Another kind of union, then, is needed, which is peculiar to the regenerated, and which they have in exact measure to their participation of the Spirit of Christ, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," that is, by inward or outward manifestation. By being made partakers, then, of Christ's Spirit, the members of his mystical body have a living union with him, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." 1 Corinthians 6:17. Being thus baptized by the Blessed Spirit, they are made one spirit with the Lord, and thus have a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. As, then, he died under the curse of the law and the guilt and burden of sin, and yet by death died unto the law and unto sin, being by death freed from the curse of the law and the penalty of sin, so the believer dies under the curse of the law and the burden of guilt and sin in his conscience; and yet by virtue of his union with Christ as a member of his body, and of communion with him as baptized by his Spirit, he dies also unto the law and unto sin, no more to suffer the penalty of the one or to live under the power of the other. But though thus delivered, yet to the end of his days, as mourning and groaning under sin, as suffering from the hidings of God's countenance, as tempted and assailed by Satan, as hated and persecuted by the world, and often forsaken by followers and friends, he is crucified with Christ, and has fellowship with him in his sufferings and death. His sorrows, his trials, his temptations, and his sufferings, all, as sanctified to his soul's good, lead him to the cross of his suffering Lord, to get life from his death, pardon and peace from his atoning blood, justification from his divine obedience, and resignation to the will of God from his holy example. Here the world is crucified to him, and he to the world; Galatians 6:14; here sin is mortified, Romans 6:68:13, and its reigning power dethroned; Romans 6:12; the old man crucified and put off. Romans 6:6 Ephesians 4:22, and the new man put on. Thus, having a spiritual union with his suffering, dying Lord, the heaven-taught believer suffers and dies with him, and by this fellowship of his sufferings and death becomes here below conformed to his suffering image, Romans 8:17; Romans 8:29 2 Timothy 2:12, and is made conformable to his death. Php 3:10. This is no mere doctrine, an article only of a sound creed, but a fountain of life to every believer's soul in proportion to the measure of the Spirit whereby he is baptized into the death of Jesus. But for the most part it is only through a long series of afflictions, bereavements, disappointments, vexations, illnesses, pains of body and mind, hot furnaces, and deep waters, as sanctified to his soul's profit by the Holy Spirit, that the child of God comes into this part of Christian experience. These things are indeed death to the flesh, and are meant to be so, that it may be crucified and mortified; and are killing blows to all schemes of earthly joy, worldly happiness, and temporal prosperity and pleasure, as well as to all legal hopes and pharisaic righteousness; but they are, in the Spirit's hand, the very life of the believing soul. For "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of their spirit." Isaiah 38:16. Crucifixion is a long, painful, lingering death. Nature dies hard, and struggles, but struggles in vain, against the firm but blessed hand that nails it to the cross of Christ; but grace, cleaving all the more closely to him who

suffered and bled there, draws life and power from his blood and love. This experience made the apostle say of himself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:10-11. Here was the secret of all his strength, of all his holiness, and all his happiness. This inward experience of the power and blessedness of the cross inspired him with a firm and holy determination to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified; and this made him say, as the grand distinguishing test of the lost and of the saved, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18. For this was not Paul's experience only, a hidden secret of which he alone was made by grace the happy partaker. All who are taught by the same Spirit, and have the same union and communion with a crucified Lord, whether Jew or Greek, know him to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:24. We read of believers being "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isaiah 61:3, and this planting is a being planted into Christ so as to have that union and communion with him which the living branch has with the vine. The apostle therefore speaks of our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." Romans 6:5. What the vine is, the branches are. Where the vine is, there will the branches be. The vine was once prostrate on the ground; the branches were prostrate with it. The vine rose from earth to heaven; the branches rise with it. As then a tree planted into good soil drinks of its juices, or rather as a grafted scion becomes so incorporated with the stock as to be one with it, not merely in outward strength and firmness of union, but so one with it as to draw virtue, sap, and fruitfullness out of it, so the true believer, being planted into the likeness of Christ's death, draws supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness. Here, then, we see the blessedness of the bleeding, suffering, dying humanity of our adorable Redeemer. By virtue of his suffering humanity he has union with a suffering people, and by virtue of being baptized with his Spirit they have union and communion with a suffering Lord. He died that they might live, bore the curse of the law that it might not light on them, and suffered "the just for the unjust" that they having fellowship with him in his sufferings and death might have every gracious motive communicated, and the supply of all spiritual strength imparted, to crucify them to sin, to the world, and to self.

05.08. The Resurrection

THE RESURRECTION Chapter Eight from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

But we pass on to the resurrection of the blessed Lord from the dead; and here we shall have to establish the doctrine before we enter into its experimental fruits. 1. The first thing that we notice is, what we may call the grand fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this the whole verity of the Christian faith may be said to be suspended. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was not what he declared he was, "the Son of the living God." But if he rose from the dead, it was God’s own attestation that he was his only begotten Son, for all will admit that nothing short of the power of God can raise the dead. For this reason we find in the Acts of the Apostles the resurrection of the Lord Jesus made a leading feature in every sermon and every address. Whether Peter preached to the inquiring Jews, Acts 2:23; Acts 243:15 to the opposing Sanhedrim, Acts 4:105:30; Acts 4:31 or to Cornelius and his friends; Acts 10:39-40 or whether Paul addressed the synagogue of Antioch, Acts 13:30 the Athenian Areopagus Acts 17:31 or king Agrippa and the most noble Festus, it might be said of them what the Holy Ghost declares of all the rest; "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Acts 4:33 Look for a few moments at this remarkable circumstance, that these blessed men of God made the resurrection of Jesus, as it were, the very foundation of all their sermons and addresses; for we may be sure that the Holy Ghost inspired the apostles thus to preach. And see the reason why they bore this firm testimony in the very forefront of the battle which they waged in the name of God against the kingdom of darkness and death. The Lord of life and glory had been condemned to death by the Jewish council on a charge of blasphemy, first, because he had said that "he would destroy the temple made with hands, and within three days build another made without hands;" Mark 14:58 and, secondly, that he had declared, in the very presence of the council, that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Mark 14:61-64 He therefore died under the charge of blasphemy, in pain and ignominy, crucified openly for that alleged crime in the face of the assembled thousands who had come from all parts to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Now, had Jesus not risen from the dead that charge would have been substantiated, and he would have been justly convicted by the voices of many thousands as having been put righteously to death. It was necessary, then, not only for the whole economy of redemption, but for the very veracity of Jesus himself, and for the whole truth of the gospel, that he should be raised from the dead by the power of God as the seal of his mission, as the standing, undeniable, irrefragable truth that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, as he claimed to be. We see, then, the force and meaning of the apostle’s words, where he says that the Lord Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:4 It was God’s attesting witness to his divine Sonship, the visible, ratifying seal to his heavenly mission. And not only so, but God’s own assurance to the church that his atoning sacrifice had been accepted, that the debt due to law and justice was fully discharged, and her justification complete, for he "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification;" Romans 4:25 that is, he, as the head and representative of

the church, was raised by God from the dead as justified from all law charges, and the church was thus visibly and authoritatively declared to be justified in him. This was the attesting witness from heaven that her justification was complete, and that Jesus lives at God’s right hand to reveal that justification to her heart, put her into experimental possession of its unspeakable blessedness, and seal it effectually by the Holy Ghost upon her breast. 2. The next thing that we notice is that each Person of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was engaged in the blessed work of raising Jesus from the dead. Though the Persons of the Trinity are essentially distinct, and their acts in the great economy of redemption separate, yet as one God they participate in the putting forth of every act of divine power. Thus God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, as we learn from almost innumerable passages; but see the following, which we need not quote at length, but simply refer to; Acts 2:24, Acts 3:15, Acts 4:10, Acts 5:30, Acts 19:40,, Acts 13:37, Acts 17:31 Ephesians 1:20 Colossians 2:12. But the Son of God raised himself from the dead, according to his own words of grace and truth, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17-18 He is "the resurrection;" John 11:25 and as he raised Lazarus from the tomb, and will at the last day raise up the sleeping dust of all that the Father gave unto him, John 6:39-40 so, by the exercise of the same divine power, did he raise his own incorruptible body from the grave. The Holy Ghost also had a blessed participation in the same divine act. We therefore read that the Lord Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:18 - the same Holy and Blessed Spirit who will also quicken the mortal bodies of the saints at the great resurrection. Romans 8:11 3. The next thing that we notice is, the identity of the Lord’s risen body. It is a cardinal, fundamental article of our most holy faith that the same actual, identical body was raised from the grave which was deposited in it. If erroneous men had not indulged their vain speculations about the risen body of the Lord Jesus, we might well wonder at their daring attempts to pull up the landmarks which the Holy Ghost has so plainly set up in the word of truth. The Lord never had, never could have, two different bodies, one before, another after the resurrection. We might as well talk of his having two different souls - one soul for earth, and another soul for heaven. The identity of his body is as indispensable to his still being Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," as the identity of his soul, no less certain, no less necessary, and no less precious. But because, after the resurrection, the Lord came miraculously into the place where the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut, and vanished out of the sight of the disciples at Emmaus, and because they cannot conceive how he can wear a human body in heaven, such as he had upon earth, men who would be wise above what is written have assumed that a change took place in that body, and that it no longer consisted of flesh, and bones, and blood, as before, but was, as it were, transmuted into some aerial, celestial substance, they know not what, but such as they imagine would be more fitting to inhabit the courts of heaven. Now, nothing can be more plain, if we are willing to follow the footsteps of the Holy Ghost, than that it was the same identical body which hung on the cross that rose from the dead. It would seem, as if to stop all cavil, and crush in the very bud all such erroneous speculations as we have alluded to, the Lord himself gave again and again the most incontrovertible proofs after his resurrection that he was the same Jesus as before, and not another, and that he wore the same body in all respects without change or alteration. He did not appear for a few moments only, as if "showing himself through the lattice," and then hastily withdrawing, but conversed with them most familiarly, and ate with his disciples after the

resurrection; Luke 24:42-43 Acts 10:41 and for this very purpose, that they might be standing and undeniable eye and ear witnesses that it was indeed the very same Jesus with whom they had consorted before his crucifixion. Now we all know what a marked change a little alteration makes in a person's form and features, so that a severe illness, or the lapse of a few years, makes him scarcely recognisable as the same person by even his most intimate friends. If, then, any visible change had taken place in the body of the Lord Jesus, it would not only have destroyed its identity but its identification. The whole chain of evidence that it was indeed the same Jesus who had been crucified that was risen from the dead would have been broken to pieces unless it was clearly and undeniably the same form, the same features, the same feet and hands, the same voice - in a word, the very same Jesus whom they knew so well and loved so dearly. Did not Mary Magdalene know his form and features well? Could she have been deceived? Was not John, who leaned on his breast at the last supper, well acquainted with his voice, gestures, and countenance? Could he have been deceived? So with Peter and James, not to name the other disciples who had attended him daily from the baptism of John. Acts 1:22 One witness might be deceived, but not so many. But besides this, there were several special seasons on which the Lord did not only appear for a short time to his disciples, but was with them some space. Look at the instance of Thomas. What can exceed the clearness of the testimony mercifully produced by his very unbelief? So firmly fixed was he in his disbelief of the resurrection that he would not believe that the disciples had seen the Lord as risen from the dead; and declared that except he should see in his hands the print of the nails; and, lest his eyes should deceive him, unless he put his fingers into the print of the nails; and even lest he should be deceived then, except he should thrust his hand into the very side which had been pierced by the Roman spear, he would not believe. But how condescendingly to him, and how graciously for the saints in all ages, did the blessed Lord, eight days after this unbelieving declaration, appear again gently to reprove him for his unbelief, but at the same time to afford to the church through him the memorable testimony that he wore still the same body; that the hands were the very same hands, still bearing the print of the nails which had fastened them to the cross, and that it was the very same side which still wore the thrust-mark of the Roman spear. If this were not a proof of actual identity where shall we find one? If this evidence be rejected, what remains but to reject the whole mystery of the resurrection as an idle tale? Learned men have, by comparing scripture with scripture, ascertained that the blessed Lord appeared ten times to eye-witnesses after his resurrection {1} and that at some of these appearances, as that memorable one recorded John 21:1-25, he conversed with his disciples as closely and as intimately as before his resurrection. And that his human body in which he ate and talked with them was not a shadowy appearance, which had neither flesh nor bones, he spake to them those ever-memorable words, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Luke 24:39 "Behold," said he, "my hands and my feet" - they are real hands, they are real feet; "that it is I myself," the same, the very same Jesus, having the same body which you saw him wear before; "handle me, and see," feel, if you will, whether it be real flesh or an aerial body, "for a spirit," such as you take me to be, a disembodied soul, or an airy, unreal phantasm, "hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Can anything be stronger than this the Lord's own testimony to the actual identity of his body before and after his resurrection? And if it be objected that, whatever the body of the Lord was then, it is now so exceedingly glorified that it has lost in that glory all the distinctive features of its former humanity, we reply. How was it with that same body before the resurrection, on the holy

mount, when it was transfigured before the three disciples, so that "his face did shine as the sun, and his very raiment," as borrowing lustre from his glorious humanity, "was white as the light?" Matthew 17:1-2 There we see that the brightest glory no more altered the identity or changed the substance of the Lord’s body than the glory of the face of Moses altered his. When we come to the ascension of our blessed Lord, we shall see this perhaps more clearly and distinctly still, or at least view more at length the blessings and benefits connected with it. {1} The Lord’s first appearance was to Mary Magdalene;- Mark 16:9-11; John 20:14-18; his second to the disciples journeying to Emmaus: Mark 16:12 Luke 24:13-32 his third to Simon Peter; Luke 24:33-34 1 Corinthians 15:5; his fourth to the eleven disciples in the absence of Thomas; Luke 24:36-43 John 20:19-25 his fifth to the eleven again, when Thomas was present; Mark 16:14 John 20:27-29 his sixth to the women who had at first visited the sepulchre; Matthew 28:9-10 his seventh to the apostles and five hundred brethren at once in Galilee; Matthew 28:16-20 1 Corinthians 15:6 his eighth to the disciples when fishing on the lake of Galilee; John 21:1-24; his ninth to James the Lord’s brother; 1 Corinthians 15:7 and his tenth and last to all the apostles assembled at Jerusalem just before his ascension. Luke 24:44-49 Acts 1:4-8 1 Corinthians 15:7. These are the "many infallible proofs" of which the Holy Ghost speaks Acts 1:3 that he was really and truly risen from the dead.

05.09. The Effects of the Redeemer's Resurrection

THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER’S RESURRECTION Chapter Nine from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of Our Blessed Redeemer

We shall attempt now to show the spiritual bearing and influence which the resurrection of the Lord has upon the believing soul. The apostle’s earnest desire and prayer were that he might "know the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of his resurrection." Php 3:10. It was not, then, the bare fact of his resurrection, or the mere doctrine of it as revealed in the scripture, which would satisfy his panting soul, though both of them in themselves as foundation truths full of unspeakable blessedness; but what his believing heart intensely longed to enjoy was the inward experience of its power, fruits, and effects. What was that power? Let us see, if we can, with God’s blessing, what it was to know and enjoy which drew forth such intense desires from Paul’s inmost soul. The prayer which this man of God offered for the church of God at Ephesus Ephesians 1:16-23 will, we think, form a blessed key to this experimental secret. Among the heavenly blessings which he there prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would grant unto them, he begs that "he would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that they might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 1:19-20. If we read the whole of that blessed prayer we shall see that the Lord Jesus is there spoken of as the Head and Representative of his body, the church - a multitude which no man can number. When, then, he died on the cross, he sank, so to speak, under the load of millions of sins, for "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree." We know, indeed, that by the shedding of his precious blood the sins of the church were purged away, and that he himself said, "It is finished," before he gave up the ghost; but as under the law the death of the victim was the essential part of the sacrifice, so, until the Lamb of God died, the sacrifice was not complete. In this sense, then, he died and sank into the grave under the tremendous weight of sin laid on his sacred head. By these, as dead under the law, he was bound fast in the tomb - faster than by the burial-clothes, the Roman guard, or the stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre; and by these he was held fast till the resurrection morn. These, then, were the "pains (or cords) {1} of death" of which Peter speaks, which held him fast. Acts 2:24. But God "loosed" these cords, because he being the Son of God and the Prince of life, "it was not possible that he should be holden" of death; and therefore he raised him up as the justified Head of his body the church, leaving in the grave the sins under the guilt and weight of which he had died. Being thus raised up as the head of the church, and openly acquitted and justified, she rose in and with him. This view of Christ’s resurrection may prepare us to enter more clearly and fully into the experimental meaning of that blessed prayer for the Ephesian believers, to which we have already referred; and to show us why the apostle prayed that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is here spoken of as a most miraculous display of the mighty power of God. Why was it such? Not surely in merely raising the dead body of the Lord

Jesus to life, for that miracle had been before done in the case of Lazarus and the widow's son, and in many other instances. But it was because in raising up Christ from the dead God raised up millions of redeemed sinners with him, and that, too, out of all their sins and miseries, which had sunk his sacred head, as bearing them all, into death and the grave. The church is, therefore, said to be "quickened together with Christ," and "raised up together with him;" Ephesians 2:5-6 Colossians 2:12-13; and believers are spoken of as "risen with Christ." Colossians 3:1. Now, what a living child of God longs to experience is the felt power of this resurrection - that as having been mystically and virtually quickened together with Christ at and in his resurrection from the dead, he may feelingly enjoy the spiritual power of that resurrection in his own soul, enabling him to rise up out of the cords of death which so often hold him firm and fast. This putting forth of the power of Christ to quicken, renew, and deliver the soul is so exceedingly great that it is compared by the apostle to the display of that mighty power which God put forth in raising Jesus from the dead. For though the believer was virtually and really quickened together with Christ when he rose from the dead, and has already risen out of the grave of death and sin by this power regenerating and making him alive unto God, yet he often sinks back into the gloomy grave of carnality and deadness. He therefore wants a mighty power to be put forth in his soul - the power of Christ's resurrection; for he feelingly needs the same almighty power which raised Jesus from the dead to raise him up once more to faith, and hope, and love. The resurrection of Jesus, and his interest therein as a quickened member of his body, is indeed the sure pledge that he shall again be blessed with this renewing, reviving grace; but 0 the power! - inwardly and experimentally to feel this power from time to time coming into his soul as the power of God came into the tomb of Christ and raised him from the dead; and by the experience of this power to rise with Christ to light, life, liberty, and love - this is indeed to have the kingdom of God which is not only "in power," but is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 4:20 Romans 14:17) As, then, by the resurrection of Christ the church was mystically "quickened together with him,", (Ephesians 2:5) so regeneration is the first proof, the initial pledge, of the resurrection of each individual believer with him. This is the first act of the power of Christ's resurrection as a felt, experimental reality in each member of his mystical body. As, then, the regenerated soul experiences more and more of the putting forth of this risen power, and feels more and more deeply and sensibly the contrast between the workings and movements of this hidden life and its own miserable darkness, bondage, and death when this divine fruit of Christ's resurrection is not realised, it hungers and thirsts after its renewed enjoyment. Regeneration in itself is an instantaneous act which cannot be repeated, but its effects are permanent. A child can be born but once; but having once breathed it breathes again; and without breath and food cannot live. So every sweet revival, gracious renewal, soft word, melting touch, comforting look, heavenly smile, applied promise, encouraging testimony, or blessed manifestation of or from the risen Lord of life and glory is not, indeed, regeneration, but the fruit and effect of it; and to experience it in the soul is to experience the power of his resurrection. The more we view by faith the resurrection of our adorable Redeemer, the more grace and glory shall we see shining through it; and the more we feel of our own sinfullness and helplessness, the more shall we desire to realise the power of that resurrection in our own personal experience. The guilt of sin makes us cleave to a dying Christ; the power of sin makes us hang upon a risen Christ. The Holy Ghost, therefore, in the scripture sometimes exhibits Jesus to our view as a slaughtered Lamb, and sometimes as the church's glorious risen Head. Holy John blessedly unites them both in one verse, "And from Jesus Christ,

who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Revelation 1:5) Though he had such a view of his glorious Person as a risen Jesus that he fell at his feet as dead, yet his faith departed not from the cross, or from the fountain opened therein for sin and for uncleanness. So blessed Paul, in the longing aspirations of his soul, breathes forth at one and the same moment his desires to know Christ risen and to sympathise with Christ suffering: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." (Php 3:10) Even in the courts of heaven, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, John had a view of a Lamb, standing "as it had been slain," and heard the song of the representatives of the redeemed as they fell down before him: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Revelation 5:9) Whether, then, dying on the cross, or risen from the dead, or ascended up on high, he is still Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," wearing still the same sacred humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin. We cannot separate Jesus' cross from Jesus' crown; the slaughtered Lamb from the risen Conqueror; the High Priest offering sacrifice from the High Priest carrying the blood within the veil; the church's suffering Surety from the Church's glorified Representative. We need him as much for what he was as for what he is. Without a dying Jesus there could be no redemption; without a living Jesus there could be no salvation. It is sweet to lie at the foot of the cross that the drops of his atoning blood may fall on the conscience; it is sweet to see his languid eyes sealed in death, and to know that he died the just for the unjust that he might bring us unto God; it is sweet to see the prisoner of death break through the barriers of the tomb and come forth into the light of heaven as the Church's justified Head; and it is sweet to see him ascended up on high to take possession of the kingdom given him by the Father before the foundation of the world. And well it is for poor sinners, and especially for those who are burdened with the guilt of sin, that it is so. For though we are said to be "come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, &c., and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," all which blessings spring from Christ risen, yet we are said also to be come "to the blood of sprinkling," which, as issuing from Christ crucified, "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." (Hebrews 12:22-24) We have dwelt a little largely upon this lest any apprehension might arise in our readers' minds that we are looking away from the cross by speaking so much of the resurrection. In thought they may be separated, but not in blessing; for as without the cross there could have been no atoning blood, so without the resurrection there could be no preveiling intercession. 1. One of the greatest blessings that spring out of an experimental knowledge of the power of his resurrection is the manifest justification thereby of every one who believes in the Son of God, according to those words, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:25) We have used the expression, "the manifest justification," for the elect are not really and actually justified by Christ's resurrection, but by the imputation of his active and passive obedience, as the apostle speaks, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:18-19) The resurrection of Christ from the dead is not, then, the procuring cause, but the manifest proof that his obedience to the law was accepted on their behalf, and that they were raised up together with him as justified

persons; for "in the LORD," that is, by virtue of union with him, "shall all the seed of Israel be justified;"; (Isaiah 45:25) and this they were manifestly when their covenant Head was raised up and openly acquitted of all law charges. Now as the resurrection of Christ was the manifest justification of their persons, so a knowledge of its power is the manifest justification of their consciences. For till Christ is revealed to the soul as risen from the dead, it is shut up under the law, full of guilt and condemnation, a prisoner in the pit where there is no water; but when he is manifested, or rather, when he manifests himself - which he could not do unless he were alive from the dead - he seals a sense of justification on the cconscience. "I bring near," he says, "my righteousness," (Isaiah 46:13) which he does when he experimentally clothes the soul with the garments of salvation, and covers it with the robe of righteousness. (Isaiah 61:10) Then the power of his resurrection experimentally felt raises the child of grace out of the grave of bondage and death, and by faith in him as a risen head, he is "justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39) Christ is thus sensibly made of God unto every believing soul righteousness; and in the language of faith he can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isaiah 45:24) This made the apostle say, "And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17) Why are you not, he might ask them, yet in your sins as regards their condemnation by the law? Because Christ is risen from the dead. Why are you not yet in your sins as regards their condemnation in your own conscience? Because by faith in him as risen from the dead you are justified experimentally from them. It is thus the apostle connects, in another place, the two blessings of manifest and experimental justification: "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 4:255:1) Why that "therefore" connecting the two chapters, but to show that as by Christ’s resurrection we are manifestly justified, so by faith in him as risen from the dead we are experimentally justified, of which the proof is to have peace with God? This justifying faith gives manifest union with Christ, and, opening up a divine channel of communication with him, produces another blessed fruit of the power of his resurrection: 2. Communion with him as a risen Head. In his last consoling discourse Jesus said to his disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:18-19) But being able only to view him with the natural eye, when his personal presence was withdrawn the world could see him no more. "But ye see me," said the blessed Lord to his disciples. And how should they see him? In the same way as is recorded of Moses: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27) Faith is the eye of the soul, for it is "the evidence of things not seen" by sense; and thus by faith they would see him at the right hand of the Father. But as they saw him there, would they not see him as a living Head, for he says, "Because I live, ye shall live also?" And would not life, flowing into them from union with him, flow back unto him in sacred communion? But he also said, "I will not leave you comfortless," as mourning my death and your own disappointed hopes; "I will come to you." But how? By personal manifestation. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21) Thus communion with Christ rests on three things - seeing him by faith, living upon his life, and experiencing his manifested presence. But all these three things depend on his resurrection and a knowledge of its power. As risen from the dead, the saints see him; as risen from the dead, they live a life of faith

upon him; as risen from the dead, he manifests himself unto them; and as life and feeling spring up in their souls from sweet communion with him, the power of his resurrection becomes manifest in them. The sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, as seen by faith, has a blessed effect in drawing the soul up unto himself. We cannot have communion with pure Deity. Our fallen condition and miserable state as guilty sinners has for ever shut out that way. But eyeing by faith the pure humanity of our adorable Redeemer, in union with his eternal Deity, we may now draw near to God in all holy boldness. The blood of Jesus gives us access within the veil, as the apostle urges, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19-22) And again, "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, for we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16) Now, just in proportion to our faith in him as a risen Head shall we feel the holy boldness of which the apostle speaks; and as thus venturing nigh and enabled to plead with him, pour out our heart before him, show before him all our trouble, confess our sins, bewail our backslidings, and seek some manifestations of his pardoning love, will communion with him be sensibly experienced, for he will more or less manifest himself, apply some comforting word, and melt and soften the heart into humility and love. This communion, therefore, with the Lord Jesus as a risen Head all the reconciled and justified saints of God are pressing forward after, according to the measure of their grace and the life and power of God in their soul. It is indeed often sadly interrupted and grievously broken through by the sin that dwelleth in us. But the principle is there, for that principle is life; and life is the privilege, the possession, and the distinction of the children of God. You need none to assure you that Jesus is risen from the dead if he manifests himself to your soul. You want no evidence that you are a sheep if you have heard and know his voice. So you may say, "Jesus is risen, for I have seen him; Jesus is risen, for I have heard him; Jesus is risen, for I live upon him." Communion with Jesus is the life of religion, and indeed without it religion is but an empty name. If without him we can do nothing; if he is our life, our risen covenant Head, our Advocate with the Father, our Husband, our Friend, our Brother, how are we to draw sap out of his fullness, as the branch from the vine, or to know him personally and experimentally in any one of his endearing relationships, unless by continual communion with him on his throne of grace? In fact, this is the grand distinguishing point between the living and the dead, between the true child of God and the mere professor, that the one has real union and communion with a risen Jesus and the other is satisfied with a form of godliness. Every quickened soul is made to feel after the power of God, after communion from above, after pardon and peace, after visitations of mercy and grace; and when he has had a view of Christ by faith, and some revelation of his Person and work, grace and glory, nothing afterwards can ever really satisfy him but that inward communion of spirit with Jesus whereby the Lord and he become one; "for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:17) 3. Another fruit of Christ’s resurrection, and closely and intimately connected with the foregoing, is, the rising with him of the spiritual affections of his believing people, as the apostle urges on the Colossian saints: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right

hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1-2) By nature we cleave to earth and to earthly objects. Our affections are buried in the grave of death, nor are we able of ourselves to raise them up to high and heavenly things. We need, then, the power of Christ's resurrection to be inwardly felt and realised, that, as risen with him our covenant Head, we may no longer lie buried in the things of time and sense, the vain and fleeting objects here below, but may set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Our Head is risen from the dead. Why, then, should we, the members of his body, still grovel here below in the dust of the earth? He is gone up on high. Let our affections mount with him. He is in heaven. Let our hearts be with him. Now, just in proportion as we realise the power of Christ's resurrection do we rise in our heart and affections up from this miserable earth, with all its cares and all its passing vanities. Nothing seems to be a greater evidence of the low, sunken state of the church in the present day than the manifest want of this heavenly grace. How few there are whose affections are set on things above. How few can really say, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Php 3:20) How few there are who, either by their conversation or their life, manifest that their heart is in heaven - we will not say continually, but ever there at all. How few seem to have any affectionate thoughts toward Jesus, any longing for his manifested presence - "0, when wilt thou come unto me?" - any delight in him as the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, any breaking forth of heart after him as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, any adoring contemplation of his glory, any inward retirement of spirit, whereby their wandering affections are gathered home and fixed upon heavenly things. We know, indeed, how cold, stupid, and carnal the heart often is, and how the affections stray after the things of time and sense; but to be always so, never to have any sweet incoming of divine life and power drawing the affections heavenward, how do such persons differ from those altogether dead in a profession? Where there is life, it will work; where there is faith, it will act; where there is love, it will flow. Such persons, to say the least, are in a very perilous condition, for if not wholly dead, their affections being so set on things of earth, they lie open to the worst snares of the devil and the flesh. Even some of the Lord's more clearly-manifested people are verily guilty in this matter. Some of them are bowed down with a daily load of care. Worldly anxieties fill their mind and occupy their thoughts from morning to night. Can these be said to be spiritually risen with Christ? Would not the power of his resurrection experimentally felt lift them up from their family cares, their business cares, their too often imaginary, their self-tormenting cares? Were their faith more firmly fixed on a risen Christ, their affections more set on a living Christ, what a load of carking cares would be removed from their shoulders! Others of the Lord's family are bowed down with worldly grief and sorrow. Some beloved object has been removed out of their sight, and their affections linger round the tomb which holds his earthly remains. The sorrow of the world is working death in them, nor can they look beyond the sepulchre to the resurrection. But is not Christ risen from the dead? Has he not destroyed death and him that had the power of death, and as having felt the power of his resurrection, should not their affections rise with him, and there find their happiness d their home, instead of seeking the living among the dead? Others, again, who once did run well, and whose heart and affections once emed fixed on heavenly things, through that root of all evil, the love of money, are now eagerly pursuing the world, intent upon gain, thinking they never can have enough, elated with every flush of success, and correspondingly depressed with failures and reverses. Knowing what we are by nature, and how surrounded by temptation on every side to do

evil, we cannot wonder that even those who have some marks of the fear of God in their hearts may be, for a time, left to live so far from the power of Christ's resurrection. But it will not always be so with them. There are in reserve for them heavy crosses, hot fires, deep waters; and by these, as so many chastening rods, they will be brought once more to feel the power of Christ's resurrection raising them out of their carnality and death, and then once more they will set their affections on things above. 4. Closely connected with the setting of our affections on things above, as the fruit of the resurrection of Jesus and of our union with him as a risen Head, is the being made spiritually-minded; that heavenly grace which contains in its bosom these two blessed fruits, "life and peace." (Romans 8:6) Just in proportion as our heart and affections are engaged on heavenly objects, shall we feel a sweet savour of heaven resting upon our spirit; and as we can only give back what we receive, every going forth of divine life from the soul below is but the fruit and effect of the incoming of that life from above. Christ is our life above; (Colossians 3:4) and as he by his Spirit and grace maintains the life of faith in the soul, it manifests itself in gracious actings upon himself. This movement of the life within up to its divine Author and Object is the breathing of the spirit from under its house of clay, the ascension of the soul up unto God, the taking possession beforehand of its mansion above, and sitting down with Christ in heavenly places before the glorious celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7; Revelation 19:9) Without this spirituality of mind religion is but a mere name, an empty mask, a delusion, and a snare. There must be wrought in the soul of every heir of glory before he departs out of this time-state what the apostle calls a being "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Colossians 1:12) God does not take into heaven, into the fullness of his own eternal bliss, those whom he does not love, and who do not love him. It is a prepared people for prepared mansions. And this preparedness for heaven, as an inward grace, much consists in that sweet spirituality of mind whereby heavenly things become our only happiness, and an inward delight is felt in them which enlarges the heart, ennobles the mind, softens the spirit, and lifts the whole soul, as it were, up into a holy atmosphere in which it bathes as its choice element. This is "life," not the cold, dead profession of those poor, carnal creatures who have only a natural faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the truths of his gospel; but that blessed life which shall never die, but live in the eternal presence of God when earth and all it holds shall be wrapped in the devouring flames. And it is "peace" - the Redeemer's dying legacy - whereby, as he himself fulfils it, he calms the troubled waves of the soul, stills every rebellious movement, and enthrones himself in the heart as the Prince of peace. 5. The last fruit of the resurrection of the blessed Lord that we shall mention is that it is the first fruits and pledge of the resurrection of the saints at the last day. So speaks the apostle in that chapter which has comforted thousands of mourners when they have laid in the tomb the remains of their beloved husbands, wives, children, or friends who have departed in the Lord. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) Christ risen is the first fruits of that mighty crop of buried dead whose remains still sleep in the silent dust, and who will be joined by successive ranks of those who die in him, till all are together wakened up in the resurrection morn. The figure is that of the sheaf of the first fruits which was waved before the Lord before the harvest was allowed to be reaped. (Leviticus 23:10-11) This offering of the wave sheaf was the consecration and dedication of the whole crop in the field to the Lord, as well as the manifest pledge that the harvest was fully ripe for the reaper's sickle. The first fruits represented

the whole of the crop, as Christ is the representative of his saints; the offering of them sanctified what was still unreaped in the field, as Christ sanctified or consecrated unto God the yet unreaped harvest of the buried dead; and the carrying them into the tabernacle was the first introduction therein of the crop, as Christ entering heaven as the first fruits secures thereby the entrance of the bodies of the saints into the mansions prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Thus Christ rising from the dead presented himself before the Lord as the first fruits of the grand harvest of the resurrection yet unreaped, and by so doing consecrated and dedicated the whole crop unto God. As, then, he rose from the dead, so shall all the sleeping saints rise from the dead at the last day, for his resurrection is the first fruits, the pledge, and earnest of theirs. His risen body also is the type to which the risen bodies of the saints are to be conformed, "for as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Corinthians 15:49) This is that glorious image to which the saints are to be all conformed. "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." (Romans 8:29) But though fully retaining all the essential characteristics of humanity, for otherwise it would cease to be manhood in conjunction with Godhead, yet so unspeakably glorious is this risen body of the blessed Lord, to the image of which the risen saints will be conformed, that in this time-state we can not only form no conception of its surpassing glory, but not even of that inferior degree of glory which will clothe the bodies of the saints at the resurrection. "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." (1 John 3:2) But of this we may be sure, that there will always be an essential and unapproachable distinction between the glory of Christ’s humanity and theirs. His humanity, being in eternal union with his Deity, derives thence a glory which is distinct from all other, and to which there can be no approach, and with which there can be no comparison. The glory of the moon never can be the glory of the sun, though she shines with his reflected light. "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" (Php 3:21) but though like, it will not be the same. It will be the saints’ eternal happiness to see him as he is, and to be made like unto him; but it will be their everlasting joy that he should ever have that pre-eminence of glory which is his birthright, and to adore which will ever be their supreme delight. To have a body free from all sin, sickness, and sorrow, filled to its utmost capacity of holiness and happiness, able to see him as he is without dying under the sight, and to be re-united to its once suffering but now equally glorified companion, an immortal soul, expanded to its fullest powers of joy and bliss - if this be not sufficient what more can God give? {1} The word "sorrows of death." Psalms 18:4, Psalms 116:3 to which Peter evidently alludes, is literally, in the Hebrew, "cords of death."

05.10. The Ascension

THE ASCENSION Chapter Ten from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

There is this peculiar blessedness in the Person and work of the adorable Redeemer, that, like the sun which shines in every clime, he is ever beaming forth out of his inexhaustible fullness rays of grace and glory, under every aspect, to believing eyes and hearts; so that the more we look to him the more we see in him to adore and love, the more we believe in his name the more it becomes as the ointment poured forth, and the more we experience of his grace the more we feel of its power. "Have I been," he asks his people, "a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" Jeremiah 2:31. No, Lord, we may well answer; not "a wilderness," for from thee is all our fruit found; not "a land of darkness," for with thee is the light of life. If, then, no fruit be gathered by us from that portion of the heavenly garden through which we now purpose, with God’s help and blessing, to walk with our readers, it is not because no fruit grows there, but because our eyes are too dim to see, or our hands too weak to reach it down from the tree of life. In this, as in everything else that we speak, write, or do in his name, we willingly acknowledge our shortcomings; for though we would wish to set forth to the utmost of our power the grace and glory of the incarnate Son of God; and though what has lately engaged our pen has not been without some amount of careful thought and consideration, yet we feel miserably to fail both in conception and expression, and must confess with Berridge, But we lisp and falter forth Broken words, not half his worth. And if this be true as regards our past Meditations on the holy humanity of Jesus in his state of humiliation here below, how much more must it be so when we have to view him as he now is, enthroned on high in all the fullness of his mediatorial grace and glory. Still, we essay the task, in the hope that our meditation of him may be sweet, and be attended with a blessing from on high to those who love his name and long for his appearing. For though he is exalted far beyond all present conception, yet in the word of truth we have a sure guide, by following which we may obtain some believing apprehensions of what he is to those who see him by faith at the right hand of the Father. 1. The first point, then, that will now engage our thoughts is the ascension of the blessed Lord; and the first step in our meditation upon it will be to prove the fact. This, in the depth of his wisdom. God has been pleased to place beyond all doubt or controversy, at least to all who receive the scriptures as an inspired revelation; and by so doing he has given us much reason to admire his infinite condescension and grace. The Lord might have ascended to heaven immediately after his resurrection, without showing himself to his disciples; or after appearing to them, to prove that he was risen from the dead, he might have gone up on high without any eye-witnesses of his ascension. But that so stupendous and yet so indispensable a fact might rest on an immovable foundation, the Lord did not ascend till forty days after the resurrection, that by his repeated appearances to his disciples he might afford them so many "infallible proofs" Acts 1:3 that indeed he was risen from the dead; and when he went up on high it was in the presence and in the open sight of his eleven apostles, that not only they themselves might have the evidence of their own eyes, the strongest of all possible proofs, but that through all ages the church might be

able to rest with sure confidence on such indubitable testimony. The fact, then, of the Lord's ascension we have now more particularly to show from the scriptures of truth. On the morning of that day on which he ascended to heaven the blessed Lord appeared for the tenth and last time to his followers. The eleven apostles met together at his command in Jerusalem, and there Jesus appeared in their midst. As we read: "And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 1:4-5. During this last solemn interview the Lord conversed at some length with his disciples, as recorded, for we need not quote the passages at length. Mark 16:15-18 Luke 24:44-49 Acts 1:4-8. He thus afforded them not only the sweet consolation of his actual, living presence before he was parted from them, but the clearest possible evidence that he was the very same Jesus whom they had so well known and so dearly loved in the days of his flesh, during the whole time that he had consorted with them. Having, then, afforded them this confirming evidence that it was indeed he himself, he ascended visibly before their eyes to give to them - and to the church of God through all ages by them - the surest testimony that he had gone up into heaven in the same bodily form, the same identical humanity, in which they had ever known him. As this is so important a feature of our present subject, and must form the foundation of our Meditations upon it, we will quote the very language of the Holy Ghost as we find it written in the inspired page: "And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Luke 24:50-53. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." Acts 1:9. Consider for a moment the strength of this testimony. Could these eleven men have been deceived or mistaken in what they thus personally witnessed? Most of them afterwards laid down their lives in confirmation of what they then saw. When, then, they viewed him with whom they had been for some time holding sweet converse taken up before their eyes, and they watched his ascension till a cloud received him out of their sight, could they have had a more indubitable testimony of the fulfilment of his own words, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father?" John 16:28. And again, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." John 20:17. But to leave not a shadow of doubt on their minds, and to seal it more effectually on their hearts, as well as to assure them of his future return, the Lord was graciously pleased to add to their own eye-witness angelic testimony: "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said. Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:10-11. It may seem, perhaps, to some of our readers, almost unnecessary for us to have brought forward so much scripture testimony on a point which no believer doubts. But, through some little acquaintance with the unbelief and infidelity of the human heart, and continued assaults from that quarter, we have long seen and felt in our own mind that faith wants the strongest and surest foothold that God has given on which it may stand during seasons of darkness and temptation. Some never seem to doubt either the certainty of the rock or their own standing on it; but we freely confess that there are times and seasons with us when hell, with all its infernal

artillery, and the infidelity of the human mind combine together to shake our faith to its very centre. But we have learnt this lesson in the school of temptation, that faith needs the firmest possible foothold on which it may stand while the storm rages. As, then, the shipwrecked sailor, washed ashore by the heaving billow, cleaves with all his strength to the rock which he has happily reached, lest the receding wave should sweep him out to sea, so does the believing soul, landed on the rock of truth, cleave with all its might to the word of God's grace, lest the wave of infidelity sweep it away to the sea of destruction. Now, when by divine grace faith can stand upon facts so clearly attested as the resurrection and ascension of the blessed Lord, it feels that there is firm ground beneath its feet; and that in believing in a risen and ascended Lord it does not "follow cunningly-devised fables," but receives the truth as it is in Jesus from the sure witness of those who "have made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as eye-witnesses of his majesty." 2 Peter 1:16. Faith, too, needs food as well as foothold; and it is upon these divine verities, so plainly revealed and so clearly established in the word of truth, that faith feeds as its choice provision. The time may come with you, dear reader, when you may feel as if clambering up a steep and lofty mountain, whose top you must reach or die; and yet, with all your exertion, every stone on which you would place your foot rolls away from under you, filling you with dread at every step lest life be lost or limb be broken. Under such circumstances how you would prize a solid rock on which, step by step, you could set your trembling, staggering feet. This rock is Christ, which God has laid in Zion; but that faith may stand upon it unmoved, immovable by the assaults of unbelief and infidelity, he has in the word of his grace laid this foundation firm and sure by the strongest testimony. 2. Having, then, seen the strong foundation on which the ascension of the blessed Lord rests as an ascertained fact, we may now proceed to view him by faith as entering the courts of bliss. And the first most obvious view that faith obtains of him is that he entered heaven in the same identical human body in which he last communed with his disciples, and which they had seen taken up before their eyes; for one part of "the great mystery of godliness" is that "God manifest in. the flesh" was "received up into glory," and therefore in the same flesh as that in which he was thus manifested. 1 Timothy 3:16. Dr. Owen has so clearly expressed the faith of the church on this vital point that we prefer giving his words to any of our own: "All perfections whereof human nature is capable, abiding what it was in both the essential parts of it, body and soul, do belong unto the Lord Jesus Christ in his glorified state. To ascribe unto it what is inconsistent with its essence is not an assignation of glory unto its state and condition, but a destruction of its being. To affix unto human nature divine properties, as ubiquity or immensity, is to deprive it of its own. The essence of his body is no more changed than that of his soul. It is a fundamental article of faith that he is in the same body in heaven wherein he conversed here on earth; as well as the faculties of his rational soul are continued the same in him. This is that 'holy thing' which was framed immediately by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin. This is that 'Holy One' which, when it was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that body which was offered for us, wherein he bare our sins on the tree. To fancy any such change in or of this body, by its glorification, as that it should not continue essentially and substantially the same that it was, is to overthrow the faith of the church in a principal article of it. We believe that the very same body wherein he suffered for us, without any alteration as to its substance, essence, or integral parts, and not another body of an ethereal, heavenly structure, wherein is nothing of flesh, blood, or bones, by which he so frequently testified the faithfulness of God in his incarnation, is still that temple wherein God dwells, and wherein he administers in the holy place not made with hands. The body which was

pierced is that which all eyes shall see, and no other." - A Declaration of the Mystery of the Person of Christ, Chap. XIX. By Dr. Owen. The clearness, wisdom, holy and heavenly sobriety of the above extract need no commendation from us. {1} It speaks sufficiently for itself to those who know and love the truth, and are willing to submit themselves to the oracles of God as its own infallible source. We must have no tampering, then, with that fundamental article of our most holy faith, that the Lord Jesus took into heaven the identical humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin. But this thorough identity of his holy humanity does not impair or detract from every perfection as now made manifest in that glorified human nature which is consistent with its preserving its real form and essence. And of this we seem to have a very clear proof in the word of truth. When holy John had a revelation of his glorified humanity, in the Isle of Patmos, it was not of an aerial body, retaining no traces of the human form, a Jesus whom he could not at once recognise as having seen him before in the flesh, but "one like unto the Son of man" - that very same Son of man whom he had known here below - one, too, who had "head, and hair, and eyes, and feet, and hands," these human members all still retained in their entirety, but all unspeakably glorious; and whose "countenance" still the same human countenance "was as the sun shineth in his strength." Revelation 1:13-16. It is necessary, indeed, to bear in mind that whilst we speak of the identity of the risen and ascended body of the Lord, we utterly separate from it what the apostle calls "the weakness" of Christ; "he was crucified through weakness;" 2 Corinthians 13:4; for though this weakness was compatible with, and even necessary unto, his state of humiliation, it is not consistent with a heavenly condition, or his exaltation to eternal glory. The body of the blessed Lord ate, and drank, and slept, was weary and thirsty here below. But no such infirmities, or, to speak more correctly, no such sinless contingencies of a state of humiliation were taken with him into heaven. His body and soul are still identically and unalterably the same as they were upon earth; but heavenly glory, without destroying or even impairing the reality of his human nature, has eternally swallowed up all those mere passing and contingent circumstances which necessarily attended his humanity in a time-state. This will also be the case with the risen bodies of the saints at the great day, as the apostle so beautifully speaks: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:51-53. But though they will be fashioned after the likeness of the risen body of Jesus, we must ever bear in mind that the glory of Christ’s human nature in its mediatorial state essentially differs from that glory which will clothe the souls and bodies of the risen saints at the great day; for his humanity, as existing in intimate union with his divine Person, is there-by eternally distinguished from theirs, and exalted infinitely beyond any glory which the risen bodies of the saints shall wear. They will indeed see his glory face to face with-out a vail between, Job 19:27 John 17:24 1 Corinthians 13:12, and be partakers of it, which will be their eternal joy; John 17:22 Luke 22:29-30 Revelation 3:21; they will be conformed in body and soul to his glorified image, so as to be eternally resplendent in all the beauties of holiness; Psalms 17:15 1 Corinthians 15:49 Php 3:21; and as such they will "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3. But with all this eternal weight of glory, the glorified humanity of the blessed Lord, from its ineffable union with his Deity, will ever differ from theirs not only in degree, but in nature. For this reason, his human nature, as being so glorious from its conjunction with his Deity, is the object of adoration and worship of all creatures the very same worship which is paid to the

Person of the Father: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Revelation 5:13. This glory it has from its subsistence in his divine Person, therefore inherent in it, and thus essentially distinct from the inferior glory of the risen saints, who have it as a gift and not a necessary adjunct. All the glory which they will have is from him as a gift of his grace, and as being members of his mystical body; but it dwells in him in all its fountain fullness, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." What we have here, or shall have hereafter, is only by gift; but what he is and has he is and has by right. Besides which, though his sacred humanity in its glorified state still remains a creature, and neither is nor can be deified, yet, from its intimate conjunction with his Deity it receives emanations of power and glory which we may apprehend by faith, but of which no adequate conception can ever be formed by a finite intellect, not even of the highest angel. His eternal Deity irradiates his humanity with a lustre beyond its own, and shines through it with resplendent glory, as the sun shines through a cloud, or as at the moment of his transfiguration the glorious Person of the God-man made "his raiment become shining exceeding white as snow." Mark 9:3. If such a comparison be admissible, as our soul ennobles our body, and thus, even in our fallen state, as being an immortal principle, separates us from the lower creation, so the essential Deity of the Son of God ennobles his humanity, and separates it from all approach or comparison of the inferior glory of his risen saints. But we pause, lest we seem to intrude too much on high and speculative subjects, though, as far as we have gone, we cannot but feel they are blessed mysteries when apprehended by a living faith. 3. We may pass on, then, to examine in what way, and to accomplish what special purposes of wisdom and grace the blessed Lord entered upon his present state of mediatorial exaltation at the right hand of the Father. And viewing him as ascending on high that, in his complex Person as God-man, he might be "set at God’s own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," Ephesians 1:20-21, we may consider his entrance into his glory Luke 24:26 under these two different aspects: as a triumphant King, and as a gracious High Priest. He entered heaven, then, in glorious triumph, to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom, as Zion’s anointed King, and "to sit and rule upon his throne." Psalms 2:6 Zechariah 6:13 Luke 1:32-33. God the Father had appointed unto him a kingdom Luke 22:29 as the reward of his incarnation and humiliation, Php 2:9-10 Hebrews 2:9, and this he went into heaven to take possession of. Luke 19:12 Revelation 3:21. Immediately, then, that he left earth, and was received out of the sight of the eleven apostles in a cloud of glory, his royal progress began. Surely, if a chariot of fire and horses of fire were despatched to take Elijah up to heaven, 2 Kings 2:11. the blessed Lord had no inferior convoy. Was the servant so honoured, and was no honour paid to the Master? Should the subject be taken gloriously to heaven, and the King have no train of celestial glory? Did "his train fill the temple" when Isaiah "saw his glory and spake of him?" Isaiah 6:1-13; 1 John 12:41; and did no train of glory follow him as he ascended on high to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom? But we are not left to conjecture upon this point. The scripture affords the clearest proof of the triumphant manner in which the Lord of life and glory went up on high. In Psalms 68:1-35 there is a blessed description of the glorious convoy of angels which attended him on his royal progress up to heaven’s gates; for as, when "he shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation," he will be "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," 2 Thessalonians 1:7, and shall "come in the glory

of his Father, with his angels," Matthew 16:27, so thousands upon thousands of ministering angels attended upon him at his triumphant ascension. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them" Psalms 68:17-18. This triumphant ascension of the blessed Lord is also clearly intimated in Psalms 47:1-9, "0 clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph; for the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises; for God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding." Psalms 47:1-2; Psalms 47:5-7. Nor are we left without scriptural intimations even of the blessed Lord's reception at the very courts of bliss. When he reached the gates of heaven the celestial courts were, as it were, moved at his approach, for then was accomplished that memorable transition recorded in Psalms 24:1-10. As thus represented to our faith, it was as if the attendant angels that formed his glorious convoy shouted aloud before him, as the heralds of his approach, "Lift up your heads, 0 ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Psalms 24:7. But from within is made the inquiry, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is given from without by the attendants of his train, "The LORD, strong and mighty; the LORD, mighty in battle." Then comes forth the universal chorus, from without and from within, "Lift up your heads, 0 ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory." Psalms 24:9-10. We do not say, it might be rash to assert it, that all this was literally and actually transacted, for heavenly realities are beyond the range of human conception; but it is so represented to our faith in the word of truth; and as such we receive it in the simplicity of little children. Nor were good angels the only attendants of his train. Ancient kings, returning home after triumphant wars, brought back conquered enemies as well as congratulating friends. In a similar way the blessed Lord is represented in scripture as then manifestly triumphing over Satan and all his angels, as if in his glorious ascension, when "he led captivity captive," he dragged at his chariot-wheels the infernal hosts of hell, and openly showed them to all the holy angels as vanquished prisoners. Thus, at least, the apostle speaks, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," that is, the cross, or, to adopt the marginal rendering, "in himself." Colossians 2:15. The ancient promise was that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." When Satan, by entering into Judas, and by instigating the chief priests and the people to demand that Christ should be crucified, had, as he thought, effectually succeeded in destroying Jesus, he little imagined that this was to be, by God's eternal design, the very means of accomplishing that prediction. On the cross the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head the seat of his poison-fangs, as well as of his infernal craft and cruelty. There Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, and cast them out of their usurped dominion. But when he ascended on high he "led captivity captive;" Psalms 68:18; Ephesians 4:8; that is, he led captive those who had led poor fallen man captive, in the open sight of all the angelic host, that the elect angels might be eye-witnesses of the ruin and misery which had fallen on the heads of their apostate brethren in the defeat of all their schemes against the Holy One of Israel. It would appear, from the testimony of scripture, that the holy angels were partially, if not wholly, ignorant of the designs of God in the mystery of the incarnation till all was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus; and even now are waiting for further developments of the wisdom

of God as therein displayed in the present grace and future glory of the church of Christ. This was represented in the Levitical dispensation by the cherubim looking toward the mercy-seat of the ark, as Peter explains the figure, "which things the angels desire to look into;" 1 Peter 1:12; and observe that the apostle does not say that they "desired," but that they "desire," that is, still desire, to look into these heavenly mysteries, to afford them renewed discoveries of the wisdom and glory of God; for it is not by creation, with all its wonders, nor by providence, in all its displays, that the wisdom of God is made known to angelic minds, but by redemption. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:10-11. With what surpassing and resplendent glory, then, was the infinite wisdom of God displayed to these bright, angelic intelligences when, at the ascension of their Lord and ours, they personally witnessed how, in that very nature which "was made a little lower than the angels," in his state of humiliation, he had defeated all the designs of Satan, vindicated the honour of God, glorified his justice, magnified the law given by their ministration and made it honourable, revealed the grace, mercy, and love of the Father in the salvation of millions of redeemed sinners, and was now returning triumphant into heaven to reign and rule at the right hand of the Majesty on high. 4. And this leads us to consider the ends for which Jesus ascended thus triumphantly into glory. They may be briefly viewed as two, which may be severally characterised by the two different instruments of regal power which the enthroned King of Zion bears as the insignia of his authority. i. The rod of iron whereby he rules over his enemies. This has been put into his hands by his Father: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel." Psalms 2:9. "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies," was the charter of his authority, when the Father said unto him, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Psalms 110:1-2. Thus power is given him "over all flesh;" John 17:2; yea, "all power in heaven and in earth;" Matthew 28:18; for "God hath put all things," and therefore "all enemies," "under his feet." 1 Corinthians 15:25-27. All persons and things are subject to his control; and though "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed; he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." Psalms 2:4. ii. But there is the sceptre of his grace, by which he rules in the hearts of a willing people; Psalms 110:3; bows them at his feet in sweet submission to his will; and becomes enthroned in their heart and affections as the Prince of peace. But as we shall have occasion to speak more particularly of the exercise of this twofold kingly power when we come to the consideration of our Lord’s present state in heaven, we shall not dwell any longer on this branch of our subject, but proceed to view the adorable Redeemer as: 5. Ascending on high that he might be a High Priest over the house of God, and that "not after the law of a carnal commandment," as the priests under the law, "but after the power of an endless life." Hebrews 7:16. It was prophesied of him that he should be "a Priest on his throne." Zechariah 6:13. as uniting in his glorious Person the regal and priestly dignities. Of this conjunction of king and priest in one Person Melchisedec was a type, who was "king of Salem and priest of the most high God;" Hebrews 7:1; and we know that the testimony of God to his dear Son was, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Psalms 110:4 Hebrews 7:17. When, then, the blessed Lord had fulfilled one part of his priestly office here below by offering the sacrifice of his sacred humanity, his pure body and his holy soul, on the cross, thereby making an expiation for the sins of his people, he went up on high to accomplish on their behalf the second part of the priestly office, which is to make intercession

for them. Romans 8:34 Hebrews 7:25. This was beautifully typified by what took place on the solemn day of atonement, when the high priest, wearing the holy linen garments, a type of the pure humanity of Jesus, first offered sacrifice in the outer court and made atonement for sin, and then, with the blood of the bullock and of the goat, and the smoke of incense beaten small, lighted by coals taken from the brazen altar, entered into the most holy place. This most holy place was a type of heaven, Hebrews 9:24, and the ascension of our great High Priest thither was represented by the steps up which the high priest went when, after offering sacrifice, he entered with the blood into the temple. We may also observe that when the high priest thus ascended the steps of the temple to present himself before the Lord in the most holy place, this was the very time when the jubilee trumpet sounded through the land, and proclaimed liberty to all slaves and captives, and to those who had sold their houses and lands that they might freely return and take possession of them. Thus when Christ ascended up on high to enter heaven with his own blood, proclamation was made of pardon and peace, for then began the spiritual jubilee, when those who lay captive under the law, in bondage to doubt and fear, and who had sold themselves and all their possessions for nought were to be liberated by the joyful sound of a free grace gospel preached by the apostles on the day of Pentecost. {1} We have often thought that if the children of God who are blessed with time and opportunity, instead of galloping over the flimsy religious productions of the present day, would set themselves prayerfully and carefully to read such works as Owen on "The Person of Christ," his "Meditations on the Glory of Christ," his "Communion with God," his "Exposition of Psalms 130:1-8," etc., they would, with God’s blessing, derive a benefit from them which would amply repay them. We can say for ourselves that when favoured with a spiritual frame - and there is no profit even in reading the Bible in any other - we have rarely taken up any of the above-named works without finding some instruction, or edification, or reproof, or something to do our soul good, and draw it up to heavenly things.

05.11. King of Kings

KING OF KINGS Chapter Eleven from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

If favoured with that "anointing" from above which "teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," dropping into our heart and from our pen, our "meditation of him will be sweet" to both writer and reader. And indeed, if in any art of our Meditations on this sacred subject we especially need the unction of his grace to lead us into the truth, to endue us with the spirit of faith so as to receive into a believing heart what the Holy Ghost has revealed in the inspired word, to be kept from unhallowed, presumptuous speculation, whilst treading such sacred ground, and to unfold with any measure of holy and heavenly wisdom the mysteries of the kingdom of grace and glory of our risen and ascended Lord, it is now, when we approach that part of our subject where we have to contemplate him as seated at the right hand of the Father. We have seen him rising from the dead and ascending up on high, and our last view of him was his triumphant entry into the courts of heaven, or, as the Holy Ghost expresses it, "received up into glory." 1 Timothy 3:16. The subject, then, of our present Meditation will be a view by faith of what Jesus now is at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But before we enter upon this most blessed theme, as the proposed subject of our Meditations was "The Sacred Humanity of our adorable Redeemer," it may not be out of place to cast a glance at this sacred humanity in its present exalted state of majesty and glory. The exaltation of human nature, (what the scripture calls "the flesh and blood of the children," Hebrews 2:14, meaning thereby the whole of our humanity, body and soul,) as a necessary but most blessed consequence of its intimate and indissoluble union with the divine Person of the Son of God, is the greatest display of the wisdom, love, and grace of a Triune Jehovah that could be afforded to men or angels. In our present time-state, whilst groaning in our earthly house of this tabernacle, surrounded by evils innumerable without, and burdened with a body of sin and death within, we can only apprehend and realise by faith what our nature now is in union with the Person of the Son of God, and what it hereafter will be in that great day when he shall come "to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe," when he "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Php 3:21. Viewed, however, by mortal eyes, as an object of existing sight and sense, human nature can now only be seen in its debased, degraded condition. The original beauty and glory of man, as made in God’s image, after his own likeness, were utterly lost in the Adam fall. Sin has marred body and soul, filling the former with disease and pain, and the latter with pollution and corruption. Of this we have daily experience, not only in its most pressing and painful form as the poison in our own body and soul, often making us groan, being burdened, as regards ourselves, but as witnessing also with grief the pain and misery of others by which we are surrounded, and seeing spread before our eyes the vile abominations which run down our streets like water. But this is not all. Though even of this world’s present misery and sin but an infinitely small fraction has pressed on our heart or entered our eyes or ears, we have not seen, and God grant we never may see, how human nature thoroughly let loose can

both sin and suffer. What sins it is capable of we feel in ourselves, for in our own hearts lie deeply imbedded and struggling for life and growth the vital seeds of every foul and damnable crime; what it has done, and is ever greedily, exultingly, remorselessly doing in others, abandoned to its lusts, we see or read in daily act. Even in this civilised land what foul crimes are continually surging up to view, as if from a bottomless deep, where sin is ever seething and boiling as in a flaming cauldron. But in this present life human nature is no more what it will be hereafter in the unregenerate, than what it will be hereafter in the regenerate. Its future capacity for sin is no more known by the iniquities which it now throws up into open view than the depths of the sea by the seaweed cast upon the shore. Take all the depths unfathomed, unfathomable, of your own heart, or look at the vilest wretch whom sins of every shape and name have debased to the lowest pitch, steeped to the neck in blood and crime, so sworn a foe of all laws, human and divine, that, if to be taken in no other way, he must be shot down like a wild beast for the security of the lives of the community; when you have probed the depths of your own heart, or painted in your own imagination the blackest wretch that the hulks have ever held, or vomited forth on a penal colony, you have not then seen or imagined in your mind the millionth part of what human nature really is as sunk and debased by the Adam fall. The very present constitution of the human body, the limited powers of the mind, the laws of society, the restraint of God’s providence, and a thousand other visible or invisible checks, now keep human nature shut up in itself, as a wild beast in an iron cage. Nor will earth ever witness the full outburst of the fury of sin as blazing forth in the body and soul of man to its utmost height. Hell, and hell alone will fully manifest, as hell, and hell alone will fully develop human nature as burning with the most intense and unquenchable enmity and blasphemy against God and the Lamb. But take the converse. We have taken a glimpse at human nature debased and degraded, polluted by sin and set on fire of hell. Now view human nature pure and holy, unspotted, unfallen, and especially look at it as exalted above angels, principalities, and powers in the glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. There we see humanity in intimate personal and indissoluble union with Deity. 0 the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in suffering man, made after his own image, to sink so low, and in the Person of his dear Son to exalt it so high that the same nature should be in hell and in heaven; in hell, outvying devils in blasphemy in heaven, in union with Deity. It is at human nature thus exalted that we would now chiefly look; and if we have thus briefly touched upon man as debased and degraded by sin, we have thrown in these gloomy colours merely by way of contrast. As in a picture the dark shades set off and more clearly bring out the bright lights, so the very degradation of human nature by sin and its miserable consequences only more clearly brings out into open view the stupendous grace displayed in its glorious exaltation in the Person of the Son of God. These thoughts, though at first sight perhaps somewhat discursive and foreign to our subject, may, with God’s blessing, prepare our minds to approach that portion of our heavenly theme on which we now attempt to enter. We have, in our past Meditations, beheld the blessed Lord ascend up on high, and have by faith traced his course up to the very gates of heaven; we have seen his angelic convoy, viewed his dismayed foes, and heard the shouts of exultation from the heavenly host which welcomed him home. We have now, then, to consider the place to which he thus triumphantly ascended, and the end and object of his triumphant entry there. The place into which he ascended is heaven, by which we mean the immediate residence of God in all his majesty and glory. The blessed Lord is said Hebrews 4:14 to have "passed into," or rather, as the word literally means, "through the heavens," i.e., the material heavens, both the watery heavens, Genesis 7:11 Deuteronomy 28:12

Job 38:29; Job 38:37, and the starry heavens; Psalms 8:319:1; and to be "made higher" than they, that is, not only actually but locally. Hebrews 7:26. It is, then, into "the heaven of heavens," Psalms 148:4, or "the third heaven," 2 Corinthians 12:2, that the Lord ascended when he went up on high. He is therefore said to be "set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." Hebrews 8:1. We shall chiefly direct our present thoughts to the blessed Lord in the immediate presence of God as Zion's enthroned King. Just before the Lord ascended up on high he "came and spake" unto his eleven disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18. Previous to his resurrection his was a state of humiliation and suffering, for "he was made a little lower than the angels;" Hebrews 2:9; "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death;" Php 2:8; was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" Isaiah 53:3; yea, "a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Psalms 22:6. But when he arose from the dead, his humiliation was past, and his glory began, as Peter speaks, "Who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory." 1 Peter 1:21. Thus his resurrection was the commencement of his mediatorial reign, and his ascension and going up into heaven was the entering into possession of it, as he himself said to the two disciples, when journeying with them to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke 24:26. When, then, he entered into glory, he took possession of the throne of David, according to the promise made of him unto the Virgin Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:32-33. He was then "called the Son of the Highest," i.e., openly proclaimed as the Son of God, at and by his resurrection, for he was then "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead;" Romans 1:4; and when he went up on high, and was set "at God's right hand in the heavenly places," Psalms 47:4; Psalms 68:18 Ephesians 1:20, he "received the kingdom," as he intimated in the parable of the nobleman and his ten servants: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Luke 19:12. The "far country" is heaven; the "kingdom" received is his present mediatorial reign; and his returning is his second coming. He received the kingdom not only as a kingdom of grace and glory, but as a kingdom of authority and power. All things were then put under his feet, and all power given him in heaven and earth. The universal power, the spiritual nature, and the eternal duration of this kingdom are no less clearly than beautifully unfolded in Psalms 72:1-20 : "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." And that this exaltation to the right hand of God is for the good of his people, and that he might be the spiritual, ever-living Head of his church, is blessedly unfolded by the apostle where, speaking of Christ's resurrection, he says that God "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under

his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1:20-23. Men have unhappily thrown discredit upon this most blessed doctrine of the kingship of Christ, which, as revealed in the scriptures, is full of sweet consolation to the exercised family of God, by carnalising it into an earthly millennium. No doubt there are glories in this sovereign rule of Jesus to be one day more fully manifested, but it is proposed to our faith all through the New Testament as an object of our present spiritual experience; for as Zion's enthroned King he is the Head of his body the church, and as such supplies her out of his own inexhaustible fullness. He died that we might never die. To him, as raised from the dead, we are married that we might "bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4. "Because he lives we shall live also." John 14:19. To him, as our enthroned King, we give the allegiance of our hearts; before his feet, as our rightful Sovereign, we humbly lie; and we beg of him, as possessed of all power, to subdue our iniquities, subdue our rebellious lusts, and sway his peaceful sceptre over every faculty of our soul. That he should thus reign and rule, and that over all flesh, Matthew 28:18 John 17:2 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 Hebrews 2:8, was the promise made unto him in Psalms 2:1-12, the subject of which is the exaltation of the Son of God as the anointed King of Zion. This exaltation of the Son of God in our nature made "the heathen rage, and the people [i.e., the Jewish people] imagine a vain thing," which was, that by their rebellion and disobedience they could "break the bands asunder, and cast away the cords" in which they were bound by God's firm decree, when he said, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." This exaltation of the Son of God in our nature, as of the seed of David, Peter preached in that Pentecostal sermon which the Holy Ghost so inspired and so honoured: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear; for David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:32-36. Jesus is here declared to be made by the Father "both Lord and Christ," that is. King and Priest "Lord," as invested with sovereign and supreme dominion, "Christ," as the anointed High Priest over the house of God. This exaltation of the Lord Jesus was given him as a reward for his incarnation, humiliation, and suffering obedience, as the apostle so beautifully speaks, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Php 2:8-11. This exaltation wherewith God hath so "highly exalted him," is to his own right hand; and "the name which he hath given him, which is above every name," is that of "Lord," that in our nature as God-man he might rule and reign, and exercise supreme dominion and sovereign authority over things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. The mystery of grace and glory contained in and made manifest by this exaltation of the Son of God is not that he reigns and rules as one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for this he did as one with them in essence, power, and glory before the foundation of the world; but that he reigns and rules as God-man as the Son of God and yet the Son of man, as David's Lord and yet as David's Son. (See the following scriptures: Matthew 22:42-45 John 10:26-27 Acts 7:55-56 Romans 1:3; Ephesians 1:20-23 Hebrews 2:9). This

exaltation of Jesus to the throne of glory was typified by the glorious throne which Solomon made for himself, and on which he sat in royal state: "Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind; and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there, on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom." 1 Kings 10:18-20. It was "a great throne," to show the greatness of his power and dominion; made of "ivory," to denote purity and perfection; and "overlaid with the best gold," to signify value and preciousness. It had "six steps," to denote elevation; and "the top was round behind," to signify that past and present were alike open to view, that there was no escaping the sight and power of him who sat on it, for the throne being round, he could turn his eyes and hands in all directions. There were "stays on either side on the place of the seat," to signify the firmness of the throne; and the two lions beside the stays and the twelve lions on the six steps denoted the power and authority of him who sat thereon, for he is the Lion of Judah. Revelation 5:5 Genesis 49:9. This aspect of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus as the enthroned King of Zion is a blessed subject of meditation when we consider its bearing upon the helpless, defenceless condition of the church of God. She stands surrounded by foes, internal, external, infernal; and all armed against her with deadly enmity. "Behold, I send you forth," said the blessed Lord, "as sheep among wolves." Matthew 10:16. What would have become of the flock, especially in those early times, when persecution so raged on every side, unless the Lord Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, had guarded the fold? Never could the church have more loudly sung the song of preserving power: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul." Psalms 124:1-5. And even now, when the strong arm of the law protects them from external violence, what would become of the saints of God had they no sovereign Protector, who, in their nature, as their Head and Husband, rules and reigns on their behalf in the courts of heaven? We are encompassed with foes; for "we wrestle" not only "against flesh and blood" - strong in others, but far more strong and subtle in ourselves but - "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. What hope or help, then, can we have but in that all-seeing eye, which sees; that all-sympathising heart, which feels; that all-powerful hand, which delivers the objects of his love from all the snares and wiles, and defeats all the plans and projects of these mighty, implacable foes? As our enthroned King, also, Jesus is the especial object of our faith. We daily and hourly feel the workings of mighty sins, raging lusts, powerful temptations, besetting evils, against the least and feeblest of which we have no strength. But as the eye of faith views our blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father, we are led by the power of his grace to look unto him, hang upon him, and seek help out of him. Trials in providence, afflictions in the family, sickness and infirmities in the tabernacle, crooked things in the church, opposition and persecution from the world, a vile, unbelieving heart, which we can neither sanctify nor subdue, a rough and rugged path, increasing in difficulty as we journey onward, doubts, fears, and misgivings in our own bosom, inward slips and falls, wanderings, starlings aside, and hourly backslidings from the strait and narrow path, jealous enemies watching for our halting, with no eye to pity, nor arm to help, but the Lord’s how all these foes and fears make us feel our need of an enthroned King, Head, and Husband, whose tender heart is soft to pity, whose mighty arm is

strong to relieve! It is good also to bear in mind that Jesus, as Zion's exalted King, has received "gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." This Peter puts prominently forward in that sermon which he preached on the memorable day of Pentecost. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:33. It was as our enthroned King, that he received and shed forth the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, the promised Comforter. The same blessed truth is asserted and unfolded by the apostle Paul, Ephesians 4:1-32 : "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Ephesians 4:8-10. The apostle is here alluding to the prophetic declaration in Psalms 68:18. One expression in this declaration is very sweet and beautiful, according to the marginal rendering. "Thou hast received gifts for men" is in the margin, "in the man," i.e., in his human nature, in which he is exalted as our anointed King. The gift of the Comforter was, so to speak, dependent on the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." John 16:7. Thus he is said to send the Comforter, John 15:26, which he only does by virtue of his exaltation and glorification at the right hand of God, as holy John speaks: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." John 7:36. No heart can conceive or tongue describe the blessedness of this gift-the gift of the Comforter. How effectual his teachings! how divine his operations! how heavenly his influences! how sacred his anointings! how sweet his consolations, and yet how deep his convictions! how earnest his cries! how fervent his breathings! how unutterable his groanings! What could we know, or feel, or be, or have, or do; what could we think or say; how could we believe, or hope, or love; repent, or watch, or pray; submit, or suffer; preach, or hear, or write; how could we live; and, above all, and last of all, how could we die, without this holy and blessed Comforter? But were Jesus not exalted as Zion's King, this shedding forth of the gifts and graces of the blessed Spirit could not and would not be. It is because God "hath given him power over all flesh, that he gives eternal life to as many as God has given him." This "eternal life" is spiritual life; for its very being and blessedness is that they to whom he imparts it "may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." John 17:2-3. But this life, and this saving knowledge of the Father and of the Son, are given by the Spirit, whom Jesus sends, and who glorifies him by coming to testify of him; for he receives of Christ's and shows it to his people. John 16:14. Thus, as Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, he becomes a gracious and glorious head of influence to the mystical members of his body. This was prophesied of him under the figure of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah; and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle; and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." Isaiah 22:20-23. The Lord, therefore, who appeared in so glorious a manner to John, Revelation 1:1-20 as the exalted Head of the church, (for though he was still the Son of man, Revelation 1:13, his countenance was as the sun shining in his

strength; and though he was once dead yet he liveth and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death,) and said of himself, in his message to the church at Philadelphia, "And to the angel of the church at Philadelphia write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." It were good for us to be looking up to the blessed Lord as our enthroned King not only that he might sway his sceptre over our hearts, controlling our rebellious wills, and subduing us to his gentle might, but as Lord over all our enemies, external, internal, infernal. But one point we must ever bear in mind, for indeed it will surely be taught us if we are amongst the number of his loyal subjects, that however great may be the benefits and blessings of having such a King as our gracious and glorious Sovereign, we can only truly know, and experimentally realise them as we are brought into the obedience of faith. Let us not deceive ourselves by merely seeing and acknowledging his dominion when our heart is destitute of submission to his sceptre. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. The Holy Ghost, in Psalms 18:44, draws a distinction between the true obedience of Christ's "people" and the "strangers" to God and godliness. "As soon as they (the people) hear of me they shall obey me; the strangers shall submit themselves ("lie, or yield feigned obedience," marginal reading) unto me." But the same grace which makes the heart honest, and bows it in willing obedience to Christ's sceptre; the same holy anointing which, by revealing the love and blood of the cross, reconciles the stubborn will and softens and meekens the obdurate spirit, opens also the eyes of the child of God to see and his soul to feel his daily need of Jesus as his gracious King. His sceptre is felt to be a sceptre of grace; his kingdom an inward kingdom, Luke 17:21, which is "not in word but in power;" 1 Corinthians 4:20; "not meat and drink" legal observances and fleshly obedience "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Romans 14:17. But that this blessed kingdom may be set up with power in our hearts, we are led into trials and temptations, and thrust, as it were, into a very host of foes, that we may prove for ourselves the reality and blessedness of such a kingdom and such a King. Every child of God is surrounded by a host of enemies without and within, who, unless they be overcome for him and by him, will most certainly overcome him. There is no neutrality in this warfare; it is a fight for life or death; for certain victory or certain defeat. All the promises are made to him that overcometh, Revelation 3:12, and that most glorious one of all: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21. But to be overcome is to be lost, for ever lost, and to perish under the wrath of God. How then shall we overcome but by faith in our risen Head; but by calling upon our enthroned King to fight our battles, who must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet? If we belong to Jesus and walk in obedience to his will and word we shall surely have many outward foes, "for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. But let them pass; they cannot really hurt us, for "who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" 1 Peter 3:13. There are much more numerous and mightier enemies within than any foes without; and of these we may truly say with Judah of old, in the presence of the embattled host, "0, our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee." 2 Chronicles 20:12. And well it is when we can look up in faith and prayer to the blessed Lord as our risen Head and enthroned King, and, from a believing view of his surpassing grace and almighty power, ready to be stretched out on our behalf, can say, "Our eyes are upon

thee." When we feel the power of sin, the tyranny of our vile lusts and passions, and what our nature is capable of if left to its own will and way, how sweet and suitable is the promise, "He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19. When, then, our blessed Joshua brings the captive kings out of the cave, and by his Spirit and grace puts our feet upon their necks, Joshua 10:24, then he becomes endeared to us as our sceptred King; for in these favoured moments we can truly say, "0 Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." Isaiah 26:13. "Lord," we say, "subdue our iniquities; bend our wills to thine; reign and rule over and in us as our Lord and God; bring into captivity every rebellious thought to the obedience of Christ; come into our soul in thy love, and blood, and grace; conform us to thine image; make us to walk in thy footsteps, and let not any sin have dominion over us." When thus subdued by the sceptre of his all-conquering grace, we can lie humbly and resignedly at his feet, and, yielding the obedience of a believing, loving heart, commit all we are and have into his sacred hands as our most blessed rightful Sovereign; then we prove that the present kingship of Jesus at the right hand of the Father is no dry doctrine, nor mere speculative notion, but, as received into a feeling, believing heart, is a matter of vital and daily experience. This is the reign of grace; Romans 5:21; the building of the spiritual temple, in which there is heard neither hammer nor axe, 1 Kings 6:7, but noiselessly carried on in believing hearts by our glorious Joshua, of whom we read: "Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Zechariah 6:12-13.

05.12. A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - Intercession

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - His All-Preveiling Intercession Chapter Twelve from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

We are now led to another character of our blessed Lord, as wearing our nature in the courts of heaven, for in the prophecy of him just quoted, it is promised that "he shall be a priest upon his throne." The high priest under the law never sat upon a throne. He was a servant, not a sovereign; for he "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Hebrews 8:5 . But Jesus is a royal Priest, and as such was typified by Melchizedek, who united in himself the two characters of priest and king, for he was "King of Salem, and Priest of the most high God." Hebrews 7:1 . This was "the order of Melchizedek," according to which Jesus was made a high priest by virtue of the ancient oath: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalms 110:4 . There were three especial features in the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek which distinguished it from the Levitical order: 1. It was a royal priesthood; for Melchisedec was "by interpretation King of righteousness (that being the meaning of his name), and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace." Hebrews 7:2 . 2. It was made by an oath . "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest; (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him. The Lord sware 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." Hebrews 7:20-22 . 3. It was for ever, for so ran the promise, "Thou art a Priest for ever." Jesus was, therefore, not a temporary high priest, as the high priests under the law, whom sickness struck and death removed, for "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." Hebrews 7:23 . But Jesus being "made not after the law of a carnal commandment," as was the high priest under the law. "but after the power of an endless life," continueth ever, as having an unchangeable priesthood. And in this consists much of the suitability and blessedness of his priestly office as now carried on in heaven, as the apostle speaks: "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." Hebrews 7:25 . Let us, then, as the Lord may enable, now take a view by faith of the Lord Jesus, as the high priest over the house of God, and this may give us holy boldness to venture nigh. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Hebrews 10:19-20 . If thus enabled to draw near with a true heart, we may find a benefit in meditating upon our blessed Lord in this relationship to his church and people. The high priest, under the law, on the great day of atonement, which occurred once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, made a solemn atonement, first for the sins of himself and his house, and then for the iniquities of the children of Israel. Leviticus 16:34 . But this he did in two ways by offering a bullock as a sin offering for himself, and a goat, upon which the Lord’s lot fell, as a sin offering for the people; Leviticus 16:6; Leviticus 16:9; Leviticus 16:11 ; by taking a censer full of burning coals from off the altar, and filling his hands with sweet incense beaten small, and entering therewith into the most holy place. This was that sacred spot called

"the holy of holies" or "the holiest of all" Hebrews 9:3 ; which contained the ark of the covenant on which, between the cherubim, was the Shechinah or visible manifestation of the presence and glory of God. Into this holiest of all, the high priest never entered but on the great day of atonement; and even on that day he was forbidden, under the penalty of death, to come within the vail which separated it from the holy place, unless he had washed his flesh, had put on the holy linen garment, taken with him the blood of the sacrifice, and put the incense upon the burning coals in the censer. All these things were highly typical of Jesus as the great high priest. The washing of the flesh denoted his purity as high priest; the holy linen garments, the holiness of his human nature; the blood, his atoning blood shed upon the cross; and the incense, his meritorious intercession. The most holy place was typical of heaven, and the vail typical of the separation between God and us, and that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." Hebrews 9:8 . When Jesus died, this vail was rent in twain from the top to the bottom Matthew 27:51 ; to show that there was no longer a separating vail between God and his people. But the high priest going within the veil, with the blood and the incense, was a special type of Jesus, our risen High Priest, entering into the courts of heaven. There was a connection between the intercession of the high priest without, and within the veil. Outside the vail the sacrifice was offered, but the blood was taken inside it. The brazen altar was without the veil, but the ark of the covenant was within. The high priest shed the blood without, but sprinkled it within. The burning coals were taken from the brazen altar which stood in the open court; but the incense was put upon them as he entered into the most holy place, that the cloud of its fragrance might cover the mercy seat on and before which he sprinkled the blood of the bullock, offered for his sins, and that of the goat, for the sins of the people. Thus our most blessed High Priest, after he had offered his holy body and soul as a sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended up on high to enter into heaven in his pure and sacred humanity, typified by the holy linen garments worn by Aaron, when he went within the veil, that he might there fulfil that part of his priestly office - to make intercession for us. This was beautifully typified, as we have already hinted, by the high priest taking the incense beaten small within the veil, together with the atoning blood. The incense was beaten small - bruised, not cut, not only that the fragrance might more freely flow forth when lighted by the coals, but as typical of the sufferings and sorrows of our agonising High Priest. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Isaiah 53:10 . "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." The coals from off the brazen altar typified the wrath of God, for the tire on the brazen altar, kindled in the first instance by the Lord himself, Leviticus 9:24 , was never put out; and on it were burnt not only all the whole burnt-offerings, but every part of the other sacrifices, as the fat of the sin-offering, which was laid thereon for that express purpose. The cloud of incense which filled the most holy place, and covered the mercy seat, represented the fragrances of the present intercession of our great and glorious High Priest in heaven. And the blood, sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, typified "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel;" Hebrews 12:24 ; even that precious blood "which cleanseth from all sin;" which he took with him into heaven when he entered there in his holy humanity, and the efficacy of which to purge a guilty conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works, to serve a living God, he still makes manifest when the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the soul with his own divine power. A believing view of Christ, as typified by the high priest under the law entering within the veil, on the great day of atonement, will prepare our minds more clearly and fully to contemplate him as now carrying on his priestly office in the

glorious temple above; for he "is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Hebrews 9:24 . The entering in of the high priest within the vail was one special part of his sacred office, by which he was distinguished from his priestly brethren, who might offer the ordinary sacrifices, Leviticus 1:5 , but not go into the most holy place with the blood of the bullock and the goat. Leviticus 16:1 . Thus part of his priestly office was without, and part within the veil; and yet the two parts were continuous, connected, and inseparable. So it is with our great and glorious High Priest now within the vail - hidden, indeed, from mortal eyes, as the high priest was from the children of Israel by the vail of the tabernacle, but as really and truly still ministering in our nature there as Aaron ministered in the holy of holies, when he sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat, and filled the place with the smoke and fragrance of the incense. We have already traced a connection between the blood of the sacrifice shed without the vail and the same blood carried within, and a similar connection between the coals taken from the brazen altar and the incense beaten small, the smoke of which covered the mercy-seat. So there is a necessary and most blessed connection between the blood-shedding and sacrifice of Christ on earth and his intercession in heaven. The fragrance of his intercession rises from the altar of his sacrifice, as typically from the burnt offering of Noah "a sweet smelling savour" ascended up to the Lord; and as he is ever presenting his blood-shedding and death on behalf of his people here below, he, in this sense, "ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25 . We need not suppose, therefore, that the intercession of our blessed High Priest is a vocal intercession, carried on by actual prayers and supplications. In the typical intercession of the high priest, on the great day of atonement, it was not his vocal prayers which prevailed with God, for of them no mention was made or commandment given, but the blood of the sacrifice and the smoke of the incense. Thus his office is described by the apostle: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Hebrews 5:1 . And as a remarkable illustration of this we may instance what occurred when the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord was about to consume them as in a moment: "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people." Numbers 16:46-47 . Moses did not bid Aaron pray for the people, but make an atonement for them; so that it was not the prayers of Aaron, as the interceding high priest and typical mediator, but the incense lighted with fire from the brazen altar, which prevailed with the Lord, and stayed the plague which had already begun. Numbers 16:45-48 . So it is the presence of Jesus in heaven in our nature, and the continual presentation of his blood-shedding and sacrifice on earth before the eyes of his Father in which the power and prevalence of his intercession consist. Thus he is represented as "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood;" Revelation 19:13 ; and John had a view of him in the courts of heaven as a slaughtered lamb, for he says, "And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." Revelation 5:6 . His office as an interceding High Priest was thus represented, for as "a lamb as it had been slain " is a type of his sacrifice for sin, so his standing as a slain lamb in the midst of the throne denotes that his precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, 1 Peter

1:19 , yea, of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," in the predestinating counsels and purposes of God, Revelation 13:8 , now continually aveils for the salvation of the redeemed, and is ever presented before the eyes of the Father. The present intercession of our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father, as viewed by the eye of faith, is full of encouragement and consolation to every believing heart. There are but few of the Lord’s living family who do not at various times and seasons sigh and groan under a load of sin and sorrow. Now there are two especial features in the intercession of Jesus within the vail which meet this twofold burden: the prevalency of his intercession; the sympathy and compassion of his loving heart. The former suits the burden of their sins; the latter that of their sorrows. We will, with God’s help and blessing, consider these two points separately. Let us first, then, take a glance at the prevalency of his intercession, and see how suitable it is to relieve the soul under a burden of sin. "If any man sin," says John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1 . What can we do with our sins? - their burden, their guilt, their filth, and their power? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but to sink under them; for we can neither put them away nor subdue them. But Jesus can do both, for he "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30 . To him, then, a poor, guilty, miserable, sinking sinner may look to plead his case, for in him he has "an Advocate with the Father," one of God’s own appointing, and therefore sure of the ear of the Judge, a wonderful Counsellor, Isaiah 9:6 , who can stand up in the court of heaven on his behalf; one who never lost a cause, rejected a humble petition, or disappointed a client. But the power and prevalency of this advocacy in heaven rest on his atoning sacrifice offered on earth; for John immediately adds, "And he is the propitiation for our sins." It is because "he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and "was once offered to bear the sins of many," Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 9:28 ; it is because he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" Colossians 2:14 ; it is because his is a finished work; John 17:4; John 19:30 ; and he has made peace through the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:21 , that he is now our preveiling Advocate and successful Intercessor in heaven, where the cause is heard and decided. We are very apt to lose sight of these most blessed truths, and that we have such a Friend above. We believe them, indeed, firmly and fully, anchor in them, and have no hope but what is connected with and springs out of them. But in seasons of darkness and distress, when guilt from repeated backslidings lies hard and heavy on the conscience; when the mists and fogs of unbelief gather over the foundations of our hope; when our evidences are beclouded and our signs but dimly seen, then we want a living Advocate who can plead our cause, we being unable to do it ourselves, and by presenting on our behalf his blood and obedience, his sufferings, sacrifice, and death, may bring us off more than conquerors against every accusing plea and every opposing adversary. As Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest, to resist him; Zechariah 3:1 ; as the accuser of the brethren accuses them before God day and night; Revelation 12:10 ; and neither Joshua nor the brethren could plead a word in their own defence, and yet both came off conquerors by the help of the Lord and the blood of the Lamb; so poor guilty sinners now prevail through the power of their heavenly Advocate. It is, then, because we feel the weight and burden of sin, yet see by faith that our great High Priest has passed within the veil, that our eyes, hands, and hearts are all up unto him. As thus realised by faith, there is a peculiar power in this believing view of our heavenly Advocate, which draws desire and supplication out of the soul unto and after him. Nay, it is this living and daily intercourse with Jesus in heaven in which the very life and power

of godliness consist. "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19 . He, as exalted above all principality and power, is the church's glorious Head, Ephesians 1:22 , "from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Colossians 2:19 . This union with him as a living Head brings about communion with him; for as he communicates grace out of his own fullness, there springs up in the soul a sweet and sacred fellowship with him, as viewed by faith on his throne of grace as the Mediator between God and man. And these communications of divine light and life out of his fullness, enlightening the eyes of the understanding, and being attended by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him Ephesians 1:17-18 , there arises in the heart a gracious view of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and his glory. Psalms 112:4 Isaiah 33:17 Luke 1:78-79 2 Peter 1:19 . This is drinking at the fountain of life and seeing light in God's light; Psalms 36:9 ; and is the very "light of life," which the Lord gives to those that follow him. John 8:12 . As, then, the soul walks in the light of these gracious teachings, the blood of Jesus is seen as a fountain of infinite value and unspeakable efficacy for sin and uncleanness; his righteousness as a most blessed covering for all its shame and nakedness; his bleeding, dying love as a most healing balm for a wounded conscience, and a heavenly cordial for a fainting spirit. It is by these teachings that the reality of true religion and of vital godliness is learnt; and in no other way. No truly exercised soul can be satisfied with seeing salvation as a mere doctrine of the gospel - a fixed and certain truth that shines in the inspired page. Glad, indeed, he is that the way of salvation is so clearly revealed in the word of truth; and that there is the light, and life, and power of the Spirit within to bear his inward witness to the truth and certainty of the written testimony; but all this light and knowledge in the letter of truth falls short of a salvation revealed and manifested to his own heart and conscience. Here, then, comes in the blessedness of an ever-living Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father, who, by applying his blood and love with power, says to the soul, "I am thy salvation." It is therefore said of him, "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." Who shall describe, as who shall limit God's "uttermost?" David, "from the ends of the earth;" Psalms 61:2 ; Heman, when "laid'in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" Psalms 88:6 ; Hezekiah, "from the gates of the grave and the pit of corruption;" Isaiah 38:16-17 ; Jeremiah, "out of the low dungeon," where "the waters flowed over his head, and he said, I am cut off;" Lamentations 3:54-55 ; Jonah, "out of the belly of hell;" Jonah 2:2 ; all these deeply-taught and deeply-tried saints of God knew both man's uttermost and God's uttermost, and that man's uttermost was sin, hell, and despair; and God's uttermost was mercy, salvation, and heaven. Never is the prevalency of our Great High Priest's intercession so proved as when it thus saves to the uttermost. And who that knows anything of himself as a sinner, or in whose heart the fountains of the great deep have in any measure been broken up; who that has ever had a view of sin as seen in the light of God's infinite purity and holiness, and trembled before him; who that has ever felt the guilt of backslidings, the pangs of slips and falls, and his own miserable helplessness, not only in the hour of temptation but to remove the load of transgression off his conscience who of all these but has his "uttermost," if not really so deep and desperate as Heman's and Jonah's, yet, in his own feelings, such an uttermost as none can save him from but that High Priest and Advocate who liveth at God's right hand to make intercession for him? It is here we prove the experimental reality and felt blessedness of having such an Advocate with the Father, against whom and before whom we have sinned. The Lord enables us to commit our cause into his hand, however deep or

desperate, and wait and watch for him to appear and save.

05.13. A GREAT HIGH PRIEST Sympathy and Compassion

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - His Sympathy and Compassion Chapter Thirteen from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

Having attempted, then, to show the nature and prevalency of the intercession of Jesus at the right hand of the Father, and how mercifully and graciously it meets our case as burdened with countless sins and pressed down with innumerable infirmities, we come now to the consideration of the blessed Lord as our most compassionate and sympathising High Priest in the courts of heaven. Sympathy and compassion are necessary qualifications of a high priest, as sustaining the office of a mediator. A priest implies a sacrifice; a sacrifice implies a sinner; a sinner implies a guilty, burdened wretch, justly amenable to the wrath of God, and therefore in a most pitiable condition. For such a one the high priest offers a sacrifice, that he may obtain thereby the pardon of his sins. He must, therefore, compassionate the case of this guilty sinner, that, as feeling sympathy with him, he may present prayer and supplication on his behalf, that the sacrifice offered for his sins may be accepted. The apostle, therefore, says, "For every high priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people so also for himself, to offer for sins." Hebrews 5:1-3 . The high priest under the law differed in this point from the blessed Lord in that he was himself a sinner, and as such had to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people. By this offering for his own sins two things were intimated: that as a sinner he himself needed a propitiating sacrifice; and, he was reminded thereby that, though a high priest, he was really no better than the sinner for whose sins he offered sacrifice. By this sense, then, of his own sinfullness, thus vividly and distinctly brought before his eyes, he was taught to have compassion on his fellow- sinners, and especially on those who had sinned ignorantly, and were "out of the way" through backsliding or infirmity, for there was no sacrifice provided for presumptuous sinners. Numbers 15:27-31 . Our blessed Lord, then, as the great High Priest over the house of God, would not have been suitable to us, as encompassed with infirmities, unless he could compassionate our case, and sympathise with us in our troubles and sorrows. It is true that, as perfectly free from sin, both in body and soul, he had no necessity to offer sacrifice for himself; but, as a most loving and tender High Priest, he could compassionate the sinner without partaking of his sins. But this was not all, for even in eternity, before he gave himself for his people, he had pity on them; and we read that, apart from electing love or saving grace, in the days of his flesh, he had compassion on the hungry multitude. But that he might become a merciful and compassionate High Priest he had to learn sympathy with his people in a very different way. In the wondrous depths of the wisdom and grace of God, he learnt to sympathise with us in our afflictions by a personal experience of them. This is the apostle’s declaration: "For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15 . And what a most encouraging conclusion does he draw from this most blessed view of the compassion of our

once suffering Head: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16 . We showed in the last chapter the close and intimate connection that subsists between the two main branches of our Lord’s priestly office: the sacrifice which he offered in the days of his flesh on earth and his present intercession in heaven. So there is a similar connection between the personal experience of suffering and temptation which the Lord endured here below and his present sympathy above with his tempted and suffering people still in the wilderness. We must not, however, suppose the personal experience of suffering was essential to his knowledge of it. As omniscient in his divine nature, the Lord perfectly knows what his people suffer, for "he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." Psalms 103:14 . In this sense he searcheth and knoweth us, for he understandeth our thought afar off; he compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. Psalms 139:2-3 . As the all-seeing, heart-searching God, he sees and knows all our afflictions and sorrows as he knows everything in heaven and earth. But he could only have the personal experience of suffering by becoming himself a sufferer. This is a deep mystery; but as it is revealed to our faith in the word of truth and is full of blessed consolation to the afflicted family of God, we will approach it with all reverence as a part of our Meditations. It was the eternal will of God that his dear Son should take the flesh and blood of the children, and that he should take it without sin, but not without suffering. Suffering was a part of the atonement: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18 . Our blessed Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," not only that by these sorrows and griefs he might redeem us from the depths of the fall. but that he might experimentally learn to feel for, and sympathise with us in our troubles and afflictions. None can really sympathise with the afflicted but those who have passed or are passing through similar afflictions. We might as well expect a newly-married bride to sympathise with a bereaved widow, or a merchant worth a million with a ruined bankrupt, as for the unafflicted to sympathise with the afflicted. The very word "sympathy" means a suffering with; but how can there be a suffering with another if the suffering itself be personally unknown? The primary element of the whole feeling is wanting, if suffering be absent on the part of the sympathiser. Thus, in order that our blessed Lord might personally, feelingly, and experimentally sympathise with his suffering people, there was a necessity that he must himself suffer. 0 mystery of mysteries! 0 wondrous heights and depths of redeeming love! that the Son of God should suffer, not only that he might redeem, but that he might personally feel for and experimentally sympathise with his suffering people! But though we feel our inability and inadequacy to open up this sacred subject, yet, as we have proposed it as a part of our Meditations, let us now examine this point a little more closely, and see what sufferings the blessed Lord endured that he might learn thereby to sympathise with his afflicted ones, who drink of his cup and are baptized with his baptism. In viewing these, we cannot well distinguish between the Lord’s sufferings as meritorious and his sufferings as intended to teach him compassion and sympathy; for all his sufferings were a part of his atoning sacrifice: "By his stripes ye were healed." 1 Peter 2:24 . He that was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" hath also surely "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Isaiah 53:4-5 . In fact, by the sorrows and sufferings of the blessed Lord several purposes, according to the sovereign will and wisdom of God, were at once accomplished, and principally these following: 1. God was glorified, as the Lord himself said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." John 13:31 . "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John 17:4 . By

his meek endurance of the sufferings laid upon him, and by his voluntary and patient obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, through the whole course of his suffering life, from the manger to the cross. God was supremely glorified. 2. The work of redemption was fully accomplished. 3. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Hebrews 5:8 . 4. He left us an example, that we should follow his steps. 1 Peter 3:21 . 5. He was made perfect; Hebrews 5:9 ; that is, he became by suffering perfectly qualified to sustain his high office as a merciful and faithful High Priest, who, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:17-18 . It is the last point which chiefly demands our present consideration, as contemplating him now in our nature at the right hand of the Father. The sympathy and compassion of the blessed Lord, as now exercised in the courts of heaven, are chiefly shown under the following circumstances: 1. To his people under affliction; 2. To his people under temptation. 1. The Lord’s people are all, without exception, an afflicted people. This was their promised character from the days of old: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Zephaniah 3:12 . Their afflictions, indeed, widely vary as regards nature, number, length, degree, but all find the truth of that solemn declaration that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." i. Thus, some are afflicted in body , racked with continual pain, or suffering perhaps for years from some complaint which may not much shorten life, yet render life often a burden. If health be the greatest, as all must admit, of temporal blessings, the want of it must be the greatest of all temporal miseries. The blessed Lord, indeed, had no personal experience of sickness, for in his holy, immortal body there were the seeds neither of sickness nor death; but he experienced bodily pain, as when scourged by Pilate’s command, when he wore the crown of thorns, when struck and buffeted by the rude Roman soldiery, and more especially when nailed to the cross. Thus, even in the matter of bodily suffering, our gracious Lord can sympathise from personal experience with his poor afflicted family still in the flesh who are racked with pain on their bed of languishing. ii. Many again of the Lord’s people are deeply tried in providence . Poverty, if not absolute want, is the daily cross of many of the excellent of the earth. But what a personal experience their gracious Lord had of this sharp trial, who had neither purse nor scrip, but was maintained by the contributions of the women who ministered to him of their substance. Luke 8:3 . Did he not hunger in the wilderness, and before the barren fig-tree? Did he not thirst at Samaria’s well and on the cross? And did he not say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head?" Matthew 8:20 . He who for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be rich, not only spiritually made himself poor by laying aside his divine glory, but actually and literally made himself poor by voluntarily submitting to the pain and pressure of bodily poverty. iii. Others of the Lord’s people are subject to cruel persecutions . This, indeed, has been the lot of all the saints from the days of righteous Abel, and will be to the end of time, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Fire, indeed, and faggot are now unknown, and the spirit of the times, at least in this country, will not suffer fine and imprisonment, and the other acts of violence which our godly forefathers endured for conscience sake; but the scourge of the tongue is still wielded, heads cut off instead of ears, and reputations branded instead of foreheads. But what a deep and personal experience had the blessed Lord of persecution from the day that Herod sought his life till he was nailed to the cross! How every word was watched which fell from his lips, every action misinterpreted, his character calumniated as a glutton and a wine-bibber, and shame and contempt poured upon him until, as the consummation of hatred, and

to cover him, as they thought, with everlasting ignominy, they crucified him between two thieves. iv. Others of the Lord’s people suffer from the treachery of false friends. Had not our blessed Lord an experience of this in the treachery of Judas, so that he could say, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me?" But it is not necessary for us to dwell longer on those temporal afflictions which press down so many of the Lord’s people, but in which their gracious Head still sympathises with them. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus; he who had compassion on the widow of Nain, Luke 7:13 , on the beseeching leper, Mark 1:41 , on the man possessed with a devil, Mark 5:19 , on the blind, Matthew 20:34 , and on the fainting, scattered multitudes, Matthew 9:36 , surely pities and sympathises with his people in all their temporal sorrows, however diversified. These, though heavy, are not the severest afflictions which befall the saints of the Most High. We will now, therefore, divert our thoughts to those spiritual sorrows and troubles which all the family of God experience, though these, too, vary widely in number and degree, yet are allotted to each living member of the mystical body of Christ, according to the appointed measure. In these, as peculiar to the Lord’s people, Jesus has a special sympathy with his afflicted people, for of this cup he drank to the very dregs, and with this baptism he was baptized with all its billows and waves rolling over him. Whatever spiritual troubles and sorrows the Lord’s people may be called upon to endure, their gracious Lord and Master suffered much more deeply than their heart, however deeply lacerated, can feel or their tongue, however eloquent, can express. But we will look at some of these spiritual afflictions, and endeavour to show how the blessed Lord had a personal experience of them, and thus learnt to sympathise with his people under them. i. The chief burden of the Lord’s living family is sin . This is the main cause of all their sighs and groans, from the first quickening breath of the Spirit of God in their hearts till they lay down their bodies in dust. But it may be asked, what experience could the blessed Lord have had of sin. Seeing he was perfectly free from it both in body and soul? It is indeed a most certain and a most blessed truth that our gracious Redeemer "knew no sin;" 2 Corinthians 5:21 ; was "a lamb without blemish and without spot;" 1 Peter 1:19 ; and was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Hebrews 7:26 . Still, sin was so imputed to him, and the Lord so "laid on him the iniquities of us all," that he felt them just as if they had been his own. "He was made sin for us;" its guilt and burden were laid on his sacred head, and so became by imputation his that it was as if he had committed the sins charged upon him. Take the following illustration. View sin as a debt to the justice of God. Now, if you are a surety for another, and he cannot pay the debt, it becomes yours just as much as if you had yourself personally contracted it. The law makes no distinction between his debt and yours; and the creditor may sell the very bed from under you to pay the debt, just as if you were the original debtor. So the blessed Lord, by becoming Surety for his people, took upon him their sins, and thus made them his own. How else can we explain those expressions in the Psalms, which are evidently the language of his heart and lips, such as the following? "For in-numerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." Psalms 40:12 . Does not the Lord here speak of his iniquities taking hold upon him, so that under their weight and burden he could not look up, and that they were more in number than the hairs of his head? ii. With the burden and weight of sin comes the wrath of God into the sinner’s conscience; and this is the most distressing feeling that can be well experienced out of hell. So the blessed Lord, when he took the burden and weight of sin, came under this wrath. This was "the horrible pit" into which he sank, Psalms 40:2 , "the deep mire in which there was no standing," "the

deep waters where the floods over-flowed him." Psalms 69:2 . This made him say, "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." Psalms 102:3-4; Psalms 102:9-10 . None who read the word of truth with an enlightened eye can doubt that these Psalms refer to the blessed Lord, and that it is he who speaks in them. iii. Then there is the curse of the law , which peals such loud thunders, and sinks so deeply into the heart and conscience of the awakened sinner. But did not Jesus endure this too? Surely he did, both in body and soul, as the apostle declares, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written. Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Galatians 3:13 . iv. Then there are the hidings of God's countenance , the withdrawings of his presence, and his forsakings of the soul that still hangs upon him and cleaves to him. But cannot our gracious Lord here deeply sympathise with his people who are mourning and sighing under the hidings of God's countenance, for was not this the last bitter drop of the cup of suffering which he drank to the very dregs? Did heaven or earth ever hear so mournful a cry as when the darling Son of God, in the agony of his tortured soul, cried out, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus, whatever in number or degree be the spiritual griefs and sorrows of the Lord's people; whatever convictions, burdens, sorrows, distresses, pangs of conscience, doubts, fears, and dismay under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the hidings of his face, and the withdrawings of the light of his countenance they may grieve and groan under. Jesus, their blessed Forerunner, experienced them all in the days of his flesh, and to a degree and extent infinitely beyond all human conception. Can any heart conceive, or any tongue express what the dear Redeemer experienced in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; when he thrice prayed that the cup might pass from him, and being in an agony, prayed more earnestly, so that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground? Might he not truly say, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Lamentations 1:12 . An awakened sinner, under divine quickening, has to bear but the weight of his own sins; but Jesus had to bear the sins of millions. It is at best but a few drops of the wrath of, God, and that wrath as already appeased, that fall into a trembling sinner's conscience; but Jesus had to endure all the wrath of God due to millions of ransomed transgressors. It is but the distant peals of the law which sound in a convinced sinner's soul; but the whole storm burst upon the head of the Surety. In a little wrath God hides his face from his Zion for a moment; but in great wrath he hid his face from his dear Son. Thus, whatever be the spiritual sorrows and troubles of afflicted Zion, even though she be "tossed with tempest and not comforted," in all she has a Head who suffered infinitely more than all the collective members. They do but "fill up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ;" Colossians 1:24 ; but 0 how small is that measure of affliction compared with his! It was, then, his personal experience of these spiritual afflictions which makes the blessed Lord so sympathising a High Priest at the right hand of God. Though now exalted to the heights of glory, he can still feel for his suffering saints here below. The garden of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, are still in his heart's remembrance, and all the tender pity and rich compassion of his soul melt towards his afflicted saints; for, His heart is touch'd with tenderness. His bowels melt with love. 2. But the gracious Lord can also sympathise with his saints under all their temptations . This is a deep mystery, but not more deep

than blessed; and as it is pregnant with consolation to the tried and tempted children of God, we will attempt to unfold it to the best of our ability. The Holy Ghost expressly declares that our blessed Lord "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15 . This, then, we must accept as a most solemn and, as viewed by faith, a most blessed truth. Nor must we limit the language of the Holy Ghost, but as he has said " in all points ," so must we receive it on the testimony of him who cannot lie. But as the word "temptations" has in the original two significations, including in its meaning "trials" as well as temptations, properly so called, we will extend the sense of the term, and view our Lord's trials , and our Lord's temptations . The distinction between them is sufficiently evident. Trials may have God for their author, but not temptations , for we are expressly told that God tempteth no man. James 1:13 . Indeed, as temptation implies the presentation of sin to the mind, it would make God the Author of sin to make him the Author of temptation. But do we not read, it may be asked, that God "tempted Abraham?" Genesis 22:1 . The word "tempted" there should be rendered "tried," for in Hebrew as well as Greek the same word means to tempt and to try. God did not tempt Abraham to sin, as Satan tempted Eve, or as he tempted David, but "tried" him, as the apostle speaks, Hebrews 11:17 , whether his faith was genuine. Thus our blessed Lord was tried, and tried by God himself; for he is "a stone, a tried stone," of God's own laying. Isaiah 28:16 . When the Father provided him with a body in which to do his will, he became God's servant, as he speaks, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Isaiah 42:1 . As a servant he yielded obedience, for he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Php 2:8 . His obedience was a tried obedience. God tried it; men tried it; devils tried it; enemies tried it; friends tried it. The weakness and ignorance of his disciples; the treachery of Judas; the desertion and denial of Peter; the craft and malice of the Scribes and Pharisees; the unbelief and infidelity of the people; the sins by which he was surrounded; the sinless infirmities of the flesh and blood which he ad assumed, as hunger, thirst, and weariness, the long journeyings, nightly watchings, the daily spectacle of sickness and misery - all these, and a thousand other circumstances beyond our conception ied the blessed Lord during his sojourn here below. But he bare all that was laid upon him. The purity of his uman nature, in which were no seeds of sin actual or original, the strength of his divine nature with which it was in union, and the power of the Holy Ghost, which rested on him without measure, all concurred to bring him through every trial, and give him victory over every foe. But by these trials he learnt to sympathise with his tried people. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15 . We may then freely go to him with our trials, may spread them before his face, as Hezekiah did the letter of Sennacherib in the temple, may feel a sweet persuasion that he sympathises with us under our heavy burdens, and will alleviate them, or support us under them, or if they be not removed will sanctify them, and make them work for our spiritual and eternal good. Thus faith in the sympathy of our blessed Lord is wonderfully calculated to subdue fretfullness, murmuring, and self-pity, to teach us submission and resignation under afflictions, and to reconcile us to a path of sorrow and tribulation. It brings before our eyes the sufferings of the blessed Lord here below, the trials which he endured, and his holy meekness and submission under them when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. If we compare our sorrows and troubles with his, how light they seem! This works submission to them, and when we can look up in faith and love, and see the once suffering Lord now sympathising with us under our afflictions, it makes even sorrow sweet. A conformity to the dying image of Jesus is hereby wrought into the soul, a fellowship given

of his sufferings, a crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts, a deadness to the world, a mortification of the whole body of sin, a separation of heart and spirit from everything ungodly and evil, and a communion produced with the blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father. Thus we may bless God for our afflictions and trials, our sicknesses, our bereavements, our losses and crosses, our vexations and disappointments, our persecutions, our being despised by the world and graceless professors, our doubts, fears, and exercises, our sighs and groans under a body of sin and death, and, in a word, for every footstep in the way of tribulation which brings us nearer to Jesus, and opens to us more and more of his love and blood, grace and glory, sympathy and compassion, and all that he is as a merciful and faithful High Priest, whom God has raised from the dead, and seated at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Ephesians 1:21-23.

05.14. A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - Blessing the People

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST - Blessing the People Chapter Fourteen from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

One important part of the ministration of the blessed Lord, as the great High Priest over the house of God, we have not yet touched upon. This is his blessing the people . This, we know, was committed to the typical high priest under the law as one of the functions of his ministerial office. "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying. On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Numbers 6:23-27 . The chief season when the high priest blessed the people according to this formula was on the great day of atonement, when, after having carried the blood of the bullock and the goat into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it on and before the mercy-seat, he laid aside his linen garments, and, putting on the garments of glory and beauty, showed himself to the people who were praying without. Luke 1:10 . In all this there was a beautiful propriety. The high priest had two distinct sets of consecrated garments. One set was made wholly of linen, which he wore on the great day of atonement. This was simplicity and purity itself, and as such is elsewhere used as a type of the pure humanity of the Son of God in the flesh, as Ezekiel 9:2; Ezekiel 9:11 Daniel 10:5 . The other set of consecrated garments was worn on days of high and great solemnity; and being made of gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, was called "golden," or "garments of glory and beauty." The linen garments, then, which the high priest wore when he offered the bullock and the goat, and took their blood into the most holy place, were not only typical of the pure and perfect human nature of the Lord Jesus, but of that nature in its state of humiliation on earth. Similarly, the garments of glory and beauty, such as the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue, with its hem adorned with bells of pure gold and pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen, and the ephod on the breast, with the twelve precious stones on which the names of the tribes were engraved, Exodus 39:1-43 typically and figuratively represented the glorified humanity of the blessed Lord, which he now wears at the right hand of the Father. As, then, the high priest, when he had laid aside his linen garments, and assumed the garments of glory and beauty, blessed the people from the court of the tabernacle, so the Lord in his glorified humanity blesses his waiting people here below from the courts of bliss. In him, as the church’s risen Head, all spiritual blessings are lodged: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3 . He is the living Fountain whence all the streams flow to water his church here below. The ancient promise made to Abraham was, that "in him and his seed," that is, Christ, as the apostle explains the word, Galatians 3:16 , "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." Every blessing, then, which the elect enjoy either for time or eternity, in providence or in grace, comes from him as their covenant Head. They are blessed in him as they are chosen, adopted, and accepted in him. Ephesians 1:4-6 . Not to speak of his blessings in providence, though in these "he daily loadeth us

with benefits," Psalms 68:19 , how unspeakable are his blessings in grace! Look at the blessing of eternal life which hangs before the eyes of the poor way-worn pilgrim in this world of sin and sorrow, as the prize of his high calling, the prospect of which, at the end of his race, animates his drooping spirits - this rich and glorious crown, without which all others would cease to be blessings, is given in Christ. "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." 1 John 5:11 . This blessing the risen Lord bestows on his people when he first quickens their souls into spiritual life, for he is "the resurrection and the life," John 11:25 , and "quickeneth whom he will;" John 5:21 ; and the life thus given he ever maintains, for his own words are, "Because I live ye shall live also." John 14:19 . As, then, he ever lives at God's right hand, for he says, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore;" Revelation 1:18 ; and again, "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" Hebrews 7:25 ; he sends down the blessing of eternal life into their soul. And this blessing of eternal life which he thus bestows has a sweet connection with the anointing which he received as the consecrated High Priest; for the droppings of that rich unction went down to the very skirts of his garments, and falls in regenerating grace upon the hearts of his people, like the dew of Hermon: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Psalms 133:2-3 . How sweet to carry in the bosom the pledge, earnest, and foretaste of eternal life, and to feel it to be the gift of God; Romans 6:23 ; stored up in Christ, who is himself "the true God and eternal life;" 1 John 5:20 ; manifested and brought to light in the Person of Jesus; 1 John 1:2 ; and firmly secured by covenant oath and everlasting promise. Psalms 21:2-489:34-37 Titus 1:2 1 John 2:25 . From this ever-flowing and overflowing fountain of eternal life proceed all other spiritual blessings, as reconciliation to God by the blood of the Lamb; free and full justification by his imputed righteousness; deliverance from all condemnation, past, present, and to come; and, as a consequence of these glorious mercies, manifested pardon of sin; peace of conscience; fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ; revelations of his presence, power, loveliness, glory, and beauty; sips and tastes of his dying love; spiritual affections; heavenly desires; holy longings after conformity to his image, for grace and strength to imitate his example and walk in his footsteps, for power to do that which is pleasing in his sight, and to live to his praise - in a word, all that sweet and sacred intercourse with the blessed Lord which is the very life and power, sum and substance of all vital godliness; and without which all religion is but an empty form, a name, and a notion. It is thus that the reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father is made experimentally known. He is seen, felt, and believed in as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; for he is walked in as the Way of access unto God; sought unto as the Truth, the knowledge of which maketh free; and cleaved unto as the Life, from whom it was first received, and by whom it is ever maintained. Our blessed Lord was to be "a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec." It will be remembered that Melchizedec met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. Genesis 14:19 . In the same way our great High Priest blesses the seed of Abraham; for "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;" Galatians 3:9 ; and as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they walk in his steps who "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Romans 4:3; Romans 4:12 . But Melchizedec the type could only ask God to bless Abraham. He could not himself confer the blessing; but Jesus, the antitype, our great Melchizedec, whose priesthood is after the power of an endless life, Hebrews 7:16 , blesses his people, not by

merely asking God to bless them, but by himself showering down blessings upon them, and by communicating to them out of his own fullness every grace which can sanctify as well as save. Even before his incarnation, when he appeared in human form, as if anticipating in appearance that flesh and blood which he should afterwards assume in reality, he had power to bless. Thus we read that when Jacob wrestled with the angel - which was no created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, even the Son of God himself in human shape - he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And in answer to his wrestling cry we read that "he blessed him there." Jacob knew that no created angel could bless him. He therefore said, when he had got the blessing, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Genesis 32:26-30 . To this blessing Jacob afterward referred when, in blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, he said, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Genesis 48:16 . Thus, also, our gracious Lord, immediately before his ascension to heaven, as if in anticipation of the gifts and graces which he was to send down upon them when exalted to the right hand of the Father, "lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples;" and as if to show that he would still ever continue to bless them, "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven," even " while he blessed them," as if he were blessing them all the way up to heaven, even before he took possession of his mediatorial throne. Luke 24:50-51 . As, then, he sits in glory at the right hand of the Father, he sends down blessings upon his people. He blesses them "with the blessings of heaven from above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb, and unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Genesis 49:25-26 . He holds all nature in his hands; the gold and the silver are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; his is the earth and the fullness thereof; all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; he holds the reins of government, doing according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? He is the sun and shield of God’s people - their sun, ever to be their light; their shield, to be ever their defence. He giveth grace and glory - grace here, glory hereafter. Psalms 84:11 . He makes his strength perfect in their weakness, that they may glory in their infirmities; 2 Corinthians 12:9 ; nourishes and cherishes them, as being members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; Ephesians 5:29-30 ; and communicates to them more than heart can conceive or tongue express out of his own fullness; for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 John 1:16 Colossians 1:19 . He can see all the designs of their enemies, and defeat them; all the temptations of Satan, and overrule them; all his snares, and break them to pieces; all his enmity and malice, and can bruise him under their feet shortly. He can pity their case when bowed with grief and afflictions; can hear their sigh and cry out of the depths of trouble and sorrow; and can stretch forth his hand to deliver them from the worst of foes and the worst of fears. And what a matter this is of living, daily experience, so as to make the presence of Jesus at the right hand of the Father no mere doctrine seen in the letter of truth, but a very fountain of spiritual life in the heart. How continually, how, in deep trouble, almost unceasingly, is the poor, tried, tempted, and afflicted child of God, looking up to this merciful and faithful High Priest and begging of him to appear and bless his soul! This is all that he needs. For the Lord himself to bless him comprises every desire of his heart. One word, one look, one touch, one manifestation of his love and blood, is all that he wants. But if he did not see him by the eye of faith at the right hand of the Father, and able to bless him with the blessing that maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it, would his prayers, desires, tears, and supplications be so directed toward him? If, too, at times he has been blessed with a sweet sense of his presence and his love, he cannot rest satisfied without

some fresh manifestation of these blessings to his soul. And how fully adapted and divinely qualified he is to communicate these rich blessings; for God, by exalting him to his own right hand, has "made him most blessed for ever;" or as we read in the margin, "set him to be blessings." Psalms 21:6 . He has "prevented him" (or, as the word means, anticipated him in his wishes and petitions) "with the blessings of goodness, and set a crown of pure gold upon his head." This is the reward of his sufferings, for "his glory is great in God’s salvation," and therefore "honour and majesty has laid upon him." Psalms 21:5 . And does he not deserve it all? Has he not "obtained eternal redemption for us"? Hebrews 9:12 ; and is he not "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"? 1 Corinthians 1:30 . Is he not "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" Romans 10:4 ; and "the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him?" Hebrews 5:9 . How, then, can we doubt that he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him"? For what is there which he has not done for their salvation in his finished work? and what is there which he cannot do in the application of that finished work to their heart? For we need his present help as well as his present obedience. When the soul, then, sinks low into trouble or dejection; when troops of sins come to view, like so many gaunt spectres of the past; when innumerable backslidings, slips, and falls crowd in upon the conscience, bringing guilt and fear in their train, how the cast-down spirit will sometimes look at and ponder over the various cases of those sinners of every shape, and hue, and dye, whose salvation, without money and without price, is recorded in the word of truth. How it looks, for instance, at a sinning David, a blood-stained Manasseh, a dying thief, a returning prodigal, a weeping Mary Magdalene, a denying Peter, a persecuting Saul, a trembling jailer, the Jerusalem sinners who killed the Prince of life. And as it views these self-condemned, self-abhorred sinners, so freely accepted, so everlastingly saved, how it looks up to the Lord of life and glory that it may receive similar blessings out of his fullness. It is in this and similar ways that. a communication is kept up with the risen and ascended Lord upon his throne of grace; and as he, in answer to prayer, from time to time drops down an encouraging word into the soul, each fresh discovery of his Person and work, of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and glory, raises up renewed actings of faith, strengthens a lively hope, and draws forth every tender affection of the heart to flow unto and centre in him. Seeing light in his light, and how rich and free his blessings are, it cries out with Jabez of old, "0 that thou wouldst bless me indeed." An "indeed" blessing is what the soul is seeking after which has ever felt the misery and bitterness of sin, and ever tasted the sweetness of God’s salvation. And these "indeed" blessings are seen to be spiritual and eternal. Compared with such blessings as these, it sees how vain and empty are all earthly things, what vain toys, what idle dreams, what passing shadows. It wonders at the folly of men in hunting after such vain shows, and spending time, health, money, life itself, in a pursuit of nothing but misery and destruction. Every passing bell that it hears, every corpse borne slowly along to the grave that it sees, impresses it with solemn feelings as to the state of those who live and die in their sins. Thus it learns more and more to contrast time with eternity, earth with heaven, sinners with saints, and professors with possessors. By these things it is taught, with Baruch, not "to seek great things" for itself, Jeremiah 14:5 , but real things - things which will outlast time, and fit it for eternity. It is thus brought to care little for the opinion of men as to what is good or great, but much for what God has stamped his own approbation upon, such as a tender conscience, a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a humble mind, a separation from the world and everything worldly, submission to his holy will, a meek endurance of the cross, a conformity to Christ’s suffering image, and a living

to God’s glory. Compared with spiritual blessings like these, it sees how vain and deceptive is a noisy profession, a presumptuous confidence, a sound creed in the letter of truth, without an experience of its life and power; and afraid of being deceived and deluded, as thousands are, it is made to prize the least testimony from the Lord’s own lips that its heart is right before him. Looking around then, as with freshly-enlightened eyes, it sees how the world is filled with sin and sorrow; how God’s original curse on the earth has embittered every earthly good; how it has marred the nearest and dearest social relationships; how trial and affliction, losses, crosses, bereavements, vexations, and disappointments enter every home, and especially that where God is feared; how, amid these scenes of sorrow and trouble, all human help or hope is vain, that it is dying in a dying world, and must soon pass away from this time-state, where all is shadow, into eternity, where all is substance. As, then, the gracious Lord is pleased to indulge it with some discovery of himself, shedding abroad a sweet sense of his goodness and mercy, atoning blood, and dying love, it is made to long more and more for the manifestation of those blessings which alone are to be found in him. For his blessings are not like the mere temporal mercies which we enjoy at his hands, all of which perish in the using, but are for ever and ever; and when once given are never taken away. They thus become earnests and foretastes of eternal joys, for they are absolutely irreversible. When Isaac had once blessed Jacob in God’s name, though the blessing had been obtained by guile, yet having been once given, it could not be recalled. He said, therefore, to Esau, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." Genesis 27:33 . So when the Lord has blessed his people with any of those spiritual blessings which are stored up in his inexhaustible fullness, these blessings are like himself, unchanging and unchangeable; for "he is in one mind and none can turn him;" "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Those whom he loves he loves to the end; and his gifts and calling are without repentance; Romans 11:29 , for he never repents of having bestowed them, as everlasting love is their unvarying, unceasing source. But these blessings have more than sweetness of their present communication. They stretch forward as well as reach backward; look into eternity to come, as well as from eternity past. By their communication and manifestation his people are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, for these blessings have a sweet sanctifying influence. Thus, believers in Jesus are said "to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" 1 Peter 1:8; and having a hope of seeing him as he is, to "purify themselves even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3. Spiritual blessings are not like mere doctrinal opinions, which often leave a man just where they found him - a slave to sin, self, Satan, and the world. They have a blessed sanctifying influence upon the heart. They prepare the soul for glory; they are earnests and foretastes of it, and are an enjoyment beforehand on earth of the delights of heaven. Thus, their effect is to separate the heart with its affections from the world; to subdue and crucify a worldly spirit; to mortify pride and covetousness; to cause the conscience to be tender and alive in the fear of God; to make sin exceedingly sinful, its remembrance bitter, and its indulgence dreaded; to draw forth a spirit of prayer and supplication; to open up the scriptures in their spiritual meaning; to encourage holy meditation; to feed the soul with choice fruit out of the word of truth; to breathe into it that spirit of faith which gives life and feeling to every gracious movement Godward, and in a word, to communicate, maintain, and keep alive that inward holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Can earth show a more blessed sight than a believer upon his knees before the throne of grace, looking up to the most blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father, and his sympathising High Priest looking down upon him with love in his heart, pity in his eye, and blessings in his hand? These are, indeed, for the most part but rare seasons,

and are often sadly broken through and interrupted by coldness, carnality, and death; but it is only in this way, however long the interval or dark the mind in the intermediate season, that fellowship is maintained with Jesus as the great High Priest over the house of God, and he experimentally made the soul’s all in all.

05.15. The Second Coming

THE SECOND COMING Chapter Fifteen from the book Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of The Blessed Redeemer

We have another view to take of our blessed Lord as having entered into the courts of bliss. He is gone thither as his people's forerunner, as the apostle speaks, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Hebrews 6:20. How blessedly did the Lord comfort his sorrowing disciples when he said to them, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, 1 would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He is gone to take possession beforehand of his and their everlasting home; for he is ascended to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. He has, as it were, filled heaven with new beauty, new happiness, new glory. His glorious Deity shining through his spotless and glorified humanity illuminates heaven with a peculiar glory, for he has fought the fight and won the day; he has fulfilled all the types and figures of the Old Testament, accomplished the purposes of the everlasting covenant; glorified God by the highest obedience that could have been yielded to his will, and having finished the work which the Father gave him to do, has returned triumphantly to the courts of bliss to receive the reward of his humiliation, sufferings, and death. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. His glorious Person as Immanuel is become the object of heaven's praise and adoration. The elect angels, whom he has confirmed in their standing, adore him as God-man; and the spirits of just men made perfect worship him in company with the angelic host. What a view had holy John of heaven's glorious worship, Revelation 5:1-14 when he saw the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders fall down before the Lamb; when he heard their new song and the voice of many angels round about the throne, and all saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Revelation 5:12. Heaven itself is waiting for the completion of the great mystery of godliness, when the whole church shall be assembled around the throne; when the marriage supper of the Lamb shall come; when the top stone shall be brought forth by the hands of the spiritual Zerubbabel, with shoutings of Grace, Grace unto it. Earth itself is groaning under the weight of sin and sorrow; and "the souls of those under the altar who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, are crying with a loud voice, How long, 0 Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Revelation 6:9-10. Nay, the very signs of the times themselves are all proclaiming as with one voice that it cannot be long before the Lord will come a second time without sin unto salvation. And this brings us to the last point, with which we shall close our "Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer," his second coming, and the posture in which his people should be found, as looking for and expecting his return. When the Lord ascended up on high in the sight of his disciples, "they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up," their faith, hope and love all following him up the shining way; and as they thus viewed his glorious track, they seemed to lose sight of every other consideration. But, "behold, two men," two angelic beings in human shape, "stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye

gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. It was as if the angels said to them, "Jesus, your Master, your Head, your King, is not gone away from you for ever. He will one day, according to his own promise, return in the same glorious Person as that in which he is gone up, in the same divine and human nature, and in the clouds of heaven which have now received him out of your sight. For this, meanwhile, look, watch, wait, and pray." From that moment, therefore, the Lord's return has always been a leading feature in the faith of the church of Christ, especially in the early period of her history. Thus we find Peter at once proclaiming it, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:21-22. That it ever after formed a prominent point in the teaching and testimony of the apostles is plain from the inspired epistles of the New Testament, in which it is continually brought forward and alluded to. Thus, not to quote numberless passages, the apostle reminds the Thessalonians how "they had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven;" 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; and seeks to comfort them under their persecutions with the prospect of eternal rest, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; as well as to console them under their bereavements with the sweet persuasion that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." 1 Thessalonians 4:14. To be looking, then, and waiting for the Lord's second coming was the especial hope and consolation of the saints of old. By this prospect their hearts were comforted when they could look forward to that glory which should be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ, for they knew that when he should come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, he would be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all them that believe. Matthew 16:27 1 Peter 1:7 2 Thessalonians 1:10. This faith and expectation had a most blessed and enduring influence on their hearts and lives. It made them feel that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; and that their Master having promised to return, and it being uncertain at what watch of the night he would come, their "loins should be girded about, and their lights burning, and they should be like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they might open unto him immediately." Luke 12:36. We shall not enter upon the question of the nature and circumstances of the Lord's return, or its immediate consequences, as these are disputed points, and we wish to consider the subject more with a view to edification than to controversy. It is sufficient for us to believe that Jesus will come again with all his saints, and that when he comes it will be to the salvation and joy of his friends, and the destruction and confusion of his enemies. We shall, therefore, rather address ourselves to the consideration of the posture in which the church should stand as waiting her Lord's return. During our present time-state we are to be conformed to the suffering image of Christ, and to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body. Our present life is to be one of trial, affliction, and temptation, that we may walk in the footsteps of our blessed Lord. Luke 22:28. We are to be persecuted by the world, despised by professors, assailed and tempted by Satan, and walk in a path of tribulation and sorrow, that we may, as members of his mystical body, fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Colossians 1:24. We are to drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism; for "it is a faithful saying. If we

be dead with him, we shall also live with him;" 2 Timothy 2:11; and "we must suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:17. The world knew him not, and it is to know us not. It hated and despised him, and it will hate and despise us; for "the servant is not greater than his Lord; and if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." Matthew 10:25 John 15:18-19. But to suffer will not always be the portion of the church of God. There is a day coming when Zion shall be raised from the dust; when she shall put on her beautiful garments; when the marriage of the Lamb shall come, and to his bride and spouse it shall be granted that she shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, and shall sit down with her Head and Husband at the marriage supper. Isaiah 52:1,2 Kings 19:7-9. Then those who have been partakers of the sufferings of Christ shall be partakers of his glory. Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever. Daniel 12:3. Then the mystery of God will be finished, and there will be time no longer, for all the former things of this miserable time-state shall have passed away. Revelation 10:6; Revelation 721:4. Now what should be the posture of the church as looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God? and what influence should this blessed truth have upon our hearts and lives? 1. First, it should reconcile us to afflictions, as feeling with the apostle that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17. And again, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Weighed in such a balance, what are all our afflictions, though seemingly so heavy? Are they not light indeed, if they are conforming us to the suffering image of Christ, and preparing us for an eternal weight of glory? 2. It should raise up and draw forth heavenly desires and spiritual affections, as the apostle says, "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Php 3:20. Believers are called upon "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind," Romans 12:2, and to "set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" Colossians 3:2; they are said to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts; Galatians 5:24; and by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. Romans 8:13. It is true that we are sorely hindered in running the race set before us, for we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, having to carry about with us a body of sin and death, which is our constant grief and plague; and the flesh lusting against the spirit, as well as the spirit against the flesh, we cannot do the things that we would. Romans 7:24 2 Corinthians 5:4 Galatians 5:17. We are beset, too, by innumerable temptations, have often to mourn over our darkness, deadness, coldness, and unbelief, as well as on account of the hidings of the Lord’s face, and the absence of that blessed Comforter who alone can console the cast-down spirit. Still, though in themselves grievous hindrances, spears in our side and thorns in our eyes, these things do not utterly quench that preveiling bent of the renewed heart to look up and look forward to a brighter day, when tears shall be wiped from off all faces. As, then, a view of the glory of Christ is obtained, and his coming again is realised by a living faith, the soul looks beyond this time-state, and all the cares and sorrows of this vale of tears, to that glorious day when it shall be perfectly conformed to the glorified image of Christ, and never sin against him more. At his second coming he will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Php 3:21. And "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 0 death, where is thy sting? 0 grave, where is thy

victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:54-55. Now, if these things are so, if Jesus is but gone before to prepare a place for us, and has promised that he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also, John 14:3, will not this heavenly truth, if received into a believing heart, exercise a gracious influence upon our daily walk and life? Such, at least, is John's testimony, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." 1 John 3:2-3. If we are led by divine teaching to see and feel that this present world is an evil world, from which Christ came to deliver us by giving himself for our sins, Galatians 1:4, and as such is under the wrath and curse of God; if we feel everything in it marred by sin and sorrow, and have a good hope through grace that when the Lord appears we shall appear with him in glory, will not this separate us in heart and spirit from the world, and lead us, with God's help and blessing, to walk as becometh the gospel, and to speak and act as a peculiar people, zealous of good works? But taking a general view of the professing church, can we say that such is its experience or its walk? The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are sleeping and slumbering; and a cold, lukewarm profession is everywhere prevalent. Error abounds on every side; strife and division widely preveil; and we seem fallen upon those last days when perilous times were to come. We cannot, indeed, marvel that the world is what it ever was, a foe to God and godliness, buried in carnality and death, ignorant of its misery and ruin, and unconcerned at the awful judgment that is awaiting it, and almost ready to burst upon it. But we may justly wonder that the church of Christ, which professes to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, should be sunk so low, and manifest so little of the life and power of vital godliness. Yet this is only what we are led to expect from the word of truth. The Lord himself said. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8; and, "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold." Matthew 24:12. Thus, instead of expecting that the world will gradually get better and better, as men idly dream, or that bright and glorious days are awaiting the professing church, we may rather expect that things will get gradually worse and worse with both, until he comes who shall come and will not tarry. But come when he will, come when he may, it shall be well with the righteous. Unto those that fear his name the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings; and to them that look for him the Lord shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation. Here, then, we close our "Meditations upon the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer;" and can only lament that our views of this most glorious subject have been so dim, and our expression of them so faint and feeble. But such as they are, we commend them to the God of all grace; and if they have been or should be in any way blessed to the spiritual profit of his people, to Him and to Him alone be ascribed all the glory.

Chapter 101

06.01. MORE PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

MORE PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

Some beloved idol?

"Because the whole land is filled with idols, and the people are madly in love with them." Jeremiah 50:38

Have we not all in our various ways,

set up some beloved idol . . .

something which engaged our affections,

something which occupied our thoughts,

something to which we devoted all the energies of our minds,

something for which we were willing to labor night and day?

Be it money,

be it power,

be it esteem of men,

be it respectability,

be it worldly comfort,

be it literary knowledge,

there was a secret setting up of SELF in one or

more of its various forms, and a bowing down

to it as an idol.

The man of business makes money his god.

The man of pleasure makes the lust of the flesh his god.

The proud man makes his adored SELF his god.

The Pharisee makes self-righteousness his god.

The Arminian makes free-will his god.

The Calvinist makes dry doctrine his god.

All in one way or other, however they may differ in the object of their idolatrous worship, agree in this: that they give a preference in their esteem and affection to their peculiar idol, above the one true God.

"Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed."

Isaiah 2:18

There is, then, a time to break down these idols which our fallen nature has set up.

And have not we experienced some measure of this breaking down, both externally and internally?

Have not our idols been in a measure smashed before our eyes, our prospects in life cut up and destroyed, our airy visions of earthly happiness and our romantic paradises dissolved into thin air, our creature-hopes dashed, our youthful affections blighted, and the objects from which we had fondly hoped to reap an enduring harvest of delight removed from our eyes?

And likewise, as to our religion . . .

our good opinion of ourselves,

our piety and holiness,

our wisdom and our knowledge,

our understanding and our abilities,

our consistency and uprightness;

have they not all been broken down, and

made a heap of ruins before our eyes?

That monstrous creature within us!

"I abhor the pride of Jacob." Amos 6:8

O cursed pride, that is ever lifting up its head in our hearts! Pride would even pull down God that it might sit upon His throne. Pride would trample under foot the holiest things to exalt itself!

Pride is that monstrous creature within us, of such ravenous and indiscriminate gluttony, that the more it devours, the more it craves!

Pride is that chameleon which assumes every color; that actor which can play every part; and yet which is faithful to no one object or purpose, but to exalt and glorify self!

"I will put an end to the pride of the mighty." "God will bring down their pride." (Ezekiel 7:24, Isaiah 25:11)

God means to kill man’s pride! And oh, what cutting weapons the Lord will sometimes make use of to kill a man’s pride!

How He will bring him sometimes into the depths of temporal poverty, that He may make a stab at his worldly pride!

How He will bring to light the iniquities of his youth, that He may mortify his self-righteous pride!

How He will allow sin to break forth, if not openly, yet so powerfully within, that piercing convictions shall kill his spiritual pride!

And what deep discoveries of internal corruption will the Lord sometimes employ, to dig down to the root, and cut off the core of that poisonous tree, pride!

The Searcher of hearts dissects and anatomizes this inbred evil, cuts down to it through the quivering and bleeding flesh, and pursues with His keen knife its multiplied windings and ramifications.

"The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted." Isaiah 2:11

"The arrogance of all people will be brought low.Their pride will lie in the dust. The Lord alonewill be exalted!" Isaiah 2:17

"The Lord Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show His contempt for all human greatness."Isaiah 23:9

Salvation

And they were shouting with a mighty shout, "Salvation comes from our God on the throne

and from the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is salvation.

Saved FROM . . .

death and hell;

the worm which never dies;

the fire which is never quenched;

the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;

the companionship of tormenting fiends and

all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;

blaspheming God in unutterable woe;

an eternity of misery without end or hope!

Saved INTO . . .

heaven;

the sight of Jesus as He is;

perfect holiness and happiness;

the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints;

and all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word salvation? The soul's natural element

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

It is proud, and needs to be humbled.

It is careless, and needs to be awakened.

It is alive, and needs to be killed.

It is full, and requires to be emptied.

It is whole, and needs to be wounded.

It is clothed, and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous;

self-seeking;

buried deep in worldliness and carnality;

utterly blind and ignorant;

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit

and enmity;

hateful to all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is the soul's natural element.

Some of the features of the unregenerate

nature of man are . . .

covetousness,

lust,

worldly pleasure,

desire of the praise of men,

an insatiable thirst after self-advancement,

a complete abandonment to all that can please

and gratify every new desire of the heart,

an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that

restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves.

Education,

moral restraints,

or the force of habit,

may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption,

and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin,

so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate

the land. But no moral check can alter human nature.

A chained tiger is a tiger still.

"The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots."

To make man the direct contrary of what

he originally is; to make him . . .

love God instead of hating Him;

fear God, instead of mocking Him;

obey God, instead of rebelling against Him;

to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful

change, requires the implantation of a new nature

by the immediate hand of God Himself.

Natural light,

natural love,

natural faith,

natural obedience,

in a word, all natural religion,

is here useless and ineffectual.

Godly sorrow

Godly sorrow springs from a view of a suffering

Savior, and manifests itself by . . .

hatred of self,

abhorrence of sin,

groaning over our backslidings,

grief of soul for being so often entangled by our lusts and passions,

and is accompanied by . . .

softness,

meltings of heart,

flowings of love to the Redeemer,

indignation against ourselves,

and earnest desires never to sin more.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the

furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10

What benefit is there in afflictions?

Does God send them without an object in view?

Do they come merely, as the men of the world think, by chance? No! There is benefit intended by them.

The branch cannot bear fruit unless it be pruned.

The love of sin cannot be cast out; the soul cannot be meekened, humbled, softened, and made contrite; the world cannot be embittered; the things of time and sense cannot be stripped of their false hue and their magic appearance--except through affliction.

Our greatest blessings usually spring from our greatest afflictions--they prepare the heart to receive them; they empty the vessel of the poisonous ingredients which have filled it, and fit it to receive gospel wine and milk.

To be without . . .

these afflictions,

these griefs,

these trials,

these temptations,

is to write ourselves destitute of grace.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

We are willing to walk to heaven; but not to walk there in God’s way. Though we see in the Scripture that the path to glory is a rough and rugged way; yet when our feet are planted in that painful and trying path, we shrink back; our coward flesh refuses to walk in that road.

God therefore, as a sovereign, brings those afflictions upon us which He sees most fit for our profit and His glory, without ever consulting us, without ever allowing us a choice in the matter.

And He will generally cause our afflictions to come from the most unexpected source, and in a way most cutting to our feelings--in the way that of all others we would least have chosen--and yet in a way which of all others, is most for our profit.

God deals with us like a surgeon dealing with a diseased organ. How painful the operation!

How deep the knife cuts!

How long it may be before the wound is healed!

Yet every stroke of the knife is indispensable! A skillful and faithful surgeon would not do his duty if he did not dissect it to the very bottom.

As pain before healing is necessary, and must be produced by the knife; so spiritually, we must be wounded and cut in our souls, as long, and as deeply as God sees needful, that in His own

time we may receive the consolation.

Do the afflictions we pass through humble us?

Do they deaden the love of the world in our hearts?

Do they purge out hypocrisy?

Do they bring us more earnestly to the throne of grace?

Do they discover to us sins that we have not before seen?

Do they penetrate into our very hearts?

Do they lay bare the corrupt fountain that we carry within us?

Do they search and test us before a heart-searching God?

Do they meeken and soften our spirit?

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10 The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

The sin of our fallen nature is a very mysterious thing. We read of "the mystery of iniquity". Sin has depths which no human plumbline ever fathomed, and lengths which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out.

Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep;

and at other times to awake with renewed strength;

its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature;

the many shapes and colors it wears;

the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels;

the corners into which it creeps;

its deceitfulness;

its hypocrisy;

its craftiness;

its persuasiveness;

its intense selfishness;

its utter recklessness;

its desperate madness;

its insatiable greediness;

are secrets, painful secrets,

only learned by bitter experience.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9 The Lord’s secret power in our souls?

"He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; and increases strength to the weak." Isaiah 40:29

The Lord’s people are often in the state that they have no might. All their power seems exhausted, and their strength completely drained away; sin appears to have gotten the mastery over them; and they feel as if they had neither will nor ability to run the race set before them, or persevere in the way of the Lord.

Now what has kept us to this day? Some of you have made a profession ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years.

What has kept us?

When powerful temptations were spread for our feet, what preserved us from falling headlong into them?

When we felt the workings of strong lusts, what kept us from being altogether carried captive by them?

When we look at the difficulties of the way, the perplexities which our souls have had to grapple with, the persecutions and hard blows from sinners and saints that we have had to encounter--what has still kept in us a desire to fear God, and a heart in some measure tender before Him?

When we view the . . .

infidelity,

unbelief,

carnality,

worldly-mindedness,

hypocrisy,

pride, and

presumption of our fallen nature,

what has kept us still . . .

believing,

hoping,

loving,

longing,

and looking to the Lord?

When we think of our . . .

deadness,

coldness,

torpidity,

rebelliousness,

perverseness,

love to evil,

aversion to good, and

all the abounding corruptions of our nature,

what has kept us from giving up the very profession of religion, and swimming down the powerful current that has so long and so often threatened to sweep us utterly from the Lord? Is it not the putting forth of the Lord’s secret power in our souls?

Can we not look back, and recall to mind our first religious companions; those with whom we started in the race; those whom we perhaps envied for their greater piety, zeal, holiness, and earnestness; and with which we painfully contrasted our own sluggishness and carnality; admiring them, and condemning ourselves?

Where are they all, or the greater part of them? Some have embraced soul-destroying errors; others are buried in a worldly religious system; and others are wrapped up in delusion and fleshly confidence.

Thus, while most have fallen into the snares of the devil; God, by putting forth His secret power in the hearts of His fainting ones, keeps His fear alive in their souls; holds up their goings in His paths that their footsteps slip not; brings them out of all their temptations and troubles; delivers them from every evil work; and preserves them unto His heavenly kingdom. He thus secures the salvation of His people by His own free grace.

How sweet and precious it is . . .

to have our strength renewed;

to have fresh grace brought into the heart;

to feel the mysterious sensations of renovated life;

to feel the everlasting arms supporting the soul . . .

fighting our battles for us,

subduing our enemies,

overcoming our lusts,

breaking our snares, and

delivering us out of our temptations!

God’s house?

In the New Testament Scriptures, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God." The New Testament never, in any one instance, means, by "the house of God," any material building.

It has come to pass, through the traditions

received from the fathers, that . . .

buildings erected by man,

collections of bricks and mortar,

piles of squared and cemented stones,

are often called "the house of God."

In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of "God's house", thus endeavoring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that He was only to be found in some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies.

The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the Church of England; and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God."

And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in this morning, "the house of God."

How frequently does the expression drop from the pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God.

It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for His service. When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel

We often know the theory of the gospel, before we know the experience of the gospel.

We often receive the doctrines of grace into our judgment, before we receive the grace of

the doctrines into our soul.

We therefore need to be . . .

brought down,

humbled,

tried,

stripped of every prop;

that the gospel may be to us . . .

more than a sound,

more than a name,

more than a theory,

more than a doctrine,

more than a system,

more than a creed;

that it may be . . .

soul enjoyment,

soul blessing,

and soul salvation.

When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and tried--it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner’s broken heart.

We get entangled with some idol

Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its partaker to desire to live to His honor and glory.

But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing.

Such is . . .

the weakness of the flesh,

the power of sin,

the subtlety of Satan,

the strength of temptation, and

the snares spread on every side for our feet,

that we can neither do what we want, nor be what we want. Before we are well aware, we get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings darkness into the mind, and may cut us out some bitter work for the rest of our days.

But we thus learn not only the weakness of the flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies.

And as the grace of the Lord Jesus, in its suitability, in its sufficiency and its super-aboundings, becomes manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh; a sense of His wondrous love and care in so bearing with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us with a holy obligation to walk in His fear and to live to His praise. The sins and slips of the saints?

The Scriptures faithfully record

the falls of believers . . .

the drunkenness of Noah,

the incest of Lot,

the unbelief of Abraham,

the peevishness of Moses,

the adultery of David,

the idolatry of Solomon,

the pride of Hezekiah,

the cowardice of Mark and

the cursing and swearing of Peter.

But why has the Holy Spirit left on record the sins and slips of the saints?

First, that it might teach us that they were saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners; in the same way as we hope to be saved.

Secondly, that their slips and falls might be so many beacons and warnings, to guard the people of God against being overtaken by the same sins; as the apostle speaks, "All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us."

And thirdly, that the people of God, should they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast into despair; but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the slips and failings of the saints of old, they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

These two kinds of repentance are to be carefully distinguished from each other; though they are often sadly confounded. Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented. But their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience, not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry Judge, but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father.

They neither hated their sins nor forsook them.

They neither loved holiness nor sought it.

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Esau plotted Jacob’s death.

Saul consulted the witch of Endor.

Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison.

Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God; that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit’s gracious operations!

Godly sorrow does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law, but from His mercy in a blessed gospel; from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross; from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence; with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it; with most hearty, sincere and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil; and a holy longing to live to the praise and

glory of God.

Here, and here alone

Standing then at the cross of our adorable Lord,

we may see . . .

the law thoroughly fulfilled,

its curse fully endured,

its penalties wholly removed,

sin eternally put away,

the justice of God amply satisfied,

all His perfections gloriously harmonized,

reconciliation completely effected,

redemption graciously accomplished,

and the church everlastingly saved.

Here, and here alone, we see sin in its blackest colors, and holiness in its most attractive beauties.

Here, and here alone, we see the love of God in its tenderest form, and the anger of God in its deepest expression.

Here, and here alone, we see the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of His inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of His heart to the election of grace.

Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace.

Here, and here alone, penitential grief and

godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes.

Here, and here alone, is . . .

sin subdued and mortified,

holiness communicated,

death vanquished,

Satan put to flight, and

happiness and heaven begun in the soul.

What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners and a sin-pardoning God! What a healing-place for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders! What a door of hope in the valley of Achor for the self-condemned and self-abhorred! What a safe spot for seeking souls! And what a blessed

resorting-place for the whole family of grace in this valley of grief and sorrow.

Experimental knowledge

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." John 17:3

An experimental knowledge of Christ in the soul, is the only relief for sin's . . .

poverty,

guilt,

leprosy,

bankruptcy,

and damnation.

This is the true way of preaching Christ crucified; not the mere doctrine of the Cross, but a crucified Jesus experimentally known to the soul.

I am deeply conscious of my own . . .

baseness,

ignorance,

blindness

and folly.

But my malady is too deeply rooted to be healed by dry doctrines and speculative theological opinions.

The blood of the Lamb, spiritually and supernaturally sprinkled and applied, is the only healing balm for a sin-sick soul.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

I find that sin has such power over me, that though I call on the Lord again and again for deliverance, I seem to be as weak as ever when temptation comes.

If a window were placed in my bosom, what filth and vileness would be seen by all.

"O you hideous monster sin, What a curse, have you brought in!"

I love it; I hate it.

I want to be delivered from the power of it; and yet am not satisfied without drinking down its poisoned sweets.

Sin is my hourly companion; and my daily curse.

Sin is the breath of my mouth; and the cause of my groans.

Sin is my incentive to prayer; and my hinderer of it.

Sin made my Savior suffer; and makes my Savior precious.

Sin spoils every pleasure; and adds a sting to every pain.

Sin fits a soul for heaven; and ripens a soul for hell.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

Is your heart, as my heart?

Alas! Alas! We feel sin's power daily and hourly. We sigh and groan at times, to be delivered from the giant strength of our corruptions, which seem to carry us captive at their will. Though sin is a sweet morsel to our carnal mind, it grieves our soul.

I am sure I must be a monument of grace and mercy, if saved from the guilt, curse, and power of sin! My greatest enemy?

I have ever found myself to be my greatest enemy. I never had a foe that troubled me so much as my own heart; nor has any one ever wrought me half the mischief or given me half the plague that I have felt and known within. And it is a daily sense of this which makes me dread myself more than anybody that walks upon the face of the earth!

Keep a watchful eye upon every inward foe; and if you fight, fight against the enemy that lurks and works in your own breast!

There are many devices in a man's heart

"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Proverbs 19:21.

The devices of our heart are generally to find some easy, smooth, flowery path. Whatever benefits we have derived from affliction, whatever mercies we have experienced in tribulation, the flesh hates and shrinks from such a path with complete abhorrence.

And, therefore, there is always a secret devising in a man's heart . . .

to escape the cross,

to avoid affliction, and

to walk in some flowery meadow,

away from the rough road which cuts his feet, and wearies his limbs.

Another "device in a man's heart" is, that he shall have worldly prosperity; that his children shall grow up around him, and when they grow up, he shall be able to provide for them in a way which shall be best suited to their station in life; that they shall enjoy health and strength and success; and that there shall not be any cutting affliction in his family, or fiery trial to pass through.

Now these devices the Lord frustrates. What grief, what affliction, what trouble, is the Lord continually bringing into some families! Their dearest objects of affection removed from them, at

the very moment when they seemed clasped nearest around their hearts!

And those who are spared, perhaps, growing up in such a searedness of conscience and hardness of heart, and, perhaps, profligacy of life, that even their very presence is often a burden to their parents instead of a blessing; and the very children who should be their comfort, become thorns and briars in their sides!

Oh, how the Lord overturns and brings to nothing the "devices of a man’s heart" to make a paradise here upon earth.

When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord’s dealings with him from the first, he sees it was a kind hand which "blasted his gourds, and laid them low;" it was a kind hand that swept away his worldly prospects; which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty; which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations; because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally precious.

"There are many devices in a man’s heart."

Now you have all your devices; that busy workshop is continually putting out some new pattern; some new fashion is continually starting forth from the depths of that ingenious manufactory which you carry about with you; and you are wanting this, and expecting that, and building up airy castles, and looking for that which shall never come to pass; for "there are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

And so far as you are children of God, that counsel is a counsel of wisdom and mercy. The purposes of God’s heart are purposes of love and affection toward you, and therefore you may bless and praise God, that whatever be the devices of your hearts against God’s counsel, they shall be frustrated, that He may do His will and fulfill all His good pleasure.

All are more or less deeply infected with it

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

As we are led aside by the powerful workings of our corrupt nature, we are often seeking great things for ourselves.

Riches,

worldly comforts,

respectability,

to be honored, admired, and esteemed by men,

are the objects most passionately sought after by the world. And so far as the children of God are under the influence of a worldly principle, do they secretly desire similar things.

Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life. All are more or less deeply infected with it, until delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after "great things," and a secret plotting in his mind how he may obtain them.

But the Lord is determined that His people shall not have great things. He has purposed to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. He therefore nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their flattering prospects, and makes them for the most part, poor, needy, and despised in this world.

Whatever schemes or projects the Lord’s people may devise that they may prosper and get on in the world, He rarely allows their plans to thrive. He knows well to what consequences it would lead; that this ivy creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate and strangle the tree.

The more that worldly goods increase . . .

the more the heart is fixed upon them,

the more the affections are set upon idols,

the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord.

He will not allow His people to have their portion

here below. He has in store for them a better city,

that is a heavenly one, and therefore will not allow them to build and plant below the skies.

A child of God may be secretly aiming at great things, such as respectability, bettering his condition in life, rising step by step in the scale of society. But the Lord will usually . . .

disappoint these plans,

defeat these projects,

wither these gourds,

and blight these prospects.

He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job; smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah; take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob; or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of His unerring bow into the conscience.

God has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart? When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (so through ignorance esteemed) sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces.

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

a greater gift in preaching,

a readier utterance,

a more abundant variety,

a more striking delivery than they possess. And this, not for the glory of God, but for the glory of the creature. Not that praise may be given God, but that pride, cursed pride, may be gratified; that they may be admired by men.

My desire and aim is . . .

not to deceive souls by flattery;

not to please any party;

not to minister to any man's pride or presumption;

but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God's glory,

with His fear working in my heart, to speak to the edification of His people.

A minister who stands up with any other motives, and aiming at any other ends than the glory of God, and the edification of His people, bears no scriptural marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by God Himself.

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes!

Our sins,

our sorrows,

our burdens,

our trials, and above all the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .

everything worth having!

everything worth a moment's anxious thought!

everything for time and eternity!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself; my . . .

vile,

proud,

lustful,

hypocritical,

worldly,

covetous,

presumptuous,

obscene self.

O self! Self!

Your desperate wickedness,

your depravity,

your love of sin,

your abominable pollutions,

your monstrous heart wickedness,

your wretched deadness, hardness,

blindness, and indifference.

You are a treacherous villain, and, I fear, always will be such!

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146

If you know anything for yourself,

inwardly and experimentally of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and that daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven; you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. There is present salvation: an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146 Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us!

Our own strength and resolutions; the world and the church; sinners and saints; friends and enemies; have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls!

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from leaning on the world,

from leaning on friends,

from leaning on enemies,

from leaning on self,

in order to bring us to lean upon Himself.

And every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon Him.

Superabounding grace

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

What are all the gilded toys of time compared with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!

But, alas! what wretches are we when left to sin, self, and Satan! How unable to withstand the faintest breath of temptation! How bent upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace, can either suit or save such wretches?

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

Job’s religion

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

What a mere shallow pretense to vital godliness satisfies most ministers, most hearers, and most congregations!

But there was a reality in Job’s religion.

It was not of a flimsy, notional, superficial nature. It was not merely a sound Calvinistic creed, and nothing more. It was not a religion of theory and speculation, nor a well-compacted system of

doctrines and duties. There was something deeper, something more divine in Job's religion than any such mere pretense, delusion, imitation, or hypocrisy.

And if our religion be of the right kind, there will be something deeper in it, something more powerful, spiritual, and supernatural, than notions and doctrines, theories and speculations, merely passing to and from in our minds, however scriptural and correct.

There will be a divine reality in it, if God the Spirit be the author of it. And there will be no trifling with the solemn things of God, and with our own immortal souls.

The heart of God's child

There is much . . .

presumption,

pride,

hypocrisy,

deceit,

delusion,

formality,

superstition and self-righteousness to be purged out of the heart of God's child.

But all these things . . .

keep him low,

mar his pride,

crush his self-righteousness,

cut the locks of his presumption,

stain his self conceit,

stop his boasting,

preserve him from despising others,

make him take the lowest room,

teach him to esteem others better than himself,

drive him to earnest prayer,

fit him as an object of mercy,

break to pieces his free will, and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone!

The way in which the Spirit of God works

As pride rises, it must be broken down.

As self-righteousness starts up, it must be brought low.

As the wisdom of the creature exalts itself against the wisdom of God, it must be laid prostrate.

The way in which the Spirit of God works is to lay the creature low, by bringing it into nothingness, and crushing it into self-abasement and self-loathing, so as to press out of it everything on which the creature can depend.

Like a surgeon, who will run his lancet into the abscess, and let out the gory matter, in order to effect a thorough cure; so the Spirit of the Lord thrusting His sharp sword into the heart, lets out the inward corruption, and never heals the wound until He has thoroughly probed it.

And when He has laid bare the heart, He heals it by pouring in the balmy blood of Jesus, as that which, by its application, cleanses from all sin.

The world passes away, and the lust thereof

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof." 1 John 2:17

The world and all that is in it comes to an end. Where are the great bulk of the men and women who fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago trod London streets? Where are they who rode about in their gay carriages, gave their splendid entertainments, decked themselves with feathers and jewels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of life?

Where are they?

The grave holds their bodies, and hell holds their souls.

"The world passes away." It is like a pageant, or a gay and splendid procession, which passes before the eye for a few minutes, then turns the corner of the street, and is lost to view. It is now to you who had looked upon it just as if it were not, and is gone to amuse other eyes.

So, could you go on for years . . .

enjoying all your natural heart could wish;

lay up money by thousands;

ride in your carriage;

deck your body with jewelry;

fill your house with splendid furniture;

enjoy everything that earth can give;

then there would come, some day or other, sickness to lay you upon a dying bed. To you the world has now passed away with all its lusts; with you all is now come to an end; and now you have, with a guilty soul, to face a holy God.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

All these lusts for which men have sold body and soul, half ruined their families, and stained their own name; all these lusts for which they were so mad that they would have them at any price, snatch them even from hell’s mouth; all these lusts are passed away, and what have they left? A gnawing worm; a worm that can never die, and the wrath of God as an unquenchable fire.

That is all which the love of the world can do for you, with all your toil and anxiety, or all your amusement and pleasure.

You have not gained much perhaps of this world’s goods, with all your striving after them. But could the world fill your heart with enjoyment, and your money bags with gold, as the dust of the grave will one day fill your mouth, it would be much to the same purpose. If you had got all the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin was screwed down, but gravedust in your mouth.

Such is the end of the world.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

DEATH is the great and final extinguisher of all human hopes and pleasures. Look and see how man sickens and dies, and is tumbled into the cemetery, where his body is left to the worms, and his soul to face an angry God, on the great judgment day.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

Weary?

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

The Lord’s purpose in laying burdens upon us is to weary us out. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each; and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely wearied out of sin and self, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own.

The effect, then, of all spiritual labor is to bring us to this point: to be weary of the world, for we feel it, for the most part, to be a valley of tears; to be weary of self, for it is our greatest plague; weary of professors, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value; weary of the profane, for their ungodly conversation only hurts our minds; weary of our bodies, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul; and weary of life, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable.

By this painful experience we come to this point: to be worn out and wearied; and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ.

As long as we can rest in the world, we shall rest in it. As long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them. As long as we can find anything pleasing in self, we shall be pleased with it. As long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them.

But when we get weary of all things visible, tangible, and sensible--weary of ourselves, and of all things here below--then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone.

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are LOST." Luke 19:10

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

How comfortably he could walk to church with his Bible under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly also, he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well, with one foot in heaven.

But a ray of heavenly light has beamed into his soul, and shown him who and what God is; what sin and a sinful heart is; and who and what he himself as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let out, where is the clean heart once boasted of?

Where is his religion now?

All buried beneath a load of filth!

Where is all his holiness gone? His . . .

holy looks,

holy expressions,

holy manners,

holy gestures,

holy garb;

where are they all gone?

All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself

over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures; and he is, as Job says, 'in the ditch.'

We never find the right religion, until we have lost the wrong one. We never find Christ, until we have lost SELF. We never find grace, until we have lost our own pitiful self-holiness.

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are LOST." Luke 19:10

It is a creature of many lives!

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners, and yet a Pharisee!

A wretch, and the vilest of wretches, and yet pluming himself on his good works!

Did not experience convince us to the contrary, we would scarcely believe that a monster like man, a creature, as someone has justly said, "half beast and half devil," should dream of pleasing God by his obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart. Deep is the root, broad the stem, wide the branches, but poisonous the fruit, of this gigantic tree, planted by pride and unbelief in the soil of human nature.

Self-righteousness is not peculiar to only certain individuals. It is interwoven with our very being. It is the only religion that human nature . . .

understands,

relishes, or

admires.

Again and again must the heart be ploughed up, and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the growth of this pharisaic spirit.

It is a creature of many lives! It is not one blow, nor ten, nor a hundred that can kill it. Stunned it may be for a while, but it revives again and again!

Pharisaism can live and thrive under any profession. Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he carries, that constitutes the man.

The believer’s chief troubles

As earth is but a valley of tears, the Christian has many tribulations in common with the world. Family troubles were the lot of Job, Abraham, Jacob and David. Sickness befell Hezekiah, Trophimus and Epaphroditus. Reverses and losses fell upon Job. Poverty and famine drove Naomi into the land of Moab.

Trouble, then, is in itself no sign of grace; for it inevitably flows from, and is necessarily connected with, man’s fallen state.

But we should fix our eye on two things, as especially marking the temporal afflictions of the Lord’s family:

1. That they are all weighed out and timed by special appointment. For though "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," yet "affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground." Job 5:6

2. That they are specially sanctified, and made to "work together for good" to those who love God.

But the believer’s chief troubles are internal, and arise from . . .

the assaults of Satan,

powerful temptations,

the guilt of sin laid on the conscience,

doubts and fears about a saving interest in Christ, and

a daily, hourly conflict with a nature ever lusting to evil.

A religion that satisfies thousands.

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power." 2 Timothy 3:5

Much that passes for religion, is not true religion at all.

Much that goes for hopes of salvation, is nothing but lying refuges.

Much is palmed off for the teaching of the Spirit, which is nothing but delusion.

Vital godliness is very rare.

There are very few people spiritually taught of God.

There are very few ministers who really preach the truth.

Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands.

A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself, cannot take up with a religion in the flesh.

He cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be deceived by Satan’s delusions. He has a secret gnawing of conscience, which makes him dissatisfied with a religion that satisfies thousands.

Then down they sink to the bottom!

"Until the pit is dug for the wicked." Psalms 94:13

In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the bottom. And when the pit has been dug sufficiently deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth, and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed--the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this!

Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes; prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer, thinking only of . . .

some worldly profit,

some covetous plan,

some lustful scheme,

something the carnal mind delights in;

but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit."

The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them. The pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts; they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed.

So it is with the wicked; both with religious professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shown the way; no pausing, no turning back. On they go, on they go; heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly; pursuing some beloved object. On they go, on they go; until in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit!

There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are. He knows where the pit is. He knows their steps. He sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them . . .

no forewarning,

no notice of their danger,

no teachings,

no chastenings,

no remonstrances,

no frowns,

no stripes.

They are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and then down they sink to the bottom! Who can come out of the battle alive?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

We know little of ourselves, and less of one another. We do not know . . .

our own needs,

what is for our good,

what snares to avoid,

what dangers to shun.

Our path is . . .

bestrewed with difficulties,

beset with temptations,

surrounded with foes,

encompassed with perils.

At every step there is a snare!

At every turn an enemy lurks!

Pride digs the pit, carelessness blindfolds the eyes, carnality drugs and intoxicates the senses, the lust of the flesh seduces, the love of the world allures, unbelief paralyzes the fighting hand and the praying knee, sin entangles the feet, guilt defiles the conscience, and Satan accuses the soul.

Under these circumstances, who can come out of the battle alive? Only he who is kept by the mighty power of God. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

MERCY!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me." Psalms 119:132

When shall we ever get beyond the need of God’s mercy?

We feel our need of continual mercy . . .

as our sins abound,

as our guilt is felt,

as our corruption works,

as our conscience is burdened,

as the iniquities of our heart are laid bare,

as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit’s light.

We need . . .

mercy for every adulterous look;

mercy for every covetous thought;

mercy for every light and trifling word;

mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts;

mercy while we live;

mercy when we die;

mercy to accompany us every moment;

mercy to go with us down to the portals of the grave;

mercy to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan;

mercy to land us safe before the Redeemer’s throne!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me."

Why me?

Because I am so vile a sinner.

Because I am so base a backslider.

Because I am such a daring transgressor.

Because I sin against You with every breath that I draw.

Because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves.

Because nothing but Your mercy can blot out such iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind.

I need . . .

inexhaustible mercy,

everlasting mercy,

super-abounding mercy.

Nothing but such mercy as this can suit such a guilty sinner!

A flowery path?

Does the road to heaven lie across a smooth, grassy meadow, over which we may quietly walk in the cool of a summer evening, and leisurely amuse ourselves with gathering of flowers and listening to the warbling of the birds?

No child of God ever found the way to heaven a flowery path. It is the wide gate and broad

way which leads to perdition. It is the strait gate and narrow way, the uphill road, full of . . .

difficulties,

trials,

temptations,

and enemies,

which leads to heaven, and issues in eternal life.

But our Father manifests mercy and grace. He never leaves nor forsakes the objects of His choice. He . . .

fulfills every promise,

defeats every enemy,

appears in every difficulty,

richly pardons every sin,

graciously heals every backsliding,

and eventually lands them in eternal bliss!

Toys and playthings of the religious babyhouse

"I will feed My flock." Ezekiel 34:15

The only real food of the soul must be of God’s own appointing, preparing, and communicating.

You can never deceive a hungry child. You may give it a plaything to still its cries. It may serve for a few minutes; but the pains of hunger are not to be removed by a doll. A toy horse will not allay the cravings after the mother’s breast.

So with babes in grace. A hungry soul cannot feed upon playthings.

Altars,

robes,

ceremonies,

candlesticks,

bowings,

mutterings,

painted windows,

intoning priests, and

singing men and women;

these dolls and wooden horses; these toys and playthings of the religious babyhouse, cannot feed the soul that, like David, cries out after the living God. (Psalms 42:2-3)

Christ, the bread of life, the manna that came down from heaven, is the only food of the believing soul. (John 6:51)

But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict!

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more." Ezekiel 21:27

Jesus wants our hearts and affections. Therefore every idol must go down, sooner or later, because the idol draws away the affections of the soul from Christ. Everything that is loved in opposition to Him must sooner or later be taken away, that the Lord Jesus alone may be worshiped. Everything which exacts the allegiance of the soul must be overthrown.

Jesus shall have our heart and affections, but in having our heart and affection, He shall have it . . .

wholly,

solely, and

undividedly.

He shall have it entirely for Himself.

He shall reign and rule supreme.

Now, here comes the conflict and the struggle. SELF says, "I will have a part." Self wants to be . . .

honored,

admired,

esteemed,

bowed down to.

Self wants to indulge in, and gratify its desires.

Self wants, in some way, to erect its throne in opposition to the Lord of life and glory.

But Jesus says, "No! I must reign supreme!"

Whatever it is that stands up in opposition to Him, down it must go! Just as Dagon fell down before the ark, so self must fall down before Christ . . .

in every shape,

in every form,

in whatever subtle guise self wears,

down it must come to a wreck and ruin before the King of Zion!

So, if we are continually building up SELF, Jesus will be continually overthrowing self.

If we are setting up our idols, He shall be casting them down.

If we are continually hewing out "cisterns that can hold no water," He will be continually dashing these cisterns to pieces.

If we think highly of our knowledge, we must be reduced to total folly.

If we are confident of our strength, we must be reduced to utter weakness.

If we highly esteem our attainments, or in any measure are resting upon the power of the creature, the power of the creature must be overthrown, so that we shall stand weak before God, unable to lift up a finger to deliver our souls from going down into the pit.

In this way does the Lord teach His people the lesson that Christ must be all in all. They learn . . .

not in the way of speculation,

nor in the way of mere dry doctrine,

not from the mouth of others, but

they learn these lessons in painful soul-experience.

And every living soul that is sighing and longing after a manifestation of Christ and desiring to have Him enthroned in the heart; every such soul will know, sooner or later . . .

an utter overthrow of self,

a thorough prostration of this idol,

a complete breaking to pieces of this beloved image,

that the desire of the righteous may be granted, and that Christ may reign and rule as King and Lord in him and over him, setting up His blessed kingdom there, and winning to Himself every affection of the renewed heart.

Are there not moments, friends, are there not some few and fleeting moments when the desire of our souls is that Christ should be our Lord and God; when we are willing that He should have every affection; that every rebellious thought should be subdued and brought into obedience to the cross of Christ; that every plan should be frustrated which is not for the glory of God and our soul's spiritual profit?

Are there not seasons in our experience when we can lay down our souls before God, and say "Let Christ be precious to my soul, let Him come with power to my heart, let Him set up His throne as Lord and King, and let self be nothing before Him?" But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict! when God answers these petitions!

When our plans are frustrated, what a rebellion works up in the carnal mind!

When self is cast down, what a rising up of the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature!

When the Lord does answer our prayers, and strips off all false confidence; when He does remove our rotten props, and dash to pieces our broken cisterns, what a storm; what a conflict takes place in the soul!

But He is not to be moved; He will take His own way. "I will overturn, let the creature say what it will. I will overturn, let the creature think what it will. Down it shall go to ruin! It shall come to a wreck! It shall be overthrown! My purpose shall be accomplished, and I will fulfill all My pleasure. Self is a rebel who has set up an idolatrous temple, and I will overturn and bring the temple to ruin, for the purpose of manifesting My glory and My salvation, that I may be your Lord and your God."

If God has overturned our bright prospects, shall we say it was a cruel hand that laid them low? If He has overthrown our worldly plans, shall we say it was an unkind act? If He has reduced our false righteousness to a heap of rubbish, in order that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, shall we say it was a cruel deed?

Is he an unkind father who takes away poison from his child, and gives him food? Is she a cruel mother who snatches her boy from the precipice on which he was playing? No! The kindness was manifested in the act of snatching the child from destruction!

So if the Lord has broken and overthrown our purposes, it was a kind act; for in so doing He brings us to nothing, that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, that our hearts may echo back, "O Lord, fulfill all Your own promises in our souls, and make us willing to be nothing; that upon the nothingness of self, the glory and beauty and preciousness of Christ may be exalted!"

A snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart.

We need not go very far to find the most convincing proofs of this. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly; and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God.

It is true that now this sin does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped—at least the calf is not, if the gold is. Nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone.

But that rank, property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; are as much idolized now, as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea.

What is an idol?

It is that which occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, which is due to God only. Whatever is to us, what the Lord alone should be—that is an idol to us.

It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times, the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size. So is it in these inner idols, of which the outer idols are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been . . .

too base or too brutal,

too great or too little,

too noble or too vile,

from the sun walking in its brightness—to a snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag—which man has not worshiped. And these intended representations of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what man inwardly worshiped. For the inward idol preceded the outward—and the fingers merely carved what the imagination had previously devised. The gross material idol, then, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man.

But we need not dwell on this part of the subject. There is another form of idolatry much nearer home; the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan, or a modern Hindu—but that of a Christian.

Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to each find out our own idol . . .

what it is,

how deep it lies,

what worship it obtains,

what honor it receives,

and what affection it engrosses.

Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?"

If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another, "What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?"—for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to . . .

the farm,

the shop,

the business,

the investment,

to the husband, wife, or child,

to that which feeds lust or pride,

worldliness or covetousness,

self-conceit or self-admiration;

that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts

the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and yet we may both be idolaters! You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool, or such a sinner, as to hug it to my bosom! And I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours! You may condemn me, and I condemn you. And the Word of God, and the verdict of a living conscience may condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable these idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning, literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. Music—vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second—so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. Science, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind. These are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper—or even that less debasing but enervating idol—sleep and indolence, as if life’s highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty.

You middle-class people—who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ball field—may still have an idol. Your garden, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty children, so admired as they walk in the street; or your new house and all the new furniture;

or your son who is getting on so well in business; or your daughter so comfortably settled in life; or your dear husband so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer SELF that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to.

Who shall count the thousands of idols which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone?

You may not be found out. Your idol may be so hidden, or so peculiar, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer; it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with divine eye-salve.

Hidden diseases the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor’s. But an idol is still an idol, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

An idol is not to be admired for its beauty, or loathed for its ugliness—but to be hated because it is an idol.

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

06.01a. MORE PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

The mother and mistress of all the sins

"I hate pride and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Proverbs 16:5

Of all sins, pride seems most deeply imbedded in the very heart of man. Unbelief, sensuality, covetousness, rebellion, presumption, contempt of God's holy will and word, deceit and falsehood, cruelty and wrath, violence and murder—these, and a forest of other sins have indeed struck deep roots into the black and noxious soil of our fallen nature; and, interlacing their lofty stems and gigantic arms, have wholly shut out the light of heaven from man's benighted soul.

But these and their associate evils do not seem so thoroughly interwoven into the very constitution of the human heart, nor so to be its very life-blood, as pride. The lust of the flesh is strong, but there are respites from its workings. Unbelief is powerful, but there are times when it seems to lie dormant. Covetousness is ensnaring, but there is not always a bargain to be made, or an advantage to be clutched.

These sins differ also in strength in different individuals. Some seem not much tempted with the grosser passions of our fallen nature; others are naturally liberal and benevolent, and whatever other idol they may serve, they bend not their knee to the golden calf.

But where lust may have no power, covetousness no dominion, and anger no sway—there, down, down in the inmost depths, heaving and boiling like the lava in the crater of a volcano, works that master sin—that sin of sins, pride!

Pride is the mother and mistress of all the sins; for where she does not conceive them in her ever-teeming womb, she instigates their movements, and compels them to pay tribute to her glory.

The 'origin of evil' is hidden from our eyes. Whence it sprang, and why God allowed it to arise in His fair creation, are mysteries which we cannot fathom. But thus much is revealed—that of this mighty fire which has filled hell with sulphurous flame, and will one day envelop earth and its inhabitants in the general conflagration, the first spark was pride!

Pride is therefore emphatically the devil's own sin. We will not say his darling sin, for it is his torment, the serpent which is always biting him, the fire which is ever consuming him. But it is the sin which hurled him from heaven, and transformed him from a bright and holy seraph, into a foul and hideous demon!

How subtle, then, and potent must that poison be, which could in a moment change an angel into a devil! How black in nature, how concentrated in virulence that venom—one drop of which could utterly deface the image of God in myriads of bright spirits before the throne—and degrade them into monsters of uncleanness and malignity!

I needed no monkish rules then.

A man may . . .

have a consistent profession of religion,

have a sound, well ordered creed,

be a member of a Christian church,

attend to all ordinances and duties,

seek to frame his life according to God’s word,

have his family prayer, and private prayer,

be a good husband, father, and friend,

be liberal and kind to God’s cause and people,

and yet with all this bear no fruit Godwards.

What is all this but pitiful self-holiness?

Real gospel fruit is only produced by the word of God’s grace falling into the heart, watering and softening it. Without this there is . . .

not one gracious feeling,

not one spiritual desire,

not one tender thought,

not one heavenly affection.

We have tried, perhaps, to make ourselves holy. We have watched our eyes, our ears, our tongues; have read so many chapters every day out of God’s word; continued so long upon our knees; and so tried to work a kind of holiness into our own souls.

Many years ago, I used to try to pray for the better part of an hour; and I am ashamed to say, I have been glad to hear the clock strike. What was this but a monkish, self-imposed rule, to please God by the length of my prayers?

But when the Lord was pleased to touch my conscience with His finger, He gave me a remarkable spirit of grace and supplication; I needed no monkish rules then. The strong man sinks down into a babe!

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust." Psalms 18:2

As long as a man has any strength of his own, he will never have any strength in the Lord; for the strength of Jesus is made perfect in our weakness.

Oh, what a painful lesson we have to learn to find all our strength is weakness. There was a time when we thought we had strength, and could . . .

resist Satan,

overcome the world,

endure persecution,

bear the reproach of man,

mortify and keep down pride, and the evils of our heart.

Have we found ourselves able to carry out our fancied strength? What has been our experience in this matter? That we have discovered more and more our own weakness; that we cannot stand against one temptation; the least gust blows us down!

Our besetting lusts, our vile passions, and the wicked desires of our hearts, so entice our eyes and thoughts; so entwine themselves around our affections; that we give out in a moment, unless God Himself holds us up! We cannot stand against sin; our heart is as weak as water.

Thus we learn our weakness, by feeling ourselves to be the very weakest of the weak, and the very vilest of the vile.

As the Lord leads a man deeper down into the knowledge of his corruptions, it makes him more

and more out of conceit with his righteous, pious, holy self. The more the Lord leads a man into the knowledge of . . .

temptation,

his besetting sin,

the power of his corruptions,

the workings of his vile nature;

the more deeply and painfully he learns what a poor, helpless, weak, powerless wretch he is.

As the Lord is pleased to unfold before his eyes the strength, power, and fullness lodged in Jesus Christ; He draws him, leads him, brings him, encourages him, and enables him to come to this fullness. And by the hand of faith he draws supplies out of that fullness.

As the Lord enables the soul to look to Jesus, His blessed strength is communicated and breathed into his soul. Then the 'poor worm Jacob' threshes the mountains, beats down the hills, and makes them fly before him as chaff. When the Lord strengthens him, he can . . .

stand against temptation,

overcome sin,

bear persecution,

subdue the evils of his heart, and

fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

When the Lord leaves him, he is like Samson with his locks cut. He sinks into all evil, and feels the helplessness of his fallen nature. Let the Lord but remove His gracious presence, and the strong man sinks down into a babe! And he that in the strength of the Lord could thresh the mountains, falls down as weak and helpless as a little child.

Thus the Lord painfully and solemnly teaches us, that being nothing in ourselves, and feeling our weakness, helplessness, and wretchedness; in Him alone we have strength.

Save me, and I shall be saved!

"Save me, and I shall be saved!" Jeremiah 17:14

This implies salvation from the power of sin;the secret dominion sin possesses in the heart.

O, what a tyrannical rule does sin sometimes exercise in our carnal minds! How soon are we entangled in flesh-pleasing snares! How easily brought under the secret dominion of some hidden corruption! And how we struggle in vain to deliver ourselves when we are caught in the snares of the devil, or are under the power of any one lust, besetment, or temptation!

The Lord, and the Lord alone can save us from all these things. He saves from the power of sin by . . .

bringing a sense of His dying love into our hearts,

delivering us from our idols,

raising our affections to things above,

breaking to pieces our snares,

subduing our lusts,

taming our corruptions, and

mastering the inward evils of our dreadfully fallen nature.

Here is this sin! Lord, save me from it.

Here is this snare! Lord, break it to pieces.

Here is this temptation! Lord, deliver me out of it.

Here is this lust! Lord, subdue it.

Here is my proud heart! Lord, humble it.

None but the Lord can do these things for us . . .

nothing but the felt power of God,

nothing but the putting forth of His mighty arm,

nothing but the shedding abroad of His dying love,

nothing but the operations of His grace upon our soul,

can deliver us from the secret power of evil.

"Save me, and I shall be saved!"

Crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!

"Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" Mark 8:34

To deny and renounce self lies at the very foundation of vital godliness.

It is easy in some measure to leave the world; easy to leave the professing church; but to go forth out of self, there is the difficulty, for this "self" embraces such a variety of forms.

What varied shapes and forms does this monster SELF assume! How hard to trace his windings! How difficult to track this wily foe to his hidden den; drag him out of the cave; and immolate him at the foot of the cross, as Samuel hewed down Agag in Gilgal.

Proud self, righteous self, covetous self, ambitious self, sensual self, deceitful self, religious self, flesh-pleasing self.

How difficult to detect, unmask, strip out of its changeable suits of apparel, this ugly, misshaped creature, and then stamp upon it, as if one would crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!

Who will do such violence to beloved self, when every nerve quivers and shrinks; and the coward heart cries to the uplifted foot, "Spare, spare!"

But unless there is this self crucifixion, there is no walking hand in hand with Christ, no heavenly communion with Him; for there can no more be a partnership between Christ and self, than there can be a partnership between Christ and sin.

Poor, moping, dejected creatures

We are, most of us, so fettered down by . . .

the chains of time and sense,

the cares of life and daily business,

the weakness of our earthly frame,

the distracting claims of a family, and

the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature,

that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

Many of us are poor, moping, dejected creatures. We have . . .

a variety of trials and afflictions,

a daily cross and the continual plague of an evil heart.

We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart. As then . . .

the weary man seeks rest,

the hungry man seeks food,

the thirsty man seeks drink,

and the sick man seeks health,

so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with Him.

He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side.

He makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God’s wrath, that we may hide ourselves under His justifying robe.

He puts gall and wormwood into the world’s choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from Him.

What a battlefield is the heart

I have so much opposition within, so many temptations, lusts, and follies; so many snares and besetments; and a vile heart, dabbling in all carnality and filth.

I am indeed exercised "by sin and grace."

Sin or grace seems continually uppermost; striving and lusting against one another. What . . .

lustings, sorrowings;

fallings, risings;

defeats, and victories.

What a battlefield is the heart, and there the fight is lost and won. When sin prevails, mourning over its wounds and slaughter. When grace and godly fear beat back temptation, a softening into gratitude.

How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness?

If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner—you will see yourself surrounded by . . .

enemies,

temptations,

sins, and

snares.

You will feel yourself utterly defenseless, as weak as water, without any strength to stand against them. You will see a mountain of difficulties before your eyes.

If you know anything inwardly and experimentally of yourself of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and the daily conflict between nature and grace,

the flesh and the Spirit, which are the peculiar marks of the true child of God—you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality.

How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies . . .

external,

internal,

infernal,

and reach heaven's gates safe at last?

There is present salvation, an . . .

inward,

experimental,

continual

salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

Don't you need to be daily and almost hourly saved? But from what? Why, from everything in

you that fights against the will and word of God.

Sin is not dead in you.

If you have a saving interest in the precious blood of Christ—if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and heaven is your eternal home—that does not deliver you from the indwelling of sin, nor from the power of sin—except as grace gives you present deliverance from it.

Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will work in it until your dying hour. What then

you need to be saved from is the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of that sin which ever dwells and ever works in you, and often brings your soul into hard and cruel bondage.

Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for His dear people, that He may be ever saving them by His life. There He reigns and rules as their glorious covenant Head, ever watching over, feeling for and sympathizing with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the deliverance and consolation for all His suffering saints spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth; and as He lives on their behalf, He maintains by His Spirit and grace, His life in their soul.

Each Christian has to walk through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought (Deuteronomy 8:15); where he is surrounded with temptations and snares—his own evil heart being his worst foe.

How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness unless he has a Friend at the right hand of God to send him continual supplies of grace—who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle—who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them—who observes from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it bursts into word or action?

He needs an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can . . .

save him from pride by giving him true humility;

save him from hardness of heart by bestowing repentance;

save him from carelessness by making his conscience tender;

save him from all his fears by whispering into his soul, "Fear not, I have redeemed you."

The Christian has to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

to revive his soul when drooping,

to manifest His love to his heart when cold and unfeeling,

to sprinkle his conscience with His blood when guilty and sinking,

to lead him into truth,

to keep him from error and evil,

to preserve him through and amid every storm,

to guide every step that he takes in his onward journey,

and eventually bring him safe to heaven.

We need continual supplies of His grace, mercy, and love received into our hearts, so as to save us . . .

from the love and spirit of the world,

from error,

from the power and strength of our own lusts,

and the base inclinations of our fallen nature.

These will often work at a fearful rate; but this will only make you feel more your need of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus to save you from them all.

You are a poor, defenseless sheep, surrounded by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and defense of the good Shepherd.

You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all wise and able pilot to take you safe into harbor.

There a single thing on earth or in hell which can harm you—if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength from Him.

What trifles, what toys, what empty vanities do the great bulk of men pursue!

If God left us for a single hour

"Don’t leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9

How much is summed up in those three words!

What would it be for God to leave us?

What and where would we be, if God left us for a single hour?

What would become of us?

We would fall at once into the hands . . .

of sin,

of Satan, and

of the world.

We would be abandoned to our own evil hearts—abandoned, utterly abandoned to the unbelief, the infidelity, to all the filth and sensuality of our wicked nature—to fill up the measure of our iniquities, until we sank under His wrath to rise no more!

"Don’t leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9

An idol is an idol

"Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts! They have embraced things that lead them into sin." Ezekiel 14:3

An idol is an idol, whether worshiped inwardly in heart, or adorned outwardly by the knee.

Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign Lord: "Repent and turn away from your idols, and stop all your loathsome practices. I, the Lord, will punish all those, both

Israelites and foreigners, who reject Me and set up idols in their hearts, so that they fall into sin." Ezekiel 14:6-7

A worldly spirit will ever peep out

"He gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age." Galatians 1:4

The first effect of sovereign grace in its divine operation upon the heart of a child of God, is to separate him from the world by infusing into him a new spirit. There is little evidence that grace ever touched our hearts if it did not separate us from this ungodly world.

Where there is not this divine work upon a sinner's conscience—where there is no communication of this new heart and this new spirit, no infusion of this holy life, no animating, quickening influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul—whatever a man's outward profession may be, he will ever be of a worldly spirit.

A set of doctrines, however sound, merely received into the natural understanding—cannot divorce a man from that innate love of the world which is so deeply rooted in his very being. No mighty power has come upon his soul to revolutionize his every thought, cast his soul as if into a new mold—and by stamping upon it the mind and likeness of Christ to change him altogether. This worldly spirit may be . . .

checked by circumstances,

controlled by natural conscience, or

influenced by the example of others;

but a worldly spirit will ever peep out from the thickest disguise, and manifest itself, as occasion draws it forth, in every unregenerate man.

What a lesson is here for ministers!

"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" 1 Corinthians 2:4

The word "enticing" is as we now say, "persuasive." It includes, therefore, every branch of skillful oratory, whether it be logical reasoning to convince our understanding—or appeals to our feelings to stir up our passions—or new and striking ideas to delight our intellect—or beautiful and eloquent language to please and captivate our imagination.

All these "enticing words" of man's wisdom—the very things which our popular preachers most speak and aim at—this great apostle renounced, discarded, and rejected!

He might have used them all if he liked. He possessed an almost unequalled share of natural ability and great learning—a singularly keen, penetrating intellect—a wonderful command of the Greek language—a flow of ideas most varied, striking, and original—and powers of oratory and eloquence such as have been given to few. He might therefore have used enticing words of man's wisdom, had he wished or thought it right to do so—but he would not. He saw what deceptiveness was in them, and at best they were mere arts of oratory. He saw that these enticing words—though they might . . .

touch the natural feelings,

work upon the passions,

captivate the imagination,

convince the understanding,

persuade the judgment, and to a certain extent force their way into men's minds—yet when all was done that could thus be done, it was merely man's wisdom which had done it.

Earthly wisdom cannot communicate heavenly faith. Paul would not therefore use enticing words of man's wisdom, whether it were force of logical argument, or appeal to natural passions, or the charms of vivid eloquence, or the beauty of poetical composition, or the subtle nicety of well arranged sentences. He would not use any of these enticing words of man's wisdom to draw people into a profession of religion—when their heart was not really touched by God's grace, or their consciences wrought upon by a divine power.

He came to win souls for Jesus Christ, not converts to his own powers of oratorical persuasion—to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God—not to charm their ears by poetry and eloquence—but to bring them out of the vilest of sins that they might be washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit of God—and not entertain or amuse their minds while sin and Satan still maintained dominion in their hearts!

All the labor spent in bringing together a church and congregation of professing people by the power of logical argument and appeals to their natural consciences would be utterly lost, as regards fruit for eternity—for a profession so induced by him and so made by them would leave them just as they were . . .

in all the depths of unregeneracy,

with their sins unpardoned,

their persons unjustified,

and their souls unsanctified.

He therefore discarded all these ways of winning over converts—as deceitful to the souls of men, and as dishonoring to God.

It required much grace to do this—to throw aside what he might have used, and renounce what most men, as gifted as he, would have gladly used.

What a lesson is here for ministers!

How anxious are some men to shine as great preachers! How they covet and often aim at some grand display of what they call eloquence to charm their hearers—and win praise and honor to self!

How others try to argue men into religion, or by appealing to their natural feelings, sometimes to frighten them with pictures of hell, and sometimes to allure them by descriptions of heaven.

But all such arts, for they are no better, must be discarded by a true servant of God. Only the Spirit can reveal Christ, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us, applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul.

"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Unless we have a measure of the same demonstration of the Spirit, all that is said by us in the pulpit drops to the ground—it has no real effect—there is no true or abiding fruit—no fruit unto eternal life. If there be in it some enticing words of man’s wisdom, it may please the mind of those who are gratified by such arts—it may stimulate and occupy the attention for the time—but there it ceases, and all that has been heard fades away like a dream of the night. A peculiar, indescribable, invincible power

"Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The gospel comes to some in word only. They hear the word of the gospel, the sound of truth; but it reaches the outward ear only—or if it touches the inward feelings, it is merely as the word of men.

But where the Holy Spirit begins and carries on His divine and saving work, He attends the word with a peculiar, an indescribable, and yet an invincible power.

It falls as from God upon the heart. He is heard to speak in it—and in it His glorious Majesty appears to open the eyes, unstop the ears, and convey a message from His own mouth to the soul.

Some hear the gospel as the mere word of men, perhaps for years before God speaks in it with a divine power to their conscience. They thought they understood the gospel—they thought they felt it—they thought they loved it. But all this time they did not see any vital distinction between receiving it as the mere word of men, and as the word of God.

The levity, the superficiality, the emptiness stamped upon all who merely receive the gospel as the word of men—is sufficient evidence that it never sank deep into the heart, and never took any powerful grasp upon their soul.

It therefore never brought with it any real separation from the world—never gave strength to mortify the least sin—never communicated power to escape the least snare of Satan—was never attended with a spirit of grace and prayer—never brought honesty, sincerity, and uprightness into the heart before God—never bestowed any spirituality of mind, or any loving affection toward the Lord of life and glory. It was merely the reception of truth in the same way as we receive scientific principles, or learn a language, a business, or a trade. It was all . . .

shallow,

superficial,

deceptive,

hypocritical.

But in some unexpected moment, when little looking for it, the word of God was brought into their conscience with a power never experienced before. A light shone in and through it which they never saw before . . .

a majesty,

a glory,

an authority,

an evidence

accompanied it which they never knew before. And under this light, life, and power they fell down, with the word of God sent home to their heart.

When then Christ speaks the gospel to the heart—when He reveals Himself to the soul—when His word, dropping as the rain and distilling as the dew, is received in faith and love—He is embraced as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one—He takes His seat upon the affections and becomes enthroned in the heart as its Lord and God.

Is there life in your bosom?

Has God’s power attended the work?

Is the grace of God really in your heart?

Has God spoken to your soul?

Have you heard His voice, felt its power, and fallen under its influence?

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

The deep things of God

"But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:10

The Spirit of God in a man’s bosom searches the deep things of God, so as to lead him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of them.

What depths do we sometimes see in a single text of Scripture as opened to the understanding, or applied to the heart?

What a depth in the blood of Christ—how it "cleanses from all sin,"—even millions of millions of the foulest sins of the foulest sinners!

What a depth in His bleeding, dying love, that could stoop so low to lift us so high!

What a depth in His pity and compassion to extend itself to such guilty, vile transgressors as we are!

What depth in His rich, free, and sovereign grace, that it should super-abound over all our aggravated iniquities, enormities, and vile abominations!

What depth in His sufferings—that He should have voluntarily put Himself under such a load of guilt, such outbreakings of the wrath of God—as He felt in His holy soul when He stood in our place to redeem poor sinners from the bottomless pit—that those who deserved hell, should be lifted up into the enjoyment of heaven! The religionists of the day

"And everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me." Luke 21:17

Professors of religion have always been the deadliest enemies of the children of God.

Who were so opposed to the blessed Lord as the Scribes and Pharisees? It was the religious teachers and leaders who crucified the Lord of glory!

And so in every age the religionists of the day have been the hottest and bitterest persecutors of the Church of Christ.

Nor is the case altered now. The more the children of God are firm in the truth, the more they enjoy its power, the more they live under its influence, and the more tenderly and conscientiously they walk in godly fear, the more will the professing generation of the day hate them with a deadly hatred.

Let us not think that we can disarm it by a godly life; for the more that we walk in the sweet enjoyment of heavenly truth and let our light shine before men as having been with Jesus, the more will this draw down their hatred and contempt.

"And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not." John 17:14

"My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" Isaiah 24:16

There is no more continual source of lamentation and mourning to a child of God than a sense of his own barrenness. He would be fruitful in every good word and work. But when he contrasts . . .

his own miserable unprofitableness,

his coldness and deadness,

his proneness to evil,

his backwardness to good,

his daily wanderings and departings from God,

his depraved affections,

his stupid frames,

his sensual desires,

his carnal projects, and

his earthy grovelings,

with what he sees and knows should be the fruit that should grow upon a fruitful branch in the only true Vine, he sinks down under a sense of his own wretched barrenness and unfruitfulness.

Yet what was the effect produced by all this upon his own soul? To wean him from the creature; to divert him from looking to any for help or hope, but the Lord Himself. It is in this painful way that the Lord often, if not usually, cuts us off from all human props, even the nearest and dearest, that we may lean wholly and solely on Himself.

Those poor stupid people!

"The world knows us not." 1 John 3:1

Both the openly profane world, and the professing world, are grossly ignorant

of the children of God. Their . . .

real character and condition,

state and standing,

joys and sorrows,

mercies and miseries,

trials and deliverances,

hopes and fears,

afflictions and consolations,

are entirely hidden from their eyes.

The world knows nothing of the motives and feelings which guide and actuate the children of God. It views them as a set of gloomy, morose, melancholy beings, whose tempers are soured by false and exaggerated views of religion—who have pored over the thoughts of hell and heaven until some have frightened themselves into despair, and others have puffed up their vain minds with an imaginary conceit of their being especial favorites of the Almighty. "They are really," it says, "no better than other folks, if so good. But they have such contracted minds—are so obstinate and bigoted with their poor, narrow, prejudiced views—that wherever they come they bring disturbance and confusion."

But why this harsh judgment?

Because the world knows nothing of the spiritual feelings which actuate the child of grace, making him act so differently from the world which thus condemns him.

It cannot understand our sight and sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—and that is the reason why we will not run riot with them in the same course of ungodliness.

It does not know with what a solemn weight eternal things rest upon our minds—and that that is the cause why we cannot join with them in pursuing so eagerly the things of the world, and living for time as they do—instead of living for eternity.

Being unable to enter into the spiritual motives and gracious feelings which actuate a living soul, and the movements of divine life continually stirring in a Christian breast, they naturally judge us from their own point of view, and condemn what they cannot understand.

You may place a horse and a man upon the same hill—while the man would be looking at the woods and fields and streams—the horse would be feeding upon the grass at his feet. The horse, if it could reason, would say, "What a fool my master is! How he is staring and gaping about! Why does he not sit down and open his basket of provisions—for I know he has it with him, for I carried it—and feed as I do?"

So the worldling says, "Those poor stupid people, how they are spending their time in going to chapel, and reading the Bible in their gloomy, melancholy way. Religion is all very well—and we ought all to be religious before we die—but they make so much of it. Why don't they enjoy more of life? Why don't they amuse themselves more with its innocent, harmless pleasures—be more gay, cheerful, and sociable, and take more interest in those things which so interest us?"

The reason why the world thus wonders at us is because it knows us not, and therefore cannot understand that we have . . .

sublimer feelings,

nobler pleasures, and

more substantial delights,

than ever entered the soul of a worldling!

Christian! the more you are conformed to the image of Christ—the more separated you are from the world, the less will it understand you. If we kept closer to the Lord and walked more in holy obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we would be more misunderstood than even we now are! It is our worldly conformity that makes the world understand many of our movements and actions so well.

But if our movements were more according to the mind of Christ—if we walked more as the Lord walked when here below—we would leave the world in greater ignorance of us than we leave it now—for the hidden springs of our life would be more out of its sight, our testimony against it more decided, and our separation from it more complete.

We were not always a set of poor mopes

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3

Men's pursuits and pleasures differ as widely as their station or disposition—but a life of selfish gratification reigns and rules in all.

Now it is by this death that we die unto . . .

the things of time and sense;

to all that charms the natural mind of man;

to the pleasures and pursuits of life;

to that busy, restless world which once held us so fast and firm in its embrace—and whirled us round and round within its giddy dance.

Let us look back. We were not always a set of poor mopes—as the world calls us. We were once as merry and as gay as the merriest and gayest of them.

But what were we really and truly with all our mirth?

Dead to God—alive to sin. Dead to everything holy and divine—alive to everything vain and foolish, light and trifling, carnal and sensual—if not exactly vile and abominable.

Our natural life was with all of us a life of gratifying our senses—with some of us, perhaps, chiefly of pleasure and worldly happiness—with others a life of covetousness, or ambition, or self-righteousness.

Sin once put forth its intense power and allured us—and we followed like the fool to the stocks.

Sin charmed—and we listened to its seductive wiles.

Sin held out its bait—and we too greedily, too heedlessly swallowed the hook.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14 To walk after the flesh

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1

To walk after the flesh carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us—as our leader, guide, and example—and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws we move after it, as the needle after the magnet.

To walk after the flesh, then, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to . . .

the commands of the flesh,

the lusts of the flesh,

the inclinations of the flesh,

and the desires of the flesh,

whatever shape they assume,

whatever garb they wear,

whatever name they may bear.

To walk after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh, whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume—whether molded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world—or the more refined and

deceptive religion of the professing church.

But are the grosser and more manifest sinners the only people who may be said to walk after the flesh? Does not all human religion, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes! Every one who is entangled in and led by a fleshly religion, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences.

Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that false religion has slain its thousands, if open sin has slain its ten thousands.

To walk after the flesh, whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term, is the same in the sight of God. The very thought is appalling!

"Once you were alienated from God and were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions." Colossians 1:21

All man's sins, comparatively speaking, are but 'motes in the sunbeam' compared with this giant sin of enmity against God. A man may be given up to fleshly indulgences; he may sin against his fellow creature—may rob, plunder, oppress, even kill his fellow man. But viewed in a spiritual light, what are they compared with the dreadful, the damnable sin of enmity against the great and glorious Majesty of heaven?

This is a sin that lives beyond the grave!

Many sins, though not their consequences, die with man's body, because they are bodily sins.

But this is a sin that goes into eternity with him, and flares up like a mighty volcano from the very depths of the bottomless pit! Yes, it is the very sin of devils, which therefore binds guilty man down with them in the same eternal chains, and consigns him to the same place of torment!

O the unutterable enmity of the heart against the living God! The very thought is appalling!

How utterly ruined, then, how wholly lost must that man's state and case be, who lives and dies as he comes into the world . . .

unchanged,

unrenewed,

unregenerated!

I will not dwell longer upon this gloomy subject, on this sad exhibition of human wickedness and misery, though it is needful we should know it for ourselves, that we should have a taste of this bitter cup in our own most painful experience, that we may know the sweetness of the cup of salvation when presented to our lips by free and sovereign grace.

Nothing but the mighty power of God Himself can ever turn this enemy into a friend!

"Once you were alienated from God and were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now He has brought you back as His friends. He has done this through His death on the cross in His own human body. As a result, He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault."

Colossians 1:21-22

I will give you rest

Are you ever weary . . .

of the world,

of sin,

of self,

of everything below the skies?

If so, you want something to give you rest.

You look to SELF—it is but shifting sand, tossed here and there with the restless tide, and ever casting up mire and dirt. No holding ground; no anchorage; no rest there.

You look to OTHERS—you see what man is, even the very best of men in their best state—how fickle, how unstable, how changing and changeable; how weak even when willing to help; how more likely to add to, than relieve your distress; if desirous to sympathize with and comfort you in trouble and sorrow, how short his arm to help, how unsatisfactory his aid to relieve! You find no rest there.

You lean upon the WORLD—it is but a broken reed which runs into your hand and pierces you. You find no rest there.

So look where you will, there is no rest for the sole of your foot.

But there is a rest. Our blessed Lord says, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

The pride, the ambition, the pleasures, the amusements, in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged—and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God.

Whereas, such things as . . .

faith,

hope,

love,

humility,

brokenness of heart,

tenderness of conscience,

contrition of spirit,

sorrow for sin,

self-loathing,

self-abasement,

looking to Jesus,

taking up the cross,

denying one’s self,

walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life—in a word, the power of godliness—these things are despised by all—and by none so much as mere heady professors who have a name to live while dead.

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

Invincibly and irresistibly drawn

As the Lord is pleased to enlighten his mind, the Christian sees . . .

such a beauty,

such a blessedness,

such a heavenly sweetness,

such a divine loveliness,

such a fullness of surpassing grace,

such tender condescension,

such unwearied patience,

such infinite compassion,

in the Lord of life and glory—that he is as if invincibly and irresistibly drawn by these attractive influences to come to His feet to learn of Him. So far as the Lord is pleased to reveal Himself in some measure to his soul, by the sweet glimpses and glances which he thus obtains of His Person and countenance, he is drawn to His blessed Majesty by cords of love to look up unto Him and beg of Him that He would drop His word with life and power into his heart.

Woman’s chief besetting sins

"The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments, headbands, and crescent necklaces; their earrings, bracelets, and veils. Gone will be their scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms; their rings, jewels, party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; their mirrors, linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls." Isaiah 3:18-23

"The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion." Isaiah 4:4

These women of Zion are typical representatives of women professing godliness in all ages. The Lord looked at their hearts, and the motives of their gaudy attire. There He saw pride, luxury, love

of dress and admiration—woman’s chief besetting sins—and all this was in His eyes so much filth!

But as I do not wish to be too hard upon the women, I may say, that we men have our hidden filth to as great, or worse degree, than they. In us there are . . .

many secret and powerful lusts,

much hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and

various other sinful and sensual abominations.

You are not your own!

"You are not your own! For you are bought with a price—therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Your eyes are not your own—that you may feed your lusts, that you may go about gaping, and gazing, and looking into every shop window to see the fashions of the day—learn the prevailing pride of life—and thus lay up food for your vain mind—either in coveting what must be unfitting to your profession—or applying your money to an improper use—or being disappointed because you cannot afford to buy it.

Your ears are not your own—that you may listen to every foolish tale—drink in every political, worldly, or carnal report which may fall upon them—and thus feed that natural desire for news, gossip, and even slander—which is the very element of the carnal mind.

Your tongue is not your own—that you may speak what you please, and blurt out whatever passes in the chambers of your heart, without check or fear.

Your hands are not your own—that you may use them as implements of evil—or employ them in any other way than to earn with them an honest livelihood. Our hands were not given us for sin—but for godly uses.

Your feet are not your own—that you may walk in the ways of the world—or that they should carry you to haunts where all around you are engaged upon errands of vanity and sin.

All must be held according to the disposal of God, and under a sense of our obligations to Him.

But perhaps you will say, in the rebellion of your carnal mind, "What restraint all this lays upon us. Cannot we look with our eyes as we like—hear with our ears as we please—and speak with our tongues as we choose? Will you so narrow our path that we are to have nothing of our own—not even our time or money, our body or soul? Surely we may have a little enjoyment now and then—a little recreation, a little holiday sometimes, a little relaxation from being always so strict and so religious—a little feeding of our carnal mind which cannot bear all this restraint?"

Well, but what will you bring upon yourself by . . .

the roving eye,

the foolish tongue,

the loose hand,

the straying foot?

Darkness, bondage, guilt, misery, death!

"But," you say, "we are not to be tied up so tightly as all this! We have gospel liberty, but you will not allow us even that!"

Yes, blessed be God, there is gospel liberty, for there is no real happiness in religion without it; but not liberty to sin—not liberty to gratify the lusts of the flesh—not liberty to act contrary to the gospel we profess, and the precepts of God's Word—for this is not liberty but licentiousness.

"You are not your own! For you are bought with a price—therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Do you seek you great things for yourself?

"Do you seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5

O the pride of man's heart! How it will work and show itself even under a guise of religion and holiness!

Few can see that in religion, what are considered great things—are really very little; and what are considered little—are really very great. How few can see that . . .

a broken heart,

a contrite spirit,

a humble mind,

a tender conscience,

a meek, quiet, and patient bearing of the cross,

a believing submission and resignation to the will of God,

a looking to Him alone, for all supplies in providence and grace,

a continual seeking of His face,

a desiring nothing so much as the visitations of His favor,

a loving, affectionate, forbearing, and forgiving spirit,

a bearing of injuries and reproaches without retaliation,

a liberal heart and hand, and

a godly, holy, and separate life and walk—are the things which in God's sight are great. While a knowledge of doctrine, clear insight into gospel mysteries, and a ready speech are really very little things—and are often to be found side by side and hand in hand with a proud, covetous, worldly, unhumbled spirit, and a living in what is sinful and evil.

How many ministers are seeking after great gifts—thirsting after popularity, applause, and acceptance among men! They are not satisfied with being simply and solely what God may make

them by His Spirit and grace—with the blessing which He may make them to a scattered few here and there. This inferior position, as they consider it, so beneath their grace and gifts, their talents and abilities—does not satisfy their restless mind and aspiring desires. Their ambition is . . .

to stand at the very head of their peers,

be looked up to and sought after as a leader and a guide,

have a larger building,

have a fuller congregation,

have a better salary, and

have a wider field for the display of their gifts and abilities.

Gladly would they . . .

stand apart from all others,

brook no rival to their 'pulpit throne', and

be lord paramount at home and abroad.

And what is the consequence of this proud, ambitious spirit? What envy, what jealousy, what detraction do we see in men who want to stand at the top of the tree! How, again and again, do they seek to rise by standing, as it were—on the slain bodies of others!

"Do you seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5

We would not be such muck-worms!

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened—in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you—what a rich and glorious inheritance He has given to His people." Ephesians 1:18

If the Spirit would but enlighten the eyes of our heart, how this would lift us up out of the mud and mire of this wretched world! We would not be such muck-worms, raking and scraping a few straws together—or running about like ants with our morsel of grain! We would have our affections fixed more on things above. We would . . .

know more of Christ,

enjoy more of Christ,

be more like Christ,

walk more like Christ walked, and

look forward to our glorious inheritance.

If these things were brought into our hearts with divine power—how they would sweeten every bitter cup, and carry us through every changing scene, until at last we were landed above—to see the Lord as He is, in the full perfection of His infinite glory!

The multitude of Your tender mercies

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Psalms 51:1

What a sweet expression it is—and how it seems to convey to our mind that God's mercies do not fall 'drop by drop'—but are as innumerable . . ..

as the sand upon the sea-shore;

as the stars that stud the midnight sky;

as the drops of rain that fill the clouds before they discharge their copious showers upon the earth.

It is the multitude of His mercies that makes Him so merciful a God. He does not give but a drop or two of mercy—that would soon be gone, like the rain which fell this morning under the hot sun. But His mercies flow like a river! There is in Him . . .

a multitude of mercies,

for a multitude of sins,

and a multitude of sinners!

This felt and received in the love of it—breaks, humbles, softens, and melts a sensible sinner's heart—and he says, "What, sin against such mercies? What, when the Lord has remembered me in my low estate, and manifested once more a sense of His mercy? What, shall I go on to provoke Him again—walk inconsistently again—be entangled in Satan's snares again? O, forbid it God, forbid it gospel, forbid it tender conscience, forbid it every constraint of dying love!"

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Psalms 51:1

Can Christ love one like me?

"To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19

You may wonder sometimes—and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise—how such a glorious Jesus can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such worms of earth—what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked Him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, how this exalted Christ, in the height of His glory, can look down from heaven on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we—this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment!

We feel we are such crawling reptiles—such undeserving creatures—and are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from Him, that we say, "Can Christ love one like me? Can the glorious Son of God cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me—who can scarcely at times bear with myself—who sees and feels myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? O, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?"

And yet, He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." His love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown!

Its breadth exceeds all human span; its length outvies all creature line; its depth surpasses all finite measurement; its height excels even angelic computation!

Because His love is . . .

so wondrous,

so deep,

so long,

so broad,

so high;

it is so suitable to our every want and woe.

"To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19 A woman’s best ornament

"Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive

jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." 1 Peter 3:3-4

This "beauty that comes from within" is that . . .

meekness,

quietness,

gentleness,

brokenness of heart,

contrition of spirit,

humility of mind,

tenderness of conscience,

which are fitting to the children of God.

A gentle and quiet spirit is a woman’s best ornament.

As to other gay and unbecoming ornaments, let those wear them, who wish to serve and to enjoy . . .

the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eyes,

and the pride of life.

Let the "daughters of Zion" manifest they have other ornaments than what the world admires and approves. Let them covet . . .

the teachings of God,

the smiles of His love,

the whispers of His favor.

The more they have of these, the less will they care for the adornments which the "daughters of Canaan" run so madly after; by which also they often impoverish themselves, and by opening a way for admiration, too often open a way for seduction and ruin.

O you filthy creature!

"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

No doubt you have your enemies—and so have we all.

But I will tell you where you have an enemy—and a greater enemy than ever you have found in others—yourself! I have often felt that I could do myself more harm in five minutes, than all my enemies could do me in fifty years! I need not fear what others may do or say—I fear myself more than them all—knowing what I am as a sinner—the strength of sin—and the power of temptation.

Be sure of this—that YOU are the worst enemy you ever had . . .

your sin,

your lust,

your covetousness,

your pride,

your self-righteousness.

God Himself will make you feel your enemy. You shall see something of his accursed designs; how sin has deceived you, betrayed you, brought guilt upon your conscience, and made you a burden to yourself. You shall be brought to feel, and say, "There is nothing I hate so much as my own vile heart—my own dreadfully corrupt nature. O what an enemy do I carry in my own bosom! Of all my enemies, he is surely the worst! Of all my foes, he is the most subtle and strong!"

Have you not sometimes felt as though you could take your lusts by the neck and dash their heads against a stone? Have you not felt you could take out of your breast this vile, damnable heart, lay it upon the ground, and stamp upon it? And when tempted with . . .

pride,

or unbelief,

or infidelity,

or blasphemy,

or any hateful lust,

how you have cried out again and again with anguish of spirit, "O this heart of mine!"

We hate our sins, and would, if possible, have no more to do with them, and would say to this lust, idol, or temptation, "O you filthy creature! What an enemy you are to my soul! O that I could forever be done with you!"

"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thanks be to God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 7:24-25

You never knew what real happiness was!

One false charge against the children of God, is that they are a poor, moping, miserable people, who . . .

know nothing of happiness,

renounce all cheerfulness, mirth, and gladness,

hang their heads down all their days like a bulrush,

are full of groundless fears,

nurse the gloomiest thoughts in a kind of melancholy,

grudge others the least enjoyment of pleasure and happiness,

and try to make everyone else as dull and as miserable as their dull and miserable selves.

Is not this a false charge?

You know—that you never had any real happiness in the things of time and sense—that under all your 'pretended gaiety' there was real gloom—that every 'sweet' was drenched with bitterness—that vexation was stamped upon all that is called pleasure and enjoyment.

You never knew what real happiness was, until you knew the Lord, and were blessed with His presence, and some manifestation of His goodness and mercy! Were it no bigger than a child's doll

"I will cleanse you from all your idols." Ezekiel 36:25

Idolatry takes a wide range. There are 'respectable' idols and 'vulgar' idols—just as there are marble statues, and other objects of worship made up of shells and feathers. And yet each will still be an idol.

Respectable idols we can admire—vulgar idols we detest. But an idol is an idol—however respectable, or however vulgar—however admired, or however despised they may be.

But O how numerous are these respectable idols!

Love of money, ambition, craving after human applause, desire to rise in the world; all these we may think are natural desires that may be lawfully gratified. But O, what idols may they turn out to be!

But there are more secret and more dangerous idols. You may have a husband, or wife, or child—whom you love almost as much as yourself—you bestow upon this idol of yours all the affections of your heart. Nothing is too good for it, nothing too dear for it.

You don’t see how this is an idol.

But, whatever you love more than God, whatever you worship more than God,

whatever you crave for more than God, is an idol.

It may lurk in the chambers of imagery—you may scarcely know how fondly you love it. But let God take that idol out of your breast—let Him pluck that idol from its niche—and you will then find how you have allowed your affections to wander after that idol and loved it more than God Himself. It is when the idol is taken away, removed, dethroned—that we learn what an idol it has been.

How we hug and embrace our idols!

How we cleave to them!

How we delight in them!

How we bow down to them!

How we seek gratification from them!

How little are we aware what affections entwine around them—how little are we aware that they claim what God has reserved for Himself when He said, "My son, give Me your heart."

Many a weeping widow learns for the first time that her husband was an idol. Many a mourning husband learns for the first time how too dearly, how too fondly, how too idolatrously he loved his wife. Many a man does not know how dearly he loves money until he incurs some serious loss. Many do not know how dearly they hold name, fame, and reputation until some slanderous blight seems to touch that tender spot. Few indeed seem to know how dear SELF is,

until God takes it out of its niche and sets Himself there in its room.

Self, pride, reputation, the love of money the love of name and fame—these idols you cannot take with you into the courts of heaven. How would God be moved to jealousy if you could you carry an idol—were it no bigger than a child’s doll—into the courts above!

"I will cleanse you from all your idols." Ezekiel 36:25 Your filth will be washed away!

O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity—how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be—when the guilt of our sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not sometimes loathed yourselves on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of your sin sometimes disgusted you; the opening up of that horrible, that ever running sewer, which you daily carry about with you?

We complain, and justly complain—of a reeking sewer which runs through a street—or of a ditch filled with everything disgusting. But do we feel as much—do we complain as often—of the foul sewer which is ever running in our soul—of the filthy ditch in our own bosom?

As the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes—and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-abhorrence before the eyes of a holy God.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away!" Ezekiel 36:25-26

Php 3:7

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." Php 3:7

This includes the loss . . .

of all your fancied holiness,

of all your vaunted strength,

of all your natural or acquired wisdom,

of all your boasted knowledge;

in a word, of everything in creature religion of which the heart is proud, and in which it takes delight.

All, all must be counted loss for Christ's sake—all, all must be sacrificed to His bleeding, dying love.

Our dearest joys, our fondest hopes, our most cherished idols, must all sink and give way to the grace, blood, and love of an incarnate God.

Strangers & Pilgrims

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world; it is not your element—it is not your home. You are in it during God's appointed time—but you wander up and down this world a stranger . . .

to its company,

to its maxims,

to its fashions,

to its principles,

to its motives,

to its lusts,

to its inclinations, and

all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God's distinguishing power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it. You feel yourself to be a stranger here—as David says, "a stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

I can tell you plainly . . .

if you are at home in the world;

if the things of time and sense are your element;

if you feel one with . . .

the company of the world,

the maxims of the world,

the fashions of the world,

the principles of the world,

grace has not reached your heart—the faith of God’s elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to SEPARATE.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers and go out into a land that God would show him.

And so God’s own word to His people is now, "Come out from among them, and be separate."

Separation, separation, separation from the world is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness!

There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is . . .

separation of heart,

separation of principle,

separation of affection,

separation of spirit.

And if grace has touched your heart and you are a partaker of the faith of God’s elect—you are a stranger in the world, and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such.

But they were also pilgrims—that is, sojourners through weary deserts—longing, longing for home, possessing nothing in which they could take pleasure—feeling the weariness of a long journey and anxious for rest.

Are you not at times almost worn out by . . .

sin,

self,

trials,

temptations,

afflictions;

so that you would gladly lay down your weary body in the grave—that your soul might rest in the sweet enjoyment of the King of kings?

If such is your spirit, you have something of the spirit of the pilgrim sojourning in a weary land, and and longing for . . .

rest,

happiness,

and peace

in a better country.

"But they desire a better place—a heavenly homeland." Hebrews 11:16

Chapter 103

06.01b. MORE PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

Looking down into a filthy pit!

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

Sometimes we are so astonished . . .

at what we are,

at what we have been, or

at what we are capable of.

We stand sometimes and look at our heart, and see what a seething, boiling, and bubbling is there! And we look at it with indignant astonishment, as we would look into a pool of filthy black mud, all swarming and alive with every hideous creature!

So when a man takes a view of his own heart . . .

its dreadful hypocrisy,

its vile rebellion,

its alarming deceitfulness,

its desperate wickedness,

of what his heart is capable of plotting,

of what evil it can conceive and imagine,

it is as if he stood looking down into a filthy pit and saw with astonishment, mingled with self-abhorrence, what his heart is, as the fountain of all iniquity.

A man must have some knowledge of his own heart to understand such language as this.

You that are so exceedingly 'pious' and so 'extra good', and from whose heart the veil has never been taken away to show you what you are, will perhaps think that I am drawing a caricature of human nature, and painting it as the haunt of thieves and prostitutes.

Could you but have the veil taken off your heart, you would see that you were capable of doing all that wickedness that others have done, or can do!

By this sight of ourselves, we learn what a wonderful God we have to deal with! Surely none so highly prize the grace of God as those who are most led into a knowledge of the fall, and the havoc and ruin, and the guilt and misery which it has brought into our own hearts.

The largest slice of the well-sugared cake

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

Many profess that they are strangers and pilgrims here below. But they take care to have as much of this world’s comforts as they can scrape together by hook and by crook.

They talk about being ’strangers’, yet can be in close friendship with men of the world. And could you see them at the exchange, at the market, behind the counter, or at home with their families—you would not find one mark to distinguish them from the ungodly!

Yet they come to chapel—and if called upon to pray, they will tell the people they are "poor strangers and pilgrims in a valley of tears"—while all the time their hearts are in the world—and their eyes stand out with fatness—and they are as light and trifling as a comic actor—and have no concerns except to get the largest slice of the well-sugared cake that the world sets before them!

It is not the ’mere profession of the lips’—but ’grace in the heart’, that makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim.

God’s people are strangers and sojourners—the world is not their home—nor can they take pleasure in it. Sin is often a burden to them—guilt often lies as a heavy weight upon their conscience—a thousand troubles harass their minds—a thousand perplexities oppress their souls. They cannot bury their minds in business and derive all their happiness from their successes, for they feel that this earth is not their home. They are often cast down and exercised, because they have to live with such an ungodly heart in such an ungodly world.

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

The things which men despise

"The things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God!" Luke 16:15

The pride, ambition, pleasures, and amusements, in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged —and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God!

Whereas the things which men despise, such as . . .

faith,

hope,

love,

humility,

brokenness of heart,

tenderness of conscience,

contrition of spirit,

sorrow for sin,

self-loathing,

self-abasement,

looking to Jesus,

taking up the cross,

denying one’s self,

walking in the narrow path that leads to eternal life,—are despised by all—and by none so much as mere heady religious professors—who have a name to live, while dead.

"The things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

The Lord’s people are a tempted people. Satan is ever waiting at their gate, constantly suggesting every hateful and improper thought—perpetually inflaming the rebellion and enmity of their carnal mind—and continually plaguing, harassing, and besieging them in a thousand ways!

Can they repel him?

Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

Can they beat back this leviathan? They cannot—they feel they cannot. They know that nothing but the voice of Jesus, inwardly speaking with power to their souls, can beat back the lion of the bottomless pit! One whisper, one soft word from the lips of His gracious Majesty, can and will put every temptation to flight!

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name—you are Mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble—I will be with you! When you go through rivers of difficulty—you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression—you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel—your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

When it comes in the guise of a friend

"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Does not this show that the world is an enemy to the Lord, and to the Lord’s people? and never so much an enemy—never to be so much dreaded—as when it comes in the guise of a friend. When it . . .

steals upon your heart,

engrosses your thoughts,

wins your affections,

draws away your mind from God,—then it is to be dreaded.

When the world smites us as an enemy—its blows are not to be feared. It is when it smiles upon us as a friend—it is most to be dreaded.

When our eyes begin to drink it in, when our ears begin to listen to its voice, when our hearts become entangled in its fascinations, when our minds get filled with its anxieties, when our affections depart from the Lord and cleave to the things of time and sense,—then the world is to be dreaded.

Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations

"You shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their engraved images with fire!" Deuteronomy 7:5

Our hearts are by nature full of Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations, which must be destroyed!

Lusts after evil things, adulterous images, idolatrous desires, strong hankerings after sin—along with evils which have the impudence to wear a religious garb—such as . . .

towering thoughts of our own ability,

pleasing dreams of creature holiness,

swellings up of pride—dressed out and painted in all the tawdy colors of Satanic delusion—how can these abominations be allowed to run rampant in the human heart?

The altars and religious rites of Canaanites were to be destroyed as much as their idols! And thus we may say of that very religious being—man, that his false worship and heathenish notions of God must be destroyed—as well as his more flagrant, though not more dangerous, lusts and abominations.

The sentence against both is, "Destroy them!" They must not stand side by side with Immanuel, who is to have the preeminence in all things, and who is "the Alpha and the Omega—the first and the last."

And O what a mercy it is to have both our FLESHLY and RELIGIOUS abominations both destroyed! For I am sure that God and self never can rule in the same heart—that Christ and the devil can never reign in the same bosom—each claiming the supremacy! This inward conflict

"I know that nothing good lives in me—that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good—but I cannot carry it out." Romans 7:18

Now it is this which makes the Lord’s people such a burdened people—that makes them so oppressed in their souls as to cry out against themselves daily, and sometimes hourly—that they are what they are—that they would be spiritual, yet are carnal—that they would be holy, yet are unholy—that they would have sweet communion with Jesus, yet have such sensual alliance with the things of time and sense—that they would be Christians in word, thought, and deed; yet, in spite of all, they feel their carnal mind, their wretched depravity intertwining, interlacing, gushing forth—contaminating with its polluted stream everything without and within—so as to make them sigh, groan, and cry being burdened, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this

body of death?" Romans 7:24

He would not be entangled in these snares for ten thousand worlds—he hates the evils of his heart, and mourns over the corruptions of his nature. They make the tear fall from his eye, and the sob to heave from his bosom—they make him a wretched man—and fill him day after day with sorrow, bitterness, and anguish.

None but a saved soul, under divine teaching, can see this evil—and mourn and sigh under the depravity, the corruption, the unbelief, the carnality, the wickedness, and the deceitfulness of his evil heart. This inward conflict, this sore grief, this internal burden, that all the family of God are afflicted with—is an evidence that the life and grace of God are in their bosoms.

"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord! So you see how it is—in my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." Romans 7:25

Who really knows how bad it is?

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked! Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

Without a knowledge of the corruptions and abounding evils of our deceitful and desperately wicked heart . . .

unbelief,

infidelity,

pride,

hypocrisy,

worldly mindedness,

carnality,

sensuality,

selfishness;

there will be . . .

no humility,

no self loathing,

no dread of falling,

no desire to be kept,

no knowledge of the super-aboundings of grace, over the aboundings of sin.

So many truly sincere and religious people

"Cornelius and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." Acts 10:2

Yet Cornelius and his family weren't saved! (Acts 11:14)

-A generous centurion build a synagogue. (Luke 7:3-5)

-A young man keeps the commandments from his youth up. (Luke 18:21)

-Balaam prophesies. (Numbers 23:16)

-Saul weeps. (1 Samuel 24:16)

-Judas preaches the gospel. (Matthew 10:5-8)

Yet none of these men were saved!

It is at times, enough to fill one's heart with mingled astonishment and sorrow, to see so many truly sincere and religious people, whose religion will leave them short of eternal life—because they are destitute of saving grace.

To see so much . . .

amiability,

benevolence,

devotedness,

self-denial,

liberality

loveliness of character,

integrity,

consistency of life,

all inescapably dashed against the rock of inflexible justice,

and there shattered and lost—swallowed up with its unhappy possessors in the raging billows beneath—such a sight, did we not know that the Judge of the whole earth cannot do wrong, would indeed stagger us to the very center of our being!

Sick of SIN, sick of SELF, sick of the WORLD

"Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalms 37:4

By nature we delight in SIN. It is the very element of our nature—and even after the Lord has called us by His grace and quickened us by his Spirit—there is the same love to sin in the heart as there was before. We delight in it—we would wallow in it—take our full enjoyment of it—and swim in it as a fish swims in the waters of the sea!

By nature we also are prone to IDOLATRY. Self is the grand object of all our sensual and carnal worship. Our own exaltation, our own amusement, our own pleasure, our own gratification. Something whereby SELF may be . . .

flattered,

admired,

adored,

delighted,

is the grand end and aim of man's natural worship.

By nature we also delight in the WORLD. It is . . .

our element,

our home,

what our carnal hearts are intimately blended with. From all these things, then, which are intrinsically evil—which a pure and holy God must hate with absolute abhorrence—we must be weaned and effectually divorced—we need to have these things embittered to us.

All the time we are doing homage and worship to self—all the time we are loving the world—all the time we delight in sin—all the time we are setting up idols in the secret chambers of imagery—there is no delighting ourselves in the Lord.

We cannot delight ourselves in the Lord until we are purged of creature love—until the idolatry of our hearts is not merely manifested, but hated and abhorred—until by . . .

cutting temptations,

sharp exercises,

painful perplexities,

and various sorrows,

we are brought to this state—to be . . .

sick of SIN,

sick of SELF,

sick of the WORLD.

Until we are brought to loathe ourselves, we are not brought to that spot where none but God Himself can comfort, please, or make the soul really happy.

Now the very means that God employs to embitter the world to us are cutting and grievous dispensations—as unexpected reverses in fortune—or afflictions of body, of family, or of soul. But these very means that the Lord employs to divorce our carnal union from the world, stir up the self-pity, the murmuring, the peevishness, and the rebelliousness of our nature. So that we think we are being very harshly dealt with, in being compelled to walk in this trying path.

But only by these cutting dispensations we are eventually brought to delight ourselves in Him, who will give us the desires of our heart.

How long you shall be walking in this painful path—how heavy your trials—what their duration shall be—how deep you may have to sink—how cutting your afflictions may be in body or soul, God has not defined, and we cannot. But they must work until they have produced this result—weaned, divorced, and separated us from all that we naturally love and idolatrously cleave unto—and all that we adulterously roam after. If our trials have not done this, they must go on until they produce that effect.

The burden must be laid upon the back, affliction must try the mind, perplexities must encumber the feet, until we are brought to this point—that none but the Lord Himself, with a taste of His dying love, can comfort our hearts, or give us that inward peace and joy which our soul is taught to crave after. A hundred doctrines floating in the head

By five minutes real communion with the Lord . . .

we learn more,

we know more,

we receive more,

we feel more, and

we experience more

than by a thousand years of merely studying the Scriptures, or using external forms, rites, and ceremonies.

One truth written by the Spirit in the heart, will bring forth more fruit in the life, than a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

However low we may sink

What a mercy it is to have a faithful, gracious, and compassionate High Priest who can sympathize with His poor, tried, tempted family—so that however low we may sink . . .

His piteous eye can see us in our low estate,

His gracious ear hear our cries,

His loving heart melt over us, and

His strong arm pluck us from our destructions!

Oh, what would we do without such a gracious and most suitable Savior as our blessed Jesus! How He seems to rise more and more . . .

in our estimation,

in our thoughts,

in our desires,

in our affections,

as we see and feel . . .

what a wreck and ruin we are,

what dreadful havoc sin has made with us,

what miserable outcasts we are by nature.

But oh, how needful it is, dear friend, to be brought down in our soul to be the . . .

chief of sinners,

viler than the vilest,

worse than the worst,

that we may really and truly believe in, and cleave unto, this most precious and suitable Savior!

Yours affectionately in the Lord, J. C. Philpot, October 1, 1868

Nothing but a slave!

"Once you were slaves of sin!" Romans 6:17

What a picture does this draw of our sad state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy!

The Holy Spirit here sets forth Sin as a harsh master, exercising tyrannical dominion over his slaves! How this portrays our state and condition in a state of unregeneracy—slaves to sin!

Just as a master commands his slave to go here and there—imposes on him certain tasks—and has entire and despotic authority over him—so sin . . .

had a complete mastery over us,

used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure,

drove us here and there on its commands.

But in this point we differed from physical slaves—that we did not murmur under our yoke—but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all sin’s commands—and never tired of doing the most servile drudgery!

Thus some have had sin as a very vulgar and tyrannical master, who drove them into open acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy—yes, everything base, vile, and evil.

Others have been preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity—and outward breakings forth of evil. But still sin secretly reigned in their hearts . . .

pride,

worldliness,

love of the things of time and sense,

hatred to God and aversion to His holy will,

selfishness and stubbornness,

in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them! And though sin ruled over them more as a gentleman—he kept them in a more refined, though not less real or absolute slavery! Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master’s command.

What a picture does the Holy Spirit here draw of what a man is! Nothing but a slave!—and sin, as his master, first driving him upon upon God’s sword, and then giving him eternal death as his wages!

"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness—and He has brought us into the Kingdom of His dear Son!" Colossians 1:13 A glory, a beauty, and a sweetness

How sweet it is to trace the Lord’s hand in providence . . .

to look back on the chequered path that He has led us by;

to see how His hand has been with us for good;

what difficulties He has brought us through;

in what straits He has appeared;

how in things most trying He has wrought deliverance;

and how He has sustained us to the present hour.

How sweet are providential favors when they come stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!" How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our very food, lodging, and clothing!

How sweet is the least thing when it comes down to us as from God’s hands! A man cannot know the sweetness of his daily bread until he sees that God gives it to him—nor the blessedness of any providential dealing until he can say, "God has done this for me—and given that to me." When a man sees the providence of God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, a

beauty, and a sweetness over every day of his life!

Having nothing—and yet possessing all things.

"Having nothing—and yet possessing all things." 2 Corinthians 6:10

How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled?

It is resolved thus—"having nothing" in self, "possessing all things" in Christ.

And just in proportion as I have nothing in self experimentally—so I possess all things in Christ.

My own beggary leads me out of self into His riches.

My own unrighteousness leads me out of self into Christ’s righteousness.

My own defilement leads me out of self into Christ’s sanctification.

My own weakness leads me out of self into Christ’s strength.

My own misery leads me out of self into Christ’s mercy.

"Having nothing—and yet possessing all things." 2 Corinthians 6:10

These two branches of divine truth, so far from clashing with each other—sweetly, gloriously, and blessedly harmonize. And just in proportion as we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "having nothing," in self—just so much shall we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "possessing all things" in Christ.

Riches, honors, and comforts

"But we have this precious treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

How different is the estimate that the Christian makes of riches, honors, and comforts—from that made by the world and the flesh!

The world’s idea of riches are only such as consist in gold and silver, in houses, lands, or other tangible property.

The world’s estimate of honors, are only such as man has to bestow.

The world’s notion of comfort, is "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

But the true Christian takes a different estimate of these matters, and feels that . . .

the only true riches are those of God’s grace in the heart,

the only real honor is that which comes from God,

the only solid comfort is that which is imparted by the Holy Spirit to a broken and contrite spirit.

Now, just in proportion as we are filled by the Spirit of God—shall we take faith’s estimate of riches, honors, and comforts. And just so much as we are imbued with the spirit of the world—shall we take the flesh’s estimate of these things.

When the eye of the world looked on the Apostles, it viewed them as a company of poor ignorant men—a set of wild enthusiasts, who traveled about the country preaching Jesus, who they said, had been crucified, and was risen from the dead. The natural eye saw no beauty, no power, no glory in the truths they brought forth. Nor did it see that the poor perishing bodies of these outcast men contained in them a heavenly treasure—and that they would one day shine as the stars forever and ever—while those who despised their word would sink into endless woe.

The spirit of the world can never understand or love the things of eternity—it can only look to, and can only rest upon, the poor perishing things of time and sense.

The continued teachings of the Spirit

When once, by the operation of the Spirit on our conscience, we have been stripped of . . .

formality,

superstition,

self-righteousness,

hypocrisy,

presumption,

and the other delusions of the flesh that hide themselves under the mask of religion—we have felt the difference between having a name to live while dead, and the power of vital godliness—and as a measure of divine life has flowed into the heart out of the fullness of the Son of God—we desire no other religion but that which stands in the power of God—by that alone can we live, and by that alone we feel that we can die.

And, at last, we are brought to this conviction and solemn conclusion—that there is no other true religion but that which consists in the continued teachings of the Spirit, and the communications of the life of God to the soul.

And with the Spirit's teachings are connected . . .

all the actings of faith in the soul,

all the anchorings of hope in the heart,

all the flowings forth of love,

every tear of genuine contrition that flows down the cheeks,

every sigh of godly sorrow that heaves from the bosom,

every cry and groan because of the body of sin,

every breath of spiritual prayer that comes from the heart,

every casting of our souls upon Christ,

all submission to Him,

all communion with Him,

all enjoyment of Him, and

all the inward embracements of Him in His suitability and preciousness.

It will come in at every chink and crevice!

"I know that nothing good lives in me." Romans 7:18

The world within us is ten thousand times worse than the world outside of us!

We may shut and bar our doors, and exclude the outside world—but the world within cannot be so shut out! More—we might go and hide ourselves in a hermit's cave, and never see the face of man again—but even there we would be as carnal and worldly as if we lived in Vanity Fair!

We cannot shut out the world—it will come in at every chink and crevice! This wretched world will intrude itself into our every thought and imagination!

I don’t know how it may be with you, but I have no more power to keep out the workings of sin in my heart—than I have power by holding up my hand to stop the rain from coming down to the earth! Sin will come in at every crack and crevice, and manifest itself in the wretched workings of an evil heart!

The seeds of every crime are in our nature—and therefore, could your flesh have its full swing—there would not be a viler wretch in London than you!

At last to cheat the devil!

If God is not your master—the devil will be.

If grace does not rule—sin will reign.

If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be.

It is not as though we could roam abroad in total liberty. We must have a master of one kind, or another.

And which is best?

A bounteous, benevolent Benefactor, a merciful, loving, and tender Parent, a kind, forgiving Father and Friend, a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?

OR

A cruel devil, a miserable world, a wicked, vile, abominable heart?

Which is better?

To live under the sweet constraints of the dying love of a dear Redeemer—under . . .

gospel influences,

gospel principles,

gospel promises, and

gospel encouragements?

OR

To walk in imagined liberty, with sin in our heart, exercising dominion and mastery there—and binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the present life—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness in half an hour with God, in sweet union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, in reading His word with a believing heart, in finding access to His sacred presence, in knowing something of the droppings in of His favor and mercy—than in . . .

all the delights of sin,

all the lusts of the flesh,

all the pride of life, and

all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a death-bed repentance—at last to cheat the devil!

This is what the Lord says

This is what the Lord says—"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." Jeremiah 17:5

The Lord here does not lay down a man's moral or immoral character as a test of salvation. He does not say, "Cursed is . . .

the thief,

the adulterer,

the extortioner,

the murderer,

the man that lives in open profanity."

He puts all that aside, and fixes His eye and lays His hand upon one mark—which may exist with the greatest morality and with the highest profession of religion.

"I will tell you," the Lord says, "who are under My curse—the person who trusts in man—who depends on flesh for his strength—and in so doing, his heart turns away from Me."

This is what the Lord says—"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." Jeremiah 17:5

That hideous idol SELF in his little shrine

Never again will we say any more to the work of our hands—"You are our gods!" Hosea 14:3

The besetting sin of Israel was the worship of idols.

Perhaps, if you have walked into the British Museum, and seen the idols that were worshiped in former days in the South Sea Islands, you have been amazed that rational beings could ever bow down before such ugly monsters.

But does the heart of a South Sea Islander differ from the heart of an Englishman? Not a bit! The latter may have more civilization and cultivation—but his heart is the same! And though you have not bowed down to these monstrous objects and hideous figures—there may be as filthy an idol in your heart! Where is there a filthier idol than the lusts and passions of man's fallen nature?

You need not go to the British Museum to see filthy idols and painted images. Look within!

Where is there a more groveling idol than Mammon, and the covetousness of our heart? You need not wonder at heathens worshiping hideous idols—when you have pride, covetousness, and above all that hideous idol SELF in his little shrine, hiding himself from the eyes of man—but to which you are so often rendering your daily and hourly worship!

If a person does not see that the root of all idolatry is SELF, he knows but little of his heart.

Such a perpetual and unceasing conflict?

"I do not understand what I do! For what I want to do I do not do; but what I hate I do. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:15, Romans 7:18-19, Romans 7:21, Romans 7:24

What a picture of that which passes in a godly man's bosom! He has in him two distinct principles, two different natures—one . . .

holy,

heavenly,

spiritual,

panting after the Lord, and

finding the things of God its element.

And yet in the same bosom a principle . . .

totally corrupt,

thoroughly and entirely depraved,

perpetually striving against the holy principle within,

continually lusting after evil,

opposed to every leading of the Spirit in the soul,

and seeking to gratify its filthy desires at any cost!

Now, must there not be a feeling of misery in a man's bosom to have these two armies perpetually fighting? That when he desires to do good, evil is present with him—when he would be holy, heavenly minded, tender hearted, loving, seeking God's glory, enjoying sweet communion with Jehovah—there is a base, sensual, earthly heart perpetually at work—infusing its baneful poison into every thought, counteracting every desire, and dragging him from the heaven to which he would mount, down to the very hell of carnality and filth?

There is a holy, heavenly principle in a man's bosom that knows, fears, loves, and delights in God. Yet he finds that sin in himself, which is altogether opposed to the mind of Christ, and lusts after that which he hates. Must there not be sorrow and grief in that man's bosom to feel such a perpetual and unceasing conflict?

Is there ever this piteous cry forced by guilt, shame, and sorrow out of your bosom, "O wretched man that I am!" If not, be assured that you are dead in sin, or dead in a profession. But who is our greatest enemy?

The pride of our heart, the presumption of our heart, the hypocrisy of our heart, the intense selfishness of our heart, are often hidden from us.

This wily devil, self, can wear such masks and assume such forms.

This serpent, self, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances, that it is often hidden from ourselves.

Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear?

We all have our enemies.

But who is our greatest enemy?

He who you carry in your own bosom—your daily, hourly, and ever-present companion, that entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart—that . . .

sometimes puffs up with pride,

sometimes inflames with lust,

sometimes inflates with presumption, and

sometimes works under feigned humility and fleshly holiness.

God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let self (which is but another word for the creature) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified.

Now this self must be overcome. The way to overcome self is by looking out of self to Him who was crucified upon Calvary's tree—to receive His image into your heart—to be clothed with His likeness—to drink into His spirit—and "receive out of His fullness grace for grace."

We need grace, free grace

"May grace and peace be multiplied unto you." 2 Peter 1:2

When we see and feel how we need grace every moment in our lives, we at once perceive the beauty in asking for an abundant, overflowing measure of grace.

We cannot walk the length of the street without sin.

Our carnal minds, our vain imaginations, are all on the lookout for evil. Sin presents itself at every avenue, and lurks like the prowling night-thief for every opportunity of secret plunder. In fact, in ourselves, in our fallen nature, except as restrained and influenced by grace, we sin with well near every breath that we draw. We need, therefore, grace upon grace, or, in the words of the text, grace to be "multiplied" in proportion to our sins. Shall I say in proportion? No! If sin abounds, as to our shame and sorrow we know it does, we need grace to much more abound!

When the 'tide of sin' flows in with its muck and mire, we need the 'tide of grace' to flow higher still, to carry out the slime and filth into the depths of the ocean, so that when sought for, they may be found no more.

We need grace, free grace . . .

grace today,

grace tomorrow,

grace this moment,

grace the next,

grace all the day long.

We need grace, free grace . . .

healing grace,

reviving grace,

restoring grace,

saving grace,

sanctifying grace.

And all this multiplied by all our . . .

wants and woes,

sins,

slips,

falls, and

unceasing and aggravated backslidings.

We need grace, free grace . . .

grace to believe,

grace to hope,

grace to love,

grace to fight,

grace to conquer,

grace to stand,

grace to live,

grace to die.

Every moment of our lives we need . . .

keeping grace,

supporting grace,

upholding grace,

withholding grace.

"May grace and peace be multiplied unto you." 2 Peter 1:2

Are you seeking great things for yourself?

Oh, how many ministers do I see led by . . .

ambition,

pride,

self-interest, or

covetousness!

How few have singleness of eye to God’s glory!

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers often seek . . .

great gifts,

great eloquence,

great knowledge of mysteries,

great congregations,

great popularity and influence.

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

We are not flogged into loving Him

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Where are your affections to be set?

Are they to be set on "things on the earth" . . .

those perishing toys,

those polluting vanities,

those carking cares,

which must ever dampen the life of God in the soul?

The expression, "things on the earth," takes in a wide scope. It embraces not only the vain toys, the ambitious hopes, the perishing pleasures in which a gay, unthinking world is sunk and lost—but even the legitimate calls of business, the claims of wife and home, family and friends, with every social tie that binds to earth. Thus . . .

every object on which the eye can rest;

every thought or desire that may spring up in the mind;

every secret idol that lurks in the bosom;

every care and anxiety that is not of grace;

every fond anticipation of pleasure or profit that the world may hold out, or the worldly heart embrace—all, with a million pursuits in which man’s fallen nature seeks employment or happiness—are "things on the earth" on which the affections are not to be set.

We may love our wives and children. We should pursue our lawful callings with diligence and industry. We must provide for our families according to the good providence of God. But we may not so set our affections on these things, that they pull us down from heaven to earth. He who is worthy of all our affections claims them all for Himself. He who is the Bridegroom of

the soul demands, as He has fairly won, the unrivaled love of His bride.

But how are we to do this?

Can we do this great work by ourselves? No! it is only the Lord Himself, manifesting His beauty and blessedness to our soul, and letting down the golden cord of His love into our bosom, that draws up our affections, and fixes them on Himself. In order to do this, He captivates the heart by . . .

some look of love,

some word of His grace,

some sweet promise, or

some divine truth spiritually applied.

When He thus captivates the soul, and draws it up, then the affections flow unto Him as the source and fountain of all blessings.

We are not flogged into loving Him, but are drawn by love into love. Love cannot be bought or sold. It is an inward affection that flows naturally and necessarily towards its object, and all connected with it. And thus, as love flows out to Jesus, the affections instinctively and necessarily set themselves "on things above, and not on things on the earth."

Jesus must be revealed to our soul by the power of God before we can see His beauty and blessedness—and so fall in love with Him as "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One." Then everything that . . .

speaks of Christ,

savors of Christ,

breathes of Christ,

becomes inexpressibly sweet and precious!

In no other way can our affections be lifted up from earth to heaven. We cannot control our affections—they will run out of their own accord. If then our affections are earthly, they will run towards earthly objects. If they are carnal and sensual, they will flow towards carnal and sensual objects.

But when the Lord Jesus Christ, by some manifestation of His glory and blessedness—or the Holy Spirit, by taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul—sets Him before our eyes as the only object worthy of, and claiming every affection of our heart—then the affections flow out, I was going to say naturally, but most certainly spiritually, towards Him. And when this is the case, the affections are set on things above.

O what a company of lusts!

"We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to

do. But our eyes are upon You!" 2 Chronicles 20:12

There is no use fighting the battle in our own strength. We have none.

O, when temptation creeps like a serpent into the carnal mind, it winds its secret way and coils around the heart. As the boa-constrictor is said to embrace its victim, entwining his coil around it, and crushing every bone without any previous warning—so does temptation often seize us suddenly in its powerful embrace. Have we in ourselves any more power to extricate our flesh from its slimy folds, than the poor animal has from the coils of the boa-constrictor?

So with the corruptions and lusts of our fallen nature. Can you always master them? Can you seize these serpents by the neck and wring off their heads?

To examine our heart is something like examining by the microscope a drop of ditch-water—the more minutely it is looked into, the more hideous forms appear. All these strange monsters, too, are in constant motion, devouring or devoured. And, as more powerful lenses are put on the microscope, more and more loathsome creatures emerge into view, until eye and heart sicken at the sight.

Such is our heart. Superficially viewed—passably fair. But examined by the spiritual microscope, hideous forms of every shape and size appear—lusts and desires in unceasing movement, devouring each other, and yet undiminished—and each successive examination bringing new monsters to light! O what a company of lusts! How one seems to introduce and

make way for the other! and how one, as among the insect tribe, is the father of a million!

We must take these lusts and passions by the neck, and lay them down at the feet of God, and thus bring the omnipotence of Jehovah against what would destroy us—"Here are my lusts, I cannot manage them. Here are my temptations, I cannot overcome them. Here are my enemies, I cannot conquer them. Lord, I do not know what to do. Will You not subdue my enemies?"

This is fighting against sin—not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Not by the law, but by the gospel. Not by self, but by the grace of God. And if your soul has had many a tussle, and many a wrestle, and many a hand-to-hand conflict with sin, you will have found this out before now—that nothing but the grace, power, and Spirit of Christ ever gave you the victory, or the least hope of victory.

"We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to do. But our eyes are upon You!" 2 Chronicles 20:12 As if this beautiful viper had no poison fang!

"Deliver me from all my transgressions!" Psalms 39:7

Ah! how rarely it is that we see sin in its true colors —that we feel what the apostle calls, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin!" O how much is the dreadful evil of sin for the most part veiled from our eyes! Our deceitful hearts so gloss it over, so excuse, palliate, and disguise it—that it is daily trifled, played, and dallied with, as if this beautiful viper had no poison fang!

It is only as the Spirit is pleased to open the eyes to see, and awaken the conscience to feel "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and thus discover its dreadful character, that we have any real sight or sense of its awful nature.

Sins of heart, sins of lip, sins of life, sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of ingratitude,

sins of unbelief, sins of rebellion, sins of lust, sins of pride, sins of worldliness! As all these transgressions, troop after troop, come in view, and rise up like spectres from the grave, well

may we cry with stifled voice, "Deliver me, O deliver me from all my transgressions! Deliver me from . . .

the guilt of sin,

the filth of sin,

the love of sin,

the power of sin, and

the practice of sin!" The very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under!

Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings.

Thus no one can really desire to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and is brought to know and feel in the conscience, that his good works would damn him as equally with his bad works.

When grace is thus opened up to the soul, it sees that grace flows only through the Savior's blood—and that grace . . .

superabounds over all the aboundings of sin,

heals all backslidings,

covers all transgressions,

lifts up out of darkness,

pardons iniquity,

and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under!

Weaned from feeding on husks and ashes

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

The Lord has given a special promise to Zion’s poor—"I will satisfy her poor with bread."

Nothing else? Bread? Is that all?

Yes! That is all God has promised—bread, the staff of life.

But what does He mean by "bread"?

The Lord Himself explains what bread is. He says, "I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. I am the living Bread who came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." John 6:35, John 6:51

The bread, then, that God gives to Zion’s poor is His own dear Son—fed upon by living faith, under the special operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

But must not we have an appetite before we can feed upon bread? The rich man who feasts continually upon juicy meat and savory sauces, would not live upon bread. To come down to live on such simple food as bread—why, one must be really hungry to be satisfied with that.

So it is spiritually. A man fed upon ’mere notions’ and a number of ’speculative doctrines’ cannot descend to the simplicity of the gospel. To feed upon a crucified Christ, a bleeding Jesus!—he is not sufficiently brought down to the starving point, to relish such spiritual food as this!

Before, then, he can feed upon this Bread of life he must be made spiritually poor. And when he is brought to be nothing but a mass of wretchedness, filth, guilt, and misery—when he feels his soul sinking under the wrath of God, and has scarcely a hope to buoy up his poor tottering heart—when he finds the world embittered to him, and he has no one object from which he can reap any abiding consolation—then the Lord is pleased to open up in his conscience, and bring the sweet savor of the love of His dear Son into his heart—and he begins to taste gospel bread.

Being weaned from feeding on husks and ashes, and sick "of the vines of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah," and being brought to relish simple gospel food, he begins to taste a sweetness in ’Christ crucified’ which he never could know—until he was made experimentally poor.

The Lord has promised to satisfy such.

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

That secret loveliness

"I drew them with My cords of kindness and love." Hosea 11:4

Where Christ is made in any measure experimentally known, He has gained the affections of the heart. He has, more or less, taken possession of the soul. He has, in some degree, endeared Himself as a bleeding, agonizing Savior to every one to whom He has in any way revealed Himself. And, thus, the strong cord of love and affection is powerfully wreathed around the tender

spirit and broken heart. Therefore . . .

His name becomes as ’ointment poured forth’,

there is a preciousness in His blood,

there is a beauty in His Person,

there is that secret loveliness in Him,

which wins and attracts and draws out the tender affections of the soul. And thus this cord of love entwined round the heart, binds it fast and firm to the cross of the Lord Jesus.

"I drew them with My cords of kindness and love." Hosea 11:4

Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness!

"O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me." Psalms 43:3

The Christian is often dissatisfied with his state. He is well aware of the shallowness of his attainments in the divine life, as well as of the ignorance and the blindness that are in him. He cannot perceive the path of life. He sees and feels so powerfully the workings of sin and corruption, that he often staggers, and is perplexed in his mind.

And therefore, laboring under the feeling of . . .

his own shortcomings for the past,

his helplessness for the present,

and his ignorance for the future,

he wants to go forward wholly and solely

in the strength of the Lord, to be . . .

led,

guided,

directed,

kept,

not by his own wisdom and power—but by the supernatural entrance of light and truth into his soul.

When thus harassed and perplexed, he will at times and seasons, as his heart is made soft, cry out with fervency and importunity, as a beggar that will not take a denial, "O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me!" As though he would say, "Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness! I know I must go astray, if You do not condescend to guide me. I have been betrayed a thousand times when I have trusted my own heart. I have been entangled in my base

lusts. I have been puffed up by presumption. I have been carried away by hypocrisy and pride. I have been drawn aside into the world. I have never taken a single step aright when left to myself.

And therefore feeling how unable I am to guide myself a single step of the way, I come unto You, and ask You to send forth Your light and Your truth, that they may guide me, for I am utterly unable to lead myself."

The child of God—feeling his own ignorance, darkness, blindness, and sinfulness—causes him to moan, and sigh, and cry unto God—that he might be . . .

led every step,

kept every moment,

guided every inch.

"O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me." Psalms 43:3

O what a way of learning religion!

"I was caught up into paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be told!" 2 Corinthians 12:4

Now, doubtless, the apostle Paul, after he had been thus favored—thus caught up into paradise—thought that he would retain the same frame of mind that he was in when he came down from this heavenly place; that the savor, the sweetness, the power, the unction, the dew, the heavenly feeling would continue in his soul. And no doubt he thought he would walk all through his life with a measure of the sweet enjoyments that he then experienced. But this was not God’s way of teaching religion!

God had another way which Paul knew nothing of, and that was—if I may use the expression—to bring him from the third heaven, where his soul had been blessed with unspeakable ravishment—down to the very gates of hell. For he says, "I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to BUFFET me."

The idea "buffeting" is that of a strong man beating a weak one with violent blows to his head and face—bruising him into a shapeless mass!

O what a way of learning religion!

Now I want you to see the contrast we have here.

The blessed apostle caught up into the third heavens, filled with light, life, and glory—enjoying the presence of Christ—and bathing his soul in the river of divine consolation.

Now for a reverse—down he comes to the earth.

A messenger of Satan is let loose upon him, who buffets, beats and pounds this blessed apostle into a shapeless mummy—no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no features—but one indistinguishable mass of black and blue!

Such is the mysterious way in which a man learns religion!

But what was all this for?

Does it not appear very cruel—does it not seem very unkind that, after the Lord had taken Paul up into the third heaven, He would let the devil buffet him?

Does it not strike our natural reason to be as strange and as unheard of a thing, as if a mother who had been fondling her babe in her arms, suddenly were to put it down, and let a large savage dog ravage it—and look on, without interfering, while he was tearing the child which she had been a few minutes before dandling in her lap, and clasping to her bosom?

"But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to BUFFET me and keep me from getting proud." Here we have this difficult enigma solved, this mysterious knot untied!

We find that the object and end of all these severe dealings was to keep Paul from pride!

Three times Paul besought his loving and sympathizing Redeemer, that the trial might be taken away, for it was too grievous to be borne. The Lord heard his prayer and answered it—but not in the way that Paul expected.

His answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you." As though He would say, "Paul, beloved Paul, I am not going to take away your trial; it came from Me—it was given by Me. But My grace shall be sufficient for you, for My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. There is a lesson to be learned, a path to be walked in, an experience to be passed through, wisdom to be obtained in this path—and therefore you must travel in it. Be content then with this promise

from My own lips—My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

The apostle was satisfied with this—he wanted no more, and therefore he burst forth, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities—that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

O what a way of learning religion!

In a most mysterious and inexplicable manner

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

I am often a marvel to myself, feeling at times . . .

such barrenness,

such leanness,

such deadness,

such carnality,

such inability to any spiritual thought.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive.

Carried on, and yet so secretly—worked upon, and yet so mysteriously—and yet led on, guided and preserved through so many difficulties and obstacles—the Christian is a miracle of mercy!

He is astonished how he is preserved amid all his . . .

difficulties,

obstacles,

trials, and

temptations.

Sometimes he seems driven and sometimes drawn, sometimes led and sometimes carried—but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarce knows how, he still presses on!

His very burdens make him groan for deliverance.

His very temptations cause him to cry for help.

The very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step.

The very perplexity of the path compels him to cry out for a guide—so that the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on—and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle—until He sets him in glory!

He will then understand, that he has . . .

not had one trial too heavy,

nor shed one tear too much,

nor put up one groan too many,

but all these things have, in a most mysterious and inexplicable manner, worked together for

his spiritual good!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Wrought with divine power

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Most men’s religion is nothing else but ’a round of forms’ . . .

some have their ’doings’,

some have their ’doctrines’,

and others have their ’duties’.

And when the one has performed his doings, the other learned his doctrines, and the third

discharged his duties—why, he is as good a Christian, he thinks, as anybody. While all the time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands not in simply in word—but in power.

But as the veil of ignorance is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel that there is a power in vital godliness—a reality in the teachings of the Spirit—that religion is not to be put on and put off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes.

Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power in a man’s heart, and preached by the Holy Spirit into his conscience—it mingles, daily and often hourly, with his thoughts—entwines itself with his feelings—and becomes the very food and drink of his soul.

Now when a man comes to this spot—to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit—it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God.

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and

with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The more lovely does Jesus appear!

The poor believer feels, "I continually find all kinds of evil working in my mind; every base corruption crawling in my heart; everything vile, sensual, and filthy rising up from its abominable deeps. Can I think that God can look down in love and mercy on such a wretch?"

When we see . . .

our vileness,

our baseness,

our carnality,

our sensuality,

how our souls cleave to dust,

how we grovel in evil and hateful things,

how dark our minds,

how earthly our affections,

how depraved our hearts,

how strong our lusts,

how raging our passions;

we feel ourselves, at times, no more fit for God than Satan himself!

"You see, at just the right time, when we were utterly helpless, Christ died for the ungodly!" Romans 5:6

Christ does not justify those who are naturally righteous, holy, and religious.

But He takes the sinner as he is, in all his filth and guilt; washes him in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and clothes the naked shivering wretch, who has nothing to cover him but filthy rags, in His own robe of righteousness!

The gospel of the grace of God brings glad tidings . . .

of pardon to the criminal,

of mercy to the guilty, and

of salvation to the lost!

That the holy God should look down in love on wretches that deserve the damnation of hell; that the pure and spotless Jehovah should pity, save, and bless enemies and rebels, and make them endless partakers of His own glory; this indeed is a mystery, the depth of which eternity itself will not fathom!

The deeper we sink in self-abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ. And the blacker we are in our own view, the more lovely does Jesus appear!

Have you not brought this on yourselves?

"Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the Lord your God when He led you in the way?" Jeremiah 2:17

"Have you not brought this on yourselves?" says the Lord to His sinning Israel. Who dares say he has not by . . .

his sins,

his carnality,

his pride,

his covetousness,

his worldly-mindedness,

his unbelief,

his foolishness,

his rebelliousness,

procured to himself many things that have grieved and distressed his soul?

If indeed we take no notice of the sin that dwells in us; and pay no regard to our thoughts, desires, words, and actions; and take our stand on our own righteousness; we may refuse to believe that we are such vile sinners.

But if we are compelled to look within, and painfully feel that SIN is an indweller, a lodger, whom we are compelled to harbor; a serpent that will creep in and nestle in our heart, whether we will or not; a thief that will break through and steal, and whom no bolt nor bar can keep out; a traitor in the citadel who will work by force or fraud, and against whom no resolution of ours has any avail; if such be our inward experience and conviction, I believe there is not a man or woman here who will not confess, "Guilty, guilty! Unclean, unclean!"

"Some became fools through their rebellious ways, and suffered affliction because of their iniquities." Psalms 107:17

We bring affliction upon ourselves. We procure suffering by our own iniquities. "O!", says the fool . . .

"my worldly-mindedness,

my pride,

my covetousness,

my carnality,

my neglect of divine things,

my rebelliousness,

my recklessness,

the snares I entangled myself in,

my various besetting sins;

this it is which has provoked the Lord to afflict me so severely, and leave me, fool that I am, to reap the fruit of my own devises!"

A religious animal

"Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious, for as I was walking along I saw your many altars. And one of them had this inscription on it—TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." Acts 17:22-23

Man has been called, and perhaps with some truth, a religious animal. Religion of some kind, at any rate, seems almost indispensable to his very existence—for from the most civilized nation, to the most barbarous tribe upon the face of the earth—we find some form of religion practiced. Whether this is ingrained into the very constitution of man, or whether it be received by custom or tradition—I will not pretend to decide. But that some kind of religion is almost universally

prevalent, is a fact that cannot be denied.

We will always find these two kinds of religion . . .

false and true,

earthly and heavenly,

fleshly and spiritual,

natural and supernatural.

Compare this vital, spiritual, heavenly, divine, supernatural religion . . .

this work of grace upon the soul,

this teaching of God in the heart,

this life of faith within—with its flimsy counterfeit.

Compare the actings of . . .

real faith,

real hope,

real love;

the teachings, the dealings, the leadings, and the operations of the blessed Spirit in the soul—with rounds of . . .

duties,

superstitious forms,

empty ceremonies, and

a notional religion, however puffed up and varnished.

Compare the life of God in the heart of a true Christian, amid all his dejection, despondency, trials, temptations, and exercises; compare that precious treasure, Christ's own grace in the soul—with all mere . . .

external religion,

superficial religion,

notional religion.

O, it is no more to be compared than a grain of dust with a diamond! No more to be compared than a criminal in a dungeon to the King on the throne! In fact, there is no comparison between them.

What a contrast!

"Those who endure to the end will be saved." Mark 13:13

Saved!

Saved from what?

Saved from hell!

Saved from an eternity of endless misery and horror!

Saved from the worm which never dies!

Saved from the fire which is never quenched!

Saved from the sulphurous flames!

Saved from the companionship of devils and damned spirits!

Saved saved from ever-rolling ages of ceaseless misery and horror!

Have you not thought sometimes about eternity? What must an eternity of misery must be—when you can scarcely bear the pain of toothache half an hour! O! to be in torment forever! How it racks the soul to think of it! What tongue, then, can express the mercy and blessedness of being saved . . .

from hell,

from the billows of the sulphurous lake,

from infinite despair!

When a soul strikes upon the 'rock of perdition', it is at once swallowed up in a dreadful eternity!

Not only are believers saved from all this infinite and unending misery—but they are saved into

unspeakable happiness and glory! They are . . .

saved into heaven,

saved into eternal communion with the infinite God,

saved into the eternal enjoyment of His blessed presence,

saved into the perfect enjoyment of that perfect and everlasting love in those regions of endless bliss where tears are wiped from off all faces!

What a contrast!

Heaven — hell!

Eternal misery — eternal bliss!

Ages of boundless joy — ages of infinite despair!

But salvation includes not only what we may call future salvation—but present salvation. Thus,

there is a being saved in the present . . .

from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin,

from the curse and bondage of the Law,

from the spirit and love of the world,

from inward condemnation,

from the entanglements of Satan,

from worldly anxieties and cares,

from following after idols,

from carelessness,

from coldness,

from carnality,

from every evil way,

from every delusive path.

Sweet buy!

You say, "I am rich—I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me white garments, so you can cover your shameful nakedness. Revelation 3:17-18

The only qualification is a deep feeling of our necessity, our nakedness and our shame—and a feeling that there is no other covering for a needy, naked, guilty soul—but the robe of the Redeemer's spotless righteousness.

And when the soul is led to His divine feet—full of guilt, shame, and fear—abhorring, loathing, and mourning over itself—and comes in the actings of a living faith—in the sighs and cries of a broken heart—in hungerings, thirstings, and longings—desiring that the Lord would bestow upon him that rich robe—then the blessed exchange takes place —then there is a 'buying'—then the Lord brings out of His treasure-house, where it has been locked up—the best robe—puts it upon the prodigal, and clothes him from head to foot with it!

Sweet buy!

Blessed exchange!

Our nakedness—for Christ's justifying robe!

Our poverty—for Christ's riches!

Our helplessness and insufficiency—for

Christ's power, grace, and love!

You say, "I am rich—I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me white garments, so you can cover your shameful nakedness. Revelation 3:17-18

Chapter 104

06.01c. MORE PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

God’s perfect will

"That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

God’s will is "perfect". In it, there is . . .

no spot,

no stain,

no weakness,

no error,

no instability.

It is and indeed must necessarily be as perfect as God Himself; for it emanates from Him who is all perfection; and is a discovery of His mind and character.

But when God’s perfect will . . .

sets itself against our flesh,

thwarts our dearest hopes,

overturns our fondest schemes,

we cannot see that it is a perfect will. But rather, are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it.

God’s perfect will may . . .

snatch a child from your bosom;

strike down a dear husband;

tear from your arms a beloved wife;

strip you of all your worldly goods;

put your feet into a path of suffering;

lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing;

cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods;

make your life almost a burden to yourself!

How can you, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, acknowledge and submit to God’s perfect will; and let it reign and rule in your heart without a murmur of resistance to it?

Look back and see how God’s perfect will has, in previous instances, reigned supreme in all points, for your good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to your injury; but all things have worked together for your good.

Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away. Whatever . . .

property,

or comfort,

or friends,

or health,

or earthly happiness we have been deprived of,

it was better for us to lose, than to retain them.

Was your dear child taken away? It might be to teach you resignation to God’s sacred will.

Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend.

Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith in the providence of God.

Have your fondest schemes been marred; your youthful hopes blighted; and you pierced in the warmest affections of your heart? It was . . .

to remove an idol,

to dethrone a rival to Christ,

to crucify the object of earthly love,

so that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might be enshrined in its stead.

To tenderly embrace God’s perfect will is the grand object of all gospel discipline.

The ultimatum of gospel obedience is to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His.

"That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

This sinner, not the Pharisee

The proud Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: "I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that publican over there! For I never cheat, I don’t sin, I don’t commit adultery, I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income." Luke 18:11-12

Man unites in himself, what at first sight seem to be completely opposite things. He is the greatest of sinners--and yet the greatest of Pharisees.

Now, what two things can be so opposed to each other as sin and self-righteousness? Yet the very same man who is a sinner from top to toe, with the whole head sick and the whole heart

faint--who is spiritually nothing else but a leper throughout--how contradictory it appears that the same man has in his own heart a most stubborn self-righteousness!

Now, against these two evils God, so to speak, directs His whole artillery--He spares neither one nor the other.

But it is hard to say which is the greatest rebellion against God--the existence of sin in man and what he is as a fallen sinner--or his Pharisaism, the lifting up his head in pride of self-righteousness.

It is not easy to decide which is the more obnoxious to God--the drunkard who sins without shame--or the Pharisee puffed up with how pleasing he is to God.

The one is abhorrent to our feelings--and, as far as decency and morality are concerned, we would rather see the Pharisee. But when we come to matters of true religion, the Pharisee seems the worst! At least our Lord intimated as much when He said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.

"But the publican stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner!' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:13-14

Five devilisms!

As regards sin in its workings, we may say there are five devilisms from which we need

to be saved . . .

1. The GUILT of sin.

2. The FILTH of sin.

3. The LOVE of sin.

4. The DOMINION of sin.

5. The PRACTICE of sin.

1. We need the application of Christ's precious blood to our conscience, to take away the guilt of sin.

2. We need the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and to wash the soul in the fountain, to cleanse from the filth of sin.

3. We need the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, to take away the love of sin.

4. We need the power of Christ, to rescue us from the dominion of sin.

5. We need the grace of Christ, to preserve us from the practice of sin.

It is feeling sin in its various workings, which makes us value Christ! Strange mysterious way! O, strange path! that to be exercised with sin, is the path to the Savior!

Very painful, very mysterious, very inexplicable --that the more you feel yourself a wretched, miserable sinner; the more you long after Jesus, who is able to save you to the uttermost!

Thus, we shall find that we need all that Christ is. For we are no little sinners; and He is no little Savior!

We are great sinners!

He is a Savior--and a great one!

"He is able to save to the uttermost!" Hebrews 7:25

This is the struggle!

"Oh, what a wretched man I am! Who will free me from this body that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

If a person were to tell me he did not love sin in his carnal mind, I would say with all mildness, "You do not speak the truth!" If your carnal mind does not love sin . . .

Why do you think of it?

Why do you secretly indulge it in your imagination?

Why do you play with it?

Why do you seek to extract a devilish sweetness out of it?

O, what a mercy it would be, if there were not this dreadful love of sin in our heart! This is the struggle--that there should be this traitor in the camp; that our carnal mind should be so devilish as to love that which made the blessed Jesus die; as to love that which crucified the Lord of glory, and to love it with a vehement love!

"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:25

It is I

"Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid." Mark 6:50

It is I who formed you in the womb, and brought you forth into your present existence. It is I, the Lord your God, who has fed you, and clothed you from that hour up to the present moment. It is I, the Lord your God, who has preserved you on every side. When you were upon a sick bed, it was I, the Lord your God, who visited your soul, raised up your body, and gave you that measure of health which you do now enjoy. It is I, the Lord your God, who placed you in the situation of life which you do now occupy.

It is I, the Lord your God . . .

who deals out to you every trial,

who allots you every affliction,

who brings upon you every cross,

who works in you everything according to My own good pleasure.

When we can thus believe that the Lord our God is about our bed and our path, and spying out all our ways; when we can look up to Him, and feel that He is the Lord our God, there is no feeling . . .

more sweet,

more blessed,

more heavenly!

"Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid." Mark 6:50

That sweet grace

"Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, to humble you." Deuteronomy 8:2

We learn humility by a deep discovery of what we are; by an opening up of . . .

the corruption,

the weakness,

the wickedness,

of our fallen nature.

The Lord’s way of teaching His people humility is by placing them first in one trying spot, and then in another; by allowing . . .

some temptation to arise;

some stumbling block to be in their path;

some besetting sin to work upon their corrupt affections;

some idol to be embraced by their idolatrous heart;

something to take place to draw out the sin which is in their heart; and thus make it manifest to their sight.

As a general rule, we learn humility, not by hearing ministers tell us what wicked creatures we are; nor by merely looking into our bosoms and seeing a whole swarm of evils working there; but from being compelled by painful necessity to believe that we are vile, through circumstances and events time after time bringing to light those hidden evils in our heart, which we once

thought ourselves pretty free from.

We learn humility, not merely by a discovery of what we are, but also by a discovery of what Jesus is.

We need a glimpse . . .

of Jesus,

of His love,

of His grace,

of His blood. When these two feelings meet together in our bosom . . .

our shame, and the Lord’s goodness;

our guilt, and His forgiveness;

our wickedness, and His superabounding mercy;

they break us, humble us, and lay us, dissolved in tears of godly sorrow and contrition, at the footstool of mercy!

And thus we learn humility, that sweet grace, that blessed fruit of the Spirit in real, vital, soul-experience.

Slaves of Satan!

"Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." 2 Timothy 2:26

In our natural state, we are all the slaves of Satan!

We love our foul master, hug his chain, and delight in his servitude, little thinking what awful wages are to follow.

This mighty conqueror has with him a numerous train of captives! This haughty master, the ’god of this world’, has in his fiendish retinue, a whole array of slaves who gladly do his behests. They obey him cheerfully, though he is leading them down to the bottomless pit! For though he

amuses them while here in this world with a few toys and baubles, he will not pay them their wages until he has enticed and flattered them into that ghastly gulf of destruction, in which he himself has been weltering for ages.

"Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe." 2 Corinthians 4:4

To keep me from getting puffed up

"But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time He said to me, ’My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in your weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me." 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Depend upon it, the Lord’s family have to go through much tribulation on their way to heaven. So says the unerring word of truth, and so speaks the experience of every God-taught soul. Now . . .

in these seasons of trouble,

in these painful exercises,

in these perplexing trials,

the Lord’s people need strength; yet the Lord sends these trials in order to drain and exhaust them of ’creature strength’.

Such is the ’self-righteousness’ of our heart; such the ’legality’ intertwined with every fiber of our natural disposition--that we cleave to our own righteousness as long as there is a thread to cleave to; we stand in our own strength as long as there is a point to stand upon; we lean upon our own wisdom as long as a particle remains!

In order, then, to exhaust us, drain us, strip us, and purge us of this pharisaic leaven, the Lord sends . . .

trials,

temptations,

sorrows,

perplexities.

What is their effect?

To teach us our weakness, and bring us to that one and only spot where God and the sinner meet--the spot of creature helplessness.

In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally the strength of Christ, and feel it to be more than a doctrine, a notion, or a speculation--to know it as an internal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul--to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot--to feel our own utter weakness.

If anyone loves the world

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

If the love of the Father is in us, we will not love the world--nor will the world love us!

If your heart and spirit are still in the world, and you are not separated from . . .

its society,

its amusements,

its pursuits,

its pleasures,

its delights,

its men,

its maxims,

you certainly lack any evidence of a divine change having been wrought in your soul.

"Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." James 4:4

07.00. New Years' Addresses

New Years’ Addresses

J. C. Philpot was the editor of the "Gospel Standard" from 1849 until 1869, the year he died. Every January, he would write a New Years’ Address, of which the following are a sampling. The "Gospel Standard" was distributed monthly to some 10,000 subscribers.

Pastoral Counsels Must reading for church leaders!

1851

1853

1856

1857

1858

1862

1864

1865

1866

1867

1868

1869

07.000. Pastoral Counsels

Pastoral Counsels —excerpts from Philpot’s Annual Addresses.

Must reading for church leaders!

What, then, is or should be the object of a Periodical that, like the "Gospel Standard," circulates widely among the living family? The same object that Paul set before the Ephesian elders, (Acts 20:28) "to feed the church of God." "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," was Christ’s thrice repeated injunction to Peter. Every preacher, writer, and editor that addresses himself to the church of God should have this set before him as his whole aim and desire. This we can honestly say is ours, and the only motive which keeps us at our difficult and responsible post. Here we feel our conscience clear. It is not worldly interest, or ambition, or aiming at popularity and influence; but a desire to be instrumental in feeding living souls, that bears us up and keeps us at our post amid many discouragements, from both within and without, best known to ourselves.

We can say, we trust with all honesty, that we feel an increasing desire to be made a blessing to the church of God. Placed as we are in a position unsought and undesired by us to edit a periodical widely circulated among the living family, we desire it to be a means in the Lord’s hands of great and increasing profit to their souls. In laboring month after month for their benefit, we have no party ends to serve, no miserable petty ambition to gratify, no schemes of pelf or pride to advance, no rich readers to flatter, nor worldly professors to fear. To say we have no workings of pride and self would be to say that we have no blood of the old Adam nature circulating in our veins; but we hope we can say, in the sight of God, and before his people, that our chief desire and aim is the spiritual profit of the church of Christ. If our readers believe this, and if, in addition to our assertion, they have the more convincing evidence of their own conscience that they have felt any blessing or derived any profit from our labors, they—as knowing that in many things we all offend—will overlook those blots and stains which human infirmity will ever drop on the fair page of truth, and will ascribe them not to willful design, but, to a hand unsteady through the fall. To speak the truth in love; to be faithful yet affectionate; keeping back nothing that is profitable, but abstaining from all harsh, unbecoming language; to watch for souls as those who must give an account; to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God—if this is the spirit which should influence the servants of God who speak in their master’s name, should it not equally be the ruling desire and aim of those who write for the honor of the same blessed Lord and for the benefit of his people? To edify, to comfort, to instruct, to lead on, to encourage the family of God, amid all their trials and sorrows, temptations and conflicts, is, or should be the aim of all who, as preachers or writers, stand on the battlements of Zion. If God, then, in his providence and grace, has placed us in a position whence we can, if not with voice, yet with pen, address many, very many of his dear children; if he has inclined any of their hearts to listen to us as believing that we know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we are bound, not only by the weight which eternal realities have with our own soul, but by the very

readiness of our friends and brethren to receive our words, to seek to the uttermost their spiritual profit. To be of the least spiritual service to the Church of Christ; to profit the souls of any, though the least and lowest, of God's dear children; to promote in any way a spirit of love and union in the churches of truth specially, and among individual believers generally; to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints earnestly, but affectionately; to testify boldly against all error and all evil; and be a favored instrument of advancing in any measure the kingdom of the Redeemer, the cause of vital, experimental godliness, and the glory of a Triune God—what earthly rank or dignity, what place of worldly power or profit can for a moment be compared with an honor such as this? And are any of us, friends and brethren, so highly favored and honored? Blessed are our eyes, dear Readers, if they have seen any divine beauty and blessedness in Jesus; blessed are our ears if we have heard his voice with sweetness and power; blessed are your tongues, you servants of God, if, in testifying of his Person and work, love and blood, suitability and preciousness, you have felt the dew of the Spirit dropping from your lips—and blessed are your fingers, you whose pens seek to trace his worth, if what you write is attended with the unction of his grace to contrite, believing hearts. If this be our experience, and this our aim and end, one living bond of union will knit together editor, writers, readers, servants of God, members of Gospel churches, and believers generally among whom our pages come. As an editor, the desire of our soul is to seek and pursue peace, love, and union with all who fear God and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to avoid as much as possible contention and strife.

We wish to say little of ourselves, lest we fall into the same spirit of self exaltation that we have been condemning—but this much, we trust, we may say, that in editing this periodical, we desire to seek the good of the brethren among whom it comes. In what falls from our pen, as well as in selecting what is sent by our correspondents for insertion, our main aim and object are to profit the Lord's people, to avoid all questions that may tend towards contention and strife; and while we contend for the truth in the power and experience of it in the heart, to do so in a spirit of tenderness, affection, and love.

We cannot but declare our honest conviction that we have never flinched from setting before our readers the truth of God from any apprehension of either offending readers or losing them. The desire of our soul is to possess for ourselves, and to be a means of strengthening in others, nothing short of a saving faith in the Son of God, and all the gracious fruits which gladden the heart and adorn the life, as springing out of union and communion with him. However we come short of this, and we are always so failing, this is the goal towards which we run, the mark at which we aim—and to be an instrument in the Lord's hand to promote his glory and his people's good is the highest privilege he can confer upon us. A minister of any real weight and power, of any long standing and general acceptability, when permanently fixed over a church and congregation, gradually forms his own body of hearers. Those who cannot hear him, or at least, not to profit, gradually drop off, and there remains a congregation which receives his ministry, sees as with his eyes, drinks into his spirit, and is united to him in love and affection. He stands to them in time as a father to his children; and the tie being cemented by mutual affection, he becomes enabled and warranted to speak to and deal with them in a way which would not be consistent, nor indeed tolerated, in a strange minister, or a transient supply. No man is more despised, no man more justly despicable, than a time-serving minister. A shifting, time-serving editor is, in our judgment, scarcely less despicable. As there always have been and always will be religious parties, every

party naturally, almost necessarily, if of any extent, seeks some recognized organ of opinion by which it may act and speak. Our desire and aim are, and always have been, to represent no party—or at least that party only which possesses and professes sound experimental truth, and sterling vital godliness. If we have any weight or influence, this is the secret of it, that we express what our spiritual readers believe and feel. We do not lead them, nor do they lead us. We are friends and brethren, not master and servants, nor servant and masters. It is the truth in the love and power of it which unites us—that secret, mysterious, invisible, and yet powerful bond which knits together as with ties of adamant all who see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is a reading age; and as books are cheap, largely read, and easily procurable, the press has come to embrace a wider circle and to possess a greater influence on the public mind than any other medium of communication. The Christian press has spread itself in all directions, and exercises an influence scarcely inferior to that of the pulpit. Works, therefore, written by gracious men, whether living or dead, may be viewed as exercising a ministry of their own, running, as it were, parallel to that of the pulpit, and in harmony with it, but possessing the advantage of penetrating into places, and speaking on occasions where the voice of the living preacher cannot come, as well as of being accessible at all times, lying silently and unobtrusively on the table or the bookshelf, ready to be taken up or laid down at pleasure, and, if we have well chosen them, our trustiest friends and wisest counselors, who will always tell us the truth without fear and without flattery."

Now, if God is pleased to use our little monthly work as an instrument for his people’s good and his own glory, how abundantly will it reward us for all the toil, care, anxiety, and responsibility of conducting it which falls to our share. Our desire is to make it as instructive, as edifying, and as profitable as we can to the Lord’s living family. We wish, therefore, to avoid all strife and contention, all doubtful disputations, all gossip, slander, and news-mongering, all flattery and time-serving, all dry and merely notional discussion of points of doctrine which usually leads to endless dispute and vain jangling, and every other thing which feeds the flesh and starves the soul.

If you have received any instruction or consolation from our writings; if they have strengthened your faith; if they have encouraged your hope; if they have drawn forth your love; if any light has been cast upon your dark path; if any truth has been learned; if any error has been exposed in which you were nearly entangled; if you have effectually felt any reproof or rebuke; if there has been any stirring up or recovery from sloth and indifference; if there has been produced any brokenness of spirit, true penitence, and godly sorrow for sin; if any backsliding has been healed; if there has been any gracious renewal or revival of the good work within effected; in a word, if any real, solid, and abiding profit has been communicated to you by our labors on your behalf; we pray that our heavenly Father "who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." 2 Corinthians 9:10

We ask that you bring us before the throne of grace, that God would bestow upon us that spiritual and experimental knowledge of His truth, that heavenly wisdom and judgment, that holy boldness and faithfulness, that zeal for His glory and desire for His people’s good, which, if granted, would be both our and your best reward.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you." 2 Thessalonians 3:1

07.01. 1851

.New Years' Address, January 1851

All true religion flows out of the life of God in the soul. Wherever this divine life exists, there will true religion be found. Where it exists not, there may be the name of religion; but it will be a shadow without substance, a form without power, an imitation without reality. Almost the first truths that are sealed on the conscience in the earliest dawn of life and light, when men are beheld as trees walking, are connected with the life of God in the soul as a divine work. That God is a Spirit; that he must be worshiped in spirit and truth; that there is a new birth; that the seat of all true religion is in the heart; that everything must be given up for Christ; that sin is a dreadful internal reality; and that therefore grace and salvation must be internal realities too– amid all the darkness and confusion of mind in the beginnings of the work of grace, these truths stand prominently forth, as the mountain tops lift themselves up out of the mists of the valley. Nor are these simple truths ever shaken or undermined by subsequent experience. Much may have to be renounced. Many opinions, prejudices, pursuits, connections, attachments, may have to be abandoned; much pride, self-righteousness, creature-strength and wisdom to be burnt up; the soul may be stripped naked and bare, and "left like a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill;" but this truth is never swept away, that the kingdom of God set up in the heart with a divine power is the main point, the one thing needful, the treasure in the earthen vessel, the white stone and the new name, without which all profession is but a mask and a show. No, all the storms, waves, and billows that, rolling over the soul, bury and drown all religion that is of the flesh and the creature, only settle and ground it more deeply in the firm persuasion that all true religion is a divine work, a new creation, and that it is begun, carried on, and perfected by the sovereign, efficacious power of God alone.

Hence springs the separation between those that are born of the flesh and those that are born of the Spirit. Probe all false religion to the bottom; put the scoop into its heart and center; strip off its garments and trappings, and what will you find? SELF.

False religion may assume a thousand shapes, from preparation for Confirmation at a young ladies' boarding school to the hair shirt and bleeding back of a Popish saint. It may run through all shades of profession, from wild Ranterism or Mormonism to the highest flight of doctrinal Calvinism. But hunt it down through all its turnings and windings, and you will find the creature at the end of the chase.

How this leaven met and thwarted Paul at every step! "You must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses," was the first stumbling block cast into the path of the Gentile believers. And by whom? By "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed;" (Acts 15:5;) who, in bondage themselves to the law of works, envied the Gentile saints the liberty with which Christ had made them free. With them, as with all who are not effectually humbled under the mighty hand of God, the grand stumbling stone and rock of offence was this--that Christ must be all and the creature nothing. "I bear them record," says the apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to

knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (Romans 10:2-3.) And so it is in our day. The "straitest sect of the Pharisees" did not die out in the days of the apostles. Its roots still lie deep in the human heart. It is a religion taught at the mother’s knee, nurtured and fed by schools, tutors, and governesses, strengthened in maturer years, where not knocked to pieces by worldly lusts, by sermon upon sermon and tract after tract, and handed down in old age as a precious legacy to the rising generation. Nor is it confined to what is called "the religious world," and to be found only in little books bound in crimson watered-silk as Christmas presents for good little boys and girls. Alas! it is found in a higher, purer atmosphere, intruding itself into the church of God– a noxious, rampant weed in the garden of spices. Nearly all the mistakes, errors, confusion, strife, and division everywhere seen in the churches that hold the truth arise either from the lack of divine life, or from mingling with it what is of the creature and the flesh.

Religion is with some almost as indispensable as the air they breathe or the food they eat. It is a natural craving that requires a suitable nourishment. In some it is Popery, in others Arminianism, in others Calvinism– a numerous tribe of sisters, but with a strong family likeness stamped on all. "Let us have some religion. We cannot do without religion. Our church, our chapel, our pew, our minister, our people– we can’t exist without them." Such is the feeling, such the language of hundreds who have not a grain of real religion, not a spark of divine teaching– who, with all this clamor about religion, have never once, perhaps, in their lives cried from a broken heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner," or ever had one sight, by living faith, of the King in his beauty. When this strong natural feeling of religion is well varnished over by a few tears under a sermon, gilded by a sound Calvinistic creed, and kept duly polished by a consistent life, who can wonder that there are shoals of professors in the churches in whom the very root itself of divine life is lacking?

Now these, though embarked under a free grace profession, will be either Pharisees or Antinomians. The leaven, though hidden for a time, will, and must work; and when it breaks forth, contention must ensue. For errors and mistakes must arise where the Spirit of truth is not; strife and division must exist where the Spirit of love is not; pride and self-righteousness must prevail where the Spirit of Christ is not; carnality and death must reign where the Spirit of life is not; and sin must rule where the Spirit of holiness is not. A spirit of loose Antinomian licentiousness has, it is to be feared, deeply infected many Calvinistic churches. They have argued, or, if not argued, have almost acted, as if free grace were a freedom to evil, and gospel liberty a liberty to please the flesh and the world. And need we wonder that in churches where the admission is so easy, where so shallow a work is considered sufficient for membership, there are many real Antinomians– Antinomians in heart and secret practice, who are not sufficiently so in life to bring them under church censures? But because there is this great evil in one form, shall we correct it by an equally great evil in another form? To avoid Scylla, must we fly to Charybdis? (Scylla was a rock on one side of the narrow strait between Italy and Sicily, and Charybdis, a whirlpool on the other; and as it often happened that in avoiding one a ship fell on, or into the other, it became an ancient proverb to express how, in endeavoring to shun one difficulty, a person ran upon the opposite.) Because the Antinomian has bent the stick in one direction, shall we straighten the curve by passing it into the hand of the Pharisee to bend it in the other direction? That were to break the stick, not straighten it.

Pharisaism is every whit as deadly an enemy to Christ as Antinomianism. Gentile sinners and Jewish Pharisees crucified, by mutual consent, the Lord of life and glory. The austere priests of the Hebrew Sanhedrin "spit in his face and buffeted him," and the wild soldiers of the Roman camp mocked him with the crown of thorns and the purple robe. One error is not to be corrected by another--an abused gospel cannot be rectified by introducing into it a strong tincture of the law. Error of any nature or shape, introduced into the gospel of Jesus Christ, is like the introduction of a foreign body into the human system--it must fret and irritate until dislodged or worked out. Arminianism is as much a grain of sand in a living eye as Antinomianism. In a gospel church a handful of Arminians will cause as much confusion as a handful of Antinomians. The gospel of Christ fights equally with both; and therefore both equally fight with the gospel of Christ. No, the greatest confusion frequently arises from the Arminian quarter. Fretted and irritated by a condemning law, which they are vainly endeavoring to keep, they are ready to quarrel with a straw, and secretly hate a free grace gospel, because it will not go partners with their righteousness.

Need we wonder if, under these circumstances, there is so much confusion and division in the churches, and so little love and union among the ministers? But what should all do who love vital, spiritual, experimental godliness? Contend for all truth and oppose all error. And above all, seek to be endued themselves with power from on high, and to get their religion from the Fountainhead; to be satisfied with nothing short of divine teaching and divine testimony– to buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, and to beg of him to anoint their eyes with his own precious eye-salve, so that they may see. A mighty conflict is apparently at hand, which may arouse the most sleepy and try the most strong. We shall need in that battle, not notions, but faith– not only union with a church, but union with Christ; not a lazy hearing of sermons, as though that were the all in all of religion, but sheddings abroad of the love of God– not a sitting under the vine and fig-tree of the pulpit, and a snug corner in a Calvinistic chapel, but a putting on of "the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in that evil day, and having done all, to stand."

While the officers have been quarreling, and the crew asleep, the pirates have come alongside the ship. Rome has hoisted her black flag, and we may have to contend with her foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, upon a deck flowing with blood. When the day comes "for the slaying of the witnesses" (Revelation 11:1-19)– a prophecy yet unfulfilled, for the testimony of the gospel has never yet been silenced– realities, divine realities will be found needful. There will be no nice, neat, well pewed, softly cushioned chapels then, no quiet sleeping corners to nestle down in after the text has been given out. "Our chapel" may be then a store-house or a granary; "our minister" be an exile or in prison; and "our people" gone over, two thirds of them, to Popery.

While, then, a breathing time remains, let us be seeking that which can alone "Stand every storm, and live at last,"--a vital union and communion with the Son of God. As a humble instrument, then, in the hands of the Lord, would we, while opportunity is allowed, "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

We have spoken of the black flag of Rome. Let ours be a different banner– the banner of truth and love. (Psalms 40:4; Song of Solomon 2:4.) "You have given a banner to those who fear you, that it may be displayed because of the truth."

1. The new man of grace has a pure appetite. Husks cannot satisfy it. Truth, pure truth, is the air it breathes; bread, heavenly bread, the food it eats; water, living water, the stream of which it drinks. This air, this food, this water, it seeks as with a spiritual instinct. As the new-born babe seeks the mother's breast, the new-born soul desires "the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby."

Truth revealed by the Spirit is the soul's food, whether milk for the babe or meat for the man. This truth, in its purest form, is contained in the Scripture. But it often needs to be dealt out. Truth flows in God's word as a mighty river– but it often reaches the soul through canals, pipes, conduits appointed of God or sanctioned by him.

Among these canals or conduits of divine truth we would gladly hope the "Gospel Standard" has a place. May it be our increasing desire that through it pure truth may flow. But what truth? Not truth in a dry, dead, cold, abstract form. It is vital truth, truth impregnated with the power and unction of the Spirit,– truth wet with the dew of heaven, truth to which the Holy Spirit has given bone and sinew, life and breath– that alone is profitable. What this is requires a spiritual eye to see and a spiritual heart to feel.

2. But we need over us also the banner of love. Paul has beautifully combined both in one short sentence– "Speaking the truth in love," (Ephesians 4:18)– love to Jesus, love to the people of Jesus, and love to the truth as it is in Jesus. Love in the heart and truth in the lips form a beautiful and harmonious union; and both are needed to blow the silver trumpet of the gospel and bring forth its melodious and joyful sound. An archer needs a mark, a pilot a compass, a runner a goal, an architect a plan. Without this definite object, the arrow has no aim, the ship no course, the racer no prize, the building no symmetry. What, then, is or should be the object of a Periodical that, like the "Standard," circulates widely among the living family? The same object that Paul set before the Ephesian elders, (Acts 20:28) "to feed the church of God." "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," was Christ's thrice repeated injunction to Peter. Every preacher, writer, and editor that addresses himself to the church of God should have this set before him as his whole aim and desire. This we can honestly say is ours, and the only motive which keeps us at our difficult and responsible post. Here we feel our conscience clear. It is not worldly interest, or ambition, or aiming at popularity and influence, but a desire to be instrumental in feeding living souls, that bears us up and keeps us at our post amid many discouragements, from both within and without, best known to ourselves.

Added to which, we are deprived of the valuable aid and advice of our late dear friend and coadjutor, poor M'Kenzie, who, in mercy to himself, but with a heavy loss to the church, has been removed from this valley of tears. Pressed with the difficulties of our post, wearied with its toils, sensible of our own insufficiency, cast so much upon our own judgment that, as regards our editorial task, we may well say, "Of friends and counselors bereft," wishing to do right, but often not knowing how– anxious to avoid what is wrong, but often entangled unawares in it, our path as editor resembles very much the exercised path of a Christian. Let such sympathize with us. Let them consider our difficulties; bear with our infirmities; hold up our hands at a throne of grace, and beg of the Lord to endue us with grace and wisdom needful for our post. We can assure them the bitters much outweigh the sweets. But, through mercy, there are sweets. Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Again and again have we been on the point of resigning our post, but some instance of a blessing has come to our ears, which has encouraged us to persevere and to hold on, "faint, yet pursuing."

During the year now before us, may the blessing of God accompany what is brought before the church of Christ in our little work. This blessing, as it has rested upon our pages, so we hope it may rest upon them again; and that will be an ample reward for all the difficulties and discouragements that have hitherto beset our path, and will, if we be faithful, beset it to the end.

07.02. 1853

New Years' Address, January 1853 In the world everything at this moment speaks of movement and progress. Science daily wins new fields; are advances in taste and beauty; trade flourishes; employment abounds; wealth increases; luxury prevails. Australia pours forth her golden treasures, and draws thousands across the ocean, to turn up, like Demas, her glittering ore. America opens wide her arms to myriads of needy emigrants. Steamships, railways, electric telegraphs, spreading in every direction and knitting in close bonds the most distant nations, all bespeak an era of activity and progress such as the world has never yet seen. Well may the prince and god of this world look from his dusky throne upon his devoted subjects and worshipers, and say, "All goes on well. Never did the sons of Adam post faster to hell. The whirl of business; the ever-clanging hammer; the ever-whirring shuttle; the snorting of the iron steed, hourly dragging in its swift train thousands of throbbing brains; the incessant occupation of mind in office, shop, and counting-house; the clamor of "work, work, work," ever knolling from the factory-bell– in this huge fermenting vat of life all seems heaving and moving. Men view these signs of the times and cry, "What prosperity! what success! Let us only have more of it; more business, more gold; greater crops, larger barns; then will we take our ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But where, with all this material prosperity, is religion– vital godliness, the work of grace? Does this flourish too? Is the church, the Lamb's wife, growing in grace and in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do striking conversions or remarkable deliverances abound? Does love reign in the bosom of churches? Do ministers preach with power and savor? Is God deeply feared, his promises firmly believed, his precepts carefully obeyed, his ordinances highly prized, his word dearly loved, his glory earnestly sought? Are those who profess the truth humble, prayerful, watchful, spiritually-minded, walking as living witnesses for God, and testifying to an ungodly world that they are children and servants of the Most High? Is the line of separation between the church and the world clear and distinct? And does she shine forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" Who can say so? Who can say of the church that she is flourishing, and that her prosperity runs parallel with that of the world? We may rather take up Joel's lament– "The fields are ruined and empty of crops. The grain, the wine, and the olive oil are gone. Despair, all you farmers! Wail, all you vine growers! Weep, because the wheat and barley—yes, all the field crops—are ruined. The grapevines and the fig trees have all withered. The pomegranate trees, palm trees, and apple trees—yes, all the fruit trees—have dried up. All joy has dried up with them." (Joel 1:10-12.) No one who knows what grace is, and what grace does, can help seeing that Zion's sky is much beclouded, that the life of God is at a low ebb, and that the blessings and consolations of the Spirit are much restrained. Go where you will, the same complainings reach the ear. Churches are much rent and divided, party spirit widely prevails, coldness and deadness benumb those who once seemed full of life and feeling. When the children of God meet there is little real spiritual conversation. Worldly subjects, the mere trifles of the day, the weather, the markets, and the crops, politics and gossip, thrust out the things of God. When religion is talked of, it is all at a distance; experience is lost in a cloud of generalities; the gifts and abilities, texts and sermons, changes and movements of ministers are a prevailing topic; some controversial point is broached,

on which the combatants fall tooth and nail; the contending parties lose their tempers; one harsh word produces another, until the whole degenerates into an ale-house squabble, and poor religion is as much trampled down in the vestry as sobriety is in the bar-room. Where is love and union amid this strife of tongues? What are the feelings of the tender-hearted, the meek and quiet, the newly-called, the young members of churches, the exercised part of the flock, the doubting and fearing, when they see those who, for age and experience, should be fathers in Israel, cold and dead in conversation, asleep under the ministry, buried in carnality, and whose tongues can only wag when the world is on the carpet, strife at the church meeting, or disputation in the vestry? When churches are made up of discordant materials, strife and disunion must needs exist. How can the stormy seabird and the timid dove dwell in the same nest? The dove cannot scream on the crest of the boiling wave and gather up its fishy prey between the heaving billows, reveling in wind and storm. Nor can the seabird lodge in the calm nest of love, cooing lamentations for the absence of its beloved.

It is, however, a mark that the Lord has not left his church that there are such doves still. "Behold, you are fair, my love!" says the Lord to the church; "behold, you are fair; you have doves' eyes." (Song of Solomon 1:15.) "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." "My dove, my undefiled, is but one." (Song of Solomon 5:2; Song of Solomon 6:9.) These doves are the quiet in the land; the meek, who are to inherit the earth; the humble and contrite, who tremble at God's word; the marked in forehead, that sigh and cry for all the abominations; the tender-hearted Josiahs, who rend their garments at the discovery of the law– the Baruchs, who seek not great things for themselves, but whose life is given them for a prey.

These abhor themselves, with Job; cry out "Woe is me!" with Isaiah; lament over Zion's desolations, with Jeremiah; lie on their side all the days of her siege, like Ezekiel; and rejoice in the building of the temple of the Lord, with Nehemiah. These pray for the peace of Jerusalem, love the very dust and stones of Zion, are valiant for the truth on earth, and cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart.

True, they are, like Asaph, plagued all the day long and chastened every morning; like Heman, their soul is often full of troubles and their life draws near to the grave; their hope with Job's, is sometimes removed like a tree; like Hezekiah, for peace they have often great bitterness; and, like Joseph, the archers frequently grieve them, and shoot at them, and hate them. At the throne of grace, Satan resists them, as he did Joshua, the high priest, and accuses them before God day and night, as he did the ancient martyrs; snares beset their feet on every side; often do they slip and stumble in slippery places; lusts and passions work at a fearful rate; an evil heart is ever sprouting evil things– and gloomy despair sometimes opens wide her arms, as if at the last gasp she would bear them away into the blackness of darkness for ever.

We do not say there are not some favored individuals whose souls are more warmed by the beams, and watered with the rains and dews of heaven than those whose experience we have just sketched out. The Lord bless them more and more abundantly, and, if his will, increase their number! They are bright and blessed exceptions to the generality of the living family at this day. But they are, for the most part, deeply afflicted, and need these cordials; and if they have more of the consolations they have more of the afflictions of Christ. But is the state of things at this day without a parallel in the word of truth? The latter days of the Jewish Church, just before the

Babylonish captivity, and the period just before the prophet Malachi closed the canon of the Old Testament, appear to present very similar features– we may perhaps add, even worse. Read the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and see their lamentations over prophet, and priest, and people. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will you do in the end thereof?" (Jeremiah 5:31.) "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one deals falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:13-14.) ""These evil prophets deceive my people by saying, 'All is peaceful!' when there is no peace at all! It's as if the people have built a flimsy wall, and these prophets are trying to hold it together by covering it with whitewash! Tell these whitewashers that their wall will soon fall down. A heavy rainstorm will undermine it; great hailstones and mighty winds will knock it down." (Ezekiel 13:10-11.)

Bold indeed and fearless were the denunciations of these servants of God against the ungodliness that abounded in those days. Without fear and without flattery they proclaimed the coming judgments of God upon a guilty nation. But how did they treat the suffering remnant? Did they make no distinction between the timid and the stout-hearted; the tremblers at God's word and the doers of evil; the sickly sheep and the strong he-goats? Here are they eminently worthy of our imitation. Did they whip the afflicted saints with scorpions? Did they lash them with the same scourge as the ungodly world or the false prophets? No; on the contrary, they gave them repeated promises of the Lord's favor. This was the burden of their testimony, "Verily, it shall be well with your remnant."

They encouraged them to seek the Lord's face– "Beg the Lord to save you—all you who are humble, all you who uphold justice. Walk humbly and do what is right. Perhaps even yet the Lord will protect you from his anger on that day of destruction." (Zephaniah 2:3.) They encouraged them to trust in the Lord– "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isaiah 50:10.) They assured them that the Lord would appear to their joy; (Isaiah 66:5;) that he would be a wall of fire round about them, and his glory in the midst of them; (Zechariah 2:5;) that he would seek them out and deliver them out of all places where they had been scattered in the cloudy and dark day; that though the mountains should depart, and the hills be removed, yet that his kindness should not depart from them, nor the covenant of his peace be removed. Should not we follow in this track? If we are called upon to cry aloud and spare not; to lift up the voice like a trumpet and show the people their transgression and the house of Judah their sins, yet are we equally called upon not to make the heart of the righteous sad whom God has not made sad. The inspired prophets, if they had a commission "to root out, and to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down," had also a commission "to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:10.) If the hail swept away the refuge of lies, there was still laid "in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Let not Jesus be overlooked; his precious blood be tacitly set aside; his justifying obedience be put out of sight; his grace forgotten; and his dying love neglected.

We may see so much evil in ourselves and others as to see nothing else; have our eyes so fixed and riveted on the malady as to lose all view of the remedy– dwell so much and so long on Zion's sickness as to forget there is balm still in Gilead and a mighty Physician there. There is much hazard of falling into a legal spirit in the endeavor to avoid an Antinomian one. Zion is sick and

languishing. How is she to be healed and restored? By the law or the gospel? Does balm flow from Mount Sinai or Mount Zion? The sheep are sickly. To cure them, shall the under-shepherds beat them on the head with the crook and throw them over the hillside, or shall they take them to the green pastures and the still waters? Shall they overdrive them, with Esau, or lead them on softly, with Jacob? Shall they rule them with force and cruelty, or feed them upon the mountain of Israel, in a good fold, and in a fat pasture? (Ezekiel 34:4; Ezekiel 34:14.)

Strife exists in churches. How are these strifes to be healed and peace restored? By the ministers taking the whip into the pulpit, like a vixen mother, who flogs the children all round more as a vent for her own passion than for their good? A slap here and a box on the ear there, will no more restore peace to a church than to a household. Families and churches are to be ruled by love, not by the rod. Let there indeed be a rod, and, when necessary, let it be brought out, for discipline is as needful in the church as in the house– but let not the rod be the main instrument, and not be used until all gentler means have been tried and fail. And if the rod be necessary, let it be steeped in the pastor's tears, and be laid on, not as a schoolmaster flogs a truant, but as a parent chastises a child.

We are bound, by the tenderest ties and the most blessed obligations, to show forbearance and forgiveness to erring brethren. We are not to justify their evil deeds nor wink at sin, but to consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted. We are not to be harsh and unforgiving, ever prone to censure and condemn, taking our brethren by the throat for a hundred pence, with a "pay me what you owe!" forgetting our own debt of ten thousand talents. We are not to be ever weighing and tithing mint, anise, and cummin, and neglecting the weightier matters of judgment and love. We are not to sit as judges, but to stand at the bar as criminals; not to elevate ourselves by depressing others; nor increase our own comparative goodness by throwing into the opposite scale the deficiencies of professors. The prophets did not do thus. They identified themselves with the Lord's people in all their confessions. Who more blameless than Daniel? Yet read his confession (Daniel 9:1-27)– "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity," &c. Not, "I, Daniel, am free." Who more faithful than Jeremiah? Yet how he identifies himself with sinning Israel! "We have transgressed and rebelled." "Turn us unto you, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." (Lamentations 3:42; Lamentations 5:21.) Who more obedient than Moses? Yet he does not separate himself from transgressing Israel "Pardon our iniquity and our sin." (Exodus 34:9.) When he departed from this putting his mouth in the dust, and taking the rod in his hand, smote with it not only the face of the rock but the backs of Israel, with a "Hear now, you rebels," as if he too were not one, he shut himself out of the land of promise. He stood then as a god, and not as a man, and therefore did not "sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Numbers 20:11-12.) When Paul sent a rod to the church at Corinth, it was not in a self-exulting, self-righteous spirit, but "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears," and when his reproofs were blessed to their repentance, he was "filled with comfort, and was exceeding joyful in all his tribulation." (2 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:4.) What an example of the highest faithfulness blended with the tenderest affection! He is slow to wound and swift to heal; last with the rod and first with the kiss; angry with the sin, but tender over the sinner– jealous for the Lord's glory, but mindful of his grace; careful for the purity and profit of the flock, but yearning to bring back the wandering sheep. Were pastors Pauls, and churches epistles of Christ, there would be fewer divisions, and those sooner healed. But when an unyielding, unforgiving spirit is manifested on either side, when churches cannot bear

with the infirmities of their minister, and ministers will not give way where they are evidently in fault, a smoldering volcano lies under pulpit and pew which will one day burst forth into unquenchable flame, in this life. "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another."

There is no truer sign nor more alarming symptom of the decline of vital godliness, than the lack of love and union among those who profess the truth. If love to the brethren marks the dawn of spiritual life, the decay of that love most certainly denotes its decline. A house divided against itself cannot stand. A besieged city, if torn with internal faction, must fall before the enemy. Peace in the church is the next blessing to peace in the soul, and is most intimately connected with it. It is as absurd as it is hypocritical to talk of having peace with God when the heart is at war with the brethren. To peace, then, must we sacrifice everything but truth and conscience. Our strife should be– not to gain our own selfish ends, nor stiffly carry out our own opinions, nor rule and domineer over the minds of others, as if our own views were necessarily infallible– but to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The prosperity of a church does not consist in the number of its members, nor in the praying gifts of its deacons, nor in its liberal quarterly collections, nor in the gifts and abilities of the minister, nor in the clear doctrinal views of the people, but in the love which knits the whole body together. The real increase of a church is not so much from without as from within, "the increase of the body unto the edifying itself in love." Without this internal increase in love, members may be added to a church by scores, and yet the whole body be a discordant mass of shapeless limbs, without union either to the Head or to each other.

We may be certain that the precepts of the New Testament for mutual love and forgiveness cannot be slighted and neglected with impunity. Our stubborn temper and unforgiving spirit may refuse to listen to the word of God, but we cannot, except to our own cost, set aside Scripture precepts and Scripture practice because our corrupt nature withstands them. God’s ways may not please our carnal mind, but he will not alter them for that reason. If we walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to us, and if we are disobedient we shall reap its bitter fruits. If sin be at one end of the chain, sorrow will surely be at the other. If we sow to the flesh, we shall most certainly of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. But what we chiefly need, and that to which our prayers and desires should be directed, is the pouring out of the Spirit upon pastors and churches, and the whole church of God. No other means will avail. For lack of this we are continually in extremes. We see this in the ministry of the present day, for the ministry is but a reflection of the times. Some are all for doctrine. Doctrine, doctrine, doctrine, and all in the hardest, driest form, is their unvaried staple. Most sweet and precious are the doctrines of the gospel when distilled into the soul by the Holy Spirit; but delivered in a cold systematic way as a mere creed, they are made a substitute for vital godliness, and thus become a curse instead of a blessing. Others, seeing the neglect in our day of practical religion, urge the precept continually, but in a spirit so legal, and with a temper so harsh, that grace seems almost thrust out of sight, and the poor hearers are ever filled with bondage and slavish fear. And others, who preach experience, dwell so much on the workings of sin as almost to omit the workings of grace, and, pointing out the malady, almost forget to dwell on the remedy. But all these, and innumerable other evils under which Zion now labors, can only be remedied by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high. From Him alone comes a true sight of sin, repentance for it, confession of it, and turning from it. Then will Zion repent and abhor herself in dust and ashes; then will confession flow forth to God

and the brethren; then will love and union be revived between ministers and churches; and then will the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Until that happy time arrive, our wisdom and mercy will be to avoid strife and contention. A sight and sense of the evils in ourselves and others should teach us mutual forbearance. We are all in the hospital, and shall we quarrel with our fellow-patients? Should we not rather sympathize with each other's complaints, and be looking out for the arrival of the Physician who alone can cure each and all? On this common ground, even in the present dark and gloomy day, all the living family may meet. But if we cannot keep out of contention, and desire a matter of strife with the brethren, let this be our ground of dispute. Who is the greater sinner; who owes most to the Savior; who shall live most to his glory.

07.03. 1856

New Years' Address, January 1856

Spared as we are by the tender mercies of God once more at the commencement of another year to address those of our readers who fear his great name, we desire to come before them with the Gospel in our hands, and under the teaching and unction of the blessed Spirit in our heart. Unable of ourselves even to think a good thought, much less to produce by tongue or pen anything for the spiritual edification of the family of God, we have again and again presented our supplications to the God of all grace, that he would on this occasion teach us how and what to write, that our words might be truly profitable to that portion of the church of Christ to which they may come. Our only claim upon their attention is the truth we may bring before them, and the spirit in which we write; and if these be commended to their conscience and fall with any weight or power upon their heart, they will receive our words, not because our pen indites them, but because of the testimony which accompanies them to their own soul.

We can say, we trust with all honesty, that we feel an increasing desire to be made a blessing to the church of God. Placed as we are in a position unsought and undesired by us to edit a periodical widely circulated among the living family, we desire it to be a means in the Lord's hands of great and increasing profit to their souls. In laboring month after month for their benefit, we have no party ends to serve, no miserable petty ambition to gratify, no schemes of pelf or pride to advance, no rich readers to flatter, nor worldly professors to fear. To say we have no workings of pride and self would be to say that we have no blood of the old Adam nature circulating in our veins; but we hope we can say, in the sight of God, and before his people, that our chief desire and aim is the spiritual profit of the church of Christ. If our readers believe this, and if, in addition to our assertion, they have the more convincing evidence of their own conscience that they have felt any blessing or derived any profit from our labors, they– as knowing that in many things we offend all– will overlook those blots and stains which human infirmity will ever drop on the fair page of truth, and will ascribe them not to willful design, but, to a hand unsteady through the fall. To speak the truth in love; to be faithful yet affectionate, keeping back nothing that is profitable, but abstaining from all harsh, unbecoming language; to watch for souls as those that must give account; to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God– if this is the spirit which should influence the servants of God who speak in their master's name, should it not equally be the ruling desire and aim of those who write for the honor of the same blessed Lord and for the benefit of his people?

What is any man or minister but a fallen creature in himself? Whatever measure anyone may possess of light or life, wisdom or knowledge, faith or hope, liberty or love, he owes it wholly and solely to sovereign grace. If, like Asher, he be blessed with spiritual children; if he be acceptable to his brethren, because he dips his foot in oil, it is only as poured to him out of the Rock. (Deuteronomy 33:24; Job 29:6.)

Well, then, may the Lord say to any servant of his, who from deeper experience or greater gifts would gladly lift up himself above his brethren, "Who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive? Now, if you did receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it," but had procured it by your own exertions? Or if any wanderer in the wilderness gather less manna than his brother, still, when meted with the spiritual omer, it will be found that, as he who has gathered much has nothing over, so he who has gathered little has no lack. This is the beauty and blessedness of grace, that it sets all the family of God upon a level, allows no man or minister to exalt himself above another, allows no boasting for deeper experience or greater manifestations, but most humbling the most favored, and most exalting the most self-abased, hides pride from man, and secures all the glory for God.

Whence, then, such self-exaltation among many, such bitterness of spirit, such envy and jealousy, such slander and detraction? Certainly not from grace– for grace no more teaches a servant of God to exalt himself and despise others, or beat his fellow-servants, than it teaches him to eat and drink and be drunken. (Luke 12:45.) Grace, on the contrary, constrains him by every tie of love to the Lord and his people to count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, to lay himself out for his brethren’s good, and to esteem all time lost that is not spent in seeking the profit of his own soul, the glory of God, and the welfare of Zion. We know too much of ourselves, and of the evil that dwells in us, to say that this is our constant or frequent frame– but if this is not deeply engraved on our heart, and does not influence our mind and guide our pen, the sooner we lay it down the better. In this spirit, then, do we now desire to address our spiritual readers, and to present them with a few thoughts which have struck our minds as applicable to the present state of things among us.

Spiritual matters are, by general confession, at a low ebb in the church of God. Churches are much rent and torn; godly ministers very scarce; little blessing comparatively resting upon the preached Gospel– and most of God’s saints complaining of barrenness in themselves and in others. Pained and wounded by seeing so much carnality and death in the churches, or disgusted, perhaps, by individual instances which have come before them of ungodliness in professors, many, tender in conscience, but not much acquainted with the evils of their heart, have experienced a revulsion of feeling which has almost driven them from truth itself. "Are these the people of God? Is this a church of Christ? Can this man be a servant of the Most High? Are these the doctrines of the Gospel, and do Gospel doctrines produce effects like these?"

Staggered and thrown back by such thoughts and feelings, some of God’s people have been tempted to secret infidelity, and to think religion itself all a delusion; others, almost to abandon their profession, or renounce the truths they have hitherto held; if members of churches, to throw up their membership; if accustomed to hear at a certain place, to resolve to go there no more. Driven from those they once so highly esteemed, they look around to see where they are to go, or what they are to do. Some specious form of religion at this moment catches their eye. The "Brethren" have a little room in the town; they will go there. They will find, they think, more spirituality among them, more love and union, more zeal and fervor, more devotedness and holiness, more faith and fruits of faith, as well as more frequent opportunities for communion and religious communion.

Others, who see clearly enough where the "Brethren" are, determine to go nowhere; they will stop and read the Bible at home, and will have nothing more to do with any professors whatever. There

are, they think, now no ministers worth hearing, and no books worth reading. There is no real religion in the land; all professors are alike, deceivers or deceived, the Calvinists worse than the Arminians, and the experimental ministers, so called, not a whit better than the dry doctrinal men. They will, therefore, they say, come out from them all, and read nothing but the Bible and Deer's hymns, and sometimes the old Puritan writers, or Huntington and Hawker, and have nothing whatever to do with the profession of the day, for they are sick and tired of it.

Much of this feeling, we doubt not, springs in some from spiritual pride and secret humiliation that they themselves are not valued by others so highly as they stand in their own eyes– in others, from that self-righteous spirit which leads men to say, "Stand by yourself, I am holier than you;" in others, from ignorance of their own hearts, and expecting more from the church of God than is usually found in her. On people in this state of mind we do not expect our words to make any impression; but if these lines should meet the eye of any who, pained and grieved by the state of things in many churches, are perplexed what path to take, and have felt any such workings of mind as we have just sketched, will they bear with us in laying before them and the church of God generally what we believe is the safest and wisest way to take?– and in so doing we shall attempt so to frame our observations and counsel, that they may have as wide a bearing as possible on the line of conduct which those should pursue who love Zion.

We do not conceal from ourselves the evils we have mentioned, and which all who fear God must deeply deplore. Let us confess and acknowledge them, and seek of the Lord deliverance from them. But let us not be driven by them to the other extreme. If our words could find an entrance into the heart of any who are tried and exercised by painful things in the church of God, and by powerful inward temptations, springing out of and connected with them, we would lay before them the following advice– advice which we have proved in our own souls, and therefore know to be sound and good.

1. Hold on to the TRUTH of God.

Remember those words of the Lord himself– "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Let men profess the truth and not possess it; or let men profess the truth and disgrace it. Does that stain and sully the purity of truth itself? Look at that clear stream gushing out of the hill-side, sparkling in the sun, as it leaps forth to meet his rays. A few yards lower down, a sheep, attempting to drink, muddies the water with its foot. Wait a moment. That water which the sheep has stained, you need not drink. See how the pure stream comes leaping to you from the rock. Drink that which neither foot of man nor beast has yet polluted. Have you ever felt the power and sweetness of God's truth? Has it ever made you free from the guilt and filth of sin, the bondage of the law, the terrors of death, the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life? Can you, then, abandon the truth? Is it not your life, your all? Say that men disgrace it, hold it in unrighteousness, act inconsistently with it, or profess it without feeling its power. Let these be warnings to you, not to do the same; but, do not give up truth because others make an ill use of it. Do not countenance their evil deeds, nor be a partaker of other men's sins; keep yourself pure from their or similar inconsistencies; but forsake not truth because men abuse it.

What blessings have men not abused! Some have fed their dogs with hot slices from the joint. Will you never touch meat again? Health is abused by thousands. Will you, therefore, prefer sickness?

Money is daily perverted to the vilest purposes. Will you, therefore, throw up your situation, let anybody take your rents or profits, work without wages, or put up your shop shutters, because wicked men abuse what you may accept with thankfulness as God’s gift, and use to his glory? No; let us rather hold on to truth all the more firmly because it is abused; let us rather seek for a more full revelation and powerful application of it to our own soul, a stronger faith in it, and a more earnest desire to live more abidingly in the enjoyment and sweetness of it, seeing all the more clearly from the example of others how dangerous a profession of truth is without a heartfelt possession. If you are grieved or disgusted by the conduct of some who profess truth, show that there is one person at least in this crooked and perverse generation that can and does adorn it; and bear in mind that the purity of truth can no more be really sullied by the treachery of its professors than the cheek of Christ was stained by the kiss of Judas, or his pure humanity disgraced by the stripes and thorns of Pilate’s judgment-hall. And in holding on to truth, hold on, above all things, to the power of truth. It is not the letter of truth, however clear or correct, which can save or bless your soul. How well, because how experimentally, does Deer speak on this point in that wonderful experience of his– that undying testimony against Pharisaic self-righteousness and Antinomian licentiousness– "Notions of religion I needed no man to teach me– I had doctrine enough; but found by woeful experience that dry doctrine, though ever so sound, will not sustain a soul in the day of trial." When we look a little more closely at matters, we see why many, of whom better things were once hoped, have been driven from the truth. They never felt its power, nor tasted its divine blessedness, by a gracious experience of it as made known to their soul. Therefore they were driven from truth to error by the conduct of its professors, just as men are often driven from one extreme of politics to another by the ill-treatment they meet with from their own party. But the truth of God– the truth as it is in Jesus– the truth which makes free is not to be abandoned thus. Let this rather be our feeling. If every professor in England disgraces it, if every minister in England turns from it, let me hold it all the closer; for if I abandon it, I abandon Christ himself, who is the "Truth," as well as the "Way" and the "Life." Let us rather, if all abandon it, follow that noble example portrayed so beautifully in the seraph Abdiel–

"So spoke the seraph Abdiel, faithful found;

Among the faithless faithful only he;

Among innumerable false, unmoved,

Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;

His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal

Nor number nor example with him wrought,

To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,

Though single."

2. Hold on to the CHURCH of Christ. The Lord’s own promise was, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." There is then a church of Christ still. Men speak sometimes as if there were no people of God now, no church of Christ on earth, and almost say, with the prophet Elijah, "I, even I only, am left." But as in those gloomy times, there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so in our day God has still a seed to serve him, a remnant

according to the election of grace. Were it not so, we would soon be as Sodom, and be like unto Gomorrah.

However low, then, or divided, or scattered, this remnant may be, they are still the church of Christ, dear to him as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And should they not be dear to us? Can we love the Head and not love the members? seek union and communion with the Lord, and separate ourselves from the Lord's people? "Ah! but they are so crooked, and I have had so much trouble among them; have been so cruelly wounded in the house of my friends; have had such grief and sorrow of heart from my connection with them; my feelings have been so crushed and trampled on; my motives so misinterpreted, my words and actions so misrepresented, that I have been absolutely forced to leave them!" Does this step that you have taken, or are about to take, flow from grace? May there not be some strong mixture of self-pity, or wounded pride, or natural resentment, or fretfulness and irritability of temper, or mortification because you cannot have your own way, blended with your present exercises of mind? Oh! how deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man! How it can hide from itself all its own faults; and, dwelling on or magnifying the faults of others, can raise up storms of wrath against our dearest friends, and for a little offence cherish enmity towards the choicest saints of God! Your present feelings then of shyness and distrust, and your shunning those you once had sweet communion with, may not be wholly from grace. Would not grace rather say, "Well, with all their faults, they are the people of God still. I mourn and grieve over their crookedness and waywardness; but I cannot and must not give them up. May not I too be partly to blame? Have I always spoken and acted quite in the spirit of the gospel? Have not I sometimes been provoked myself, and dropped hasty expressions, given way to my temper, and though I contended only for right things, yet did not do so in the spirit and meekness of the gospel? Have I not also been too ready to take up prejudices and listen to unkind speeches– and may I not have wounded them as well as they have wounded me?" But whether so or not, let you have acted most blamelessly in word and spirit, still it comes to the same point. Nothing must separate us from the suffering members of Christ. These we took as our brethren and friends when we came out of the world, and we must not give them up. Christ, whom we profess to love, loves them with all their crookedness; and think what we may, or say what we may about them, there is more crookedness in our heart– any one of us– than in all their words and actions put together. But if our advice be good for those who fear God generally, many of whom are not in church fellowship, how much more forcibly will it apply to members of gospel churches! This is your position. You have joined, and still are a member of a gospel church. But many things in that church deeply try your mind. It is much divided, and with some of the members you have little or no union; others you believe are deeply tainted with legality and free will, and others, who have a good experience, are so obstinate and headstrong, that if they cannot rule and have just their own way, the church has no rest or peace. Well, certainly, you might save yourself a great deal of trouble and sorrow if you left them altogether. And so would the martyrs, if they would have given up the truth– and so would Paul, had he abandoned the care of all the churches– and so would the blessed Lord himself, had he prayed the Father for twelve legions of angels. But he suffered, and so must you. And this may be your especial cross. We know how heavy church troubles are– the greatest of all next to personal soul trouble, and few can be in church-fellowship without them.

If the church is an ordinance of Christ, for a believer not to be a member of a church is, to say the least, not to walk in Christ's ordinances; and if he be a member of a church, he must, in the exercise of Christian love, bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things, sooner than give up his membership with it.

3. Hold on to the SERVANTS of God.

We move here on tender ground, for really, when we look around us, we find but few worthy of that title. But the point we would mainly press is this. It is not for us to say who are and who are not servants of God; but we do say, if any man be commended to your conscience as a minister of Christ, and any blessing has ever been communicated to your soul through him, do not allow a little thing to separate between him and you. We are creatures of extremes. Some think too much, and others too little, of the servants of God. Some see in them no fault, at least, none in the one object of their idolatrous affection, and others see in them little else but faults. Remember that God sends men to preach, not angels– and as men, they are not only of like passions with their hearers, but are peculiarly exposed to temptations, not only from their very position, but because Satan more particularly thrusts severely at them that they may fall, well knowing that their fall would– fill the church with mourning, imbue the enemies of truth with rejoicing, disgrace the cause of God, stumble the weak, drive the tempted almost to despair, and cast a cloud over a congregation which might never be removed, furnish a standing reproach for years, and supply hundreds with the most powerful weapon against the truth as long as the chapel walls stand. Bearing this in mind, how incumbent it is on the family of God to hold up the hands of the servants of Christ by prayer and supplication, and if the ministry has been blessed to their souls to seek of the Lord continued supplies of grace for their minister that his soul may be watered and kept alive, and that dew, savor, and power may rest abundantly on him and the word preached by him.

4. Hold on to the WORK OF GOD ON YOUR OWN SOUL. This is your treasure– the treasure in the earthen vessel which God has lodged there by his Spirit and grace. Here you may be deeply tried. Such darkness may at times cover your soul that you cannot see a single feature of God's work upon your heart; or you may have got into such a cold, dead, lifeless state, that you seem past all feeling, without even a sigh or cry; or you may be severely tempted to think yourself a wretched hypocrite or self-deceiver, and that the best way will be to make away with your profession or even with yourself. Still, with it all, there is a 'secret something' which you cannot give up. You know there have been times with you when you could and did feel Christ precious, when you did love him with all your heart, when you did see the King in his beauty, and the land now so very far off, and were softened and melted into contrition by a taste of his love. You can look back, too, and see how you were first wrought upon, what convictions you felt, what sighs and groans you uttered, what prayers and cries you poured forth, and how you were brought out of the world or a dead profession, and made to seek pardon and peace for your own soul. How can you really give up what you have thus felt? No! Hold on, then, to it, for it is your life. Part with everything before you part with that. The Lord can and will shine, sooner or later, on his own work, and bring it forth to his own praise.

5. Hold on to any PROMISE ever made to your soul. The Lord's usual way is first to give a promise, and then test it. So it was with Abraham, so with Jacob, and so with Joseph. Sarah's barrenness tried Abraham; Laban's persecutions tried Jacob; and Pharaoh's prison, where the

iron entered into his soul, tried Joseph. But not one jot or tittle of the promises made to them fell to the ground. And so, if the Lord has ever made you a promise, though your path now be dark and gloomy in Providence or grace, still, if you are enabled to do as Jacob did, put the promise that God made into God's own hand, with a "You said I will surely do you good," (Genesis 32:12,) he will honor in his own time and way his own word, and fulfill it to his glory and your joy.

6. Hold on to those MEANS OF GRACE which have been blessed to your soul.

God has given his word of truth into your hands, set up a mercy-seat, a throne of grace, for you to approach, favored you with Christian friends, and blessed you, perhaps with a servant of his own teaching and sending, for you to hear. How good it is to read his word with an enlightened understanding and a believing heart; to pour out the soul before the mercy-seat with liberty and access; to feel union and communion in Christian converse with the saints of God; and to hear the preached gospel with life and power. It is true that we may not be often thus favored; but, if we are sometimes or ever have been, we shall prize these means of grace, these channels of divine communication. The Scriptures may be to us a sealed book, but we shall read them still; the throne of grace covered with a cloud, but we shall still present our supplications there; converse with the children of God may be a burden, but we shall not forsake their company– and the ministry a dry breast, but we shall not neglect the assembling of ourselves together in the house of prayer. We may give way to temptation in these matters, be overcome by sloth and negligence, until our soul resembles the garden of the sluggard. We may neglect reading the Bible, until we get into a habit of scarcely looking into it at all– be cold and formal at a throne of grace, until prayer is quite restrained; be shy of the saints of God, until we forsake their company altogether– allow any excuse to keep the foot away from the house of prayer, until it becomes a burden to go. The Lord does not tie himself to means; but he is usually found in them, and it is therefore our wisdom and mercy in them to seek him.

7. Hold on to the Lord JESUS Christ to the utmost of your faith and hope in him.

Many changes pass over our mind; but he changes not, for he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Without him we can do nothing; with him we can do all things. He can support us under our trials, comfort us in our afflictions, deliver us out of our temptations, subdue our sins, smile away our fears, cheer us in life, bless us in death, and present us in eternity before his Father's throne, holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight. To him, then, may we ever cleave with purpose of heart; and may our desire ever be to glorify him on earth, with the prospect before us of spending an eternity with him in heaven.

07.04. 1857

New Years' Address, January 1857 by J. C. Philpot, editor of the Gospel Standard Magazine In venturing once more, at the opening of another year, to greet our readers with our Annual Address, we desire to come before them under the gracious teachings and influences of the blessed Spirit– that holy Instructor, that promised Comforter, that unerring Guide into all truth; for if we are but favored with his heavenly dew and divine anointing, we shall not write in our own spirit, or seek our own glory; we shall not arrogate to ourselves any undue authority, presume upon our position, or abuse our privilege; we shall not use flattering words, or seek the passing breath of human applause; but shall, by manifestation of the truth, commend ourselves to their conscience in the sight of God, as seeking their spiritual welfare and the glory of the blessed Redeemer. To edify, to comfort, to instruct, to lead on, to encourage the family of God, amid all their trials and sorrows, temptations and conflicts, is, or should be the aim of all who, as preachers or writers, stand on the battlements of Zion. If God, then, in his providence and grace, has placed us in a position whence we can, if not with voice, yet with pen, address many, very many of his dear children; if he has inclined any of their hearts to listen to us as believing that we know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we are bound, not only by the weight which eternal realities have with our own soul, but by the very readiness of our friends and brethren to receive our words, to seek to the uttermost their spiritual profit. To be of the least spiritual service to the Church of Christ; to profit the souls of any, though the least and lowest, of God's dear children; to promote in any way a spirit of love and union in the churches of truth specially, and among individual believers generally; to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints earnestly, but affectionately; to testify boldly against all error and all evil; and be a favored instrument of advancing in any measure the kingdom of the Redeemer, the cause of vital, experimental godliness, and the glory of a Triune God– what earthly rank or dignity, what place of worldly power or profit can for a moment be compared with an honor such as this? And are any of us, friends and brethren, so highly favored and honored? Blessed are our eyes, dear Readers, if they have seen any divine beauty and blessedness in Jesus; blessed are our ears if we have heard his voice with sweetness and power; blessed are your tongues, you servants of God, if, in testifying of his Person and work, love and blood, suitability and preciousness, you have felt the dew of the Spirit dropping from your lips– and blessed are your fingers, you whose pens seek to trace his worth, if what you write is attended with the unction of his grace to contrite, believing hearts. If this is our experience, and this our aim and end, one living bond of union will knit together editor, writers, readers, servants of God, members of Gospel churches, and believers generally among whom our pages come. The union of the church with Christ her living Head, and the union of all the members of his mystical body with each other in him, are truths so vital and essential that, if lost sight of or not realized, confusion in doctrine, experience, and practice, must be the necessary result. "I am the vine, you are the branches." "Abide in me, and I in you." "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "That they all may be one– as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one of us." If these divine truths are hidden or obscured– if these springs of love to Jesus and of love to his dear saints cease to flow into our hearts; if they are dried up by contention, or

muddied by error or evil, we at once lose sight not only of our own standing in Christ, but of the place which the church holds in his person and heart. We would then, the Lord enabling, fix our eyes steadily on these two points as guiding stars, as we sail over the waters of time; and we invite our readers to look at them with us in this opening season, that, with the help and blessing of the Lord, they may influence our hearts, lips, and lives, day by day in our walk before God and our walk with his children, from the beginning to the end of the year. From ignorance or forgetfulness of these grand distinguishing truths of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, many, both preachers and writers, who appear to have some desire for the welfare of Zion, have dwelt, we think, too exclusively, and some almost angrily on the evils which afflict, on the divisions which separate the sheep of Christ; and, in their zeal and warmth against what they consider the low, carnal state of the church, seem well near, if not quite, to lose sight of her covenant standing in the Son of God, her place in his heart, her interest in his blood and righteousness, as well as of his tender care over her, and that what she is she is by his sovereign grace, or by his all-wise permission.

We may look at the church sometimes as we often look at ourselves, seeing in her, as in our own evil hearts, nothing but what is carnal and vile; and with much the same result– unbelief, and hopelessness of any better or brighter days. But, as the more we look at ourselves apart from Christ, the lower we shall sink, so the more we look at the church separate from him, the worse she will appear. To be ever fixing our eyes on the low state of the church, and be ever censuring her for her spots and blemishes, is a spirit akin to that which sees nothing in individual believers but their faults and infirmities. A parent may keenly grieve that his eldest child is a cripple, or a husband that his wife is afflicted in body or mind; but the love that so deeply feels the affliction will not be ever roughly uncovering these family infirmities to the crude gaze of the common eye; nor is the child less a dear son, or the wife less a beloved partner because of them. Are we members of the family in heaven and earth, (Ephesians 3:15,) that royal family, all of whom are made kings and priests unto God? (Revelation 5:10.) Let us, then, be jealous of the family honor; not stain with contention the family dignity; and, while deeply lamenting family infirmities, still manifest family love, and cleave in affection to every member of the family as equally dear to their covenant Head, and for that reason, dear also to us. Take away the people of God, where are our friends, our companions, our brothers? Do we hope to spend with them an eternity of bliss? Can we not, then, bear with them a little on earth, if we hope to be forever with them in heaven? To be always dwelling on their infirmities, is to speak a language very different from the language of Christ to his bride, and from all that the blessed Spirit has revealed of the covenant standing of the affianced spouse of Jesus. To view the church separate from Christ, is to look at a headless trunk; to view the members of his mystical body, apart from their union with each other, is to see only scattered limbs. Such unscriptural views must lead to a wrong judgment, and must necessarily make us dwell more upon what the church is in herself, sunk and fallen, than what she is in her covenant Head– all fair, without spot, or wrinkle. In the same spirit many seem also much disposed to dwell upon the breaches of Zion, the divisions which undoubtedly exist among those who profess the same truths, and to believe in the same blessed Lord. But here, too, they appear to lack the anointing eye-salve, which would show them that as there is more in the blood of Christ to save the individual believer than there is in sin to damn him, so there is more in grace to unite together the members of Christ than there is in strife to separate them.

Whatever be the divisions and dissensions that rend the visible church, which at the best is a mixed multitude; a firm, indissoluble union binds together the living members of Christ's mystical body. Small are their differences compared with their points of agreement. A stranger to the spiritual union which knits the members of Christ to him as their living Head, and to each other in him, sees only the divisions which separate; while he who knows the strength and sweetness of that inward life which gives him union with Christ, feels the power of that grace which gives him also union with his brethren.

Unless we believe that sin is stronger than grace, Belial than Christ, the world than faith, the works of darkness than he who was manifested to destroy them, we have no ground to believe that disunion, division, strife, contention, and discord are stronger than love, union, affection, concord, and peace. To a common eye the ship of the church may seem tossed with every wave, driven out of her course, or pursuing no definite course at all, her sails rent, her masts and ropes broken, her pilot heedless, her officers asleep, and her crew at strife. But the spiritual eye looks beyond all that meets the common gaze, and sees that there is at her helm an almighty and unerring, though invisible, Pilot, who steers her after his own will, who holds the winds in his fists, governs and directs the movements of all on board, overrules all their ways and wills to his own glory, and is bringing her through every storm to her desired haven.

Let us freely acknowledge that there is not always that love and affection, that tenderness, kindness, gentleness, forbearance, meekness, and brotherly interest manifested by the children of God to each other, which should mark Christ's disciples. Let us confess that among many who really fear God there is often a lack of mutual consideration for each other's feelings, a lack of sympathy with each other's trials and temptations, an inability or an unwillingness to make any allowance for differences of station, education, or natural disposition– all which things are very trying to tender minds, and especially so to those who are disposed to lean too much upon them for help and comfort.

No, let us go a step further, and own that in many instances there is more than a lack of love and affection; that there is actual strife and contention; envy and jealousy in the pulpit, sullenness and bitterness in the pew; members of the same church who will hardly speak to each other in public, and almost cut off each other in private; pride or covetousness in one, love of dress and the world in another, a censorious, quarrelsome spirit in a third, a readiness to take offence and an inability to bear the least reproof in a fourth, a caviling, contentious disposition upon every point or no point at all in a fifth, a hot, fiery temper in a sixth, a self-pitying, self-bemoaning complainingness in a seventh, that always feels or fancies it is ill treated and imposed upon by every one. Allow that all these evils, which, beyond doubt, sadly impair union, exist in many churches; still, we assert and are willing to stand by our assertion, that under all these hindrances there lies a firm bond of union among the family of God; which, as being of grace, and, therefore, eternal and indestructible, as much surpasses in strength and duration all these temporary ills as the sun outshines the mists, or eternity stretches beyond time. The man who stands on Dover cliffs sees merely the channel that divides England from France. He looks on the wild waste of waters that is spread between, on the rolling waves that sunder them from each other. But, underneath the dividing sea, lies the electric cable, hidden indeed from view, but carrying every moment messages to and fro, and binding our island to the continent more closely than the channel keeps it asunder. No, the very waves themselves are but seeming barriers, for over them speed the ships laden with goodly

merchandise, and bearing to each country the productions of the other. So, under all the waters of contention which seem to separate the living family of God, there lies a firm bond of spiritual union; and over the very sea of discord there pass occasional winged prayers for each other's good, and kind, affectionate feelings, not the less deeply felt because not always freely expressed, that tend more to unite than the waves to divide.

Union with Christ, our living Head, and union with his people as living members of his mystical body, stand on the same foundation with the other blessed truths of the everlasting gospel. Do we believe that the everlasting covenant stands ordered in all things and sure; that the work of Christ is a finished work; that his blood cleanses from all sin; that his righteousness perfectly justifies; that he has fulfilled the law, conquered Satan, destroyed death, and gained a full and final victory for all that believe on his name? These are the foundations of our most holy faith, and the ground of all our hope. But if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?

Let it, then, not be forgotten, that as sin cannot destroy grace, or the law overthrow the gospel; as Satan cannot triumph over Christ, as death cannot reign over life, and as hell cannot defeat heaven, so all the divisions and dissensions that harass the church cannot break to pieces the bond of union that knits together the family of God.

These divisions are works of the flesh, (1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:20 :) the evil fruits that hang on the boughs of our fallen nature; the spawn and filth of that old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and all influenced and drawn out by the restless agency of Satan, acting upon our carnal mind. But as there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, as they stand complete in him, without spot or blemish or any such thing, as all the members of his mystical body must be partakers of his glory, and can no more fall out of his body than he himself can fall from his throne, we must view all these divisions as mere passing things of time, evils, it is true, much to be lamented, and as much to be avoided, but not touching the foundation, nor removing the church from her standing in Christ's person, or Christ's heart. And even admitting that divisions do exist in the visible church, yet we believe they are very much confined to those who are 'out of the secret'– mere professors of the truth, without divine light or life, liberty or love. Say that a church appears, and, indeed, is much divided. But before we begin to lament and bewail how a church of Christ is so rent and torn, it might be as well to examine a little more closely the actual condition of that church. Perhaps it is very large, made up of members, hastily, almost heedlessly, taken in, when the pulpit was filled by an unsound minister, or an undue influence exerted by worldly deacons; perhaps, even at the present moment, more respect is paid to money and respectability than grace; a spirit of contention is fostered from the pulpit; great laxity of discipline and order prevails; evils are allowed to grow instead of being nipped in the bud; loose-living characters are tolerated; doctrine is more contended for than experience and the power of godliness; and a general deadness and stupor evidently pervade the whole.

Now, if such a church be rent and torn with divisions, it will not do to point to it as a specimen of a gospel church and say, "See how the children of God are divided," when, perhaps, not half are children of God at all, or, if children, sunk so low into carnality and death as to give little evidence of the life of God being in them. Instead of looking at the contentious spirits who fight and wrangle in the van, fix your eyes upon those who, out of the din and strife, occupy the rear. Search and look for the broken in heart, the quiet in the land, the sick and afflicted, the tried and tempted, the

doubting and fearing, the simple and sincere, the slow to talk but quick to act, the tender in conscience, the exercised and distressed, the warm-hearted and affectionate, the prayerful and watchful, the humble and spiritually minded. Put aside the fighting men and women, the talkers, the brawlers, the boasters, the contentious, the self-conceited, and the ignorant; and see if you cannot, when you have blown away the foam, get at something more palatable and drinkable; when you have swept away the chaff, and empty ears of corn; if you cannot find some precious grain below.

It is among the mourners in Zion, the weighted with a heavy cross, the plagued all the day long and chastened every morning; it is among the true lovers of Jesus, who have some personal experience of his love and grace; it is among those who know the sweetness of communion with Christ, and love the brethren with a pure heart fervently, that you must look for union. These do tenderly and affectionately cleave to each other.

Say that the leaders of the church are at variance; minister and deacons jarring; the word little blessed either to call or deliver– the main supporters of the cause worldly and proud, keeping the poorer members at a distance, and little disposed to words of kindness or deeds of liberality towards them; beneath all this sad state of things, in a church sunk even so low as this, there may still be a deep, close, and blessed union among those unknown and unnoticed sheep of the flock, whose souls are alive to God, and who are favored with his teaching and blessing.

It is then neither true nor fair to represent the real church of God, that which alone deserves the name, as torn with divisions, when these contentions and quarrels are much confined to dead churches, sunk into worldliness and error, or to those members of living churches who are either destitute of grace, or sadly departed from it. Sure we are that no one living under the influence of grace can be quarrelsome or contentious. That holy Dove, who, as a Spirit of peace and love broods over contrite hearts, never rests upon that bosom which indulges in constant war amid strife, and in which allowed enmity rankles against any of the dear saints of God.

We do not believe it then, to be a fact that God’s real children, at least those who are daily living under the influences of the blessed Spirit, are divided, or are ever jangling and wrangling with each other. It is true that unkind, angry feelings may at times, with all other evils, work in their carnal mind, and may occasionally, to their grief and sorrow, manifest themselves in hasty words or cold looks; but these are passing clouds– for the same grace which subdues their other sins restrains also this beginning of strife, and that promise is fulfilled in them with this, as with other iniquities, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace."

We have known during our pilgrimage many dear saints of God, some now before the throne, and others still in the wilderness, in different parts of England, and we would desire to leave it on record when God calls us away from this mortal scene that we have received little else but the greatest kindness and affection from them, that with those with whom we have been brought into closer connection we have lived in undeviating love and union, and that except for a few passing moments the noise of strife has not been heard in our gates. And we may add, that as a Christian, as a minister, and as an editor, the desire of our soul is to seek and pursue peace, love, and union with all who fear God and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to avoid as much as possible contention and strife.

True it is that strife in churches as well as among individuals cannot always be avoided, for there are contentious spirits, who, if permitted, would set any church on fire– salamanders who live in the flame, birds that revel in a storm. Mark and avoid all such, you saints of God. (Romans 16:17.) If in the church, treat them kindly and courteously, but bring no fuel to their fire, (Proverbs 26:20-21,) nor make them bosom friends; if out of the church, do all you can that they do not get in. (Proverbs 22:24.) But enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said by us on this subject. Other points, besides that of Christian union, call for some notice from us in our annual appeal to our readers' hearts and consciences.

If we are, as we profess to be, followers of the Lamb, three things, we believe, will be with us primary objects of spiritual desire–

1. The glory of God.

2. The edification of our own souls.

3. The good of our brethren.

If we lack the first, our eye cannot be single, and, therefore, the light that is in us must be darkness; if we lack the second, eternal realities can rest with but little weight and power upon our conscience; if we lack the third, pure love to the brethren cannot dwell in our breast. In opening, then, and dwelling upon these three points a little more fully, we may, perhaps not unprofitably occupy the rest of our Address.

1. The glory of God. Neither preachers, writers, or editors can expect God's blessing to rest upon their labors, if the glory of God is not their main object. Yet how little of this singleness of eye, this simplicity and godly sincerity, is seen in many who call themselves ministers of Christ and servants of God. And how painfully evident the contrary often is in them, to such as are possessed of any measure of spiritual discernment.

Pride, self conceit, and self exaltation, are both the chief temptations, and the main besetting sins, of those who occupy any public position in the church. Therefore, where these sins are not mortified by the Spirit, and subdued by his grace; instead of being, as they should be, the humblest of men; they are, with rare exceptions, the proudest.

O did we but see what we really and truly are; had we a penetrating, abiding view of the depths of the fall, in which we as sinners are so fearfully sunk; did we carry about with us a daily, hourly sense of what our heart is capable of, if left by God to itself, and what but for grace we could say or do the very next moment; were we continually sighing and mourning over our ignorance, unbelief, ingratitude, shortcomings and miserable unfruitfulness; did we bear in constant remembrance our slips, falls, and grievous backslidings; and had we, with all this, a believing sight of the holiness and purity of God, of the sufferings and sorrows of his dear Son in the days of his flesh, and what it cost him to redeem us from the lowest hell, we would be, we must be clothed with humility, and would, under feelings of the deepest self abasement, take the lowest place among the family of God, as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. This should be the feeling of every child of God. But if, in his infinite condescension, the Lord has made any of us his servants, and has qualified and commissioned any of us to preach the gospel to his people, what special, what additional self abasement does this call for! If we did not know the human heart, and how it

takes advantage of God's own gifts, and even of his very grace to lift itself up against him, we would at once say, "A proud minister of Jesus Christ, a self-conceited servant of God! A man to preach humbling grace, and yet be proud of his way of preaching it! The thing is impossible! It is a self contradiction! Such a man is a monster, not a Christian, still less a Christian minister." Truly he is a monster; and such the Lord makes some of his dear servants feel themselves to be when this accursed pride lifts itself up in their hearts, and they see in the light, of his countenance what a hideous guest is lodged there. But until this pride be in some measure crucified, until we hate it, and hate ourselves for it, the glory of God will not be our main object, and we shall lie under the weight of that cutting reproof, "How can you believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?"

Readers, friends, brother ministers, may we all with one mind and heart seek the glory of God with a single eye, and be ever willing to be nothing that Christ may be all in all. Let the world, profane and professing, seek their own honor, their own pleasure, and their own profit. Let us who profess ourselves to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works," seek the honor of that dear Lord, who, as we trust, has called us by his grace, brought us near to himself, and is employing us in some measure in his service.

2. The spiritual profit of our own soul, the blessing of the Lord, as a personal, experimental reality in our own conscience, the dew of his favor resting on our branch, and our own growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ– how weighty, how essential should these blessings be felt to be by us. Surely our own soul's salvation and consolation should be our main concern. What are our farms, our shops, our business, our property, our families, our friends, our very bodies and lives themselves, compared with the worth and value of our immortal souls? If it be well with our souls, all is well; if ill with them, all is ill. And if any of our readers are called to minister to the souls of others, with what power or earnestness, we may well say with what face can we press eternal realities on the conscience of others, when they have so little weight with ourselves, or bid them keep their vineyards clean, when we are so neglecting our own? If our soul is like the garden of the sluggard, overrun with thorns and briars, never weeded or watered, the fences broken down, and the wild boar of the woods ravaging it, and we are idly looking on, careless what the crop is, or whether there is any crop at all, we shall prove sorry gardeners of the church of Christ– that "garden enclosed," into which she invites her beloved to come that he may eat his pleasant fruits.

Now, without a spirit of prayer, reading, meditation, seclusion from the world, self searching and communing with one's own heart; without visitations of the Lord's presence, and the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit, we can never be fruitful in every good word and work. "Abide in me and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me." Associating with worldly people, gossiping and visiting from house to house, lounging their precious time away in empty talk; not giving themselves to reading, meditation, or study, but spending hour after hour in utter idleness of mind; neither tried, nor exercised, nor crying to the Lord, nor even thinking about eternal things at all, much less enjoying the Lord's presence– if such be their state week after week, can we wonder if the occupiers of the pulpit are rather a burden than a benefit to the occupiers of the pew; and if, instead of being honored and resorted to, they gradually become despised and forsaken? "By much slothfulness the building decays– and through idleness of the hands the house drops through." When we look

around and see decaying buildings and dropping houses, well may we say, "Slothfulness and idleness have done this!"

3. An earnest desire for the good of the brethren will flourish or fade much in proportion to the weight and power with which eternal realities press on our own soul. In this desire for the welfare of Zion, this love to the people of God for Christ's sake, this pure, unselfish, affectionate solicitude that the blessing of God might rest upon them, does the grace of the gospel shine forth so conspicuously, and forms such a noble contrast with the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world says, "All for me, none for you– all I get I keep– all you get I grudge." But the noble, unselfish principle of grace says, "Dear brother, I want you to be blessed as well and as much as myself– for the more the Lord gives me, the more I want him to give you. We are partners, not rivals– friends and brethren, not antagonists and foes!" In nothing does divine grace more display its heavenly origin than in seeking the good of the brethren. Ministers seeking the spiritual welfare of their flock– members of churches desiring the blessing of God upon those connected with them in church fellowship– believers generally laboring in prayer and supplication for the power of God to rest upon his servants, his churches, his people– how befitting the gospel is this, how consistent with our profession, how following the example of the blessed Redeemer,

"Who spared no pains, declined no load,

Resolved to buy us with his blood.

We wish to say little of ourselves, lest we fall into the same spirit of self exaltation that we have been condemning– but this much, we trust, we may say, that in editing this periodical, we desire to seek the good of the brethren among whom it comes. In what falls from our pen, as well as in selecting what is sent by our correspondents for insertion, our main aim and object are to profit the Lord's people, to avoid all questions that may minister to contention and strife; and while we contend for the truth in the power and experience of it in the heart, to do so in a spirit of tenderness, affection, and love. In this spirit have we desired to write what we now lay before our readers, and if any of them think we have, in some expressions, borne rather hard on existing evils, let them forgive us this wrong, and attribute it to our desire to be faithful, as well as affectionate, and not, under a show of seeming gentleness, smooth over manifest inconsistencies. "Brethren, pray for us," is the best request and the most fitting close that can be offered to those of our readers who know and love the truth, by their affectionate friend and servant.

07.05. 1858

New Years' Address, January 1858

Ever since the subject of our Annual Address has presented itself to our thoughts, a word of the Lord has been on our mind, which we feel should be our guiding rule, not only in what now lies before us, but be ever present with us from the beginning to the end of the year, if we are to be of any real service or spiritual profit to the Church of God in the position which we occupy as the Editor of the "Gospel Standard." The word is this– "Take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:16.)

They are the words of Paul the aged, Paul at the end of his race and in sight of his crown; to Timothy, his own son in the faith; and they are words of solemn warning and admonition, which should ever be before the eyes and in the heart of every servant of Christ; for though written by the pen of Paul, they are, as part of the inspired testimony, the express language of the Holy Spirit to all whom he has made overseers to feed the Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. If the Lord, then, in his providence and grace, has placed us in a position whence we may speak in his holy name to any of his redeemed and regenerated family– if he has given us any singleness of eye to his own glory, or any desire that what we send forth from our own pen, or that of others, may be made a blessing to his people; and if he has bestowed upon any who seek his face and believe in his dear Son any willingness to receive with affection what, in all faithfulness and love, is in our pages set before them, we are bound by every gracious tie to listen to the admonition that we have quoted, and which seems so peculiarly adapted to our case and situation.

I. The first part of the admonition come home with solemn weight and power to our own conscience, "Take heed to YOURSELF." As all evil begins, so all good commences in a man's own bosom. Sad then must be the lamenting cry for any minister, or any editor of a religious periodical, to be compelled to take up, as his own bitter and painful experience, "They made the a keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." To take care of other men's souls, and take no care of one's own; to warn, to admonish, to reprove the flock of Christ, and listen to no warning, admonition, or reproof that belongs to one's self; to teach others, day by day, and week by week, and seek no heavenly instruction from the Lord for ourselves; to contend for a living faith, without any inward experimental acting of it, on its Author and Finisher, or any earnest breathing to the God of all grace to bestow a larger measure of it, and draw it forth into more living and continual exercise; for a good hope through grace, and not to realize it; for love to the Lord and his saints, and neither to feel, nor to be desirous to feel it; to set before the people the joys of heaven and the smiles of God, with the terrors of hell and the frowns of the Almighty, yet neither seek the one or dread the other– surely, surely, there are no men, much less ministers, so deceiving or deceived as to act thus!

Yes; but there are, and more in number than any of us probably dream of; no, such shall we, and you, you ministers who read these lines, and all be, who fill any public office in the Church of God,

but for special grace. Familiarity with sacred things has a natural tendency to harden the conscience where grace does not soften and make it tender. Men may preach and pray until both become a mere mechanical habit, and they may talk about Christ and his sufferings until they feel as little touched by them as a tragic actor on the stage of the sorrows which he personates. Well, then, may the Holy Spirit sound this note of warning, as with trumpet voice, in the ears of the servants of Christ. "Take heed unto yourselves."

It was Paul's public warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus. (Acts 20:28.) It was Paul's private warning to his friend and disciple, his beloved son, Timothy. And do not all who write or speak in the name of the Lord need the warning? Are they not all then– men of like passions with their hearers, and usually more tried and tempted than they? Have they not, besides the snares common to all the children of God, snares peculiar to themselves– snares connected with the ministry itself? How many a star has fallen from the bright skies of the church! How many burning and shining lights, as they were once considered, have smouldered out, or been suddenly extinguished! How many have cooled in their youthful zeal; left their first love; fallen into sin; embraced error; and made themselves and their profession to stench in the nostrils of men.

If the way to heaven is strait and narrow– if surrounded with snares and pits on every side; if the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; if Satan is ever on the watch to deceive and allure; if all our strength is weakness, all our knowledge ignorance, all our light darkness, (and such they are without grace in its continued supply), who can walk in this path except as guided by the Spirit, and upheld by the power of God? The mercy is, that those whom the Lord loves, he loves unto the end– that those whom the Father has given him, he keeps in his name; and that he who is in the midst of the candlesticks holds the stars in his right hand, that none may pluck them thence, hide their luster, or extinguish their beams. But apart from this special and divine keeping, as the Lord does not work mechanically, but makes use of the word of his grace, of his own promises, precepts, and admonitions, as gracious means to keep the feet of his saints, we shall do well to give earnest heed to the things which we have heard from his lips, lest at any time we should let them slip. And sure we are that no Christian man or minister will, in his right mind, think himself placed in a position where such an admonition can be safely neglected; or, that while he is in the flesh, he is beyond the necessity or reach of such warnings.

There are few Christians, and we may well add, few Christian ministers, who have not ever found SELF to be their greatest enemy. The pride, unbelief, hardness, and impenitence of a man's own heart– the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature; the lusts and passions, filth and folly of his own carnal mind will not only ever be his greatest burden, but will ever prove his most dreaded foe. Enemies we may have, enemies we shall have from outside, for all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, and we may at times keenly feel their bitter speeches and cruel words and actions. But no enemy can injure us like ourselves. In five minutes a man may do himself more real harm than all his enemies united could do to injure him in fifty years. And if this is true of a private Christian, how much more will it hold good in the case of one who occupies a public situation in the church of God? "Take heed then to yourself." To yourself you can be the most insidious enemy and the greatest foe. "Take heed to yourself," minister of the Gospel, writer, reader, editor, that your loins may be girt, your lamp burning, and you engaged in the Masters work, with the Master's presence, the Master's smile, and the Master's blessing.

We would then, in the opening of the present year, view this admonition as placed before our own eyes as a lamp unto our feet, and a light to our path, and as such we would open the words a little more closely and fully, as bearing more immediately upon our own conscience.

1. First, we seem specially admonished thereby to take heed that we ourselves should experience the POWER, and live under the influence of the truths for which we contend. It is impossible for us otherwise to fulfill our office as the glory of God and the good of the Church both require. We have many communications to read, many inquiries to answer, many intricate and difficult points to weigh, the good of many to consider, the petulance, quibblings, and enmity of many to endure; many books to peruse, many Reviews to write, friends whom we must not flatter, foes whom we must not fear, and, above all, to be ever looking up for wisdom to guide, and power to strengthen; feeling, as we do, that we have neither one nor the other in our own hands, or at our own command.

We have instrumentally, unworthy as we are of the position, and inadequate as we are to the task, some of the saints of the Most High to instruct, others to comfort, others to encourage, others to feed– and when we say "we," it is meant thereby to include whatever appears in our pages, whether written by our own pen, or that of others. Without, then, the continual power and influence of the Blessed Spirit upon our heart, how soon the hands hang down, how soon the knees totter, how soon do eyes and ears and heart all become weary in well-doing.

2. We are also admonished thereby to take heed TO OUR OWN SPIRIT. Here we are liable chiefly to fail. We are not much afraid of being entangled in the slough of Arminianism– at least, as far as regards any open adherence to, or expressed sanction of, its God-dishonoring views and sentiments. The truth as it is in Jesus is, we hope, too dear to us to sacrifice it to any obvious and palpable error, come from what quarter it may, and last of all from a point that proclaims, with shameless forehead, creature strength and righteousness. But to maintain truth in a spirit of tenderness, affection, and love; not to be betrayed into a contentious, wrangling temper, nor be provoked by any obstinate opposition to call down fire from heaven on all who do not or will not see as we see, and believe as we believe; here we have much need to watch our own spirit, lest it betray us into words and expressions unbecoming the meekness of Christ and the spirit of the Gospel. To be bold and faithful, on the one hand, in defense of truth and godliness, yet without wrath and bitterness, and to maintain, on the other, "the love of the Spirit," the affection and tenderness which ever become a sinner in this valley of tears, and a follower of the meek and lowly Lamb, and yet not to be entangled in that wretched 'universal charity', that false and canting spirit which, either in pretense or self-deception, thinks well, hopes well, and speaks well of everything and everybody who can prate about Jesus Christ and the Gospel– this safe, this Christian path, we would desire to tread. The servant of the Lord is to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; (Jude 1:3;) but he is not to strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those who oppose them; (2 Timothy 2:24-25;) and he is to put away all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking. (Ephesians 4:31.)

3. We are also warned and admonished, in taking heed to ourselves, to watch against any CARNAL INFLUENCE that, under the guise of religion, may work with deviousness and subtlety on our own mind, and impose itself upon us for the work and witness, the power and teaching of the Holy Spirit. We are expressly bidden in the word of truth, "not to believe every spirit, but to test

the spirits, whether they are of God." Spirit has its filthiness as well as the flesh; (2 Corinthians 7:1;) and if not so gross and sensual, is much more subtle and deceptive. In all its forms, whether in our bosom or that of others, in a profession or out of it, in the pulpit, the pew, the closet, or the study; SELF in its inmost spirit is still a deceitful, subtle, restless, proud, and impatient creature; masking its real character in a thousand ways, and concealing its destructive designs by countless devices. We have but to look on the professing church to find the highest pride under the lowest humility, the greatest ignorance under the vainest self-conceit, the basest treachery under the warmest profession, the vilest sensuality under the most heavenly piety, and the foulest filth under the cleanest cloak. But if self be such, and those who know its features will be the best judges of its likeness, well may we take heed to ourselves lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, we should be deceived by the twining movements and glowing speeches of this serpent, and, professing to exalt Christ, be secretly exalting ourselves.

4. To be kept from all EVIL and to be preserved from all ERROR may form also a part of that solemn admonition, "Take heed to yourself." We know too much of what we are as a fallen sinner, to think for a moment that we can keep ourselves from either evil or error. Sin is sweet to the flesh; error suits well the reasoning mind. Who can mortify the one, who can shut out the other, without special help from the sanctuary? But if we take no heed to our steps, or receive without fear or care doctrines that are preached and taught from pulpits and books without number, we may soon fall into as much sin as may make us limp all our days; and embrace as much error as shall make us a wandering star and a rainless cloud to the church of God.

"Take heed then to yourself," but in so doing may a sense of the Lord’s own blessed keeping ever be deeply engraved on your heart and conscience. "He keeps the feet of his saints;" "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "Keep me as the apple of your eye– hide me under the shadow of your wings." "He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Only in the strength of these promises and in the experience of their fulfillment, would we say to ourselves, would we say to those who have ears to hear, "Take heed to yourself."

II. But we are bidden also to "take heed to the DOCTRINE." And surely this is a most needful admonition, not only to us, but to all who profess, whether by tongue or pen, to teach the church of Christ. Few, comparatively speaking, seem to realize sufficiently the solemn position of standing forward to teach the church of Christ. Almost anybody who has a little fluency of tongue thinks himself able to preach, and almost everybody in a profession who can hold a pen deems himself capable of writing upon the weighty matters of salvation. But in so doing they profess to be the mouth of God. Well, then may every one who fears God and trembles at his word take heed what words his mouth utters; for God can only speak his own truth, and it is a fearful position to stand up as his mouthpiece, and then to speak lies in his great and holy name. How careful, then, should we be, that what we speak by mouth and what we teach by pen is according to the oracles of God. By the word "doctrine" we understand all that holy truth, whether viewed as one consistent, harmonious whole, or as branching out into various parts, which the blessed Spirit has revealed in the word of truth, and which he makes experimentally known in the hearts of the people of God. The word "doctrine" has in the New Testament a larger, broader, and nobler meaning than that comparatively limited signification which is generally attached to the term. Doctrine is often now spoken of as something distinct from experience and precept, whereas it comprehends both. The

word "doctrine," translated literally, means, "teaching;" and therefore includes every branch of divine truth which the Holy Spirit teaches, whether outwardly in the inspired Scriptures, or inwardly by his sacred unction and power. As used with reference to the ministry of the word, it means, as well as includes, all that "teaching" with which a servant of God, according to the ability bestowed upon him, instructs, feeds, comforts, and admonishes the Church of Christ. In this sense our pages should be full of "doctrine," that is, of heavenly truth, according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the word and in the heart.

What need, then, is there that we, as Editor of these pages, should take heed to the doctrine! in other words, carefully watch and examine whether what we write ourselves, or insert as written by others, be in strict accordance with the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and as experienced, under the power and teaching of the Holy Spirit, in the heart of his saints.

1. If we are enabled then to take heed to the doctrine as there directed, the first quality looked for will be purity. How "clear as crystal," did holy John see the pure river of water of life proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1.) Such should be, though alas! from human infirmity, never can fully be, the truth as preached by God’s ministering servants.

Three times in one short Epistle does the apostle Paul urge on his son Titus "sound doctrine," (Titus 1:9, Titus 2:1, Titus 2:8) that is healthy, untainted with error, free from all the sickly corruptions and pestilential disease of human wisdom or human ignorance. "In doctrine," again he urges, that is, in your teaching, in what you set before the people, "showing uncorruptness, gravity," (not jokes and ridiculous anecdotes, to make fools laugh and saints sigh,) "sincerity," (not deviousness and hypocrisy, flattering the rich and keeping back the truth for fear of giving offence,) "sound speech," wise and weighty, "that cannot be condemned," as commending itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God from its intrinsic authority and power. Whether the writing and preaching of the day resemble this divine model, let those judge whose ear tests words, as the mouth tastes food. But it should ever be our earnest desire, and watchful care, to preach and write only what bears this divine stamp upon it.

2. In taking heed to the doctrine we should see that it be impregnated with the life of God, anointed with his unction, watered with his dew, and accompanied by his power. What is all our preaching and writing worth, if it falls upon the ears and hearts of the saints of God with no weight or influence; if it never melts or softens, comforts or blesses his tried and exercised people? There is a power in the word of his grace, when God is with his servants, to kill and to make alive, to wound and to heal; there is then in their hands a two-edged sword, which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; there is a balm, too, which brings pardon and peace to a troubled, distressed mind; and there is an influence that reaches the inmost thoughts, lays bare the hidden depths of conscience, and speaks with a voice that unmistakably assures the soul it is the very voice of God himself.

It is true that he who has the keys of David, who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens, keeps in his own hands this power, for it is his own heavenly voice by which he himself speaks to his own sheep. But he does from time to time thus speak from heaven by his own sent servants; and when they thus preach, it is Jesus himself who gives them mouth and wisdom; (Luke 21:15;) yes, the Spirit of their Father which speaks in them. (Matthew 10:20.) And his sheep know his voice and follow it, but they will not hear the voice of strangers.

Now, are we to take no heed to our "doctrine" whether it be accompanied or not with this heavenly power? Is it quite enough to preach or write consistently with the mere letter of truth, and there leave it, with a sort of reckless, Antinomian carelessness, "I can only preach the truth; God must apply it"? True; but are there no blessings to be called down upon your preaching by prayer and supplication? Is there no inward experience in your own soul of the power of God, no sense of his absence or presence, of his opening or shutting up? How can you preach or write to the comfort and edification of the saints of God, if you are an utter stranger to the things in which is all their life and all their religion? And if you do not know vitally and experimentally the things you preach and write, why do you preach or write at all? If you call experience "cant," and the life of God in the soul "frames and feelings," beware lest God say unto you, "What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant in your mouth; seeing you hate instruction and cast my words behind you." (Psalms 50:16-17.)

3. That the doctrine shall be such as shall save the soul. This is what the Apostle seems chiefly to insist upon in his admonition. "Take heed to yourself, and to the doctrine," for he adds immediately, "continue in them; for in doing this, you shall both save yourself and them that hear you." When the people of God come to hear a servant of Christ, or read a book that professes to show the way to heaven, they want to be well assured that what they hear or read shall be such saving, vital truth, that they can rest their souls upon it for time and eternity. A man’s own soul is a tremendous stake to put into the balance; and he who holds the scales should be equally well satisfied that they are such as Christ holds in his own hands for heaven or hell. "What this man preaches, what this book teaches, can I rely on it as able to save my soul? Is it the real truth of God? Have I any evidence that it is so from salvation having reached my heart through the truth I now read and hear? Can I, as before a heart-searching God, with heaven and hell both before my eyes, hang all the weight of my soul for eternity upon what I hear from this pulpit, or what I read in this book?"

Well may a dying sinner thus narrowly and anxiously weigh and consider this point; well may he interrogate again and again his own conscience in this matter, for if he has no internal evidence, from what he has felt in his own soul of its saving power, that this man preaches or writes what can and does save, let him at once leave the man, let him without delay throw aside the book. A guide who does not know the way, a chart that does not mark the rocks, a pilot who cannot steer the ship– to follow or be in company with such is to seek death and destruction. But men by thousands are contented with reading and hearing book after book, and minister after minister, without ever having or seeking to have any secret testimony in their own consciences that there is salvation in the things which the man preaches or the book declares. And why, but because they hug the deception and love the deceiver? But our limits admonish us that we must now draw to a close. We are writing an Address, not preaching a sermon, though, perhaps, our almost sermonizing strain may to some appear not very unlike it. Yet a few words more.

"CONTINUE in them," says the apostle. In what? in the things that you have known and felt– in the truths of the gospel as revealed in the scripture and in your own conscience. The truth of God in its life and power, the truth of God as saving and sanctifying the soul, cannot be taken up and laid down like a trade or a business. Nor is a man to be all for his soul this week and all for the world next– making the children of God his friends and companions on the Sunday; and his partners, his carnal relatives, or his fellow workmen, his chosen associates on the Monday. If truth is worth

knowing at all, it is worth knowing for life; if worth having, it is worth having forever, for salvation reaches down to death, in death, and after death. He that endures unto the end, he, (and he only,) shall be saved. As conducting the "Gospel Standard," we have no new views to offer, no new patterns for the coming Spring, no novelties of the season to please and attract a crowd of customers. We have only one Gospel, for there is but "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." The Gospel is our Standard; we have, and we want to have no other– and by this standard we hope ever to abide. Each revolving year only confirms us more strongly, and roots us more deeply in that precious truth which now for many years it has been the object of our pages to set forth. All that we want is to experience more of its power, live more under its influence, and adorn it more by our life.

Friends and readers, do you see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart with us in these important matters? However the truths we love may be despised by the profane and professing world, may they be more and more dear to us! Many read our pages whom we have never seen, whom we may never know; but if we are taught by the same Spirit, a bond of union knits us together, and in doing so unites us to one common Lord.

We have no promises to make for the year upon which we are now entered; but we desire to be ever looking up to Him from whom comes every good and every perfect gift, that he would give us grace and wisdom, if he still spare life and grant health, equal to our task, and make his strength perfect in our weakness.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate friend and servant,

The Editor

07.06. 1862

New Years' Address, January 1862 The rapid and unceasing flight of time must, in some measure, force itself on the attention of all, but will ever lie with peculiar weight and power on the heart of the living family of God. Even those who live only for time must sometimes feel that the ground on which they stand is gradually crumbling under their feet, and that every advancing wave is sweeping away some fresh portion of the soil. But enjoying no comfort in the prospect of eternity, and thus "having no hope, and without God in the world," they either, like children, play on the sands heedless of the incoming tide, or in reckless hardness sullenly make up their mind to wait for the last plunge, when the dark waters of death must flow forever over their head.

Those, however, who live not for time but for eternity, not to sin and self but to Christ and his glory, whose hearts are made tender in the fear of God, whose conversation is in heaven, and whose affections are set upon things above, while they continually feel the flight of time, yet seem on certain occasions more peculiarly to realize the solemn fact that they are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," runners whose race will soon be run, sojourners whose place will before long know them no more.

Painful breaches made from time to time in their families by the entrance of death into the circle, and the removal of some beloved member; the decease of some esteemed servant of God under whose ministry they may have sat, or whose friendship they may have enjoyed; the recurrence of their own birthday; an attack of severe illness in their own body; a sense of advancing age and of growing infirmities– such and similar occurrences in the experience of us all, serve continually to remind the saints of God that the angel is ever lifting up his hand and warning them, that with them soon it will be time no longer. Nor do they repel the thought as an unwelcome intruder, or seek to drown the solemn impression thus produced upon their spirit, as if death and eternity were doleful themes which dampen all rising joy; but they seek rather to strengthen the feeling and maintain the solemn recollection, in the hope that solid profit may be communicated to their souls thereby. At such seasons as these memory with them casts her thoughtful eye back on the irrevocable past; earnest musing meditates upon the vivid present; and anticipation, with mingled feelings of hope and fear, looks forward to the unknown future. But though the rapid wing of time is ever thus leaving impressions of this nature on believing hearts, yet there is one special season when these impressions make themselves more deeply and distinctly felt. The commencement of a New Year is the season to which we thus particularly allude. We seem then to stand as if on a narrow isthmus between two boundless seas– the past and the future.

There is, geographers tell us, one point and one point only on the Andes, that lofty ridge of mountains which, like a huge backbone, runs through both the American continents, whence the eye of the traveler can observe both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. History records the feeling of the Spanish captain who, after days and weeks of incessant toil amid dense woods and steep mountain passes, first gazed upon this wondrous scene, and tells us with what emotions he beheld the Pacific never before seen by European eye. Two oceans far deeper, far broader, far

more involving our happiness and peace, than Spanish eye ever saw, or warrior's heart ever felt, meet our view when in musing meditation we look back on our life past, and forward upon our life yet to come. The year just closed is a portion of the one; the year on which we have just entered a part of the other.

Under this feeling, it has been our pleasing, though difficult, task for many years to avail ourselves of the new-born year to address a few words of friendly counsel to our numerous readers. They have been hitherto kind enough to lend a favorable ear to that annual Address in which, not as having dominion over their faith, but as a helper of their joy, we have sought, in the exercise of our Editorial position, to speak to their hearts and consciences.

1. Let us, then, as those who desire to fear God, under a feeling sense of his presence and of his power, once more take our stand upon that isthmus of time of which we have just spoken; and let us first cast our eyes on the year now forever PAST, as that may better prepare our mind to direct its view toward that which is to come. Though it may in some respects be a painful retrospect, for what one period of time, whether short or long, can bear to be closely scanned? Yet let us seek to look back upon it with believing eyes, and in a meditative, prayerful, thankful spirit.

Moses, the man of God, when, after forty years' weary wanderings, he stood upon the edge of the desert, with the Holy Land in view, separated from it but by Jordan's deep and rapid stream, recalled to the minds of the children of Israel the varied transactions of the wilderness before he set before them the blessings of Canaan. "You shall remember," he says, "how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:2-3.)

Let us then, with God's help and blessing, seek to realize a similar spirit of godly recollection, whereby we shall, with Moses and the children of Israel, look back upon the year now past before we traverse the year still future. The rebellious murmurings of the children of Israel, their idolatries and other grievous sins, were not urged against them by Moses, except to bring before them the Lord's rich, free, and super-abounding grace in overruling their wilderness trials and temptations into a means of making his word precious to their hearts. In the same spirit shall we seek to recall to the minds of our readers the goodness of the Lord during the past year; and if we touch upon its trials and temptations, or bring to remembrance its sins and transgressions, we shall do so only as magnifying the exceeding riches of that grace in which alone we stand, and by which alone we can be saved and sanctified.

1. Mercy must be the first note of our song, yes, the very keynote which regulates the whole theme. "I will sing of mercy and judgment," was David's gracious resolution. (Psalms 101:1.) "Judgment" shall have its place in the song, as bass mingles with treble to produce the sweeter harmony, but mercy shall lead the strain. With this keynote let us, then, commence our theme. As we look back upon the year now just past, and, according to the frame of our mind, or the strength of our faith, various feelings spring up in our bosom, thankfulness is one which has, or at least should have, a foremost place. As viewed by a believing eye, that wondrous faculty which sees a present God in every circumstance of life, what countless mercies have crowned with goodness

the year whose birth and burial we have now witnessed! The bountiful hand of a most kind and tender God in providence, as so conspicuous in giving us an almost unparalleled harvest in the year now past demands our first and earliest tribute of thankful praise. What a striking contrast did the past summer and autumn afford to the corresponding seasons of the preceding year– a contrast which made it doubly felt and appreciated. What a succession of bright suns was day after day granted us to mature and ripen the corn, and yet occasionally there fell genial showers to prevent too great a deficiency of needful moisture. How the soil, too, sick and saturated with the unprecedented rains of 1860, seemed to gather, day by day, renewed health and strength under those warm solar rays which brought forth "the precious fruits from the deep that couches beneath," turning in God's mysterious chemistry the very superabundant moisture of one year into a source of fertility for another. How many anxious eyes and trembling hearts were watching at the commencement of the harvest the aspect of the heavens, scanning with doubt and fear the appearance of every passing cloud. In all our long recollection of such seasons, and we have been no unwatchful observer of them for many years, we never remember to have witnessed such a universal feeling of dependence upon the sky, and we hope, in very many instances, on Him who rules the sky, as marked the commencement of last harvest. All seemed to feel that the worth of millions was suspended in the visible heavens, and that the recurrence of another such a wet and deficient harvest as that of 1860 would fall upon the nation as a public calamity. When, then, day after day, the sun shone bright and fair in the sky, and the grain, rapidly maturing under his warm rays, was cut and gathered in an almost unprecedented condition of dryness, it was as if the nation breathed again, like one who holds his breath in awe and suspense in the sight of some expected disaster, but, recovers respiration when escape is obtained.

Let us hope that the lesson of dependence thus experimentally taught us was not in vain, and that it has been treasured up in many believing hearts. And though men, blinded by the fall, will not see the Lord's hand, yet surely we, as a nation, need to be reminded by these changeful visitations that "the Lord does not leave himself now without witness, in that he still does good and gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." If deficient in quantity, the grain was so excellent in quality that we have abundant reason to say, as we eat our daily bread, "The Lord be praised for the beautiful harvest of 1861." This was a general mercy, but one of so marked and abundant a character that we could not in a review of the year now gone pass it by without notice. One of the worst marks of the fall, and one of the crying sins of the Gentile world was that when they knew God by the things that are made, "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." (Romans 1:20-21.) Let us not imitate their sin and their folly; but while we believe in and love a God of all grace, let us thankfully adore him as our kind God in providence. But in a review of the year now past, faith bids us call to mind those special mercies which peculiarly demand a note of thankful praise. "Whoever offers praise glorifies me." (Psalms 50:23.) "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Php 4:6.) We lose much of the sweetness of mercies for lack of a believing eye to see them, and of a thankful heart to feel and acknowledge them. Surrounded as we are by mercies, through the power and prevalency of unbelief, we continually lose sight of them, and fixing our eye perhaps on some trial or affliction, murmur amid our favors and rebel amid our blessings. Thus we commit two evils– ingratitude and rebellion, and by the indulgence of this unthankful, murmuring spirit, lose the sweetness of our mercies and add to the weight of our miseries.

But, has faith no eyes to view past favors, or rather the gracious hand which has showered them down upon us during the months gone by? Our temporal mercies have been great. It is true that all may not have been unmixed prosperity and success. Providential trials, losses in business, great and unexpected disappointments, serious reverses, lack of employment, and other painful circumstances, have doubtless fallen to the lot of some, if not many of our readers, for the precarious and peculiar state of our foreign relations has much depressed trade, injured profits, and thrown hundreds out of work– and as the Lord's people, while in the body, are in the world, though not of the world, they necessarily suffer with it. But if these heavy providential trials have at times severely tried their minds, and deeply depressed their spirits, yet have not these very difficulties made the Lord's providential hand more conspicuous? A course of unchequered prosperity is not the way in which the Lord generally leads his children. Severe and heavy trials much more usually mark their course. But, these very trials only reveal him more plainly as a God in providence. When, then, we call upon our spiritual readers to acknowledge with thankful heart their past temporal mercies, we do not mean that they should do so except in connection with their providential deliverances. To see the kind hand of the Lord in daily giving us food and clothing, house and home, in supplying our temporal needs with necessaries if not with luxuries, enabling us to maintain an honorable position, according to our respective stations, disgracing neither ourselves nor the name we profess to love by running into debt or injuring others by hopeless insolvency, but, amid many difficulties, from which few are free, by prudent economy and needful self-denial, still enabled to fulfill the precept, "Owe no man anything"– is not this a mercy that demands a thankful note of praise? When we look around and see the misery that men bring upon themselves and their families, and if professors of religion, and especially if ministers, what disgrace upon the cause of God and truth by running into debt and involving others who have confided in them by their recklessness and extravagance, we may well count it a rich mercy if the kind providence of God has hitherto held up our steps, and not put us to an open shame. But casting our eyes back upon the year now forever past and gone, are there no other mercies which claim a note of thankful praise? It is sweet to see the Lord's kind hand in providence, but sweeter far to view his outstretched hand in grace. Are we then so unwatchful or so unmindful of the Lord's gracious hand in his various dealings with our soul as to view the whole past twelve months as a dead blank in which we have never seen his face, nor heard his voice, nor felt his power? "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jeremiah 2:31.) the Lord tenderly asks. Has he been such to us also for twelve long and weary months? What! No help by the way, no tokens for good, no liftings up of the light of his countenance, no visitations of his presence and power, no breakings in of his goodness for all that long and dreary time– for dreary it must indeed have been for a living soul to have been left and abandoned of the Lord so long!

If not blessed with any peculiar manifestations of the Son of God, with any signal revelations of his Person and work, blood and love, grace and glory, for such special seasons are not of frequent occurrence, have we not still found him the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Have we not from time to time found secret access unto God by him as the Way, the only Way, unto the Father? known him as the Truth, by an experience of his liberating, sanctifying power and influence on our heart? and felt him to be the Life by the sweet renewings and gracious revivings of his Spirit and grace? If we have indeed a personal and spiritual union with the Son of God, as our living Head, there will be communications out of his fullness, a supplying of all our need, a making of his strength perfect in our weakness, a maintaining of the life that he has given, a drawing forth of faith and hope and

love, a support under trials, a deliverance from temptations, a deepening of his fear in the heart, a strengthening of the things which remain that have often seemed ready to die, and that continued work of grace whereby we are enabled to live a life of faith on the Son of God. If we have no such tokens for good, no such testimonies to record, the year has indeed been to us a blank, and we may almost say of it what Job said of the day of his birth– "Let it not be joined unto the days of the year! let it not come into the number of the months." But not to have it is one thing, not to see it is another. "The Christian often cannot see his faith, and yet believes."

You may have had all and more than all that we have described as the life of faith, and yet through timidity, unbelief, fear of presumption, a sense of your dreadful sinfulness, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy, may fear to take what really belongs to you. But where or what, are we if we have no spiritual mercies to record? How do we differ from the dead in sin who are without God in the world, or the dead in a profession, who have a form of godliness, while they deny the power thereof? But we may also have to sing of "judgment" as well as of "mercy," not indeed of judgment as implying the penal wrath, the judicial and implacable indignation of the Almighty, but as a kind and fatherly chastisement for our multiplied sins and transgressions. "Fury is not in me," said the Lord. No– there is no wrath in the bosom of God against his people. They are forever "accepted in the Beloved," and stand in him before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle; but there is displeasure against their sins; and this displeasure, their kind and gracious Father makes them feel when he withdraws from them the light of his countenance, and sends his keen reproofs and sharp rebukes into their conscience. But these very "judgments" help them; (Psalms 119:175,) for they lead to deep searchings of heart; and as the same blessed Spirit who sets home the reproof communicates therewith repentance, they sorrow after a godly manner, and this godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of. (2 Corinthians 7:10.)

If, then, our afflictions, crosses, losses, bereavements, family troubles, church trials, and more especially if the rebukes and reproofs of God in our conscience have been a means of humbling our proud hearts, bringing us to honest confession of, and godly sorrow for our sins and backslidings, if they have instrumentally separated us more effectually from the world, its company, its ways, its maxims, and its spirit– if they have, in the good hand of God, stirred up prayer and supplication in our hearts, led us into portions of the word of truth before hidden from view, laid us more feelingly and continually at the footstool of mercy, given us a deeper insight into the way of salvation, made mercy more dear and grace more sweet, have these trials and afflictions been either unprofitable or unseasonable? The tree is to be judged by its fruits. The stem may be rough, and crooked– what more so than the vine? and yet what rich clusters may hang upon the bough! Measure your trials and afflictions by this standard– fruit. The true believer longs to bring forth fruit unto God; he mourns under his barrenness, often fearing lest he should eventually prove to be one of these branches which, as not bearing fruit, are to be taken away– and as these fears and feelings work in his breast, the earnest desire of his soul is to be more manifestly, both to himself and others, a fruitful branch in the only true Vine. The sweet psalmist of our Christian Israel has well expressed his desire–

"Smile me into fruit, or chide,

If no milder means will do."

We are surrounded, we were going to say pestered, by a generation of loose-living professors, both in the pulpit and in the pew, men whose character Jude has written with the point of a diamond, as "feeding themselves without fear, as clouds without water, carried about of winds– trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame," etc. (Jude 1:12-13.) Who that views the professing church with an enlightened eye does not see how such characters abound in this day of loud profession? What a separation of spirit, not in pride and pharisaism, not in harsh censure, not in resentment and bitterness, not in wrath and malice, but in the calm depths of a quiet humble mind, does the child of God feel from such wanton professors! Their company is death to his soul; and if his lot be unhappily cast under a light, unprofitable, dead, and barren ministry– the very element of such graceless characters, what darkness, bondage, and misery are communicated to him thereby! Shall we, then, murmur and rebel under those strokes of kind and fatherly chastisement which, by making our conscience tender and our souls alive unto God, show us the dreadful spots into which men fall who have not the rod of God upon them? How are we, or how are any kept from their presumption and vain confidence, from their evils and their errors, except by the hand of God holding us up and holding us in? Nothing is more dangerous than a profession of the truth without an experience of its power, for nothing more hardens the heart and sears the conscience than a wanton handling of sacred things. Natural men have often a reverence for sacred things, and a conviction that they are too holy for them to touch. By this they are preserved from presumption, if not from unbelief, and their conscience, though dead, is not seared. But when this barrier is broken down, and men without a particle of godly fear or heavenly reverence of the glorious Majesty of God, intrude into his sanctuary, a graceless familiarity with the solemn mysteries of truth is almost sure to harden their conscience and make them twofold more the children of the devil than they were before. The Lord has pointed this clearly out in the parable of the man out of whom the unclean spirit had "gone out,"– gone out, not cast out, departed for a season under the influence of a profession, but not turned out by the mighty power of God. Being thus at liberty to go and come, he returns to spy out the state of his former mansion– and he finds it "empty" of grace, but "swept" by the brush of profession, and "garnished" with the letter of truth. This is just the place for Satan and his crew, and thus exulting over his suitable home, "he goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself,"– for they are religious devils, whereas he is but an unclean or profane spirit, "and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Matthew 12:43-45.)

2. But let us now look a little FORWARD. The year is before us. We have seen its beginning; the Lord knows whether we shall see its ending. Will it not then be our wisdom and mercy to live in it as if it were to be our last? Our Lord tells us what is the posture, the only safe and happy posture of his people– "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." (Luke 12:35-36.) But though this posture can neither be obtained nor maintained except by special grace, yet the Lord does bless those means of his own appointment which he has afforded us; and most certain it is that without the use of these means the life of God cannot be sustained in health and vigor. Let us glance at some of them.

1. A spirit of PRAYER is most certainly one of the most gracious means which the Lord employs in maintaining divine life in the soul. A spirit of prayer is something very different from a custom of

prayer, a form of prayer, or even a gift of prayer. These are merely the fleshly imitations of the interceding breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the saints of God– and, therefore, may and do exist without it. But that secret lifting up of the heart unto the Lord, that panting after him as the deer pants after the water-brooks, that pouring out of the soul before him, that sighing and groaning for a word of his grace, a look of his eye, a touch of his hand, a smile of his face, that sweet communion and heavenly communion with him on the mercy-seat which marks the Spirit's inward intercession– all this cannot be counterfeited. Such a close, private, inward, experimental work and walk is out of the reach and out of the taste of the most gifted professor. But in this path the Holy Spirit leads the living family of God, and as they walk in it under his teachings and anointings, they feel its sweetness and blessedness.

2. Having the eyes and heart much in the WORD of truth is another blessed means of maintaining the life of God in the soul. O what treasures of mercy and grace are lodged in the Scriptures; what a mine of heavenly instruction; what a store of precious promises, encouraging invitations, glorious truths, holy precepts, tender admonitions, wise counsels, and living directions! What a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path! But O how little we know, understand, believe, realize, feel, and enjoy of the word of life. For many years have we read, studied, meditated, and sought by faith to enter into the treasures of truth contained in the inspired word; but O how little do we understand it! how less do we believe and enjoy the heavenly mysteries, the treasures of grace and truth revealed in it! Yet only as our heart is brought not only unto, but into the word of life, and only as faith feeds on the heavenly food there lodged by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, can we be made fruitful in any good word or work. We should seek, by the help and blessing of God, to drink more into the spirit of truth, to enter more deeply and vitally into the mind of Christ, to read the word more under that same inspiration whereby it was written, to submit our heart more to its instruction, that it may drop like the rain and distill like the dew into the inmost depths of our soul, and thus, as it were, fertilize the roots of our faith, and hope, and love.

3. Separation from the WORLD, and everything worldly, and that not in a monkish, austere, pharisaic spirit, but from the constraining influence of that love to the Lord which draws up the heart and affections unto him away from earthly things, is a gracious, we might almost say an indispensable means of maintaining the life of God in the believer's breast. Nothing more deadens the soul to every gracious and heavenly feeling than drinking into the spirit of the world. As long as that is kept out, mere external contact with the world, as, for instance, in the calls of necessary and lawful business, does not injure. The world without and the world within are like two streams of different magnitude which run side by side. Keep them apart, and the smaller stream will not overflow its banks; but let the larger stream get an entrance into the smaller, in other words, let the world without rush into the world within, who shall tell the width of that flood or the havoc that it may make of the crops?

Some constitutions are so tender that every cold blast is sufficient to produce inflammation; and others are so susceptible of disease that they fall sick under the slightest taint of every epidemic disorder. Such sickly constitutions must watch against the east wind, and not expose themselves to the air of the marshy fen. But just such cold-catching, feverish invalids are we all in soul, whatever be the vigor and health of the body. Let us then be afraid of the very breath of the world lest it chill the heart, or inflame the carnal mind; let us dread exposure to its infectious influence lest it call forth into active energy our latent disease. And above all, let us dread the influence of

worldly professors. The openly profane cannot do us much harm. The foul-mouthed swearer, the staggering drunkard, the loud brawler, are not likely to do us any injury. We can give them what the sailor calls "a wide berth," as he does to a known rock when he approaches the place as marked on the chart. Nor are we likely to suffer injury from the moral Churchman, or the zealous Arminian, or the political Dissenter. They and we are far enough apart. But the professor of the same truths which we hold dear, who sits perhaps under the same or a similar ministry, whom we cannot altogether reject and yet cannot receive, who, like Bunyan's Talkative, is swift to speak on every occasion, and on no occasion at all, that he may have the pleasure of hearing the music of his own tongue, but who the more we are in his company the more he robs us of every tender, humble, gracious, and spiritual feeling– he, he is the robber, not indeed the highwayman who knocks us down with his bludgeon, but the pickpocket who steals our purse as he sits in the same carriage by our side.

4. To cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart under all cases and circumstances, under all trials and temptations, under all difficulties and perplexities, amid a whole storm of objections and suggestions from the carnal mind, the sore thrustings of our pitiless and unwearied adversary, and every obstacle from without or within that may obstruct our path– this, too, is indispensable to the life of faith. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." It is not folding the hands and crying, "Peace, peace," that will take us to heaven; no, nor a sound creed, a form of godliness, or a name to live. This is not running the race set before us, or fighting the good fight of faith, or wrestling with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. Sometimes we are tempted to presume and sometimes tempted to despair. The only cure for both these diseases of the soul is to cleave to the Person and work, blood, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus, so far as he has been revealed to our soul and according to the measure of faith which is given unto us. To hang upon him at every step is the only way to be brought through.

5. The last gracious means which we shall name, as it is time to come to a conclusion, is to live, walk, and act in the daily fear of God. This is, indeed, a most blessed fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. Only, then, as this fountain of life springs up in the soul, watering and thus making the conscience tender, the heart fruitful, the affections heavenly, and the spirit soft and contrite, can the power of grace be maintained in the breast. This heavenly grace of godly fear, the believer's treasure, the beginning and the end of wisdom, makes and keeps the eye watchful, the ear attentive, the smell quick and sagacious, the tongue savory, the arm strong, the hand open, and the foot cautious; and thus amid thousands of snares and temptations he walks forward to a heavenly kingdom with his eyes right on, and his eyelids straight before him.

Dear friends, friends of Jesus, partakers of his grace, and heirs of his glory, there is a divine reality in the things of God and the kingdom of heaven. We have not followed cunningly devised fables in leaving all things for Jesus' sake– name, fame, prospects in life, worldly joys, earthly hopes, and carnal pleasures. In choosing, with Moses, through the power of God's grace, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, we have not made a choice which will end in disappointment.

Mat the Lord give us to realize during the coming year more of his love; and may his rich, free, sovereign, distinguishing, and super-abounding grace manifest itself in a godly walk, a holy life, and a conversation becoming the gospel, that we may adorn the doctrine we profess, and compel

our very enemies to hold their mouths for shame when they would gladly find occasion of reproach in us. Under every trial may we find heavenly support, out of every temptation a gracious deliverance; and should the sentence even be "This year you shall die," may we feel the everlasting arms underneath on the bed of death, leave behind us a sweet testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord, and be borne aloft to join that happy and glorious company who with tongues of ceaseless praise forever adore the Lamb.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

07.07. 1864

New Years' Address, January 1864

Nothing, as a visible record of the lapse of time, more sensibly reminds us of the passing away of life; nothing, among the ever-changing aspects of surrounding nature, more vividly brings before our eyes the certainty of death than the close of each succeeding year. The END of the year! What a funeral knell is in the very sound! What a warning emblem of the end of life! As the year was born, so were we; as the year had its joyous spring, its glowing summer, its fruitful autumn, so had we our merry boyhood, our aspiring youth, our sober manhood. And now what lies before us? The corpse of the departed year. For several weeks we saw it gradually droop. We marked its daily decline, until its last hour struck, and in a moment it became a thing of the past. So shall we, when our appointed time comes, droop, decline, and die; our body will fall into its native earth, as the past year has sunk into its grave, and we, like it, shall go hence and be no more seen. But besides this striking emblem of death, presented to our view by the dying year, there is something in the very season at which the year dies, which is peculiarly fitted to remind us of our own mortality. The dark and gloomy days; the rapid setting in of night; the mists and fogs which lower over the earth– the general death and decay of nature, lately so bright and fair; the frost which chills our blood, or the storm which beats against our windows; the melancholy musings which often fall upon our spirit at this season of the year, as if prompted by, and in unison with the wintry scene, all tend vividly to bring before us the solemn conviction that our life here is but a shadow, a dream, a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. In this musing mood, which is not altogether without its chastened calm or its profitable influence, we look back through the year now forever gone, and seek perhaps to recall more vividly to our mind some of those circumstances in it which have left a deep and abiding mark on our memory.

1. Our first thoughts turn to the memory of those personal friends, or beloved relatives, whose well-known faces we shall see no more, whose familiar voices will never again sound tenderly in our ears. Have not some of you, dear readers, during the year now past, been robbed of one or more of your most cherished household treasures? Our very monthly Obituary testifies that there lines will meet the eye of many a weeping widow, of many a mourning husband, or bereaved parent. Tears are due to the memory of the departed. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus wept. Grace does not forbid the tear, but it bids us "sorrow not, even as others who have no hope." Would you wish the dear departed back? Would you, if you could, recall them to life? Even if there were no hope in their end, must we not still bow to the sovereignty of the almighty? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Why, then, tear open the wound by dwelling too long or too deeply on the irrevocable past?

2. But we may have been spared these cutting strokes. Death may not have come into our home and torn away that beloved head of the family, that tender wife, that idolized child, whose absence has made the Christmas season so mournful a blank. Still the last enemy may have made an inroad into our midst, the effects of which we shall long deeply and increasingly feel. He may, as in

our own peculiar case, have come into our church, and borne away members with whom we had been long united in church fellowship. They are gone, and have left us still to struggle on in the wilderness. But though we would not wish them back, for they are with Christ, which is far better, yet we miss their presence in the house of prayer and at the Lord's table; we miss their prayers, so simple and fervent, their kind words of sympathy and affection, their friendly communion, or their forcible example.

3. Our thoughts then, perhaps, turn to those dear and highly-valued servants of God whom we knew personally or by favorable report, whom he has taken home to himself, and we wonder how their places can be supplied. We think of their widowed churches and scattered flocks, and feel what an almost irreparable loss a faithful and experienced servant of God is to his church and congregation. Dark is the cloud that hangs over Zion. Men of sterling, experimental truth, sound in the faith, godly in life, able ministers of the New Testament, are fast passing away. Some the Lord is taking home to himself, and others he is laying aside by sickness or infirmity. But look where we may, how few do we see raised up to take their places. "The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart." Meanwhile error abounds and spreads; and many are deeply infected with it, who, from prudential motives, keep it at present out of sight, or disguise it under a form of sound words.

4. Nor, while in this musing mood, in harmony with the season, does busy memory forget the various incidents which have more or less strikingly marked the past year as regards our own personal experience of sorrow or joy, affliction or consolation. Mercies as well as miseries strewed the path– a hundred mercies to ten miseries, were faith allowed to make up the reckoning, and strike out unbelief's figures. Illness may have laid us on the bed of affliction; but, were there no mercies here? Did no kind hands nurse the body? Did no kind words cheer the spirit? Were no prayers offered up on our behalf by Christian friends– no solicitude for our recovery; no desire that the affliction might be blessed to the soul? Was there no secret support given on the bed of languishing; no submission granted to the will of God; no faith drawn forth on the word of promise; no sweet hope in the Lord of life and glory; no love to his dear name? Nor was recovery denied, or the blessing of returning health and strength refused to prayer, or the willing mind rejected to give time and strength and what remained of life more unreservedly to the Lord and his people.

5. Other trials may have marked our path, such as church troubles, the heaviest of all next to those which more peculiarly touch the soul's own immediate interests. But even these, we trust, though they severely tried the mind, will be found eventually to work for good to those who love God and desire to walk in his fear. There are few keener tests of men's spirits than the way in which they bear themselves in those strifes and divisions from which few churches are exempt. Nowhere is more manifestly seen the difference between the spirit of wrath and the spirit of meekness, the spirit of strife and the spirit of peace, the violent, contentious, unforgiving spirit of some, and the forbearing, forgiving, and yet firm and faithful spirit of others. Thus, even by these painful things, grace is tried, the approved made manifest, and the thoughts of many hearts revealed. (1 Corinthians 11:19; Luke 2:35.)

6. Nor let us forget, dear friends and brethren, amid our many rich and unspeakable mercies, that eminent favor of the maintenance of divine life in our breast. O what have we not done to quench the sacred flame? With what sacrilegious hands have we piled dust and rubbish on God's altar! What unbelief, what infidelity, what earthliness and worldly-mindedness, what pride and

covetousness, what abounding evils of every shape and name have worked in our carnal mind to bring forth fruit unto death. How these and a thousand other evils, too base to name, would have effectually damped, if not destroyed, the life of God in the soul, had it not been maintained by Him who first gave it. But how sweet the promise, how sure its fulfillment. "Because I live, you shall live also." The various revivals, then, and renewals of the life of God in the bosom, those seasonable helps by the way, those refreshings from the presence of the Lord, those gracious visitations whereby he preserves our spirit, have been some of our choicest past year's mercies; for where would our soul have been without them? Into what depths of carnality would it not have sunk? Under what loads of darkness and death would it not have been buried? The sweetness and delight sometimes felt in the word of God, as the eyes of the understanding were enlightened to see, and faith was raised up to mix with the divine testimony; the life and liberty, access and power enjoyed in secret prayer; the rays and beams of divine light which sometimes shone upon the glorious truths which are the very foundation of our most holy faith; the meltings of heart felt before the throne, under a sight and sense of our cruel sins and of the Lord's goodness and mercy; if a minister, seasons of enlargement, of boldness and faithfulness in handling the word of life; if a hearer, blessings communicated under the ministry, to make the soul revive as the corn, and grow as the vine– to have been thus, as if miraculously, kept alive in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, was not mercy here? Has 1863 passed away and left none of these mercies to be thankfully recorded? Does not the Lord say to us, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jeremiah 2:31;) and must we not answer, "No, Lord; you have not been thus to us during the year now past?"

7. But is it not a mercy also to have been in any way kept from evil that it should not grieve us; to have been in any measure preserved tender, circumspect, simple and sincere; to have brought no distressing, overwhelming guilt upon our consciences by giving way to unseemly lusts; to have caused no grief to the dear children of God by open inconsistency? We are deeply conscious of many wanderings of heart, much inward backsliding from the Lord, many infirmities of the flesh, much darkness of mind, coldness of affection, and deadness of frame; but to have been kept from conscience-wasting sins is no small mercy, when we feel ourselves tempted to them on every hand.

8. To have been preserved from the abounding errors of the day, and still to hold the truth with firm and steady hand; to have walked in any measure separate from that loose, ungodly profession which so marks the present day; to have enjoyed any union and communion with the real saints of God; and to have loved and cleaved to them as the excellent of the earth– has 1863 left no such testimonies in our favor, which we wish to bear in mind, not with the boasting pride of the self-righteous Pharisee, but the thankful acknowledgment of our deep indebtedness to super-abounding grace? But your path may have been one of deeper trial, more painful exercise, and more severe temptation, than that which we have thus sketched out. Be it so. Then if your afflictions have been greater, greater have been your consolations; if your miseries have abounded, your mercies have super-abounded. You have been further and deeper in the wilderness, but have gathered more manna; have felt more of the storm, but have seen more of the sun; have had more fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, but have known more of the power of his resurrection. Thus are we even. You who have gathered much, have nothing over; we who have gathered little, have no lack.

We have struck, then, the keynote of our Address– the Old Year and the New; for as we have taken the departed year as the emblem of death and decay, so will we now take the New Year as the emblem of life and resurrection. For as the departed year is but a shadowy emblem of death, so death itself, with all its gloomy accompaniments, is really but the shadow of a shade. Has not the Lord destroyed death and him who had the power of death, that is, the devil?" (Hebrews 2:14.) Has he not "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel?" (2 Timothy 1:10.) If death then be "destroyed" and "abolished," it can have no real substance; and if it has no substance, it can have no shadow. But it often casts, you will say, a very gloomy shadow over our feelings. It is true; but why? Because we are not raised out of its shadow into the light of the Lord's countenance. That there is something naturally appalling in death, all must admit, for it is what all must feel. The very surroundings of the grave have in them something terrible to nature. The coffin, through whose lid we almost seem to see the pale corpse in its last shroud; the open grave into whose mouth we look as its dark and chilly bed– the earthy smell of the damp mold on which we stand, as if it breathed the very odor of death– the mourners in their weeping or subdued agony– the falling of the clods when all is over, the last prayer uttered, and every other sound stilled, and nothing now remains but to bury the dead out of sight– all these trappings of death, like the dark hearse and the funeral pall, speak so strongly to our natural senses, that to look through them, and beyond them, needs a special net of faith.

Apart, too, from these sights and scenes of woe, in which most of us have taken a perhaps never-to-be-forgotten part, there are internal causes why death casts at various times over the mind a chilling gloom. Unbelief, darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, the doubts and fears with which most are exercised; the natural apprehension of death, the innate love of, and clinging to life– the strong ties of flesh and blood, perhaps a young wife or little family for whom there is but slender provision; peculiar circumstances in business which need all the activity and skill of personal management, and without which wreck and ruin seem imminent– the place at present occupied in the church of Christ, with its binding claims; the desire to live a little longer for the glory of God and the good of his people– who can enumerate the thousand bonds which knit the heart to life, and produce a natural shrinking from death? But why else the need of Jesus on a dying bed? Who needs the support of everlasting arms but the sinking? Who needs the rod and the staff, but the traveler through the valley of the shadow of death? It is but reckless insensibility, or bold, presumptuous confidence, veiled under the name of strong assurance, which looks death in the face without shrinking, unless the Lord himself whispers, "It is I; be not afraid." But how mercifully and graciously are these very exercises of mind overruled for spiritual good, and what a profitable influence do they often produce upon the heart. To die daily is a needful part of Christian experience. To have the loins girt, and the light burning, and to be waiting for the Master's return, is the most fitting posture of a disciple of Christ. We are especially warned to "take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares." (Luke 21:34.) It will be then our wisdom and mercy "not to sleep as do others, but to watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," in the sweet confidence that "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thessalonians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:10.)

If he died for us that we should live together with him, he is "our life;" and so far as he is our life, the life which we now live in the flesh will be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. There is no other way of dying to sin, to the world, to the things of time and sense, and of living unto God. The deepest convictions may still leave us under the power of sin– the heaviest trials stir up only rebellion and fretfulness; the most distressing temptations only toss us up and down like the locust; and the acutest griefs cause only the sorrow of the world which works death. But one believing sight of the Son of God, one discovery of the King in his beauty, one manifestation to the soul of his Person and work, grace and glory, at once lifts it up to himself; and thus, while faith is in active exercise, bears it up above the world and all its sorrows as well as joys, its carking cares as well as all its passing vanities. To have a blessed revelation of Christ to the soul, and to enjoy union and communion with the Son of God, is the one grand secret of vital godliness. But if it be so, and to this all the saints of God set to their seal, how is this personal, experimental knowledge of Jesus, this union, this communion with him, this living faith in his Person and work, to be maintained alive in the heart? O! Here is the grand fight of faith. On this narrow ground the hostile armies meet. Here unbelief, infidelity, guilt, doubt, and fear; pride, lust, and covetousness, rebellion, murmuring, and fretfulness; coldness, carnality, and death; sloth, torpor, and fleshly ease; enmity, filth, and devilism; darkness, desertion, and despair– here are they all ranged in their different regiments, but all under one flag– the black flag; and under one commander– the prince of hell. How slippery the ground with blood! What advancings, what retreatings, what hopes, what fears, what cruel wounds, what horrid sights, what faintness of heart, what almost certainty of defeat!

What, O what can the soul do but look up to the Captain of its salvation and implore his help? Who can save but He upon whom help has been laid, as one that is mighty? Timid soul! Is not this look, this cry, the very look, the very prayer of faith? The battle is not yours, but the Lord’s– and is not he even now thus teaching your hands to war and your fingers to fight?

Now, as we are brought to this point, we see and feel our need of "the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." We beseech you, then, brethren, allow the word of exhortation from one who is indeed the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints; and yet one who earnestly desires your spiritual profit. Our Lord is risen from the dead, and was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power. (Romans 1:4.) And we, too, who believe in his name and have vital union with him, are risen with him; for God "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 2:6.) But what is our evidence of this? How do we know we are indeed risen with Christ? By the communications of his grace; by the work and witness of his Spirit; by the discoveries of his Person; by the faith which lays hold of him; by the hope which anchors in him; and by the love which flows out towards him. What but a living Christ will do for a living soul? He is "the resurrection and the life;" so that "he that believes in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in him shall never die." (John 11:25-26.) Let us not, then, tarry among the tombs. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen. On this ground, then– the ground of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, would we address a few words to those living souls who are risen with Christ, and are setting their affections on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Let us, then, not in a spirit of dictation, but of brotherly love and affectionate counsel, drop a few words that may seem suitable to the present occasion. We

assume that your soul is exercised on the weighty matters of eternity, that you are not settled on your lees or are at ease in Zion, still less have a name to live and are dead. To such we have no message, except it be a word of solemn warning, to consider in what a perilous position they stand. But to those whose souls are in any measure alive unto God, and who are willing to receive a word of exhortation from us, we would, in the love and spirit of the gospel, address such counsel as we would desire to lay up in our own heart for our own profit and direction.

1. The first point to which we would direct your thoughts is– the claim that the word of God has upon our study and attention. We live in a day of great outward religious profession, and yet of bold and rampant infidelity. Thus we are surrounded as if by two fires. On one side is the professor with the Bible in his hand, but with no one word of grace or truth in his heart; on the other stands the infidel with the Bible under his feet. But this would not so much matter to us, or at least would not be so dangerous, if we could merely look on as spectators, or pass indifferently by them, as we get through a crowd without troubling ourselves about what has collected it together. This, however, we cannot easily do; for our own heart is too much like a city without gates or walls, lying as it were open to every attack; and there is a traitorous party within, who are at league with every assailant without; so that had not the Lord built for himself a little citadel in the very center of the city for his own habitation, we would long ago have been sold into the hand of our enemies.

Where, too, these foes cannot prevail by open violence, they seek to overcome by subtlety and craft. Thus sometimes formality would persuade us to be satisfied with the mere letter of truth, with the bare doctrines of grace, without so much seeking and longing after the power; sometimes infidelity would urge us to give up both letter and power together. Difficulties also and objections sometimes present themselves which we cannot dismiss, and yet cannot answer. Reasonings, either from our own mind or accidentally met with in books or conversation, similarly force themselves upon our thoughts, the tendency of which is either to confuse our judgment, or assault and overthrow our faith. Thus we get puzzled and perplexed, envying the simple faith of those tender-hearted children of God who believe with all that childlike, confiding trust, which we so admire in them, yet cannot attain to ourselves.

Amid all this conflict of thought we see and feel how life is fast passing away; the things of time and sense slipping from under our feet– the world a scene of vanity and trouble; sin everywhere running down the streets like water; and, alas! what is worse, running through our own heart, ever grieving and defiling our conscience. How deeply, amid all this conflict and confusion, this hubbub of voices without and within all clamoring to be heard, we need a strong prop on which the soul may firmly lean, a directing light to shine before the feet– and as none can give us any help in this dark path, where "we often grope for the wall, like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes," we feel our urgent need of some strong and friendly hand to guide us right and bring us safely through the tangled maze. This we find, and find only in the word of God, as made life and spirit to the soul by Him who graciously inspired it. How safe, how sweet it is, after such restless tossings to and fro as we have described, to rest in the sure word of promise, and to take refuge in the two immutable things– the word and the oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie. (Hebrews 6:18.) What a debt of gratitude, then, do we owe to the God of all grace for the gift of his holy word, to be to us this light, this prop, this guide. And how do we best show our appreciation of, our gratitude, for this divine gift? By binding it close to our heart– by searching it daily, as for hidden treasure– by studying it, and seeking to penetrate into its inmost mind and meaning, pith and marrow, spirit and

power– not scuffling over it as a schoolboy over his task, or some drudge over her work– not reading it with a listless eye and wandering mind, glad enough to close its pages, and put it back on the shelf– but feeding upon the milk and honey, the meat and marrow, and sipping the cheering wine with which the Lord of the house has furnished his table. The longest life, the most unwearied search, the deepest study of the Scriptures would leave us but learners still. How, then, can we expect to understand them, penetrate into their holy wisdom, have our heart and conscience brought under their influence and power, see their beauty and connection, feel the impress of God's authority in them, be cast into their heavenly mold, and believe, admire, and adore the voice of the Lord speaking in them to our inmost soul, unless we take some pains to make them our bosom friend and counselor? Take the word of God out of our hands and heart, and we wander in shadows of thickest night.

2. Connected with this daily study of the word of God, we should earnestly desire to be well established in the truth as it is in Jesus. How many in a profession of religion are "ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth;" while others, scarcely less numerous, are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Not a novelty can show its face in the religious world– not a daring novice or presumptuous wretch put forth an old heresy under a new name– not a vile or damnable error can come flying abroad on the wings of the wind, but some are caught by and entangled with it. And who are sometimes the very first to entertain it, hug it to their breast, and move earth and hell to spread it? Why, some of our old Calvinistic professors, men and women who have sat under the sound of truth for years. These are "the unstable souls" whom erroneous men "lie in wait to deceive," and whom they love to beguile; especially if they have a little of this world's goods to fill their purse or gratify their pride. But what a lamentable sight it is to see old professors, who ought to be pillars of truth, rocking to and fro under the gusts of error, as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind; or hurled headlong into the very slough of some damnable doctrine. And why? Because they were never rooted and grounded in the truth by the teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Spirit. How needful, then, if we would escape such a dreadful downfall, it is to be well established in the truth– for these winds of error often blow with great violence, and from most unexpected and dangerous quarters. We need, then, ever to be drinking wisdom at the fountain-head; to be ever looking unto the Lord for his special teaching, and to get all that we have immediately from him. The Lord Jesus is made unto us the wisdom of God, (1 Corinthians 1:30,) and he communicates it by his Spirit and grace. We shall find, therefore, more and more that all our wisdom is in him and from him; and that every divine truth which he makes known with power to the soul testifies of him, and centers in him. His glorious Person, as Immanuel, God with us, is the object of our faith; and from him, as the glorious Sun of righteousness, every ray and beam of divine truth is shed abroad in the heart. He illuminates the written word with the beams of his glory; he is the sum and substance of every doctrine, the ground and center of every promise, and the life and power of every precept. His divine Sonship, his finished work, his atoning blood, his justifying obedience, his death and resurrection, his ascension and glorification, his present advocacy and intercession at the right hand of the Father, his royal government, his universal presence and power, and his second coming in the clouds of heaven, all form the food of faith, without which it droops and languishes, and loses its activity, energy, and power. How needful, then, to be well established in the truth, that it may be our food and drink, and we be daily living in the realization, if not the sweet enjoyment of it. But this will not be our abiding experience until deep necessity has made us feel

how destitute before God, how needy before man, how naked before our enemies, how unable to live, how unprepared to die we are without a vital interest in, without an experimental knowledge of the truths of the everlasting gospel. What darkness there is in the mind, when the light of truth does not shine into the heart! What confusion in the thoughts when there is no clear view, no believing apprehension of the grace of the gospel; what unbelief when the Person and work, love and blood, presence and power of the Lord Jesus are out of sight! But as the precious truths of the everlasting gospel are brought near, and we, seeing light in God's light, embrace them in faith and affection, for faith works by love, they become the very food of our soul, our hope, our all. God did not send his dear Son to bleed and die for poor lost sinners that they should trifle with his bleeding, dying love, nor with their own immortal souls. God did not raise him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, that men should speculate and argue about doctrines in the letter, or neatly arrange them into a creed to be carried about in a pocket-book, or be hung up in the vestry like an old almanac. God did not send apostles and prophets to proclaim a glorious gospel, nor did he reveal it as with a ray of light in the Scriptures of truth, nor does he now raise up his own servants to preach the word of life, that some should oppose it, others despise it, and others hold it in unrighteousness. The sun breeds maggots in an ash-heap, and draws up fever and pestilence from the noxious marsh; but the sun was not created for that purpose. So God sent his dear Son to save a chosen race, and that he might have a people in whom he should be eternally glorified. There will be maggots in ash-heap hearts, there will be pestilent doctrines in churches and congregations; but this is the abuse, not the use of gospel light. How bound then we are by every sweet constraint of his love to believe in his name, to look unto him, to live on him and unto him! But they cannot be enjoyed without another blessing, to which we would next call your attention.

3. A spirit of prayer and supplication given and maintained by the God of all grace. There is the closest and most intimate connection between every grace in the soul and the spirit of prayer in the breast. Indeed, the life of God in the believer's bosom sinks and rises, ebbs and flows in exact proportion to, in thorough unison with the incoming and outgoing of the Spirit of grace and supplication. Faith and prayer go hand in hand to the throne, mutually strengthening each other in their advance to the mercy seat. The more I have of the spirit of faith, the more I have of the spirit of prayer. Faith eyes the blessing, prayer pleads for its enjoyment; faith strengthens prayer to ask; prayer enables faith more firmly to believe; and their union brings the mercy into personal possession– "What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." (Mark 11:24.) When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; when Moses let down his hands, Amalek prevailed. (Exodus 17:11.) But as this spirit of faith is easily damped, for even Moses, the man of God, could not hold up his hands long at a time, it will be our wisdom and mercy, 4. To avoid these things, which we know, from past experience, weaken faith and hinder prayer.

Entanglement in worldly matters, beyond what is absolutely necessary, is one of the surest hindrances to the life of God which can come across our path. Some of the family of God are so circumstanced in business or in their daily employment that they must necessarily have much to do with the world. But this will be neither their temptation nor their sin if they are not entangled in, nor overcome by its spirit. Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, Daniel as the first of the three presidents to whom a hundred and twenty princes gave their accounts, maintained not only their

worldly position, but their divine grace. It is not then being in the world, but of the world in which the danger lies. Keep the world at arms' length, and it will not hurt you; allow it to embrace you, and you will soon yield to its seductive influence.

But, worldly professors are almost more dangerous than the world itself. Six days the world may claim your body, even though it may not entangle your heart. But the Lord's day is all for the soul. What then? Must we lose the Lord's day too? Must we sacrifice that day of days to the same worldly company and carnal spirit which have made the heart sigh and groan all through the week? Shall they follow us into the house of prayer, dodge us up and down in the chapel, haunt us in the vestry, and rob and plunder us in the very street? And yet, what are many places of worship but mere worldly assemblies? In dress, in deportment, in the merry faces, in the absence of all reverence and solemnity, in the levity of the pulpit, in the carelessness and listlessness of the pew, in the vain conversation before and after service, what difference is there between the sermon in the chapel and the lecture in the Mechanics Institute? Even when separate from such abominations, in places of clear doctrinal, experimental truth, there is often much to grieve the spirit, if not altogether to entangle the heart of the child of God.

Keep separate, then, you who value your own souls' good, from those worldly professors who are ever to be found where truth is preached. You will soon discover them by the way in which they will be felt to rob and plunder your soul. If you have heard with a little real feeling, and if your heart is softened and melted under the word, and your soul is in the sweet enjoyment of a blessing, or at least solemnized and impressed with the weight of eternal things, you will be robbed before you have gone a hundred steps, if you drop into conversation with one of these thieves.

Take then as much care of your blessing as you would of your purse in a London crowd– be as wary of your discourse as a modest female is of hers in a railway-carriage full of men. The Lord's day is yours and the Lord's; have it and keep it all to yourselves. His presence is worth having, his blessing worth cherishing, his love worth enjoying. Don't barter all these choice mercies away for a little chit-chat, even though your chatty friend sits in the same pew, praises the same sermon, and extols the same minister. And remember that the Lord's day does not end with the services. How sweet to go to bed with the savor of the day of the Lord on the spirit, and to lie down in the enjoyment of that rest of which the Sabbath is but a feeble type! But we shall weary you with our long and prosy advice. Much, therefore, must be left unsaid which might well afford subject for our Address. But we cannot close without adding that we esteem it a favor and a privilege that we are again allowed to open the year with this friendly greeting to our numerous readers; and if we have, in so doing, rather seated ourselves in the teacher's chair, forgive us this wrong. We have only laid before you such things as we have ourselves proved the value of; and we desire to take to ourselves, if the Lord would enable, all the advice which we have given to you. May the blessing of God, which makes rich, rest on our pages; may the eyes of the Lord be upon us for good from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; and as we trust we desire his glory and his people's good, may he not deny us the continual request of our lips.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

07.08. 1865

New Years' Address, January 1865

It is part of the wisdom of God in a mystery that he has seen fit to entrust the ministry of the gospel to men of like passions with their fellow men. (Acts 14:15; Ephesians 3:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 2:4.) In this he displays both his sovereignty and his grace; his sovereignty in choosing the vessel, his grace in filling it with his hidden treasure. And as this is true of the greatest and highest, so is it true also of the least and lowest of the servants of God. None are more, none are less than God makes them to be. Whatever they possess of light or life, grace or gift, experience or utterance, unction or power, knowledge or wisdom, usefulness or acceptability, their sufficiency to every good word and work is wholly of the Lord, wrought in them by that one and the self-same Spirit who gives to every man individually as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.)

This, as it stops all boasting in the strong, gives all encouragement to the weak. If any are strong in faith, clear in knowledge, ripe in judgment, deep and rich in experience, well instructed to understand, well enabled rightly to divide the word of truth, bold and faithful in testimony, ready and powerful in utterance, and blessed with abundant success in their work, to them may be addressed, to quell all exaltation of self, all despising of others, Paul's pregnant question– "Who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:1.)

If, on the other hand, any be weak in faith, deficient in knowledge, feeble in gift, bound in utterance, limited in usefulness or acceptance, and feeling, from a sense of these things, the heavy burden of the ministry and their own insufficiency, are ready to faint in the work, to them are suitable Christ's words– "My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and Paul's response, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9.) Thus, whether they are strong or whether they are weak, minister to hundreds or minister to a handful, are known and esteemed through the length and breadth of the land or are hidden in corners– sovereignty and grace equally determine the standing and position of every minister of Christ. But there is another view of the question not less worthy of consideration by all the sent servants of Christ– the obligation under which grace lays them to seek the glory of God and the good of his people. As bought with a price, and therefore not their own, but the Lord's; (1 Corinthians 6:19-20;) as graciously brought under the constraining influence of the love of Christ, and therefore bound not to live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again; (2 Corinthians 5:14-15;) as set in an honorable and conspicuous place in the mystical body of Christ, that they should have a care for their fellow-members, and seek their spiritual profit, not their own glory or advantage, (1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:18; 1 Corinthians 12:25) the servants of God are bound by the strongest ties, the ties of the atoning blood, dying love, and effectual grace of the Lord Jesus, to study to show themselves approved unto God, to preach the word boldly and faithfully, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine, knowing that the time is not to come, but even now has

come, when men will not endure sound doctrine, but are turning away their ears from the truth, and are turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:2-4.)

Now what is true of those who labor for the profit of the Church of God with their tongue is true also, in good measure, of those who labor for the same end and in the same spirit with their pen. We say "in good measure," for we by no means intend or wish to place the tongue and the pen on the same level. The preaching of the gospel, as the special ordinance of the Lord, (Mark 16:15) stands apart by itself, and claims the just pre-eminence over every other means of edifying the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12.) It is the especial display both of the wisdom and of the power of God by "the foolishness of preaching," as men deem it, "to save those who believe." (2 Cor. 2:18-25.) The ministry of the gospel is a divinely appointed means of communicating faith, (Romans 10:17) and through the means of faith thus given to become the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes. (Romans 1:16.)

Writing cannot stand upon this foundation, nor rise to this level, for it has not the same divine appointment, and therefore does not inherit the same promised blessing. And yet few who fear God, and have derived benefit from the works of good men, would wish to deny that writing has, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, been made an instrument of edification to the Church of God only second to the ministry of the preached word. Indeed, in some respects the works of men of God have been made of greater and more enduring service to the Church of Christ even than their words, as being both more widely spread and more enduringly permanent. Whatever abundant blessing in their day rested upon their ministry, Bunyan and Owen would have been now mere names, if so much; Deer and Huntington but traditions, had not these men of God been writers as well as preachers. But by means of their writings the light and knowledge, grace and gifts, which were blessed to their generation are also blessed to ours, and will be handed down to our children’s children when we shall have passed away.

Assuming, then, that writing, when the Holy Spirit inspires the pen, is an instrument of edification to the Church of Christ only inferior to preaching, when the Holy Spirit inspires the tongue, does not this conclusion follow, that those whose place and calling it is to write should as much seek the glory of God and the profit of his people as those whose place and calling it is to preach? If the ministry of the gospel were not a divine institution, it would be an act of presumption to be tolerated neither by God nor man that a sinner, even a saved sinner, should stand up publicly to instruct, comfort, warn, and rebuke his fellow-sinners and fellow-saints. But the special ordinance of God and the power with which, as such, he himself clothes it, make what else would be an act of presumption an act of willing service for the minister and of blessing for the hearer. To be thus owned and blessed to the family of the living God; to be the honored instrument of communicating light, life, liberty, and love to those for whom Christ died; to set forth the Person and work, blood and righteousness of the Son of God, and, by thus exalting his worthy name, to advance his kingdom and endear him to believing hearts; this is, or should be, the aim and object, the reward and crown of every servant of Christ, whether tongue or pen be the instrument employed.

If these views be correct, in harmony with the word of truth and the experience of the saints, may not a writer, let him be only the editor of a short-lived and fleeting periodical which may die tomorrow and leave no trace behind– may not even a writer who occupies so temporary a position, yet who feels the life and power of God in his soul, and who seems, in the providence and by the

grace of God, called to the work of the pen, equally labor to the same end and in the same spirit, equally seek the glory of God and the good of his people, equally desire to set forth the same gospel, exalt the same dear Redeemer, and find his main reward in the blessing of God upon his labors?

Or, to bring the preceding train of thought into a narrower compass, and direct it more clearly and closely to our present subject, may not even we, without presumption, address a few words at the opening of another year to our numerous readers, as seeking their spiritual profit? So far as we are taught by the same Spirit, have one faith and hope, feel the same love, and are of one accord, of one mind with the living family of God, we may look not on our own things only, but also on the things of others. (Ephesians 4:4-5; Php 2:2-4.) And if in this spirit, at the opening of another year, we seek to lay before our spiritual readers a word of counsel or of exhortation, giving them no other advice than we feel willing to take ourselves, and laying no other burden on them than we desire ourselves to bear, may it not be a word in season to both writer and reader? And surely these are days when friendly counsel is required, keen reproof needed, and stirring up of the graces of the Spirit in the hearts of God’s people needed.

All who have any good measure of divine light and life, of gracious discernment, of daily experience, of almost continual exercise about themselves or others; all who know for themselves the power, the reality, the blessedness of that kingdom of God which is within us, and are struggling often through a sea of trials, afflictions, and temptations to find and enjoy in their own bosom that secret of the Lord which is with those who fear him; all thus taught, thus led, thus exercised, see and cannot but see, feel and cannot but feel at what a low ebb vital godliness everywhere is. It is with this as with many other matters of practical observation. The outward appearance may seem fair and good until the thing itself, as it really stands, is measured by a proper standard, or put to some searching, practical test. So long, then, as we are content to measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves with ourselves, (2 Corinthians 10:12,) our profession may appear fair and good. But how does it stand when examined by the searching, practical test of the word of God?

Take, for instance, the ministry, we will not say of the day, but even of many whom we desire to esteem for their work’s sake. Where is the preceptive part of the gospel brought forward, and insisted upon as we find it declared in the words of our Lord, and in the epistles of the New Testament? Where is doctrine so set forth as to have an experimental bearing upon the inward life, and a practical influence on the outward walk? Where is experience traced out, not only in its inward feelings, but in its outward fruits? Now in Scripture doctrine is never held forth in what we may call its dry form. It is always blended either with an experience of its power, or with a declaration of its practical fruits. Thus, for instance, we are declared to be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," but it is "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:2.) How graciously blended here is the doctrine of election with the experience of the blood of sprinkling and the practice of obedience. And so experience in the word is never held up as a mere matter of feeling, that is, mere abstract feeling as dissociated from all effects and fruits, but is blended either with some practical influence on the heart, or some gracious fruit in the life. And are not churches as faulty, in some of these respects, as ministers? How many of our Baptist churches can "bear with the word of exhortation?" (Hebrews 13:22.) What an outcry there would be of "legality" if any minister of truth

were to exhort husbands, wives, and children, masters and servants, individually and specially, as Paul exhorts them. The ministers may preach Paul's doctrine with the utmost clearness, and Paul's experience of law and gospel in its depths and heights with the greatest acceptance; but may they preach Paul's practice with the same faithfulness and with the same favor? If this be so, and we leave it to our readers to judge for themselves whether our words are true or false, is not that one thing a sufficient evidence that vital, practical godliness is with us all, for we put ourselves among the number of the defaulters, at a low ebb?

If, then, we speak these things and bear this testimony, it is not, we trust, from a spirit of bitterness, or censoriousness, or spiritual pride, or fleshly holiness, or self esteem under a garb of humility– it is not from monkish austerity, or self-inflicted seclusion, or narrowness of mind, and absence of what are called large and liberal views; it is not from lack of charity, or of allowance for human infirmity; from dimness of eye to see, or slowness of foot to march on with the advance of society and the times– that a conviction has been lodged in our breast how low the life of God for the most part is in churches and individuals. So far from this being the case, we can say for ourselves, and we believe for many others, that we would not shut ourselves up in a narrow corner and make all we can see from thence our spiritual horizon, or draw a kind of magic circle round our feet, inside which all is light and life, outside which all is darkness and death. On the contrary, we are only too glad to see and welcome the grace of God in ourselves and others, not to hail with joy every appearance of divine life. As he who is lost at night on a lonely moor welcomes the first streak of light in the eastern sky; as the sailor whose ship is on a sandbank gladly marks the rising tide which he hopes will bear her off; so all who truly fear God hail with joy the dawnings of divine light and the springings of heavenly life, whether in themselves or in others. So without putting light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, we may look around and see, and as we see gratefully acknowledge, that there are still golden candlesticks amid which the Lord walks, and still stars in his right hand. There is a love of sound experimental truth in many churches. The glorious doctrines of grace are not wholly hidden in a corner. In many places there is a good spirit of hearing, and in our own connection especially there has been for many years a greater desire for men of truth, or greater difficulty in obtaining their services.

Thus though we cannot but feel, and must, as feeling it, declare our conviction that vital godliness is almost everywhere at a low ebb, yet it gladdens our eyes and hearts to see and thankfully acknowledge that all is not ebbed out, that though on every side wide and deep are the mud banks, yet between runs in a scanty stream the river of the water of life. God has a people yet in this land, bless his holy name, whom he loves, and who both love and fear him. And though these be, for the most part, but men that sigh and cry for all the abominations they feel within and see without, yet have they a mark set upon their foreheads, known and recognized by the Lord, and known and recognized by each other. (Ezekiel 9:4.) It is to such we write. It is for such we labor. It is with such we wish to live, and with such to die. We have no union with the dead, be they dead in sin, or dear in a profession. "The living, the living," these are they, and only they, who "shall praise God" here or hereafter. "Death cannot celebrate him" on earth or in heaven; and "those who go down into the pit" of error or of perdition "cannot hope for his truth," (Isaiah 38:18-19) for it is hidden from them, either in its purity or in its power.

Will, then, the living among our readers; will those who have received not merely the truth, but the love of the truth; will those who, for lack of clearer and higher evidences, can only say they "desire

to fear God;" (Nehemiah 1:11;) will those who, deeply convinced of their lost and undone condition, are seeking to realize the fullness of salvation in their own breast, bear with and listen to a fellow-traveler in the way, who, with all his sins and infirmities, would wish to deceive neither himself nor them? And if he does not come with soft and honeyed words, according to the fashion of the day, as if the gospel had no other voice or sound but, "Peace, peace,"– peace at any price, peace at any rate, peace in every state, however worldly, carnal, or covetous in which churches or individuals may be sunk, let it be borne in mind that there is a coming "with a rod" as well as "in the spirit of meekness," (1 Corinthians 4:21) and that, so far as we are true soldiers of Christ, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds– casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5.) In this spirit, then, the spirit of faithfulness and love, let us seek to address ourselves to the hearts and consciences of those who are willing to receive a few words from us in the simplicity of truth.

It its but too evident that we cannot be mixed up with the profession and the professors of the day without drinking, in some measure, into their spirit and being more or less influenced by their example. In this we too much resemble the chosen people, of whom the Holy Spirit testifies– "They mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them." (Psalms 106:35-36.) We can scarcely escape the influence of those with whom we come much and frequently into contact. If these be dead, they will often benumb us with their corpse-like coldness; if light and trifling, they will often entangle us in their carnal levity– if bitter and censorious, they will breathe into us a measure of their condemning spirit– if angry and quarrelsome, they will provoke us to wrath in word or feeling; if worldly and covetous, they may afford us a shelter and an excuse for our own worldliness and covetousness.

Nothing but being well weighed with trials and afflictions, and bowed down with burdens and exercises, yet finding in and by them the life of God maintained with some power and vigor in the heart, will keep us from being corrupted by these evil companions. But as few escape their influence, let us simply state what we believe to be, if not the only, yet the safest way to obtain deliverance, from a path to walk in which will surely sooner or later, bring sorrow and grief to every living soul.

1. Now the first step out of a wrong path is to see and feel that it is wrong. The carnal professors of the day see nothing wrong, nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent in their conduct or spirit. They have no inward checks of conscience, no keen reproofs from the word, no trembling fears about their state before God, no solemn apprehensions of the Majesty and presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, no believing views of the Person and sufferings of Christ, no desire to know and do the will of God from the heart. But where there is divine life, where the blessed Spirit moves upon the heart with his sacred operations and secret influences, there will be light to see and a conscience to feel what is wrong, sinful, inconsistent, and improper. These convictions may for a time be resisted. Sin is of a hardening nature, and we may for a while be so caught in the net, and so held down by it, that our very struggles against it, may end only in fuller and further entanglement.

How few, for instance, see their own covetous spirit until they find themselves so entangled in it that they fear they shall be utterly given up to its dominion, and yet cannot deliver themselves from

it. How often when brother falls out with brother, or a spirit of strife and division gets into a church, every attempt at reconciliation, every effort after peace fans the flame instead of extinguishing it. How, again, we may sink into a cold lifeless state, neglect reading the word, and have a relish for the throne of grace, until our very profession seems to stench in our own nostrils as well as of others.

Now where there is divine life in the soul, the Lord often sets his hand as it were a second time to revive his work upon the heart. The snare is broken either by his providence or his grace. By some affliction or trial the heart is made tender to receive the word, even if it be a keen reproof, for "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet," and there is that yearning after the Lord which nothing can satisfy but the manifestations of his pardoning love.

2. If this simple sketch meets the experience of any of our spiritual readers, let them next allow from us the word of exhortation, as couched in the words of the apostle– "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed." (Hebrews 12:13.)

We read in the word of truth– "These people turn from right ways to walk down dark and evil paths. They rejoice in doing wrong, and they enjoy evil as it turns things upside down. What they do is crooked, and their ways are wrong." (Proverbs 2:13-15.) And as we read their character in the word, so do we also read their end– "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel." (Psalms 125:5.) Such warnings have their place not only in the word, but in the heart that is made tender in the fear of God; nor are they put away as if we stood so firmly and strongly in the right road that there could be no danger of our ever making a crooked path for our feet. On the contrary, surrounded as we are with a crooked generation, professing and profane, whose ways we are but too apt to learn; beset on every hand by temptations to turn aside into some crooked path, to feed our pride, indulge our lusts, or gratify our covetousness– blinded and seduced sometimes by the god of this world, hardened at others by the deceitfulness of sin; here misled by the example, and there bewitched by the flattery of some friend or companion; at one time confused and bewildered in our judgment of right and wrong; at another entangled, half resisting, half complying, in some snare of the wicked one; what a struggle have some of us had to make straight paths for our feet, and what pain and grief that we should ever have made crooked ones. But there is one mark of a crooked path which will ever stand both as a warning and a direction to those who fear God. "They have made them crooked paths– whoever goes therein shall not know peace." (Isaiah 59:8.) It is this lack of finding peace in the crooked path which alarms and terrifies those who are possessed of a living conscience, and often summons up against them a whole host of doubts and fears lest they be deceived altogether. These convictions and these fears plainly and clearly show them their sin and folly in leaving the paths of uprightness to walk in any crooked way; and as the Lord is pleased sometimes by terrible things in righteousness, sometimes by laying affliction upon their loins, sometimes by his keen reproofs under the word preached or applied in secret, sometimes by a startling stroke in providence, to make them know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord their God, repentance is wrought in the heart, with self-loathing and self-detestation, issuing in humble and honest confession. This is the first step to return, for with this confession comes the forsaking of every evil way; and to this confession and forsaking, the promise of mercy and forgiveness is annexed. (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9.) When, then, the

mercy and goodness of God are thus inwardly felt and realized; when a view by faith of the suffering Son of God manifests at one and the same time the dreadful nature of sin, and the way, the only way whereby it is freely put away; when the super-aboundings of grace over the aboundings of inward and outward evil make the soul at once tremble and rejoice– tremble at the floods of sin, rejoice at the overflowings of the higher tides of grace above them all, then there is a making of straight paths for the feet, and that which was lame and so turned out of the way become healed.

3. Closely connected with this is the affectionate counsel before God and man. This Paul's exercise– "And herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." (Acts 24:16.) There is no greater blessing than a conscience purged by the blood of sprinkling; and few greater miseries than a conscience loaded with guilt. As the one enables us to look up, so the latter compels us to look down before God and man. Nothing inconsistent or unbecoming may have appeared in our walk and conduct, and yet the 'silent monitor' may make the tongue falter, the knee tremble, and the countenance be dejected. Here, then, is the main exercise, first to OBTAIN, secondly to MAINTAIN a conscience so sprinkled by atoning blood as to be void of offence toward God; and then to walk so tenderly in the fear of God, in that sincerity and godly simplicity, in that uprightness of conduct, in that integrity of life, which shall preserve us from giving just cause of offence to, or putting a stumbling-block in the way of our fellow-men, and thus follow out that comprehensive precept– "Whether, therefore, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31-32.)

4. Our next word of counsel shall be that which the Lord himself gives to the virgin of Israel– "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Mark well the path by which you came. Come back again, my virgin Israel; return to your cities here." (Jeremiah 31:21.) To look at the past is often a blessed encouragement for the future. If we are travelers in the way Zionward, we shall have our various road signs. A conspicuous call, or a signal deliverance, or a gracious manifestation of Christ; a promise applied here, or a marked answer to prayer there; a special blessing under the preached word; a soft and unexpected assurance of a saving interest in the blood of the Lamb; a breaking in of divine light when walking in great darkness; a sweet sip of consolation in a season of sorrow and trouble; a calming down of the winds and waves without and within by "It is I, be not afraid"– such and similar road signs are most blessed to be able to set up as evidences that we are in the road. And if many who really fear God cannot set up these conspicuous road signs, yet are they not without their testimonies equally sure, if not equally satisfying. The fear of God in a tender conscience, the 'Spirit of grace and supplication' in their breast, their cleaving to the people of God in warm affection, their love for the truth in it purity and power, their earnest desires, their budding hopes, their anxious fears, their honesty and simplicity making them jealous over themselves lest they be deceived or deluded, their separation from the world, their humility, meekness, quietness, and general consistency often putting to shame louder profession and higher pretensions– these and similar evidences mark many as children of God who cannot read their title clear to such a privilege and such a blessing. But whether the road signs be high or low, shining in the sun or obscure in the dawn, the virgin of Israel is still bidden to "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Mark well the path by which you came. Come back again, my virgin Israel; return to your cities here."

5. This, then, shall be another word of counsel, that we should be ever setting our heart toward the high way. Christ is the way, there is no other. "I am the way" stands written in letters of beaming light at the head, in the middle, at the end of the path to guide the child, to nerve the man, to sustain the father. The first ray of light which beams on the soul to guide it heavenward shines from the Person and work of Jesus– should it wander, by this it is brought back– should it faint and stagger, by this it is held up and held on, the eye still turning, the feet still moving, the heart still yearning towards the way, the only way out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of confusion into clearness, out of restlessness into quietness, out of bondage into liberty, out of sorrow into joy, out of trouble into peace– in a word, out of hell into heaven.

Blessed be God, not only that Jesus should be the way, but that the dear Redeemer said himself, in the days of his flesh, "I am the way;" for as these his own blessed words drop with power into the heart, they raise up such a faith in him; (John 6:47;) such a looking unto him, even at times from the very ends of the earth; (Isaiah 45:22;) such a coming out of all the rags and ruins of SELF, to take hold of and hide ourselves in him; (Isaiah 27:5; Psalms 17:8; Psalms 143:9;) such a cleaving to him with purpose of heart; (Acts 11:23;) such a hanging upon him, (Isaiah 22:24,) that, by the gentle attractions of his Spirit and grace, (Song of Solomon 1:4; Jeremiah 31:3; John 6:44,) he is received and walked in at every step heavenward. (Colossians 2:6.) And now our limits as well as the fear of wearying our readers warn us to draw to a close. Yet would we still press a few more thoughts on their notice, seeking to condense them as much as we can; and if our words of counsel assume a preceptive form, those to whom they are addressed will kindly bear in mind that we do not mean thereby to imply any power in us or them, but that of grace to put them into practical execution.

6. Keep yourselves separate from the shallow, light, loose profession of the day. Beware of resting on those shallow evidences whereby so many are built up, from both pulpit and press, on an insecure if not unsound foundation. Rest on nothing short of God’s own testimony in your conscience, and the witness of his Spirit to your spirit that you are his child. Hate that spirit of levity, whether in the pulpit or in the pew, which is not only death to every gracious, godly feeling in the soul, but which would turn the most solemn truths of our most holy faith, the very sufferings of Christ himself, into an entertainment for the carnal mind. Abhor that loose profession, that ready compliance with everything which feeds the pride, worldliness, covetousness, and lusts of our depraved nature, which so stamps the present day with some of its most perilous and dreadful characters.

7. Choose for your companions, and let them be few in number, the humble, sober-minded, exercised, tender-hearted, spiritual children of God; those whose company and conversation you find to do you good and to leave a sweet savor on your spirit– whose life and conduct approve themselves to you as conforming to the gospel; whose walk in the church and before the world is evidently under the influence of grace; and with whom you feel you can live and die in the close and firm union of brotherly affection and love.

8. Learn to be patient, meekly bearing with the infirmities of Christian brethren. There is a time in our Christian life when we desire to set everybody right and make everything square. But we begin to find after a while that we cannot set our own selves right, nor make our own spirit and conduct square with the word of truth. This conviction, forced increasingly upon us, makes us less keen to

see the mote and more willing to take out the beam; less desirous to condemn others, more willing to condemn ourselves; less sure of the sins of our friends, more certain of our own. Besides which we sooner or later learn that it is one thing to wink at our brethren's sins, another to bear with our brethren's infirmities. We see that we naturally differ from one another, and that though grace changes the heart, the natural disposition is rather subdued by it than altered. Thus our natural tempers, stations and occupations, education, and bringing up, modes of thought and feeling, views of men and things, family and business connections, prejudices and prepossessions, besetting sins and infirmities, our very knowledge and experience of the truth of God, our various stages in the divine life, our afflictions, trials, and temptations, and many other circumstances which we cannot now enumerate, all so widely differ that you can scarcely find two Christians alike, each having his own peculiar infirmities. As, then, we expect others to bear with our infirmities, let us learn to bear with theirs, loving them for the grace that we see in them, and thus, "Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." (Ephesians 4:2.)

9. Expect a path of increasing rather than diminishing tribulation. Lay your account with a daily cross within or without, with bodily afflictions, sharp trials, and painful conflicts. Anticipate no easy road in providence or in grace, in the church or in the world, in the family or in the business, in your dealings with sinners or in your dealings with saints. God means to make us thoroughly sick of this world and of everything in it, that, wearied and worn out with trials, temptations, and conflicts, we may find all our rest in himself, and thus, as through much tribulation we enter into his kingdom of grace, so through much tribulation we may enter into his kingdom of glory.

10. And yet, amid all your tribulations, seek ever to hang upon the faithfulness at God to his promises. With all your exercises, doubts, misgivings, and fears, you cannot deny that he has been a good God to you, both in providence and grace. You have for many years watched his hand in both, and can bear testimony that he has never failed you in the hour of need, and that though he has deeply tried you, yet he has hitherto proved faithful to every promise he has spoken upon your heart, or enabled you to believe and plead. Are not these so many pledges that he will never leave you nor forsake you even to the end?

"Brethren, pray for us." We present you with our New Year offering. Accept it in love. Weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary. Compare it with the word of truth and the experience of the saints; and while you pardon all in it that is amiss, as savoring of human infirmity, receive in the spirit of meekness what is commended to your conscience as a suitable word of counsel or encouragement. And join your supplications with ours, that if we be still spared to continue our monthly labors, our services may be accepted of God, and be made a blessing to an increased number of his people. Your unworthy, but affectionate Friend and Servant in the path of tribulation,

The Editor

07.09. 1866

New Years' Address, January 1866 From almost the very commencement of our editorial labors we have attempted, at the opening of each successive year, to address to our gracious readers some words of friendly and affectionate counsel. The season itself seems to call for some such friendly greeting, some such affectionate recognition of the ties which have so long bound us together. Without scrupulously or superstitiously observing "days, and months, and times, and years," few of us altogether pass by so marked an epoch as the dawning of another year upon our path without some acknowledgment of it both to God and man. When we open our eyes on the first morning of the year, we almost instinctively say, "This is New Year's day." Nor is this, at least this should not be, all the notice we take, all the acknowledgment we make of that opening year of which we may not see the close. When we bend our knees before the throne of grace, we mingle with thankful acknowledgment for the mercies of the past year, both in providence and in grace, earnest petitions for similar mercies to be experienced and enjoyed through the present. Last evening witnessed our confessions of the many, many grievous sins, wanderings, backslidings, and departings from the living God during the year now gone; this morning witnesses our supplications for grace to hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not through the year just come.

Tears are most suitable at the burial of the dead; hopes and desires at the birth of the living. The past year was the departed father, worn out with age and infirmity; the present year the new-born babe in the arms of the smiling nurse. It is still, however, mid-winter. Today, the first of the present year, differs little in outward appearance from yesterday, the last of the past. But the thoughtful, prayerful mind takes little notice of wintry skies. It feels that the old, worn-out year has sunk into its grave, with all its trials and afflictions, and that a new year has come in its place, with its new hopes and new mercies; and if it bring new trials, yet that the promise still stands, that new strength will be given to meet and overcome them.

Refreshed and strengthened at the throne of grace, by such or similar communings with the God of all our mercies, we go down to meet our families, and are at once greeted on all sides with, "I wish you a happy new year," a greeting which we as warmly and affectionately return. Almost every friend, well-near every acquaintance that we meet with in the course of the day, greets us with the same kind wish. Now in all this there may be a great deal of formality, lip service, and traditional usage; but there may be also a good deal of sincerity, kindness, and affection. We are not, surely, so shut up in miserable self as to have no desire for the health and happiness, the temporal and spiritual welfare, of our families, our friends, or even our acquaintances. And if we desire their good, we need not be backward or unwilling to express it in a few words of friendly greeting. "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted;" "Be full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds;" "If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men," are precepts imbued with all the spirit of the gospel, and may be, indeed, should be, attended to without the least sacrifice of that faithfulness which suits those who would daily walk in the fear of the Lord. There may be a 'form of kind words' as well as "a form of sound

words;" (2 Timothy 1:13;) and as we may use the latter in perfect harmony with the doctrines of the gospel, so we may use the former in perfect harmony with the spirit of the gospel. But we would hope that there is something better between our spiritual readers and ourselves than kindness and courtesy, and something warmer than the mere expression of mutual friendliness and affection at the opening of another year. We are not, at least by this time we should not be, altogether strangers to each other. In one point an editor, if not in others, much resembles a minister; his readers know much more of him than he can know of them. In the case of every sound and settled minister, his views of divine truth, his mode of setting it forth, his gifts natural and spiritual; his peculiar line of things in which and in which alone he is at home, or at all clear and strong, his very defects and infirmities, are all open to the view of, are all fully understood by, his intelligent and gracious hearers. A minister of any real weight and power, of any long standing and general acceptability, when permanently fixed over a church and congregation, gradually forms his own body of hearers. Those who cannot hear him, or at least, not to profit, gradually drop off, and there remains a congregation which receives his ministry, sees as with his eyes, drinks into his spirit, and is united to him in love and affection. He stands to them in time as a father to his children; and the tie being cemented by mutual affection, he becomes enabled and warranted to speak to and deal with them in a way which would not be consistent, nor indeed tolerated, in a strange minister, or a transient supply.

Now, an editor cannot hope to attain a position so honored as this, for he has not either the same divine commission– the ministry being the ordinance of God, or the same authority and influence; nor has he that personal knowledge of his readers, or they of him, which the pastor has of his people, and therefore cannot gain that same amount of esteem and affection. And yet he may, no must, if he be of any use at all to the church of God, attain a position in which his words may posses a weight and power not much inferior, and in some respects, much more advantageous. How much wider is his field, how much larger his congregation; how his words can enter houses where his person would be rejected, and be read by foe as well as received by friend. The influence which the thoughts and opinions of others exercise over us often escapes our own notice. The power is so subtle, the effect often so gradual, and in its operation so blended with the workings of our own mind, that we can hardly distinguish between the influence and its effects, between what is another’s and what is our own. And if this holds good in ordinary matters, how much more so in the kingdom of grace. Truth, we mean thereby divine truth, has a wonderful power and influence over the mind, wherever the eyes, ears, and heart have been opened to see, hear, and believe it. It carries with it its own evidence, and shines in the light of its own testimony. To know the truth and experience its liberating, sanctifying power; (John 8:32; John 17:17;) to receive the love of it– (2 Thessalonians 2:10;) to be taught it by an unction front the Holy One; (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27;) to be of it, and to know that we are of it; (1 John 3:19;) for it to dwell in us, and for us to walk in it; (2 John 1:4;) these are some of the peculiar narks of the living family of God; and if so, without them no minister, no book will be received by, or be acceptable to them. But where they find this truth, and it is commended to their consciences, there they will find an influence and a power, and that acting for their spiritual good. But two things are specially needful for this active influence– elements we may call them of spiritual weight and power.

1. The first element of this influence must be CONFIDENCE. If we cannot trust a man either in private or public life, of what use or value can he be? From the errand boy to the bank director,

from the little maid who runs with a letter to the post-office to the prime minister who holds the reins of government, confidence is the foundation of all the daily transactions of life. If without a large measure of mutual confidence between man and man, society itself could scarcely hang together, how much more is mutual confidence needed between men in those matters which relate to our soul's welfare and peace? But confidence is a plant of slow growth. And as it grows slowly, so it may slowly decline or suddenly fall. To a man in business credit is everything. What exertions will he make to obtain it; what sacrifices will he endure to maintain it! But shall the children of this world esteem loss of credit almost worse than loss of life? and shall the children of light be careless and indifferent to the loss of their Christian reputation?

How careful, then, should be every minister, and every editor who professes the doctrines of our most holy faith, neither by word nor work to impair the confidence reposed in him. He should be as tremblingly alive to avoid everything to shake that confidence as a banker to prevent a run upon his bank. No, much more so; for the one may merely cause a temporary pecuniary loss, but the other permanent injury to the cause of truth and to his own happiness and usefulness. No man is more despised, no man more justly despicable, than a time-serving minister. A shifting, time-serving editor is, in our judgment, scarcely less despicable. As there always have been and always will be religious parties, every party naturally, almost necessarily, if of any extent, seeks some recognized organ of opinion by which it may act and speak. Our desire and aim are, and always have been, to represent no party– or at least that party only which possesses and professes sound experimental truth, and sterling vital godliness. If we have any weight or influence, this is the secret of it, that we express what our spiritual readers believe and feel. We do not lead them, nor do they lead us. We are friends and brethren, not master and servants, nor servant and masters. It is the truth in the love and power of it which unites us– that secret, mysterious, invisible, and yet powerful bond which knits together as with ties of adamant all who see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. But as contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, we may be considered to speak for many who have not the opportunity, or perhaps the ability, to speak for themselves. Because we do this, freely and simply putting forth from time to time what God, we hope, has taught us, and because what we thus write or insert expresses the views and feelings of many private Christians and of many ministers, we may be considered rightly or wrongly the organ of a religious body.

"The Standard men" has become almost a word of reproach. Be it so. But let all know that as we allow no man to have dominion over our faith, so we exercise dominion over the faith of none. But even were it so that we do virtually represent a large body of Christian men and ministers, to be the free, unfettered, independent organ of a party is one thing, to be the tool of a party is another. A man, be he minister or editor, who will allow himself to be the tool of a party, merits the end of all tools– to be thrown aside as useless and worthless when worn out, when the job is done. Dear readers, if we have not your confidence, we are no fit editor for you. If you read what we write or what we insert with any suspicion, either of the genuineness of the article itself, or of our motives in bringing it before you, throw the book aside; you will get no profit from it; the secret suspicion that is working in your mind will poison the whole to you. But if you feel so far a confidence in us as an editor both as to what we write and what we insert, that we would not willingly deceive you or ourselves, for due allowance must be made for human weakness and infirmity, it imposes on us the greater obligation not justly to forfeit it, but rather seek to maintain and increase it to the utmost

of our power.

2. The second element of weight and influence is SOLID PROFIT. You may trust us so far as not to doubt our sincerity of purpose, or even our ability of performance– and yet derive little profit from our labors. Should this be the case, where or with whom the fault may lie, it is not for us to inquire, much less decide; but if you do not profit by our pages, do not read them. "In all labor," says the wise man, "there is profit; but the talk of the lips tends only to poverty." (Proverbs 14:23.) Judge for yourselves whether what we bring before you be the fruit of labor, or the talk of the lips. If the former, it will feed and profit; if the latter, it will starve and rob you. In earthly matters, in the daily transactions of life, profit is the spring of business, the reward of labor, the soul of industry, sustaining and cheering all who live by the sweat of the brow or the sweat of the brain. Profit, in a higher sense of the word, is the strongest spring, as it is the sweetest reward, of all preaching, of all hearing, of all writing, of all reading, of all labor in the service of God and his word and truth. But what is profit, that is, spiritual profit? Let us seek to answer this question, and thus make it the chief purport of our present Address. By profit, in a spiritual sense, we understand everything which enriches the soul, that is, makes it "rich toward God;" (Luke 12:21;) communicates to it durable riches and righteousness, causes those who love the Lord to inherit substance, and fills their treasures. (Proverbs 8:18-21.) This is profit. Of this profit, of these treasures, Wisdom, that is Jesus, as of God "made unto us wisdom," (1 Corinthians 1:30,) holds the key. Wisdom, therefore, cries aloud, "Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding. For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her." (Proverbs 3:13-15.) And again– "Choose my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge over pure gold. For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can be compared with it." (Proverbs 8:10-11.) But as the fruit of this wisdom is to make us wise unto salvation, and as it is the free gift of God to those who feel their need of it, (James 1:5) we have to cry and seek for it, but shall not cry and seek in vain. "Cry out for insight and understanding. Search for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:3-6.) Few, however, seem to know, few to prize this heavenly wisdom, this divine teaching, this unction or anointing from the Holy One which teaches all things, and is truth and no lie. Forms and ceremonies content some; a name to live satisfies others; a sound creed, with a tolerably consistent life, is enough for this professor; the approbation of men, the flattery of his own heart, are sufficient for that. But O the insufficiency, the emptiness, the deceptiveness of all these forms and shadows, when we are made to see and feel who and what we are; when our spiritual poverty comes upon us like an armed man; when our miserable destitution, nakedness, beggary, and thorough insolvency, with all their attendant needs and woes, stare us in the face; when we stand before the throne of the Most High without a rag to cover us, a refuge to hide us, or a plea to avail us. It is this view of ourselves within and without, this sinking down before God as the great Searcher of hearts, this deep and feeling sense of the pitiable state into which sin, original and actual, has brought us, which, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, opens our eyes to see what alone can profit us.

One beam of divine light shining into the soul is enough to show us not only what we are, but what alone can do us any good. One drop of the unction from the Holy One falling upon the lids is

enough to open the eyes to see in whom all salvation is, from whom all salvation comes, and thus forever to chase away those idle dreams, those vain delusions, those deceptive hopes in which thousands be as in the midst of the sea, or upon the top of a mast. By hunger we learn what is true food; by thirst, what is pure water, wine, and milk; by poverty, what is kind charity; by cold and nakedness, what are warmth and clothing; by pitiless storms and beating rains, what are house and home, refuge and shelter. That, then, which feeds, warms, relieves, clothes, shelters, comforts, blesses, and saves the soul is that alone which profits it. Everything else, every other substitute, is but a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish; (Matthew 7:9-10;) the dream of a hungry man who eats and awakens, and his soul is empty; (Isaiah 29:8;) ashes for food, and a lie in the right hand for substantial truth; (Isaiah 44:20;) the vine of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah for the best wine that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak. (Deuteronomy 32:32; Song of Solomon 7:9.) But where or whence shall we get this solid, substantial food, this wine that makes glad the heart of man, this oil that makes his face to shine, this bread which strengthens man's heart? (Psalms 104:15.) Is it not all in Jesus?– the risen, the ascended, the glorified, and glorious Son of the Father in truth and love? He alone is the bread of life to feed us– (John 6:48;) the water of life to refresh us; (John 7:37;) his justifying righteousness is our only acceptable dress– (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:6; Php 3:9;) his atoning blood our only redemption and remission of sins; (Ephesians 1:7;) his word and promise our only hope– (Romans 4:18-21; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 6:18-20;) his sympathy and compassion as our great High Priest on his throne our main support; (Hebrews 4:15;) and his ability to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him our chief encouragement. But how are we to obtain this food, this shelter, this peace, this support, this strength and consolation? We see, clearly see, that it is not in us, and we see, clearly see, in whom it all centers. But to get at it, to draw it down into our own breast, to feed on the bread, to drink the milk and wine, to enjoy the peace, the rest, the quiet, the calm security, the deliverance from all foes and fears; to have the pledges and foretastes of eternal bliss, the sweet assurance of all sin pardoned, all backslidings healed, every crooked thing made straight and every rough place made plain; to have all bondage, distance, darkness, guilt, and apprehension fully removed, and to walk in the light of God's countenance as freely accepted in the Beloved– how shall these heavenly blessings be realized as our happy portion?

Only as the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ, reveals them to us, gives us faith to believe in the Son of God, and by this precious faith to receive every mercy and blessing out of his fullness. We thus see that before we can preach to profit, write to profit, and, we may well add, hear or read to profit, we must know and feel these three things–

1. A deep sense of our own emptiness, poverty, and destitution.

2. A view by faith of the Son of God as containing in himself all the treasures of grace and glory.

3. A communication by the blessed Spirit of some of these glorious riches feelingly and experimentally to our heart. In the transactions of business and daily life, profit is something real and tangible. It is not a set of account books or a balance sheet, a heap of bills or a row of figures, which at the end of the year shows the trader where he stands, that he terms profit; but a real, solid, substantial addition to his income or his capital, to his necessaries or his comforts, to the support and education of his family, to his honorable standing in business, to the increase and enlargement of his business. It is this solid, substantial character stamped upon profits which

makes them so sought after and so valued. And similarly, it is the misery of losses, and carrying on a sinking, unprofitable business which furrows the brow with care, fills the mind with gloomy anxieties, and embitters to thousands every day of their lives.

Now take this parallel into the things of God. The profit of the soul is, or should be, as solid, as real, tangible, and substantial as the profit of business. The soul trades as well as the body; there is a business, a daily business, carried on in the closet as well as in the counting-house, at the throne of grace as well as behind the counter. The soul has its gains and losses, its receipts and payments, its account books– its waste book, journal, and ledger; the first for wasted time and opportunities, the second for the sins of each day, the third for the transgressions set down in the long debt book of memory during many years. But when the books are opened, a glance at their contents, for we need not sum up the totals or make a balance sheet, shows us our entire insolvency and total bankruptcy. Where then the profit if the whole be loss? Here, as we close the books in despair, and look upward as if without help or hope, a Friend above meets the eye who has beforehand paid every debt, and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Colossians 2:11.) Is there no profit here? What! No profit in his precious blood which cleanses from all sin– no profit in his righteousness which justifies from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses? Why, it is all profit. This made David say– "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." (Psalms 32:1-2.)

It is this which makes Jesus so suitable, so precious to those who believe, that in him we are blessed, already blessed, "with all spiritual blessings;" that "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" that "in him we have obtained all inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." And why? "That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ,"– not in ourselves, not in our good words or good works, not in our account books, but in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3-12.) To set forth, to exalt, and hold up to believing eyes and hearts this glorious Christ, whether by tongue or pen, is to speak to profit, for in him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" (Colossians 2:3;) and as these treasures are opened and their precious contents revealed, the believing heart becomes enriched by the communication of them through the blessed Spirit.

Now we believe that none but the living family of God know, or care to know, for themselves anything about this spiritual profit. In fact, none but they have truly learned that first element of divine teaching which makes us at all concerned about profit or loss. Our blessed Lord said, and his words touch this point to the very core– "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26.) Thus there lies a deep and weighty matter at the foundation of the whole question about profit and loss– that I have a soul to be saved or lost. What then shall I give in exchange for my soul? for what am I profited if I gain the whole world and lose that? This deep conviction of a soul to be saved or lost lies at the root of all our religion if it be of God. Here, on one side, is the world and all its profits and pleasures; its charms, its smiles, its winning ways, its comforts, its luxuries, its honors, to gain which is the grand struggle of human life; there, on the other, is my solitary soul,

immortal in a mortal body, to live in death, through death, and after death, aye, forever and ever, when the world and all its pleasures and profits will sink under the wrath of the Almighty– and this dear soul of mine, my very self, my only self, my all, must be lost or saved.

Everything then which I gain to the injury of my soul is certain loss, everything which I lose to the benefit of my soul is positive gain. Here is my measure, here my scale of loss and profit. My conscience keeps the account book in which the entries are made. There is a page on each side for debtor and creditor, a "minus" and a "plus." Against every sin, every idle or foolish word, every wandering glance, every infidel, unbelieving, unchaste, rebellious, fretful, murmuring thought, every proud, selfish, careless, carnal, worldly movement or desire, against all coldness, darkness, deadness, barrenness, prayerlessness, and the whole crop of earthliness there is a "minus." But on the opposite page over against these numerous entries, these long, long sums there stands a "plus." Every gleam and glimpse of divine light, every sweet season in prayer, every visitation of the Lord’s presence and power which preserves the spirit, every gracious promise or encouraging invitation, every soft word or gentle touch, every kind whisper, every rising hope, in a word, everything which warms, cheers, melts, and raises the soul up from earth to heaven is a blessed "plus," for all are placed to our account as so many pledges and, as it were, prepayments of the infinite riches of the Son of God as made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Now the main work of the ministry is to unfold this question of profit and loss, and examine, so to speak, the account books of the family of God. Every living hearer brings his account book with him, and as he sits before the man of God he finds his accounts examined and entered into. The servant of the Lord enters first into our losses, and shows what we are by nature and practice, by sin original and actual, bringing against us debt after debt and bill after bill, conscience meanwhile not merely owning the truth of every charge, but secretly whispering, "Aye, and a thousand sins twice told which you have not mentioned and cannot, dare not mention," until down the poor soul sinks almost into despair, like a tradesman poring over his books in a very cold sweat of agony at the prospect of immediate ruin to crush him into the dust. But now the man of God opens the other side of the page, and holding up to view the Person and work, blood and righteousness, of the Lord the Lamb, not only shows every sin forgiven, every charge met and paid, every debt discharged, and full acceptance for the whole sum given; but, the blessed Spirit bearing his inward testimony, by describing the work of grace, proves to the soul’s joy that it has an interest in the finished work of the Son of God. As then he shows that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and that where sin abounded there grace did much more abound, and this is received and believed, it raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the ash-heap to set him among princes, and to make him inherit the throne of glory. This preaching is to profit, not like much in our day, a "subverting of the hearers" by perverse disputings and erroneous doctrines, (2 Timothy 2:14; 1 Timothy 6:5,) but a building of them up on their most holy faith. (Jude 1:20.) This sound, searching, experimental preaching, and, we may add, writing, for we may include both, communicates to the soul solid good, for it enters into the conscience, God’s special domain, sometimes wounding, sometimes healing, but always, as owned and blessed of the Spirit, making it alive and tender, and thus fostering the fear of God as its choice treasure. By it, as a message from God, faith is strengthened, hope enlarged, love drawn forth, humility, meekness, brokenness and contrition of spirit produced or renewed; by it sin is made exceedingly

sinful, and though the light which it casts into the heart, and perhaps upon some passages of the past life is sometimes almost too great to be borne, yet in that very light, and by the working with it of divine Life, there is wrought a repentance, a godly sorrow, a self-loathing, a solemn casting oneself down before the Lord’s feet, which though painful is felt to be profitable. Is not God’s teaching to profit? (Isaiah 48:17.) Is not Scripture "given by inspiration of God," that it may be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness– that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?" (2 Timothy 3:10-17.) Does not Paul declare that in his preaching at Ephesus "he kept back nothing that was profitable," and that by so doing he was "pure from the blood of all men?" for "he shunned not to declare unto them all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:20; Acts 20:26-27.) Are we not also told that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (that is, not every man universally, but every one of those to whom it is given) to profit withal?" (1 Corinthians 12:7.) If we are "God’s building," is it not that our bodies may be the temples of the Holy Spirit? If "God’s husbandry," that we may be "fruitful in every good word and work?" (1 Corinthians 3:9, 1 Cor 5:20; John 15:1-2; John 15:8.)

Measure then, by this scale, all whom you hear, and all that you read. Let this be your simple question– "Does it profit me? This ministry, this book, this company, this connection, this person, do I get real soul profit from them? How does my account book stand? What does my conscience say? Do I not know, do I not feel when I lose and when I gain, when I fall among thieves and am left half dead, and when the oil and wine are poured in, and I am bound up and healed? Why then should we encourage thieves and robbers? for such all are who do not enter by the door into the sheepfold, (John 10:1) whether in the ministry or out of the ministry. Will a banker keep a dishonest clerk, or a store owner a thieving assistant? Are we then to encourage dishonest men, ministers or not ministers, erroneous books, and time-serving publications, when once our eyes are opened to see who and what they are, and that the truth in its real vitality and power is not in them? When we could only see men as trees walking, there was an excuse for some degree of unsteadiness and vacillation. Our natural kindness disposed us to think and hope well of almost all who made a profession of truth; our conscience would not permit us to speak against them, or separate ourselves from them. But, when we have learned by repeated and painful experience how hurtful their company or example has been to us, are we still to take them to our bosom and associate with them? Are we to give our ears to erroneous men, and our eyes to erroneous books, if we know anything of truth in its purity and its power? Are we to give our company to those who by their inconsistent conduct, carnal conversation, worldly conformity, light and trifling ways, vain presumptuous confidence, and utter lack of everything gracious and spiritual in heart, lip, and life; can only rob and plunder our soul of every grain of tenderness, meekness, and godly fear? Do not sit under a ministry which starves or injures you. If we cannot find books which do profit us, let us read nothing but the blessed word of God– if we can find no simple, humble, spiritually minded child of God to walk with, let us rather walk alone, and commune with our own heart on our bed and be still. With many of us life is fast ebbing away. Of some who read these pages, it may soon be said, "There shall be time with him no longer." God’s judgments are abroad in the land. He has smitten us with a most terrible stroke in this fearful cattle plague, of which we have seen the beginning; but who can tell the end? It may be soon with us in the words of the prophet, "The fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls." (Habakkuk 3:17.) So intimately bound together are all the links of society that this calamity, which neither we nor our fathers knew, strikes not only the immediate sufferers, but all who have

themselves and their families to maintain. Closed markets, a general paralysis of business, the greatest risk and uncertainty in all buying and selling, even in keeping stock, must be the greatest loss, if not positive ruin, to many; and food at famine price is real poverty to most, and a serious injury to all. Nor is this all that we may greatly fear or painfully feel. A visitation of cholera is generally expected by medical authorities in the ensuing summer; and who can tell when and where it shall begin, and when and where it shall end? How dark, too, and gloomy are the signs of the times! We have lost a veteran statesman who, with the support and confidence of almost all political parties, and endowed with an incredible union of sagacity and firmness, held the helm of government during a most trying period, and, humanly speaking, preserved us from the misery of being even now at war.

Popery is advancing at a rapid pace, and all the more surely as the eyes of most seem blinded to its progress. A large number of the clergy are Papists at heart, and by accustoming their congregation to Popish ceremonies are gradually paving the way to a fuller development of Papal doctrines and observances. In the House of Commons, any motion which tends to expose its practices or check its progress is so ridiculed and laughed down, or counted out, that few members have the moral courage to speak in favor of it or support it. Ireland has just escaped the breaking out of a wide-spread conspiracy, which, but for the good hand of God, might have issued, as others have done before, in a fearful massacre of the Protestant population, avenged as it would have been by a fearful retribution. When we turn from the world to the church, little that is pleasant or hopeful meets the eye. The Lord is taking home or laying aside his servants, and few seem raised up in their place to blow the trumpet with a certain sound, stand on the battlements of Zion, or feed the ’flock of slaughter’. In churches there is much strife and division, little conversion work going on, and a general apathy seems to brood over most congregations, even where sound doctrine is preached and experimental truth contended for. But it is time to draw to a close. Through mercy, all is not thoroughly or totally dark. The Lord has always had, ever will have, a seed to serve him. Thus, with all these fearful and gloomy prospects we hope, no, fully believe, that he has still a goodly number of those who fear and love him in this land. For them we labor, to them we here address ourselves; and if the God of all grace be pleased to crown with his blessing, through the present year, what may drop from our pen or appear in our pages, to him in his Trinity of Persons and undivided Unity of Essence must be ascribed all the praise, and honor, and glory. Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

07.10. 1867

New Years' Address, January 1867

How sensibly does each recurring year remind us of the flight of time. Ever rolling onward, like a mighty river, and bearing us on its broad and rapid bosom, Time, Time, that mysterious, inexplicable, and inexorable course of nature which we call by that name, hurries us unceasingly on, willingly or unwillingly, to that vast and boundless ocean of eternity into which it flows, and in which it is absorbed and lost. We did not launch ourselves on this mighty, outspread, and ever-flowing stream, but when reason dawned, found ourselves already floating on it. And as we know not the beginning, so we thought little of the end of the voyage. Amid the sports and tears of childhood, the studies and play of boyhood, the airy dreams and rising passions of youth, or the soberer pursuits of advancing manhood, most of us spent our days heedless of the flight of time, and with no concern of our nearer advance to eternity each day.

Life and time were so linked together with us that they seemed as if but one. We did not know, or if we knew it, the idea was at once thrust aside as an unwelcome intruder, that they really were so distinct that with us it might soon cease to be time, but that with us life would never cease to be. But the Lord, who had purposes of grace towards us, and cared for and loved us more than we cared for and loved ourselves, would not allow us ever so to live as those who have no hope and are without God in the world. He who had chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and launched us at the appointed season, without our consent or knowledge, on the river of time, that it might bring us into the ocean of eternity, there to dwell forever in his presence and in the enjoyment of his love, would not allow us to remain ever destitute of that eternal life which he had given us in his dear Son, and which consists in knowing him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

He was, therefore, pleased, by a special act of his sovereign grace and divine power, to quicken our souls into spiritual life– and though his dealings have been so various with us, both in Providence and in grace, that no fixed standard can be set up, or rigid lines drawn, which shall embrace every case, for "he works all things after the counsel of his own will," yet this at least we may say of them that they all have been ways of mercy and truth, and have all tended to one and the same point and been directed to one and the same end– to manifest and glorify himself in our free and full salvation, to reveal to our heart and enshrine in our affections the Son of his love, and thus make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This, at least, we may say is our chief end and aim to realize and enjoy, though in many points we may seem much to come short, and though, through the power of temptation and unbelief, we may still have many painful trials to exercise both our faith and our patience.

If, then, according to our figure, Time is a river, and we being embarked on it are now floating down on its bosom, it may be well every now and then to examine what are the hopes and prospects of our voyage coming to a happy end. The course of the river is winding and tortuous; the banks are sometimes as if out of sight, and at others well near meeting; the stream deep and

rapid; the channel full of hidden rocks; the crew for the most part heedless of danger, and more bent on pleasure and amusement than disposed to watch or work; and few on board seem to be alive to the perils of the voyage, or anxiously looking to its end. That it must end we all know, but when and how we know not. Will the end be soon? Will the end be happy? When it comes, will it find us prepared to meet so solemn an event? These are questions which may well exercise our thoughts and lead our minds to earnest prayer and self-examination how matters stand personally with ourselves. With some of us, either through advancing age or the inroads of sickness and debility, the vast ocean appears almost in sight, and its waves are already seen rolling and whitening in the dim horizon. When once we meet its swellings, and they begin to toss up and down our frail bark, and wash over the deck as if they would swallow us up alive as those that go down into the pit, the reality of our faith and hope will be proved, and it will be made manifest whether our profession of religion has been only a name to live, or the effect and fruit of a vital work of God upon our soul. How rich a mercy will it then be to have our evidences so clearly brightened, our faith so enlarged and strong, our doubts and fears so fully dispelled, and our soul so blessed and favored with the smiles and presence of the Lord that when death comes we may have nothing to do but to die. But though the whole work is of his grace, and we shall have nothing and enjoy nothing at that solemn hour but what he may freely give, (for without him we can do nothing,) yet it will be our wisdom and mercy to attend to the Lord’s own words beforehand, while life and health and opportunity still admit. "Be dressed for service and well prepared, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks." (Luke 12:35-36.) In another place, also, how graciously does he bid us "take heed to ourselves lest at any time our hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares;" and how he urges it on our consciences– "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:16.)

Nothing is more easy, as nothing is more common, than self-deception in a point where self-deception is eternal ruin. The most suspicious of men are least suspicious here. The keen eye which scrutinizes every appearance of fraud without, never turns its gaze to examine what fraud there may be going on within; and he who suspects everybody never suspects himself. When the home is threatened by robbers, scarcely any precaution is considered enough to meet the danger. Bolts and bars, iron shutters and safes are bought, and a whole army of police and watchmen paid to guard against suffering loss of property by force, and every check that ingenuity can devise has been invented to guard against loss of property by fraud. But what care or precaution is taken, what anxious days or watchful nights are spent, lest the violent assaults of sin or the subtle deceits of Satan should rob us of our own soul? No, so willing are most, to be plundered of that precious jewel, to lose which is to lose their all, and so desirous to be deceived in that very, we may almost add that only thing whence recovery is impossible, that they pay men on purpose to rob and deceive them; so that he who robs them most unblushingly, and defrauds them most thoroughly and successfully, carries off as his reward in pay or popularity the highest prizes of his profession.

We do not say that all this huge mass of robbery and deception is done of willful, deliberate purpose, either of the robber or the robbed, the defrauder or the defrauded; for the word of truth declares of "seducers and evil men" that they are "deceiving and being deceived"– first "deceived,"

so as to believe their own lie, and then seeking by deceit to impose that lie on others. (2 Timothy 3:13.) But to deceive, to lull asleep, to proclaim "peace, peace," where there is no peace, to sew pillows to all armholes, is to every discerning eye, beyond all doubt or question, the busy trade and active employment of hundreds of men and ministers who, knowing nothing themselves of the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit or the work of faith with power, rest themselves, and easily persuade others to rest also, in a form of godliness while they deny the power thereof. The Lord has solemnly and repeatedly warned us against all such thieves and robbers. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7:15-16.) Yes, by their fruits we may know them; for where do we see in them those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God?" Where do we see in them or in their followers that separation from the world, that fear of God, that tenderness of conscience, that humility of soul, that brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, that spirituality of mind and conversation, that holiness of life and consistency in walk and conduct which are the scriptural marks and fruits of vital godliness? But besides fixing our eyes on others and weighing them in the scales of the sanctuary, which is often necessary in order to guide our own feet and determine our own conduct, do we not need also to take special heed to ourselves, and well and carefully put into the same unerring scales our own religion, lest we, though in a different way, should fall into the same dreadful trap of Satan? Many see others wrong who do not see themselves wrong, and, like David, unmercifully cut off a tripping neighbor while they tenderly spare a stumbling self. But the Lord has given us a solemn warning to take heed to ourselves. "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven– but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21.) We need no other testimony to convince us that many who are buoyed up by false hopes from themselves, or by others, will find themselves fearfully mistaken, and, concerning faith, will make dreadful shipwreck. Few of the barks which we now see spreading their sails on every side will make a happy voyage. Most will go down at that spot where the river flows into the sea, and Time and Eternity meet. How will it fare with us? Amid so many wrecks, shall we escape the general disaster? All whose eyes rest on these pages will not see God nor behold his face in righteousness. But how rare it is to hear any warning voice raised from the pulpit or the press against the evils and the perils of self-deception. How rare to find in any sermon, preached or published, a close, searching word addressed to the heart and conscience of those who profess to have received the truth. The wicked are warned, and the dead in sin cut off with no unsparing hand; seekers are encouraged still to press on; the cast down comforted; and the doctrines of grace boldly and faithfully proclaimed. But where are we warned against the danger of self deception, of a graceless profession, of having only a name to live, of resting on shallow, imperfect evidences, and of coming short at the last, of eternal life? But these are the very points on which living souls are usually most exercised, and in which they find and feel that danger chiefly dwells. It is quietly assumed that all who profess to have received the truth are real believers, and that their very reception of the truth is an evidence of divine life. But this quiet assumption is guilty of two evils. It passes, first, over the very spots in experience where the living family are usually most deeply tried– and, secondly, plasters with untempered mortar a wall which is ready to fall, and which should rather be pulled down. As a proof of this, just cast your eyes around, and if you are at all connected, as most probably you are, with a place and people professing the truth, you will not have far to look. In our churches and congregations we have

scores of what we may term common believers. They like to hear the truth– they are warmly attached to the minister and his ministry, and if attacked, will boldly defend both it and him. Their life is for the most part consistent, and their seat at church never vacant. They support the cause, when then can afford it, liberally and ungrudgingly; interest themselves and are often very useful in the Sunday School– take in and regularly read the "Standard," and other religious books– have their private and family prayers, and rarely miss the prayer meeting. Besides this, on the strength of a few evidences, their general blameless character and conduct, and the standing which they have long maintained in the congregation, they have, perhaps, been received into the church, and have sufficient light and knowledge of the things of God to maintain in it a creditable and what is called honorable position. And yet with all this, which looks so well and promising outwardly, there is that lacking inwardly without which the whole of their profession is vain. Here is the fatal secret. It may be all summed up in one short sentence. They are destitute of divine life. And thus their religion is that of a bell or a bugle– "a thing without life giving sound," a mere noise, a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. With all their profession, all their good qualities, their amiableness, their consistency, their liberality, their support of the cause, their zealous attendance on the means, and their many excellent points, for which we cannot but esteem and admire them, they fall short in that very thing which to have is eternal bliss, and which to lack is everlasting woe. The Holy Spirit has never quickened or regenerated their souls. They have everything but the one thing, lacking which they lack everything worth having, and possess nothing worth possessing; and thus as dead before God are as far from the kingdom of heaven in present grace and future glory as the swearer or the drunkard. Our language may seem harsh; but we would confidently appeal to your own experience and judgment, you who know divine realities by divine teaching, whether our description is not true, and whether you yourself, in your inmost mind, do not feel that you can at this moment lay your hands on several, if not many, to whom it applies to the very letter. But what pulpit, what book warns such as these against the perils of their present profession? We see them everywhere in our chapels, forming, perhaps, a large part of the congregation, sheltering themselves under a sound doctrinal ministry; and yet it cannot escape the notice of any discerning eye that they are, at present at least, out of the secret of vital godliness. Indeed, some of them are sufficiently honest to acknowledge it. But how often do we find a ministry which refuses them shelter under its wings, which deals honestly and faithfully with their case, which seeks to fasten a word of conviction on their consciences, and to drive them out of all false refuges? "We must not cast down or distress the little ones," would be, probably, the answer to our charge. "If we were to be always as you, perhaps, would have us, warning our hearers against self-deception, and pointing out how far a person might go in religion and yet be nothing, we would make 'the heart of the righteous sad,' and discourage the lambs. We are bidden to preach the gospel, and comfort the people of God. If any others take comfort to whom it does not belong, that is not our fault." But is faithfulness no part of your ministry? Should you not by manifestation of the truth commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God? If you warn the sinner, should you not also warn the professor? You should not willingly deceive any– but may you not help many to deceive themselves? But there may be a good reason, perhaps, for all this lack of faithfulness. Are you yourself ever exercised about your own state and standing? Are you ever tried in your own soul about the reality of your own religion? Do you ever fear whether you may not be deceived yourself? Are you never cast down or exercised by the deficiency that you find in yourself of gospel grace and gospel fruit? Do you never see and feel in your own case

how far you might go as a preacher, and an earnest, accepted, and, perhaps, popular preacher too, and yet in the end fall short of eternal life? Perhaps were you more exercised yourself upon your own religion, it would add point and edge to your ministry in this very important particular. You would not let people off, nor let them in so easily. You would not allow them to shelter themselves so quietly under your ministry, or slip into the church with so little difficulty. Nor is your objection of much weight, if of any, that you would distress the 'little ones' if your ministry were more searching. Allow that a little more point and edge sharpened up your ministry, and that a few pinches of fresh salt added to it made some sore consciences smart, and some wounds more acutely sting, would that impair its efficiency, or diminish its value and acceptability to the family of God? Some who had been slightly healed might cry out as the old wound was ripped open, and some of the timid and tried might quake and tremble with fear; but would that hurt the one or the other? Your keen, sharp strokes would not hurt or even touch the life of God in their soul, but would bring it more to light by cutting away its fleshy surroundings. You had better send the little ones groaning home than rejoicing in a false peace. They will have to groan and sigh more than ever you can make them do, before they will get what they need, and without which they will never be satisfied. And surely there never was a day when a searching, discriminating ministry was more needed, and, we may add, more generally opposed. But the more it is kicked at, condemned, and cried down as legal, the more it shows the necessity there is for it. Let us seek, indeed, to remove from it every just ground of blame. The warning voice need not, indeed should not, be mingled with any bitterness, harshness, censoriousness, cutting words, or violent expressions. Some seem to think there can be no faithfulness without harshness or violence. But this is a mistake in the opposite extreme. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. Anger and harshness, wrath and bitterness, sneers and irony, attacks on character, and imputations of motive, names and places, direct or unmistakable allusions, are all foreign to the whole character and spirit of the gospel.

Love to the souls of men, tenderness and kindness of manner and expression, earnest desires for the word to be received in a spirit of affection, pressing point after point home on the conscience firmly and yet gently, so handling the knife that while it cuts out every diseased part it leaves the healthy and the sound part uninjured and even benefitted; an unwillingness to inflict too much pain, yet a fixed determination to do what is to be done thoroughly and unflinchingly– such and other marks will show the workman who rightly divides the word of truth, and takes forth the precious from the vile. But the question may spring up in the mind of some of our readers– "This may be all very true and very good, but what has it to do with the Annual Address?" May we not in our turn ask– "Are not these thoughts, these exercises, these inquiries suitable to the present occasion?" The commencement of a New Year forms, as it were, a suitable standpoint whence to look back as well as look forward, to look without as well as within, at ourselves and at others, and take a general survey of the church and the world. We have just emerged out of the year that is gone and stand on the threshold of that which is come. Past, present, and future we may scan with rapid glance. Few who have any serious, solemn thoughts about eternity; few whose religion is a reality, and not a mere name or notion; few who live in some habitual thought of the presence and power of God; few whose hearts have been touched by his finger and thus made tender before him, pass by the first day of the year without some spiritual acknowledgment of it. In their secret approaches to the throne, in their family worship, at various moments through the day, the commencement of the New Year will be a subject of prayer or meditation with many who fear God, and yet who would abstain from any legal or superstitious observance of days and months, and

times and years. Why should not, then, we embrace the opportunity afforded us by our Annual Address to look back as well as forward, without as well as within, to the state of the churches as well as the state of our own souls? We are not ever to be treading the wheel or tugging at the oar of this world. There is something higher and holier to be attended to, something to engage our earnest thoughts, anxious cares, and warmest affections besides and beyond the shop or the farm, the counter or the counting-house, the bench and the loom, the wife and the children, the cupboard and the pantry, the sweat of the brow or the toil of the brain. We boast of our freedom; but what is our freedom worth if we can never get our neck from under the chain of business, and may never indulge ourselves with some quiet rest from life's carking cares and this world's gnawing anxieties?

God has mercifully given us a day in every week on which to rest and pause amid the cares, the business, and the whirl of life. Well may we say that God has given it us, for such a boon to man and beast never would have been either given or taken by man. And thankfully do we accept what he has graciously given. But for the ever-recurring Lord's Day, but for the rest of body and soul then given, but for the services of the sanctuary, the assembling of ourselves in the house of prayer, the blessedness of a preached gospel, and the revival of our spirit under these means of grace, how soon would we become as if crusted over with a thick coat of carnality and worldliness. But as a soiled dove escapes to some quiet and secluded spot where she may bathe her plumage in the rivulet, preen her wings, and regain what she has lost in the smoky town, of her purity and strength; so the soul, soiled with the dust and smoke of the week, gladly embraces the Lord's Day with its rest and quiet, that it may bathe itself once more in the fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, renew its strength, and enjoy some of those gracious revivings of faith and love whereby it may mount upward in heart and affection to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

If circumstances admit, why, then, should not we take the opportunity of the new-born year to gather up our thoughts from the din and the dust of life? Under the old dispensation, the commencement of the civil year (for the Hebrews had a sacred or ecclesiastical year beginning at a different period) was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets, and was, therefore, called "the Feast of Trumpets." The first two days of the year were kept with peculiar solemnity. There was to be a holy convocation, or a calling of the people together, a complete cessation from all servile work, and particular sacrifices to be offered. (Leviticus 23:24-25; Numbers 29:1-6.) God would not allow them to enter upon the new year without some solemn reference to his service and worship. They were a holy people, separated from all the nations of the earth as the Lord's peculiar treasure, and they were to be perpetually reminded of the presence of God in their midst as their special privilege and happiness. They were not then to commence the year for themselves, but for God. The silver trumpets blowing through the camp aroused their sleeping bodies, and called up their listless minds to remember that they were about to enter upon a new year. On that day they met together in holy convocation; on that day all servile work was laid aside; on that day the burnt offering sent forth its sweet savor unto the Lord, the meat offering of flour mingled with oil was presented, and the sin-offering slain to make atonement. Is there not some instruction couched for us in all this? And may we not enter upon the new year with some sense of the gracious hand which has led us through the past, and on which we desire to lean, that it may guide us safely through the present?

We know not what the present year may bring forth, either as regards our private or public interests. We seem on the eve of important events, if not of troublous times; and we know not how far they may personally affect us. The past has been a most eventful year. The very visible heavens have themselves seemed almost out of course. Our cattle have been afflicted with a mysterious and most fatal disease, of an infection unparalleled for subtlety of communication, and great losses have been sustained. Nor has the danger ceased, for though mercifully much mitigated, the disease still lingers in our coasts, and breaks out in different places, to show that the Lord's out-stretched hand still hangs over us. Cholera has swept away its thousands in the eastern part of the metropolis, and heavily visited other parts of the land. The crops, when ready for harvesting, were ruined in the field by a continuance of drenching showers– and the potato disease, in more than its usual virulence, has much added to the calamity. In the north, heavy floods have destroyed much valuable property, and been attended with sad loss of life. The oldest of us can scarcely remember such a storm as fell on the commercial world on that Black Friday, (May 11th) when the great discount house, which was popularly supposed to be as firm as the Bank of England, stopped payment. The crushing weight with which the general collapse of credit fell on other houses, and the far-reaching calamity which spread, in consequence, all through the country can never be fully known; for in these commercial disasters, though the rich seem most to suffer, yet the shock, as in an earthquake, reaches all classes, and spreads itself through the whole of society in the waste of capital, the diminishing of credit, the dearness of money, the breaking of contracts, the suspension of great projects, the throwing out of employment of large masses of the laboring population, and the general depreciation of property. Directly or indirectly, therefore, all suffer under these revulsions. When, too, as in the past year, such heavy blows fall simultaneously on the agricultural and commercial world, the disaster becomes intensified; and we doubt not that many of our readers, in one or other of these large interests, have had a bitter taste of the losses of 1866, and enter with crippled resources on 1867.

What an eventful year has it also been on the Continent. Events now pass so rapidly before our eyes that, as in traveling by rail, the scene is all come and gone before we can gather up its character or fully understand its features. One campaign sufficed to lay prostrate in the dust one of the greatest powers of Europe– the Austrian Empire, and thereby to accomplish two results, both of which at one time seemed a visionary and hopeless dream– a free Italy and a united Germany. Pent up in our little Isle, we think little of the struggles and sorrows of the Continent. Twenty-five million Italians and sixty million Germans are to us but drops and units. The grinding tyranny of Austria in Italy, its firm support of all the iniquities of the Papacy, and its stern, cruel repression of all civil and religious liberty, as it little concerned us, we seemed little to think about or care for. We who cannot bear a thread to tie our own hands, can look and see other nations bound hand and foot with comparative indifference. It would be out of place to dwell at any length on this subject, but we cannot forbear remarking that two more important events could scarcely signalize any one year. Italy is now free to the Adriatic. The last Austrian soldier has left Venice, the last French Zouave has left Rome. For the first time since A.D. 1494, when the French king, Charles VIII, crossed the Alps and entered Florence and Rome in triumph, the soil of Italy is untouched by the foot of a foreign soldier. Italy, under French or German yoke for more than three centuries and a half, is now free from sea to sea and shore to shore. But with freedom to Italy comes the downfall of oppression, both civil and religious. The temporal power cf the Papacy has already virtually, if not actually, fallen. The year 1866 has seen what prophecy, according to most interpreters, has

long pointed to– a fatal blow at the usurped power enthroned on the City of Seven Hills. Rome has now virtually changed its sovereign and belongs to Italy, not to the Pope. What is hidden in the mystic womb of time, what great issues will flow from this mighty revolution, none can foresee– but we may be sure that matters will not end here. We have elsewhere expressed our opinion that the downfall of the Pope's temporal power does not involve any diminishing of his spiritual authority, and indeed may only for a time increase it. But the blow which God has struck at the Pope's temporal power is a pledge, and perhaps a beginning of the blow which, in his own time, he will deal at his spiritual. The spiritual power and authority of the Papacy may rise to a great height; and in this country, as so many good men have predicted, it may yet establish for a short time its throne. But Babylon is already judged. Her day will come, and all her pride, her pomp, and her power, and all who rejoice in it, will go down into the pit.

We have given our pen a somewhat loose rein, but standing on the edge of the year now come, we could not but cast a glance over that which is gone, particularly as it will be an epoch memorable to the end of the world. Nor are we so shut up within the bounds of our red covers as never to take a look at the outer world. We are still in it, though we hope not of it, and may consistently watch and trace the hand of God in the great movements to which we have already alluded, as well as in those minute matters which more nearly concern us in providence and grace. But now let us look forward as well as backward. The year before our eyes may hold in its bosom events which may deeply concern us, and affect us more sensibly than those of that which is past. We know what is past, but we know not what is to come. What personal, what family, what providential trials may await us, we know not. Sickness may attack our bodies, death enter our families, difficulties beset our circumstances, trials and temptations exercise our minds, snares entangle our feet, and many dark and gloomy clouds make our path one of heaviness and sorrow. Every year hitherto has brought its trials in its train; and how can we expect the present to be exempt?

What then? Shall we sit down and wring our hands at the prospect of anticipated trials? Shall we go forward to meet them, or wait until they meet us? Anticipation is often worse than the reality, and for this simple reason, that no strength or support is either promised or given for trials of our own forecasting. "As your days," (not "as your fears,") "so shall your strength be." "Hitherto," said Samuel, "has the Lord helped us;" but the Ebenezer ("the stone of help") was the memorial of a battle won, not of a battle in prospect. The well-known and often-sung lines,

"He that has helped me hitherto,

Will help me all my journey through," well express the hope and confidence of a believing heart. If, indeed, we are his, whatever our trials may be, his grace will be sufficient for us. He who has delivered, can and will deliver; and he who has brought us thus far on the road, who has so borne with our crooked manners in the wilderness, and never yet forsaken us, though we have so often forsaken him, will still, we trust, lead us along; will still guide and guard us, and be our God, our Father, and our Friend, not only to the end of the year, if spared to see it, but to the end of our life. May he bring us very near to himself; may his fear be ever alive in our heart; may he hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not; may he keep us from evil, that it may not grieve us; and may he constrain us, by every constraint of his dying love, to live to his praise, that we may glorify him in our body and spirit, which are his. Blessed with his presence, we need fear no ill;

favored with his smile, we need dread no foe; upheld by his power, we need shrink from no trial; strengthened by his grace, we need apprehend no suffering.

Knowing what we are and have been when left to ourselves, the slips that we have made, the snares that we have been entangled in, the shame and sorrow that we have procured to ourselves, well may we dread to go forth on this year alone; well may we say, "If you don’t go with us, how will anyone ever know that your people and I have found favor with you? How else will they know we are special and distinct from all other people on the earth?" (Exodus 33:16.) May we be thus manifested as those who have found grace in the Lord’s sight; and as a peculiar people, zealous for good works, may we be separated from all the people, profane or professing, who think and act otherwise, that are upon the face of the earth.

Such is the desire and prayer for himself and for every one of his gracious readers, of their affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

07.11. 1868

New Years' Address, January 1868 To enjoy a sense of the goodness, mercy, and love of God in our own bosom, to glorify the Lord in our body and spirit, which are his, and to serve his cause and people, to the best of our ability, in our day and generation, are the only objects for which we, if indeed heirs of the kingdom, should really desire to live. Strong, indeed, with most of us are the natural ties which bind us closely to the present life. An instinctive cleaving to life for its own sake, a natural shrinking from death as something terrible to the flesh, family ties and affections, especially when the very maintenance, or, if not the maintenance, yet the comfort and protection of wife and children seem much to depend on our continuance here– these and other bonds and fetters of a similar nature, into which we need not now enter, chain the greater part of us fast to earth.

Often also, through darkness of mind, deadness of spirit, coldness of affection, absence of the Comforter, who alone can dispel the gloom which, from time to time, gathers over the soul, we feel as if we were utterly unfit to die, and that we need some special breaking in of light, life, liberty, and love, and some powerful application of the blood of sprinkling to our conscience, to make us willing, yes, desirous to depart, and leaving forever this wretched world of sin and sorrow, to lay down the body of death under which we often groan, being burdened. Still, with all these allowances, which we are obliged to make for the weakness and infirmities of the flesh, we say again that the only objects really worth living for are the enjoyment of a sense of God's favor and love, to live to his honor and glory, and to be instruments in his hand of advancing his cause, ministering to the needs, temporal and spiritual, of his people, and doing what good we can to the bodies and souls of our fellow-men. In thus specifying what should be the three main objects of our present life, we, of course, do not intend to lay down thereby any exact rigid definition of gracious desires or instrumental usefulness. It will be sufficient for our purpose to present them as a general representation of what a Christian should desire to have, to do, and to be. But if such are, or should be, the main objects for which life is desirable to all who truly fear God and believe in his dear Son, much more should they be so to those who are called to stand forth in a more prominent position in the church of God than private believers. The servants of God who stand in the forefront of the battle, as they need special grace and special gifts to do the work to which God has called them, so should they, above all other men, desire to walk in the light of his countenance, to live to his praise, seek his glory, advance his cause, proclaim his truth, minister to his people, and abound in every good word and work. And if so, such also should be the desire of all who, like ourselves, occupy a kind of ministerial position as employing the pen in the service of God and the furtherance of his truth. This is a reading age; and as books are cheap, largely read, and easily procurable, the press has come to embrace a wider circle and to possess a greater influence on the public mind than any other medium of communication. As the great tidal wave of the world necessarily affects the minor tide of the church, so that it ebbs and flows with it, the Christian press, like the worldly press, has spread itself in all directions, and exercises an influence scarcely inferior to that of the pulpit. Works, therefore, written by gracious men, whether living or

dead, may be viewed as exercising a ministry of their own, running, as it were, parallel to that of the pulpit, and in harmony with it, but possessing the advantage of penetrating into places, and speaking on occasions where the voice of the living preacher cannot come, as well as of being accessible at all times, lying silently and unobtrusively on the table or the book-shelf, ready to be taken up or laid down at pleasure, and, if we have well chosen them, our trustiest friends and wisest counselors, who will always tell us the truth without fear and without flattery.

Among such trusty friends and counselors we would gladly be numbered. Without our seeking or desiring such an important and responsible position, we find ourselves occupying a place of great trust, if not of great usefulness. Month after month, and now year after year, we have an opportunity of speaking as if face to face to a large number of the people of God. What appears in our pages, either from our own pen or that of others, addresses itself to a living family, who receive what is thus submitted to them because they believe that, for the most part, it bears upon it the stamp of sincerity and truth, and is in harmony with the Scriptures and the teaching of the blessed Spirit in the heart. Our monthly visitant comes to them sometimes with a Sermon of a departed servant of God; and if it consists of but fragments of the actual discourse, still it speaks the same language and breathes the same spirit as when it issued from his lips. Sometimes it comes with a gracious Experience of the dealings of God with one of his living family, which would otherwise have been buried in oblivion; and thus fulfils the promise that "there is nothing secret that shall not be made manifest, neither anything hidden that shall not be known and come abroad." Sometimes it comes as a Letter written to a friend, out of the fullness of a broken or rejoicing heart; and as such it speaks in our pages to other hearts as well as to that of the private correspondent. Sometimes it records in an Obituary the experience of a dying saint, and thus testifies to the goodness and faithfulness of God in those solemn moments when heart and flesh fail. Sometimes the Editor lays before his readers his Meditations on various important points of truth, or seeks to unfold the Scriptures as they seem opened to his mind. And once in the year, in the opening month, our little work comes before them bearing on its first pages an Address to the spiritual readers, in which the Editor addresses them with the familiarity of a friend, and yet tenders them such affectionate counsel as he would desire himself to act upon and follow.

God works by instruments; and if he has seen fit to employ the hand which now traces these lines for his own glory and his people’s good, the more solemn is the trust, and the greater the responsibility. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful;" and if any one has reason to believe that to him there has been entrusted a stewardship of the mysteries of God, unfaithfulness to that trust, that is, willful unfaithfulness (for allowance must be made for human infirmity), must be a great and crying sin. Of course, no steward, however unfaithful, would acknowledge his own unfaithfulness; as no minister, however erroneous, would own himself to be in error. He must, therefore, be judged by his actions; and if these will bear the test of examination, confidence will be reposed in him in exact proportion to his presumed ability, for that, of course, is a necessary element of trust, and his proved faithfulness. But if this confidence be reposed in him, how careful should he be not to injure it by carelessness, presume upon it by assuming undue authority, lower and lessen it by making slips and mistakes, or abuse it to the exaltation or advantage of self, instead of seeking the honor and glory of God. These things press upon our mind, so that, while, on the one hand, we feel willing to labor with our pen, especially as that is now our chief ministerial employment, on the other our path becomes increasingly difficult in proportion to the extent and

variety of our labors, the circulation and influence of our periodical, and the felt responsibility of our position. But hitherto we have found that as our day is so our strength has been, that all our needs have been freely supplied, that meal has not failed in the barrel, nor oil in the cruse; and that should the Lord say to us, as to his disciples, "Have you lacked anything?" we must answer. "Nothing, Lord, except a larger measure of your grace for ourselves, and a larger measure of blessing upon our labors for others." But enough of this. If any have received instruction or consolation from our labors; if what has appeared in our pages has strengthened their faith, encouraged their hope, or drawn forth their love; if any light has been cast upon a dark path, any confirmation of truth received, or exposure of error in which they were nearly entangled; any reproof or rebuke less keenly, but not less effectually felt because administered by a secret voice; any stirring up or recovery from sloth and indifference; any brokenness of spirit, true penitence, and godly sorrow for sin produced; any backsliding healed; any gracious renewal or revival of the good work within effected; in a word, if any real, solid, and abiding profit has been communicated to any of our readers by our labors on their behalf, let them show their thankfulness to God as the Author, and to us as the instrument, by bearing us up before the throne of his grace, that he would bestow upon us that spiritual and experimental knowledge of his truth, that heavenly wisdom and judgment, that holy boldness and faithfulness, that zeal for his glory and desire for his people’s good, which, if granted, would be both our and their best reward. And, indeed, we doubt not that many such prayers have been and are put up by those who esteem and love us for truth’s sake, and that those petitions have been answered in the Lord’s granting to us those supplies of his grace, without which we should be but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

We have rather dropped our thread in thus speaking of ourselves and our little work; but as this is not a frequent offence with us, we trust that it will not be counted a great one, especially in an Address to our spiritual readers, when, laying aside the reserve and gravity of an editor, we speak as a friend and brother, from heart to heart, and do not tie ourselves to that orderly arrangement of thought and expression which such articles as our Meditations seem to require.

We laid down, then, in the opening of our Address, three main objects of our life here below. These were– the enjoyment of a sense of the goodness, mercy, and love of God, a living to his honor and glory, and a serving of his cause and people to the best of our power. Now let us see whether, from this text, we cannot preach our New Year’s Sermon; or, rather, without the formality of a sermon, make it so far the theme of our Address as to gather our thoughts round it, and thus give them that unity which may preserve them from wandering and confusion.

I. We laid down, as one of the chief objects of the present life, a desire to enjoy more of the goodness, mercy, and love of God in our own bosom. There may be, and, doubtless, are some, if not many, blessed exceptions; but, as a general rule, the living family of God in our day do not walk much in the light of his uplifted countenance. They have, indeed, their favored moments, when, for a short time, the clouds seem to part, and gleams of sunshine to break in through the sky. In reading or hearing the word, their hearts are sometimes melted and softened, faith raised up and drawn forth on the Lord of life and glory, while hope casts forth its anchor, and love mounts upward to him who sits at the right hand of God. At such seasons their fears are removed, their doubts dispelled, their evidences brightened, their darkness, guilt, and bondage lightened and removed, and their souls made happy in the Lord. But clouds return after rain. Earthborn vapors rise from below, clouds gather from above, and the sky soon becomes almost, if not altogether, as

much overcast as before. Then comes on the whole train of doubt, fear, and misgiving, relieved, indeed, by sweet remembrances of past favors and by a more steadfast cleaving to the word of promise, but, for the most part, depressing the mind, and attended with a good deal of the spirit of bondage. In this state of mind they usually have a great many sermons preached to them. Some tell them that they ought not to doubt and fear, that by so doing they are living below their privileges, that they should believe in Christ and take God at his word, that these doubts and fears are very dishonoring to God, that they should not indulge in them nor make a religion out of them, but should rejoice in the Lord in the full assurance of faith. Such preachers, like Jobs friends, are partly right and partly wrong. It is wrong to doubt and fear after the Lord has blessed the soul with a sense of his mercy and love. These doubts and fears should not be encouraged, or set up as evidences; they do dishonor God and rob the soul. All this is quite true. But can these kind friends tell them how to get rid of these doubts and fears in such a way as shall ease the conscience, remove darkness from the mind, and satisfy them with the smiles of God and the witness of a sprinkled and peaceful conscience? Alas! no. Here they fail, and are, therefore, as miserable comforters as ever Job’s friends were. The faith which they would have them exercise is a mere natural, notional faith, and the confidence to which they would urge them is mere presumption. Such a faith as they teach, preach, and, we suppose, possess, or they would not press it so on others, is a faith that does nothing for its possessor. It does not work by love, nor purify the heart, nor overcome the world, nor triumph over death and hell, nor bring into the soul atoning blood, dying love, or pardoning mercy. It leaves the soul just where it found it, and does it as much good as the priest and Levite did the Samaritan who had fallen among thieves, and lay in the road, stripped, wounded, and half dead.

We and you, dear readers, no more hold with unbelief, doubts and fears, darkness and bondage, than these men do; for we know that they are our greatest hindrances, and the worst of thieves and robbers. If a man has a disease or a complaint which sticks to him closer than the collar of his coat, if it troubles him night and day, if it makes his life a burden, if he expects to carry it to his grave, does he love it, does he enjoy it, does he make health and strength out of it? Say "Yes," or "No," you afflicted ones in body. Is it not the same with doubts, fears, and unbelief? They are our soul disease, our inward complaint; and to make our religion out of them would be like making health out of a disordered liver, a consumptive constitution, a paralyzed limb, an asthmatic complaint, or a nervous affliction.

Now, suppose that our doctor, when we sought his advice upon any one of these or similar afflictions, should say, "Be well; be well; don’t be ill; don’t be ill; shake off your complaint. Only believe you are well, and you will be well." "Ah, but," replies the patient, "I am no better by believing I am well, when every feeling, every pain, every suffering in my poor body tells me how ill I am. I am only deceiving myself by believing I am well when I am really ill; and you must be very ignorant both of my complaint and my symptoms not to see how ill I am, and I do not fear are equally ignorant of the right remedy. We leave to the judgment of our readers the application of the figure to the physicians of no value, who prescribe for the complaints of the family of God. But because these miserable physicians understand neither malady nor remedy, is there no cure? "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Does not the Lord himself say, "I am the Lord that heals you?" How blessedly does the Psalmist speak– "Who heals all your diseases." And what a gracious promise is that– "For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your

wounds, says the Lord; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after." (Jeremiah 30:17.) But what is this remedy? Is it not the very thing which we have laid down as one of the great objects of life– an enjoyment of the goodness, mercy, and love of God in our own soul, under a sense of pardoned sin, and a full and free acceptance in the Beloved? What but some breaking in of the light of his countenance, and some discovery and manifestation of the love and mercy of God can dispel the darkness of our mind, thaw the hardness of our heart, remove guilt from our conscience, and, animating us with new life, bring us out of that deadness of soul which seems one of our worst complaints? Here we see the wisdom of God in allowing his people to be so buffeted by sin and Satan, so plagued and worried by temptation, so exercised by unbelief, infidelity, enmity, jealousy, doubt, and fear, so shut up and fast bound by chains, often of their own making. "Have you not procured this to yourself?" Is it not that they may despair of all other salvation out God’s salvation, and find no remedy for sin but in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God? Is it not that they may enjoy no rest, peace, or comfort but what the Lord himself is pleased to give; and thus be experimentally taught the necessity of ever looking to him, and hanging upon him for a smile from his face, a word from his lips, a touch from his hand, a manifestation of his presence, and some intimation of his favor?

Those who look thus to the Lord, under the strong pressure of inward exercise of soul, will not look in vain. Some turn in providence, most unexpected and yet most suitable and acceptable, will sometimes make them feel, if not say, "I am poor and needy– yet the Lord thinks upon me;" and this intimation of the Lord’s remembrance of them will melt their heart into a persuasion of his favor toward them. Sometimes they will be favored with a special season in prayer, when, viewing by faith the glorious Mediator on his throne of grace, and drawing strength and virtue out of his fullness, they come forth with free and holy liberty into the light of such a day as the sweet Psalmist of Israel describes– "a morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds." (2 Samuel 24:4.)

Sometimes in reading the word in private, light breaks in upon its contents; authority and power, majesty and glory seem stamped upon it as the word of the living God; faith is raised up and drawn forth upon the gracious truth revealed in that special portion of it, so as to embrace it in love, and thus become mixed with it, and this enlarges, comforts, and sensibly edifies and profits the soul. Sometimes, without any particular application of the word, or any special light on, or life from, any passage, there flows into the soul a peculiar sense of the divine reality of the truths of the gospel and the mysteries of our most holy faith. Their weight, their importance, their eternal and imperishable nature, their purity and holiness, as contrasted with this sinful world and the worse sinfulness of our own wretched nature, their sweetness and blessedness, their suitability to our needs and woes, the glorious wisdom of God shining forth in them, and especially his grace, mercy, and truth in the Person and work of the Mediator, are brought into the heart with a peculiar weight and power. In this way God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6.) And what is the effect? The spirituality of mind which such divine impressions communicate, the earnest prayers which they produce, the heavenly affections which they kindle, and the blessed lift which they give us out of darkness, deadness, and earthly mindedness, are all so many convincing testimonies of the reality and power of a religion which comes from God. This is not a building on the sand, for it brings the soul unto, and lays it upon, cements it to, and gives it

vital union with the Rock. To build on doubts and fears, on convictions of sin, on deadness and coldness, darkness, barrenness, guilt, and bondage, is to build upon the sand, and almost worse than sand, for it is to build upon a bog. The very reason why "the Lord tries the righteous," and why he allows them to be tempted with unbelief and every other form of evil, is to beat them off the sand and the bog, and make them embrace the Rock for need of a shelter. That ministry, therefore, which would encourage a religion built upon doubts and fears would be to preach unbelief as the way instead of faith, put infirmities in the place of blessings, make a knowledge of sin as clear a testimony of interest in Christ as a knowledge of salvation, and elevate guilt, bondage, darkness, and condemnation into the room of pardon, deliverance, love, joy, peace, and every other fruit of the Spirit.

II. But is there no other effect of those visitations which preserve the spirit? Do they not produce an earnest desire to live to the praise, honor, and glory of God, which we have laid down as the second great object of a Christian's life? It is "the grace of God, that brings salvation, which teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It is because "we are not our own, but are bought with a price," that we are to "glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are his." It is "the love of Christ which constrains us because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15.)

Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its partaker to desire to live to his honor and glory. But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing. Such is the weakness of the flesh, the power of sin, the subtlety of Satan, the strength of temptation, and the snares spread on every side for our feet, that we can neither do what we desire, nor be what we desire. Before we are aware, we get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings darkness into the mind, and may cut us out some bitter work for the rest of our days. But we thus learn not only the weakness of the flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies. And as the grace of the Lord Jesus, in its suitability, in its sufficiency, and its super-aboundings, becomes manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh, a sense of his wondrous love and care in so bearing with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us, with a holy obligation, to walk in his fear and to live to his praise.

We have felt the bitterness of sin, the misery of being left to our own will and way, the danger of temptation, the craft and power of Satan, and what poor, helpless, vile, and depraved creatures we are in ourselves; and a mingled sense of our misery and the Lord's mercy, of the greatness of our sin and the fullness of his salvation, of our multiplied, aggravated, and unceasing transgressions and his pity, compassion, and loving-kindness to poor penitent, self-abhorring, broken, and confessing transgressors, accompanied with views at times of his bleeding, dying love, compels every gracious feeling of the soul to arm itself as it were, against that dreadful enemy– the sin that dwells in us.

It may be the work of years to teach us these simple elements of vital godliness; and it is our mercy if we learn them at all and are not eventually found among those who are ever learning and yet are never able to come to the knowledge, that is, the saving knowledge, of the truth. O the pains which the Lord takes with his dull, ignorant, stupid, obstinate, wayward pupils. How it is "line

upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little." How he has sometimes to drive, sometimes to draw, sometimes to beat his truth into us by strokes of his chastising hand, and sometimes gently and quietly to drop it in when he has unsealed the eyes to look up to him, and opened the ears to receive instruction from his lips. We are such strange creatures. We are willing and more than willing to be taught of the Lord, for we are continually, in all sincerity of heart, begging him to teach us; and yet we do not like his way of teaching when it crimps the flesh.

We feel earnestly desirous to live to the honor and glory of God; and yet when to do so demands some sacrifice of money, or ease, or comfort, or reputation– still more when it seems to require the plucking out of a right eye, or the cutting off of a right hand, then we draw back and rebel that there is not a more easy and pleasant way for the flesh. And yet, perhaps, if we are enabled to make the sacrifice required by the word and our own conscience, there is a sweetness to our spirit mingled with the bitterness to the flesh. It is almost with these bitters to the flesh as Mr. Deer speaks of repentance–

"Nor is it such a dismal thing

As 'tis by some men named.

A sinner may repent and sing,

Rejoice, and be ashamed."

It, perhaps, has been a call to make a sacrifice of a little money in possession or in prospect; and after a stout battle between a liberal spirit and a covetous heart, the better principle prevailed. Now, when the victory has been gained, do we not often find that what has been given is but little missed; and the good it has done to the cause of truth, or to any of the Lord's poor and needy children, is an ample compensation for having overcome the opposition of a covetous spirit, and the crying out of the old man as he had a nail or two driven into his miserly fist? But soon, perhaps, as he dies hard, and writhes under the crucifying nail, there will come forth a cry from us, or some one connected with us, "Spare yourself. Why, if you go on like that, you will rob your wife and family, and bring them to beggary. There is this and that bill to be paid, and you know how hard money is gotten, and how swiftly it is gone." But some kind providence turns up, and then drops the head into the dust, with a "Lord, I am vile, and you are good. Pardon my covetous, unbelieving heart. O let me never doubt you again." So, if a little of our good name or fame, or darling respectability must be parted with, the flesh soon begins to cry out, and cannot endure the shame of the cross. But how soon the Lord can so break in upon our heart with a sense of his goodness, mercy, and love as to make us feel even unworthy to suffer shame for his name's sake, and count it an honor to endure his reproach.

We need not pursue the subject further. Our readers' own experience will supply them with abundant instances both of the weakness and wickedness of the flesh and the super-aboundings of grace; and they will agree with us that both misery and mercy, all that we have seen and felt of the evil of sin and all that we have tasted, felt, and handled of salvation, all that we know of self, and all that we know of the Lord, call upon us and constrain us, as with one voice, to walk in his fear, live to his praise, and seek to glorify him with our body and spirit, which are his.

III. And with this desire will certainly follow a willing readiness to serve the Lord's cause, help the Lord's poor, sympathize with them in their afflictions and trials, and manifest to them our esteem, affection, and love. In what other way can we manifest the truth and reality, the life and power of our religion? Men will judge us, and rightly judge us, by our works, not by our words; by our fruit, not by our leaves; by our Christian spirit– meekness, quietness, humility, sincerity, unselfishness, readiness to serve rather than to rule, and general willingness to bear and forbear, to seek others' advantage, not our own, and do what good we can to the souls and bodies of our fellow-men. But our limits warn us that we must draw near to a close. Allow us, then, to drop a few words as to our monthly publication, and our desires and labors in connection with it. The Lord, as we before said, works by instruments, and usually lowly and despised instruments, that the power and glory may be more distinctly seen to be his own. Now, if he is pleased to use our little monthly work as an instrument for his people's good and his own glory, how abundantly will it reward us for all the toil, care, anxiety, and responsibility of conducting it which falls to our share. Our desire is to make it as instructive, as edifying, and as profitable as we can to the Lord's living family. We wish, therefore, to avoid all strife and contention, all doubtful disputations, all gossip, slander, and news-mongering, all flattery and time-serving, all dry and merely notional discussion of points of doctrine which usually leads to endless dispute and vain jangling, and every other thing which feeds the flesh and starves the soul.

We would come, month after month, simply, quietly, and unobtrusively, without loud knock or noisy ring, and lie by the side of the Bible and the hymn-book, speaking the same language, breathing the same spirit, attended with the same power, bedewed with the same influence, and producing the same effect. As the apostle speaks of himself and his fellow-ministers as "laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9), so would we desire to be engaged in the same blessed work of laboring with God in the building up of his people on their most holy faith. But as the Lord will not work by anything but his own blessed truth, and that only as impregnated with his Spirit and grace, it makes us to be ever on the watch to use our spiritual senses in spreading our table with such wholesome, nourishing, and savory provisions only as he will own and bless. As caterers for the Lord's family, we have carefully to weigh, examine, smell, handle, turn over, and taste the food set on the table. If short in weight, if tainted with error, if fly-blown, if too much underdone or too much overdone, if not sufficiently salted and seasoned, if not juicy nor savory– in a word, if it lacks that indescribable relish and flavor which all know who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and found his word and eaten it, unto the joy and rejoicing of their heart; it will not feed the living family.

This, therefore, lays upon us much beyond the mere labor of reading communications, or even writing what we put forth of our own. We have to select, among many sermons, letters, pieces, and obituaries, those which seem to bear the right stamp, and carry with them some evidence of having in them the breath of life. Similarly in what we write ourselves, we have to seek for the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, to instruct and guide us line by line, and then attend it with power and savor to the hearts of the people of God. Thus ours is no common task, no mere mechanical employment, no such work as a clerk in a counting-house does– reading, ticketing, docketing, selecting and putting in right order paper after paper, that each may come in its proper place; that A. B. may have the pleasure of seeing his long piece inserted, as he generally requests, "in our next number;" and C. D. his explanation of a passage, which he believes none but himself has been hitherto favored to understand– and E. F. his Obituary of a Sunday-school

scholar, which he has sent besides to half-a-dozen other magazines– and G. H. his Experience of, perhaps, 100 or 200 pages, in close and scarcely legible writing– or J. K. his Poetry, of 300 or 400 lines– and all, perhaps, highly offended, because sometimes lack of room, and more frequently lack in them of the main thing, prevents their appearing in our pages.

We have, indeed, much reason to be thankful for the way in which all our needs have been supplied; for the valuable and experimental letters of saints, living and departed, which have been forwarded to us; for the interesting and edifying Obituaries, which surviving friends and relations have recorded, and thus enabled us to insert; and for the various accounts which have been sent us of the personal dealings of God with some of his favored children. We would also raise a humble acknowledgment of his goodness and mercy to us, personally, in enabling us still to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints; and, amid many difficulties and hindrances, strengthening us still to labor in that particular field in which, with but little help except from himself, we have now for many years endeavored to serve the cause of truth and the good of his people. In his strength, not our own, we desire still to labor– and, standing as if amid the tombs of so many departed friends and brother ministers, and not knowing how soon we may be numbered among them, to have it made manifest in our own conscience and in that of others that to enjoy a sense of God’s goodness and mercy, to glorify him in our body and spirit, which are his, and to serve his cause, truth, and people, are the main objects of our private, ministerial, and editorial life.

Brethren, pray for us.

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

07.12. 1869

New Years' Address, January 1869

How wide, how unspeakably wide, is the difference, how great, how infinitely great, is the contrast, between the spiritually-minded child of God, whose portion is above and whose heart and affections are in heaven; and the carnally-minded worldling, whose portion is below and whose heart and affections are on earth! This difference between them, both in its cause and in its effects, in its source and in its streams, is from God himself; and that is the reason why it is so wide, deep, and permanent. Its foundation was laid in his own fixed purposes, in the eternal good pleasure of his will, before the foundation of the world, was brought to light in time in the first promise given after the fall, and has had its manifestation and fulfillment in a greater or less degree in the experience and life of every believer from that day to this.

Innumerable are the inhabitants of the earth; almost equally numerous and diversified are the classes, ranks, pursuits, and occupations of society; but amid these crowds of men and this diversity of station, there are really two and but two different families, two and but two distinct seeds, who are as separate now in the mind and sight of God as ever they will be when time shall be swallowed up in eternity. It is true that this separation of the church from the world, of the clean from the unclean, of the living from the dead, of the children of God from the children of the wicked one, is often not so distinct and clear to our eyes as it is in the eyes of God, and as it should be in accordance with his revealed will. And yet we may say that to reveal this eternal line of separation as a vital truth in doctrine, to bring it forth in its various fruits and consequences into living experience in the heart, and to produce as well as enforce it in all godly practice in the life and conduct of all the saints of God, is the grand aim and object of that Holy Spirit under whose divine inspiration the Scriptures were written, and by whose gracious operations and influences they are made effectual unto our salvation and sanctification. And contrariwise to confuse, to obliterate, to nullify, and, if possible, to dig down and remove this divine barrier between the church and the world, either in doctrine by the denial of truth and the promulgation of error, or in experience by slighting, despising, or misrepresenting the work of God upon the soul, or in practice by setting aside the precepts of God and substituting the ordinances of man, has ever been the aim and object of Satan and his agents from the day on which the first stone of this eternal wall of separation was manifestly laid on earth. Cain and Abel, the first murderer and the first martyr, stand in the very front of our Bibles as permanent types and representatives of these two seeds, and if now less prominent than they have been at various stages of the world's long history, they are nevertheless in the mind of God no less distinct. No language can be more plain or express than the testimony of God to this point in his holy word. Hence we learn that it was he himself who put the distinction between the two seeds; and the separation and enmity which were then thus laid and made between them have both existed in all the strength of their original constitution from that day to this, and will exist until the end of time.

It is natural enough, and perfectly consistent with the words of the first promise, that this doctrine should provoke the enmity of the carnal mind; but to those who know and understand the Scriptures by divine teaching, to those who have received the love of the truth that they may be saved thereby, it is a point beyond all dispute or question, not only from the testimony of the word, but from the witness of the Spirit in their own consciences, and the verdict of their own long and well-tried experience, both in its pains and in its pleasures. They know that it was the special grace of God which quickened them when dead in sin, and that it was his word spoken to their hearts with a divine power which called them out of the world that they might be a peculiar and separate people. To this point tended all their convictions, anxiety, and distress of mind on account of sin; for by this work of the Lord on their consciences, the bands which held them fast to sin and to the world that lies in wickedness were cut asunder, and with them it was, "Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay in the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." (Genesis 19:17.) As then, by this divine work on their conscience, and as in obedience to this call they came out of the world and became separate from it, they found him faithful to his promise, that he would receive them and manifest them as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Under the shinings in of his blessed presence when his love was first shed abroad in their heart, they knew what it was to set their affections on things above, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. The world was dead to them and they to the world; the power and dominion of sin were broken; lust and covetousness were under their feet, and they could run the way of God’s commandments with an enlarged heart. But as they are still in the body; as they are encompassed by many, and some of them new and peculiar temptations; as snares of various kinds, and many of them very suitable and attractive to the flesh, are ever spread for their feet, they did not for the most part continue long in this blessed state. Sin began gradually to revive, being only stunned and not killed, and grace in proportion to decline. They had not yet learned how to fight the great battle, and knew little of either the necessity or the use of spiritual weapons and of putting on the whole armor of God. The craft and strength of Satan as an angel of light, and the weakness of the flesh against the subtlety and power of his temptations, were much hidden from them. Need we wonder, then, that they were soon drawn aside and went, if not outwardly, yet inwardly astray; left their first love, and with it lost the spirituality of their mind, the tenderness of their conscience, and the warmth and fervor of their gracious affections?

Now, what was the consequence of this declension? That they gradually sank more and more into carnality, barrenness, and death. And this was often much helped by surrounding circumstances and the peculiar position in which they were placed. With some, the increasing cares and anxieties of life in this day of incessant struggle and competition in every trade and profession, in order to obtain an honest livelihood; with others, the daily pressure of a large and engrossing business; with others, the domestic ties of a young and growing family, taxing well-near all their time and strength, and absorbing too much of their thoughts and affections; with others, the complying too readily with the worldliness of their own relations, some of them, perhaps, very near and dear in nature’s bonds, or immediate members of their own family. To these frequent and more obvious snares which entangle the feet of so many, we may add neglect in constantly reading the Scriptures and giving themselves to continual prayer and meditation; slackness in waiting upon the Lord in the ordinances of his house; or accustoming themselves to sit under the ministry of the word as a mere exercise of the intellect or approbation of the judgment, without personal, diligent self-examination, and a spirit of prayerfulness before, in, or after the time of hearing, or anxious

earnestness to profit by it either by falling under its keen edge when used as a sword, or embracing the truth in faith and affection as commended to the conscience.

Many and various, indeed, are the means whereby the soul gets robbed of its spiritual strength, and loses the warmth and fervor of the divine life; but no one cause is more dangerous than the lack of self-denial in the hour of temptation, and of strength to resist, even unto blood, striving against sin. How many have been gradually entangled in evil by not resisting the first approaches and allurements of sin, and have either brought a reproach upon the cause by some outward fall, or if preserved from that fearful disaster, have sadly destroyed their own peace and brought death and bondage into their souls. And even where there has been much outward circumspectness of life, in how many cases has a spirit of slumber come over the soul, bringing with it numbness of conscience, coldness of affection, and a general deadness, stupidity, and lethargy of mind!

We have long marked and observed these things, as well as have had some experience of them in our own bosom; and as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man, so we doubt not many of our readers see eye to eye and feel heart to heart with us in what we have thus far laid before them.

It has, therefore, struck our mind that we might do our spiritual readers, to whom we as usual, address ourselves at the opening of the year, some useful and acceptable service if we took up this subject at greater length, and availed ourselves of the present opportunity to bring before them some such word of free and friendly counsel, admonition, reproof, or encouragement as the Lord might enable us to communicate and they might feel disposed to receive from us in his name and fear. In so doing we may have to touch upon some sore spots, to probe some deep and painful wounds, to use language that to some may seem harsh and severe, and to draw so narrow a line of separation between the living and the dead as may cause some to fear on which side they stand for time and eternity. But we shall endeavor, we hope, in the fear and as in the sight of God, to keep closely to his inspired word, tread, as far as we see and know them, in the footsteps of the flock, and bring forth nothing but what has been not only well weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, but also been tried and proved in the faith and experience of our own heart.

Good men in all ages have had to lament and lift up their voice against the evil to which we have alluded in our opening sentences– the breaking down of the barrier which God has set up between the church and the world; but never, perhaps, was the warning voice more needed than now; and glad should we be if it were more frequently and loudly sounded by those who stand on the battlements of Zion. The setting up of this barrier by the hand of God in his eternal counsels was not only an act of infinite grace but also of infinite wisdom. It was intended not only to rescue his chosen family from the depths of the fall, that they might be eternal trophies of his super-abounding grace, but also as a means to preserve them in their time state from the path of the destroyer. He knew to what temptations they would be exposed in their pilgrimage through life, what snares would be laid on every side for their feet; he knew all the strength of sin and all the weakness of the flesh. He, therefore, cast up in his word a highway, a way of grace and truth, of faith and love; a way of holiness, in which the redeemed should walk, and on which no lion or unclean animal should be found. By his grace he sets their feet in this way, and they find it to be, though a strait and narrow path in which there is no room for the flesh, a way of light and life, of union and communion, of love and godly fear; for it is the kindness of their youth, the love of their

espousals when Israel is holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. (Jeremiah 2:2-3.) Now as long as they are walking on the king's highway they are safe, for he is their sun and shield, giving them present grace and the prospect of future glory. (Psalms 84:11.) But immediately that they are drawn off it, they get upon unholy ground, the permitted domain of sin, Satan, and the flesh, and thus losing the felt presence and guidance of the Lord, often stray further and further until they wander on the dark mountains as lost sheep without a shepherd.

Many, very many, are here, and among them no small number who neither see nor feel where they are, nor what they are; for it is a part of the very nature of the malady, like a heavy sleep or a bodily lethargy, to blind the eyes, stupefy the senses, and benumb the conscience. It was so with Ephraim of old. He was "broken in judgment" (Hosea 5:11) and, therefore, could not form a right judgment of his own state or standing. "Strangers devoured his strength and he knew it not; yes, grey hairs were here and there upon him, yet he knew it not." (Hosea 7:9.) No, even when at last he saw his sickness and felt his wound, he took wrong courses to have it healed, going to those who could not heal him nor cure him of his wound. (Hosea 5:13.) He had joined himself to idols; and as his punishment God had said, "Let him alone." (Hosea 4:17.)

One of the worst features of the Laodicean church was that she said she was "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17.) We shall not be surprised, then, nor discouraged if our words meet with little or no acceptance in the eyes of those who do not see into what a state they have been brought by the subtlety of Satan, the power of sin, and the weakness of the flesh. Yet in the hope that the Lord may bless a word of admonition to those who have ears to hear, we shall, with all boldness, and yet, we trust, in a spirit of tenderness, love, and affection, speak freely the thoughts of our heart upon a point which has often exercised, and still almost daily exercises, our own spirit. The communication of divine life to the soul is the greatest of all blessings, as containing in its bosom every other blessing. Thus it is the fruit of election– "Whom he predestinated, them he also called," the sure pledge of justification– "Whom he called, them he also justified," and the anticipation of eternal glory– "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is sovereign in its first communication– "The Son quickens whom he will;" free in its reception– "Freely you have received, freely give;" unquenchable in its nature– "Many waters cannot quench love," eternal in its duration– "I give unto my sheep eternal life;" and unalienable in its possession– "I will never leave them nor forsake them." But it is subject to change and sometimes sinks very low– "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" sometimes mounts very high– "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." But all its changes depend upon the movements of the Lord upon the soul– "Lord, by your favor you have made my mountain to stand strong, you hid your face, and I was troubled" (Psalms 30:7)– and, therefore, whether it be high or low, must be resolved into the sovereign good pleasure of God. But our present object is rather to treat of the life of God in the soul in its declension and decay; and to make the subject more clear, as well as to restrain our own pen from wandering, we shall consider it under three heads–

I. Its causes.

II. Its symptoms.

III. Its cure.

I. In considering its CAUSES, we may observe that we have already pointed out some of the more prevalent, and it is, therefore, needless to repeat them. But there are others of scarcely less magnitude, on which we have not yet touched.

Among them, we feel compelled to name the prevailing ministry of the day.

Looking, then, at it without naming people, or without wishing to give needless offence, there are two features in it which have much struck our mind as showing a lamentable deficiency. These two features are, 1, a lack of power, and, 2, a lack of searching discrimination.

1. Nothing in the ministry can make up for lack of power. It may be perfectly consistent with truth. It may be unexceptionably clear in doctrine, sound in experience, and not defective in enforcing consistent practice. But, with all this, it may have the fatal defect of lack of power; it may lack that peculiar savor and blessed influence, that indescribable life, penetrating authority, and heavenly weight, which rest upon the ministry of the word, when the Lord the Spirit speaks in and by it through his sent servants. It is said of the first preaching of the word– "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." And what was the blessed effect? "Great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33.) They preached with great power, and great grace flowed from it and through it. Of his own ministry, Paul thus testifies– "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Corinthians 2:4.) And, to what end and effect? That "the faith of his hearers should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He elsewhere testifies that the gospel which he preached "came to his hearers, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." (1 Thessalonians 1:5.) And the effect was that those who received the word of God which they heard of him, "received it not as the word of men, but as the word of God, which effectually works in those that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13.) Where this blessed power attends the word, there for the most part the life of God in the soul grows and thrives; for in it there is milk for babes and meat for men– in it there is instruction for those who are seeking the way Zionward, reproof for the disobedient, admonition to the simple and sincere, encouragement to the poor and needy, healing balm for the broken in spirit, consolation to the afflicted, and a word in season to the soul that is weary. But where this indescribable life, savor, and power are deficient in the ministry, a spirit of slumber creeps gradually over the hearers; deadness and barrenness in the pulpit produce deadness and barrenness in the pew; the souls of God's people are starved for lack of food; and the necessary consequence is that a general sickliness and languor spread themselves over the church and congregation, attended with the decline and decay of every grace.

One of the worst features of this prevailing disease is, that those who are most deeply affected with it see and feel it least. It creeps for the most part over the soul so insensibly, and its influence is so slow and gradual, that, to use a strong expression, it paralyzes as it spreads. The Scripture, therefore, compares it to a deep sleep, which we know comes gradually on and gets heavier and heavier, until every sense is locked up in forgetfulness and insensibility. "The Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes." And upon whom was this deep sleep come? "The prophets and your rulers, the seers has he covered." They who should have kept the people awake had fallen asleep themselves– and the watchmen on the walls slumbered with the inhabitants of the city. And this with the enemy at the gates. (Isaiah 29:10.) It is also compared to

the insensibility of the drunkard, who keeps drinking on until buried in drunken sleep. He does not feel when he is struck or hurt; and even when for a moment roused from his drunken fit, seeks again his cups and drowsy intoxication. "They have stricken me, shall you say, and I was not hurt– they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Proverbs 23:35.)

2. But there is another no less lamentable lack, as it seems to us, in the ministry of the day. It is not as separating, searching, and discriminating as it should be. There is a close connection between a powerful and a searching ministry, though they do not always meet in the same man and the same ministry. But, as a rule, wherever there is power in the preached word there is separation in it; for nothing so takes forth the precious from the vile, nothing so separates the living from the dead, nothing so blows away the chaff from the wheat as a ministry attended with the power of God. And as a separating ministry must needs try the living family of God (for the dead feel it not), so it will be ever to them a separating, penetrating, and often keenly-piercing word, especially if they have tender spots and sore places. What a description does the Holy Spirit give us of the word of God in the hands of the Spirit, as searching the heart to its lowest depths and most secret corners and recesses! It is a "living," not a dead word, but a word full of, and, as such, ministering life; and "powerful," for the power of God attends it; and "sharper than any two-edged sword," for that can only pierce the body, but this goes further, for it "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," thus discriminating between what is natural and what is spiritual; no, more, penetrating through and dividing joint from joint, and, by breaking the bones, reaching their inmost "marrow," and thus becoming "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.)

Now, may we not be allowed, with all simplicity and godly sincerity, not wishing to give needless offence, and yet not shrinking from the cross, to compare this description of a powerful, searching, separating ministry with the ministry of the day, and to ask ourselves, be we minister or no minister, whether one resembles the other? We are not any man’s judge. To his own master he stands or falls. But these are weighty matters, and if the general deadness and lethargy of the churches be at all traceable to the lack of power in the pulpit and of a searching ministry, it, behooves those who would be right before God to examine how far they stand clear in this matter. Our dear friend, the late W. Tiptaft, was very strong on this point in his last illness, and used often to quote the words, "The blood of souls stains deep."

3. But as we are upon this point, we cannot forbear noticing another feature in the ministry which much fosters the spirit of slumber which has so much come over the churches, and that is, the setting up of a low standard of experience for church membership; the consequence of which is not only to flood the churches with doubtful characters, but to lay down as positive marks of grace what at best are but feeble symptoms of the life of God. "We must not discourage the weaklings" is the cry; "we must preach, Comfort, comfort my people." But not to discourage the weaklings is often to encourage the hypocrites; and to be always bringing forward comfort may be giving poison instead of medicine. An honest-hearted child of God loves a searching ministry. He does not want smooth things, for he dreads false comfort, and would sooner carry his burden than have it taken off, or go off the wrong way.

Those who are ever calling out for encouragement often want to be encouraged in their sins or, at least, in their carnality and death. What they really need is to be thrown down rather than built up, wounded rather than healed, sent groaning home with an arrow in their conscience to make them roll on their bed in distress and anxiety, rather than cry peace to their souls when there is no peace. It is a false rest when they rest upon the encouraging testimony of the preacher rather than upon the testimony of God in their own consciences. But we will not further dwell upon this point; we have said enough for those who have ears to hear, and too much for those who would close their ears against any word that might search and condemn them.

II. And now for a few words on the SYMPTOMS of this widespread epidemic, and let those who desire to fear God search and see whether they find in themselves any prevailing symptoms of this general complaint.

1. Out of numerous others, one of the first marked symptoms is a declension of the spirit of PRAYER in the soul. When the Lord first pours out the Spirit of grace and of supplication, it usually rises to a greater height than at any subsequent period. It would not be fair, therefore, or even just to ourselves if we measured our present spirit of prayer by what it was in days gone by. Those early days cannot be recalled. They were the days of our spiritual youth, and can no more return than the springtime of life to those who are advanced into the autumn of their years. But even if not tried by this standard, are we sensible of any manifest or marked decline of the spirit of prayer that has lately come upon us? Is it less earnest than it was? Is less sensible access found to the throne of grace? Is prayer and supplication felt rather as a burden, a task, a duty, a something that ought to be done, than a sweet privilege, a blessed mercy, a wondrous door through which the soul may pour forth its complaints, confessions, desires, longings, and breathings before the Lord? If the spirit of prayer has sensibly declined in our breast, it is a mark of having fallen into a spirit of slumber, or that we are held in some snare of sin or Satan.

2. Again, how is it with us as to reading the word of God? Is it done as a task, a performance, a duty to which conscience urges, and yet from which inclination draws back? And is this an habitual feeling? for we must not judge by occasional seasons of coldness and deadness, as the most lively Christians are subject to them. But as a general state of things, is the word of God dead, dull, and dry, and as such read with little interest, pleasure, or profit? Then we have fallen asleep, or sunk into carnal security. But contrariwise, is the word of God highly prized as a friend and companion in our secret retirements? Is there every now and then new and sweet light cast upon it? Does it open itself at times to our enlightened understanding as containing fresh teaching, and fresh treasures of heavenly truth? Does it touch our heart with admiration and love to him of whom it so blessedly testifies; soften and melt our spirit into meekness and contrition; raise up our affections to things above; loosen the hold of sin and the world; and bringing before us the things which are not seen as eternal realities, deaden and kill us to the things which are seen as the mere passing shadows of the day?

3. Another symptom of that spiritual declension of which we are now speaking is a growing numbness of conscience, rendering it less sensitive to the evil of sin, and to the danger of departing from the Lord. The fear of God in a tender conscience is a special new covenant gift and grace (Jeremiah 32:40), is our choice treasure (Isaiah 33:6), and a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. (Proverbs 14:27.) It brings into the heart a holy reverence of God’s name and

a deep sense of his glory, majesty, presence, and power; it bows down the soul before him in humility and self-abasement; fills it with hatred of sin and earnest longings and desires after holiness– is attended with contrition and godly sorrow, and produces meekness and quietness of spirit, submission, resignation, and patience. It is, therefore, our chief safeguard against the approach of evil; makes us watch our words both to God and man, to be circumspect in our movements, upright in our actions, cautious in our ways, and consistent in our life. But this grace of the Spirit, like other graces, has its growth and its decrease, its seasons of strength and of weakness, its times of activity and vigor, and of languor and decline. Now, when this grace of the Spirit declines in vigor, it loses in the same proportion its keenness of sight, its sensitiveness of feeling, and its strength of voice; and it is surprising how low it may sink in the soul, until it seems at times almost lost out of sight; its eyes closed, its quickness in hearing the voice of God gone, and its voice reduced to a faint whisper.

What, then, is the consequence? The snares of death are not departed from, for the fountain is not springing up with its living waters to keep the soul alive unto God and the conscience tender in his fear. This is the very opportunity for which the carnal mind has been looking and longing; for it hates and is weary of the restraints which grace puts upon it, and wants that indulgence and food which it can get only by sin. Now, then, is the time when the watchman has fallen asleep, for the master thief, the besetting sin, to enter in and prowl about the city; and he soon lets in his fellow thieves, until the whole gang of them fall to work to rob and plunder. The mind becomes filled with all manner of evil; secret lusts begin to work and to be indulged rather than resisted; all sorts of worldly schemes and contrivances for self-advancement or self-gratification occupy the thoughts; pride, covetousness, and worldly-mindedness make sad advance, and the man, so to speak, is but a shadow of what he was. His tenderness seems gone, and with it the life and power of his religion; until little is left but the form, except that now and then there are revivings and awakenings just enough to show him where he is and whence he has fallen.

How many, even of those who truly fear God, are here, or have been, for perhaps there are very few of the living family of God who have not had, at some period of their lives since they were called by grace, some personal and experimental knowledge of the path which we have thus traced out. These are the best judges how far our words are words of truth– not mere fancy sketches, but a description of deep and weighty realities, and matters of daily exercise and life-long remembrance. Much that daily passes in our own bosoms, or that has exercised our minds before God we can never speak of or confess to men; but a word from others will sometimes touch the secret spot. And thus those of our spiritual readers who, through grace, have been brought out of this state of slumber in which they were once held into, as it were, a new and revived life of faith in the Son of God, will be best able to set to their seal how far our description is true, or our words contain needful cautions and salutary counsel.

III. But now let us attempt to show the CURE of this prevailing malady, or rather the way in which it is brought about, with its fruits and effects.

1. The usual beginning of a revival of the soul from this deep sleep, as well as the means of its accomplishment, is a stroke of AFFLICTION. God has a chastening rod laid up in reserve for those of his family who depart from him; and sooner or later he brings it down upon their backs. Thus sometimes he sends a long and painful illness, or a distressing bereavement, or a severe family

affliction, or some cutting stroke and heavy reverse in providence; and working, by his Spirit and grace, in and with these stripes of his hand, he awakens the soul out of its sleep. The eyes are now opened to see, and the ears to hear, the heart to understand, and the conscience to feel. And what a sight meets the astonished view– at times almost more than the soul can bear, for it seems as if the end would be hopeless despair. Now it begins to see where it has been, the sad state into which it had fallen, the snares and temptations in which it had been held fast, and the grievous state of carnality and worldliness into which it had gradually sunk. Nothing wrong might have been observed by man in the outward conduct; but each heart knows its own bitterness. There the root of all backsliding lies and the soul well knows that God looks to the heart, and if that is not right before him, nothing is right. Under, therefore, his afflicting hand it sinks, at times, very low, until its very hope seems almost removed as a tree. But as this is the work of God, and the means whereby he is bringing the soul out of its state of barrenness and death, he most kindly and graciously comes to its help; and the way he does it, for the most part, is this–

2. He revives the spirit of PRAYER which had sunk very low; and with this revival comes power to confess those sins and backslidings which lie with the chief weight on the conscience. None but those who have passed through such or a similar experience can know how the soul thus dealt with abases itself in humble confession before the Lord; nor can even they describe its self-loathing and self-abhorrence, the low place it takes, the earnest longings and anxious desire for a word of mercy and pardon from his gracious lips, or how it looks up to his gracious Majesty again and again, by night and by day, for a sense of his manifested love and favor. The soul is not asleep now; its deadness is gone, its coldness and barrenness removed, and it now is truly and really alive unto God. This is a reviving as the grain, when the rain comes after a long season of drought, or a growing of the vine in the spring after the dreary days of winter, when there was nothing visible but the naked stem. (Hosea 14:7.) There is thus almost a returning to the days of its youth, and a renewal of the former life of God in the soul.

3. Now, coupled with this, as, in answer to prayer, the Lord draws near in the manifestations of his grace, there is also a revival of faith in the Person and work of the Son of God, and that of a simpler and clearer nature than before. Never does the suitability of Christ, or the riches of his grace, appear so great as to a soul awakened out of the spirit of slumber again to look unto him. How it wonders at and admires his great patience, his kind and tender forbearance, his wondrous grace in bearing so long with such base returns for all his goodness and mercy! How it admires and adore his glorious Person, sees and feels the efficacy of his most precious blood and righteousness, and the sweet secrets of his dying love! How tender is now the conscience of sinning against such mercy and such love!

What a bitter and evil thing is sin seen and felt to be! What a discovery there too, of the hidden corruption of the heart, of the danger of being entangled in any secret snare, and that a separation of spirit from the world and worldly things! Never until now did the soul seem truly and really to repent of sin with that godly sorrow which needs not to be repented of; never were there more earnest desires after holiness, spirituality of mind, and communion with God and his dear Son. Never was the word of God more open to the enlightened understanding; its inspiration, wisdom and truth more clearly seen, or its power on the heart more deeply felt. Never did eternal realities lie with greater weight and power upon the mind, and never did the things of time and sense appear more light, transitory, and vain. The soul now says to itself, "Let me never sin again against

such goodness and mercy; let me never again drop into carnality, worldliness, and death." But still seeing and feeling more than ever the strength of sin and the weakness of the flesh, and knowing, painfully knowing, what it is to be left to self, it begs of the Lord to keep it as the apple of his eye, to hold it up in every slippery place, that it may not slip or fall; to shine upon it continually with the beams of his love, and ever to water it by his Spirit and grace. It desires ever to walk in his fear and live to his praise, to know his will and do it, and be found fruitful in every good word and work. But we will not enlarge upon these points, as we have said enough upon them and perhaps too much for the generality of our readers, as we have been describing what may be to them a strange and unknown path. But we write for the spiritual, for those who know divine things by divine teaching, for we seek and desire their profit. It is not often that we can get what we may call a little close talk with our spiritual readers, or press those points home upon their consciences which often press upon our own. It is in writing as it is in conversation. How much of our communion with the people of God in conversation is upon mere external matters and subjects in which there is not much heart and conscience work! What little close talk! What little coming into the real heart of the matter– those bosom secrets of true religion and vital godliness which we most feel before God! How we play upon the surface, skim the mere outside, talk at a distance upon divine matters, without that close getting into each other's hearts and consciences, or coming into those spots where the secret springs of all our spiritual life really lie.

What poor, cold work, for the most part, what is called religious conversation is! How unedifying, disappointing, and deadening, rather than reviving, refreshing, and strengthening the soul by mutual communion, and creative of love and union by having nourishment ministered by the joints and hands of members holding the Head! (Colossians 2:19.) In our communion even with the real people of God, how rare are the seasons when we so see eye to eye and feel heart to heart that spirit melts into spirit, and the communion of saints leads up to fresh communion with God! It is with a desire thus to edify and profit the souls of our readers with whom we can converse only by pen and not by mouth, that in this opening year we meet and greet them affectionately with our Address. Receive it, dear friends, in the spirit in which we hope it is written and sent to you. It is meant for your good.

We have, perhaps, touched upon a few sore spots and made some of you wince. But if we have wounded, it is that you might be cleansed of their filth and gore by the application of precious blood– and if we have somewhat crudely or roughly pulled away the veil and shown you your guilty shame, it is that you might see and know more of the robe of righteousness which is put upon those that believe.

We do not, we dare not, write flattering words to please the dead. Our mission, our errand, our ministry is to the living, and especially to those among them who are tried and exercised with temptations and afflictions whereby their soul is kept alive unto God. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the flatterers go on with their flatteries, deceiving and being deceived, building up their walls and daubing them with untempered mortar. We are bidden not to be a partaker of other men's sins, which we should be if we wilfully sanctioned such men and such things. Our desire is to be found faithful to the position in which we are placed, and to edify and profit the living family of God. Commending you, whom grace has made and manifested to be such, to his wise and safe keeping, who alone can bless the writer or reader, and asking for your prayers upon our labors in your service, we are, dear Friends in the Lord,

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

The Editor

08.00. PEARLS from PHILPOT

PEARLS from PHILPOT (Choice formatted selections

from the works of J. C. Philpot)

Volume 1

Volume 2

Volume 3

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Volume 5

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08.01. Volume 1

Man’s religion & God’s religion "That no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Corinthians 1:29

Man’s religion is to build up the creature. God’s religion is to throw the creature down in the dust of self-abasement, and to glorify Christ.

What a mystery are you!

"So I find this law at work—When I want to do good, evil is right there with me." Romans 7:21

Are you not often a mystery to yourself?

Warm one moment—cold the next!

Abasing yourself one hour—exalting yourself the following!

Loving the world, full of it, steeped up to your head in it today—crying, groaning, and sighing for a sweet manifestation of the love of God tomorrow!

Brought down to nothingness, covered with shame and confusion, on your knees before you leave your room—filled with pride and self importance before you have got down stairs!

Despising the world, and willing to give it all up for one taste of the love of Jesus when in solitude—trying to grasp it with both hands when in business!

What a mystery are you!

Touched by love—and stung with hatred!

Possessing a little wisdom—and a great deal of folly!

Earthly minded—and yet having the affections in heaven!

Pressing forward—and lagging behind!

Full of sloth—and yet taking the kingdom with violence!

And thus the Spirit, by a process which we may feel but cannot adequately describe—leads us into the mystery of the two natures perpetually struggling and striving against each other in the same bosom. So that one man cannot more differ from another, than the same man differs from himself.

But the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is this—that our carnal mind undergoes no alteration, but maintains a perpetual war with grace. And thus, the deeper we sink in self abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ, and the blacker we are in our own view—the more lovely does Jesus appear.

What stupid blockheads!

"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. Matthew 15:16

What lessons we need day by day to teach us anything aright, and how it is for the most part, "line upon line, line upon line—here a little, and there a little." O . . .

what slow learners!

what dull, forgetful scholars!

what ignoramuses!

what stupid blockheads!

what stubborn pupils!

Surely no scholar at a school, old or young, could learn so little of natural things as we seem to have learned of spiritual things after . . .

so many years instruction,

so many chapters read,

so many sermons heard, so many prayers put up,

so much talking about religion.

How small, how weak is the amount of growth—compared with all we have read and heard and talked about!

But it is a mercy that the Lord saves whom He will save—and that we are saved by free grace—and free grace alone!

Take me as I am with all my sin and shame

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." Jeremiah 17:14

Here is this sin! Save me from it!

Here is this snare! Break it to pieces!

Here is this lust! Lord, subdue it!

Here is this temptation! Deliver me out of it!

Here is my proud heart! Lord, humble it!

Here is my unbelieving heart! Take it away, and give me faith; give me submission to Your mind and will.

Take me as I am with all my sin and shame and work in me everything wellpleasing in Your sight.

Nothing but a huge clod of dust

"Set your affection on things above—not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Everything upon earth, as viewed by the eyes of the Majesty of heaven—is base and paltry.

Earth is after all, nothing but a huge clod of dust, and as such, as insignificant in the eyes of its Maker as the small dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket.

What, then, are . . .

its highest objects,

its loftiest aims,

its grandest pursuits,

its noblest employments,

in the sight of Him who inhabits

eternity; but base and worthless?

Vanity is stamped on all earth’s attainments.

All earthly pursuits and high accomplishments . . .

wealth,

rank,

learning,

power, or

pleasure,

end in death!

The breath of God’s displeasure soon lays low in the grave all that is rich and mighty, high and proud.

But that effectual work of grace on the heart, whereby the chosen vessels of mercy are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, calls them out of . . .

those low, groveling pursuits,

those earthly toys,

those base and sensual lusts in which other men seek at once their happiness and their ruin.

How can they escape?

"He will keep the feet of His saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

The Lord sees His poor scattered pilgrims traveling through a valley of tears—journeying through a waste-howling wilderness—a path beset with baits, traps, and snares in every direction.

How can they escape?

Why, the Lord ’keeps their feet’. He carries them through every rough place—as a tender parent carries a little child. When about to fall—He graciously lays His everlasting arms underneath them. And when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip—He mercifully upholds them from falling altogether.

But do you think that He has not different ways for different feet? The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike—and will He cause all His people to walk in precisely the same path? No. We have . . .

each our path,

each our troubles,

each our trials,

each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet.

And the wisdom of the all-wise God is shown by His eyes being in every place—marking the footsteps of every pilgrim—suiting His remedies to meet their individual case and necessity—appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good—watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of His

affection were bent on one individual—and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm!

God will meet all your needs

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Php 4:19

Until we are brought into the depths of poverty, we shall never know nor value Christ’s riches.

If, then, you are a child of God, a poor and needy soul, a tempted and tried believer in Christ, "God will meet all your needs."

They may be very great.

It may seem to you, sometimes, as though there were not upon all the face of the earth such a wretch as you—as though there never could be a child of God in your state . . .

so dark,

so stupid,

so blind and ignorant,

so proud and worldly,

so presumptuous and hypocritical,

so continually backsliding after idols,

so continually doing things that you know are hateful in God’s sight.

But whatever your need be—it is not beyond the reach of divine supply! And the deeper your need, the more is Jesus glorified in supplying it.

Do not say then, that . . .

your case is too bad,

your needs are too many,

your perplexities too great,

your temptations too powerful.

No case can be too bad!

No temptations can be too powerful!

No sin can be too black!

No perplexity can be too hard!

No state in which the soul can get, is beyond the reach of the almighty and compassionate love, that burns in the breast of the Redeemer! That sympathizing, merciful, feeling, tender, and compassionate heart

"For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15

The child of God, spiritually taught and convinced, is deeply sensible of his infirmities. Yes, that he is encompassed with infirmities—that he is nothing else but infirmities. And therefore the great High Priest to whom he comes as a burdened sinner—to whom he has recourse in the depth of his extremity—and at whose feet he falls overwhelmed with a sense of his helplessness, sin, misery, and guilt—is so suitable to him as one able to sympathize with his infirmities.

We would, if left to our own conceptions, naturally imagine that Jesus is too holy to look down in compassion on a filthy, guilty wretch like ourselves.

Surely, surely, He will spurn us from His feet. Surely, surely, His holy eyes cannot look upon us in our. . .

blood,

guilt,

filth,

wretchedness,

misery,

and shame.

Surely, surely, He cannot bestow . . .

one heart’s thought,

one moment’s sympathy,

or feel one spark of love towards those who are so unlike Him.

Nature, sense, and reason would thus argue, "I must be holy—perfectly holy—for Jesus to love; I must be pure—perfectly pure—spotless and sinless, for Jesus to think of. But . . .

that I, a sinful, guilty, defiled wretch;

that I, encompassed with infirmities;

that I, whose heart is a cage of unclean birds;

that I, stained and polluted with a thousand iniquities;

that I can have any inheritance in Him—or that He can have any love or compassion towards me—nature, sense, reason, and human religion in all its shapes and forms, revolts from the idea."

It is as though Jesus specially address Himself to the poor, burdened child of God who feels his infirmities, who cannot boast of his own wisdom, strength, righteousness, and consistency—but is all weakness and helplessness. It seems as if He would address Himself to the case of such a helpless wretch—and pour a sweet cordial into his bleeding conscience.

We, the children of God—we, who each knows his own plague and his own sore—we, who carry about with us day by day a body of sin and death, that makes us lament, sigh, and groan—we, who know painfully what it is to be encompassed with infirmities—we, who come to His feet as being nothing and having nothing but sin and woe—"we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities," but One who carries in His bosom that . . .

sympathizing,

merciful,

feeling,

tender, and

compassionate heart.

Why are you cast down, O my soul?

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for

I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God." Psalms 42:11

Do you forget, O soul, that the way to heaven is a very strait and narrow path—too narrow for you to carry your sins in it with you?

God sees it good that you should be cast down.

You were getting very proud, O soul.

The world had gotten hold of your heart.

You were seeking great things for yourself.

You were secretly roving away from the Lord.

You were too much lifted up in SELF.

The Lord has sent you these trials and difficulties and allowed these temptations to fall upon you, to bring you down from your state of false security.

There is reason therefore, even to praise God for being cast down, and for being so disturbed.

How this opens up parts of God’s Word which you never read before with any feeling.

How it gives you sympathy and communion with the tried and troubled children of God.

How it weans and separates you from dead professors.

How it brings you in heart and affection, out of the world that lies in wickedness.

And how it engages your thoughts, time after time, upon the solemn matters of eternity—instead of being a prey to every idle thought and imagination, and tossed up and down upon a sea of vanity and folly.

But, above all, when there is a sweet response from the Lord, and the power of divine things is inwardly felt, in enabling us to hope in God, and to praise His blessed name—then we see the benefit of being cast down and so repeatedly and continually disturbed.

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God." Psalms 42:11

Treasure in earthen vessels

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

Do not be surprised if you feel that in yourself you are but an earthen vessel—if you are made deeply and daily sensible of your frail body.

Do not be surprised . . .

if your clay house is often tottering;

if sickness sometimes assails your mortal tabernacle;

if in your flesh there dwells no good thing;

if your soul often cleaves to the dust; and if you are unable to retain a sweet sense of God’s goodness and love.

Do not be surprised nor startled . . .

at the corruptions of your depraved nature;

at the depth of sin in your carnal mind;

at the vile abominations which lurk and work in your deceitful and desperately wicked heart.

Bear in mind that it is the will of God that this heavenly treasure which makes you rich for eternity, should be lodged in an earthen vessel.

We have ever to feel our native weakness—and that without Christ we can do nothing—that we may be clothed with humility, and feel ourselves the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints.

We thus learn to prize the heights, breadths, lengths, and depths of the love of Christ, who stooped so low to raise us up so high!

All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings The very trials and afflictions, and the sore temptations through which God's family pass, all eventually endear Christ to them. And depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will sooner or later, in your travels through this wilderness, find your need of Jesus as "able to save to the uttermost."

There will be such things in your heart, and such feelings in your mind—the temptations you will meet with will be such—that nothing short of a Savior that is able to save to the uttermost can save you out of your desperate case and felt circumstances as utterly lost and helpless. This a great point to come to. All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings that do not end here are valueless—because they lead the soul away from God. But the convictions, the trials, the temptations, the strippings, the emptyings, that bring us to this spot—that we have nothing, and can do nothing, but the Lord alone must do it all—these have a blessed effect, because they eventually make Jesus very near and dear unto us.

No fear!

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:18

Those who have every reason to fear as to their eternal state before God, have for the most part, no fear at all. They are secure, and free from doubt and fear.

The depths of human hypocrisy, the dreadful lengths to which profession may go, the deceit of the carnal heart, the snares spread for the unwary feet, the fearful danger of being deceived at the last; these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin.

As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction—they are glad to be deceived!

God does not see fit to disturb their quiet. He has no purpose of mercy towards them; they are not subjects of His kingdom; they are not objects of His love.

He therefore leaves them carnally secure, as in a dream—from which they will not awake until the day of judgment.

These difficulties . . .

"From all your idols will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

When there are no crosses, temptations, or trials, a man is sure to go out after and cleave to idols.

It matters not what experience he has had. If once he ceases to be plagued and tried, he will be setting up his household gods in the secret chambers of his heart.

Profit or pleasure, self-indulgence or self-gratification, will surely, in one form or another, engross his thoughts, and steal away his heart.

Nor is there anything too trifling or insignificant to become an idol. Whatever is meditated on preferably to God—whatever is desired more than He—whatever more interests us, pleases us, occupies our waking hours, or is more constantly in our mind—becomes an idol, and a source of sin.

It is not the magnitude of the idol, but its existence as an object of worship—that constitutes idolatry. I have seen some 'Burmese idols' not much larger than my hand; and I have seen some 'Egyptian idols' weighing many tons. But both were equally idols—and the comparative size had nothing to do with the question.

So spiritually, an idol is not to be measured by its size, or its relative importance or non-importance. A flower may be as much an idol to one man, as a chest full of gold to another.

If you watch your heart, you will see idols rising and setting all day long, nearly as thickly as the stars by night.

But God sends . . .

trials,

difficulties,

temptations,

besetments,

losses,

afflictions,

to pull down these idols—or rather to pull away our hearts from them.

These difficulties . . .

pull us out of fleshly ease,

make us cry for mercy,

pull down all rotten props,

hunt us out of false refuges, and

strip us of vain hopes and delusive expectations.

Idolatry!

"They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Nothing is too small or too insignificant which, at times, may not be an idol.

What is an idol? Something my carnal mind loves.

How may I know whether my carnal mind loves it? When we think of it, and are very much pleased with it. We pet it, love and fondle it, dallying and playing with it, like a mother with her babe. See how she takes the little thing and gazes at it. Her eyes are fixed on it—she dotes upon it because she loves it. Thus we may know an idol if we examine our own hearts—by what our imagination, desires and secret thoughts are going out after.

Instead of being spiritually minded, having his heart and affections in heaven, he has something in his mind which it is going out after—something or other laying hold of the affections.

The child of God has, more or less, all these evil propensities working within. There is idolatry in every man's heart. How deep this idolatry is rooted in a man's heart! How it steals upon his soul! Whatever is indulged in—how it creeps over him, until it gets such power that it becomes master.

A man does not know himself—if he does not know what power this idolatry has over him.

None but God can make the man know it—and when the Lord delivers him, he then turns to God and says, "What a vile wretch I have been! What a monster to go after these idols, loving this thing, and that. A wretch—a monster of iniquity, the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the face of God's earth—for my wicked heart to go out after these idols!"

When the soul is brought down to a sense of its vileness and loathsomeness—and God's patience and forbearance—it turns to God from idols, to serve the only living and true God, who pardons the idolater.

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings, mysterious changes, and ever-varying exercises of his soul, the true Christian becomes established in a deep experience of . . .

his own folly and God's wisdom,

his own weakness and Christ's strength,

his own sinfulness and the Lord's goodness,

his own backslidings and the Spirit's recoveries,

his own base ingratitude and Jehovah's patience,

the aboundings of sin and the super-aboundings of grace.

He thus becomes daily more and more confirmed in . . .

the vanity of the creature,

the utter helplessness of man,

the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of the human heart,

the sovereignty of distinguishing grace,

the fewness of heaven-taught ministers,

the scanty number of living souls,

and the great rareness of true religion.

Wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it—but only wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither soothed with ointment." Isaiah 1:5-6

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved.

The will chooses evil.

The affections cleave to earthly things.

The memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good.

The judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces mindless or wrong decisions.

The conscience, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence.

When all these ’master faculties of the mind’ are so drunken and disorderly—need we wonder that the bodily members are a godless, rebellious crew?

Lusts call out for gratification.

Unbelief and infidelity murmur.

Tempers growl and mutter.

Every bad passion strives hard for the mastery.

O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose, have filled earth with misery, and hell with victims; which deluged the world with the flood—burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—and are ripening the world for the final conflagration!

Every sin which . . .

has made this fair earth a ’present hell’;

has filled the air with groans; and

has drenched the ground with blood;

dwells in your heart and mine!

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the Spirit of God—we feel indeed to be of all men most sinful and miserable—and of all most guilty, polluted, and vile. But it is this—and nothing but this—which cuts to pieces our ’fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and strength’—which slays our delusive hopes—and lays us low at the footstool of mercy—without one good thought, word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge.

It is this which brings the soul to this point— that if saved, it can only be saved by the free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender compassion of Almighty God. The wilderness wanderer

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Psalms 107:4

The true Christian finds this world to be a wilderness.

There is no change in the world itself.

The change is in the man's heart.

The wilderness wanderer thinks it altered—a different world from what he has hitherto known . . .

his friends,

his own family,

the employment in which he is daily engaged,

the general pursuits of men—

their cares and anxieties,

their hopes and prospects,

their amusements and pleasures, and

what I may call 'the general din and whirl of life', all seem to him different to what they were—and for a time perhaps he can scarcely tell whether the change is in them, or in himself.

This however is the prominent and uppermost feeling in his mind—that he finds himself, to his surprise—a wanderer in a world which has changed altogether its appearance to him. The fair, beautiful world, in which was all his happiness and all his home—has become to him a dreary wilderness.

Sin has been fastened in its conviction on his conscience. The Holy Spirit has taken the veil of unbelief and ignorance off his heart. He now sees the world in a wholly different light–and instead of a paradise it has become a wilderness—for sin, dreadful sin, has marred all its beauty and happiness.

It is not because the world itself has changed that the Christian feels it to be a wilderness—but because he himself has changed.

There is nothing in this world which can really gratify or satisfy the true Christian. What once was to him a happy and joyous world has now become a barren wilderness.

The scene of his former . . .

pursuits,

pleasures,

habits,

delights,

prospects,

hopes,

anticipations of profit or happiness—is now turned into a barren wasteland.

He cannot perhaps tell how or why the change has taken place, but he feels it—deeply feels it. He may try to shake off his trouble and be a little cheerful and happy as he was before—but if he gets a little imaginary relief, all his guilty pangs come back upon him with renewed strength and increased violence.

God means to make the world a wilderness to every child of His, that he may not find his happiness in it,but be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth.

Temptation

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." 2 Peter 2:9

Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to be delivered from the power of a temptation—until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it.

But when we really feel the burden of a temptation; when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it—when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it—when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart, beseeching Him to deliver us from it—I believe, that the Lord will, sooner or later, either remove that temptation entirely in His providence or by His grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil.

As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "Their heart is divided—now shall they be found faulty" (Hosea 10:2)—as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes—"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways;" as long as we are hankering after the temptation, casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue; and though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away, there is . . .no hearty cry, nor sigh, nor spiritual breathing of our soul, that God would remove it from us.

But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted; and cry to Him that He would—for His honor and for our soul’s good—take the temptation away, or dull and deaden its power—sooner or later the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those temptations, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

Idling life away like an idiot or a madman

When one is spiritually reborn, he sees at one and the same moment . . .

God and self,

justice and guilt,

power and helplessness,

a holy law and a broken commandment,

eternity and time,

the purity of the Creator, and

the filthiness of the creature. And these things he sees—not merely as declared in the Bible—but as revealed in himself as personal realities, involving all his happiness or all his misery in time and in eternity. Thus it is with him as though a new existence had been communicated, and as if for the first time he had found there was a God!

It is as though all his days he had been asleep, and were now awakened—asleep upon the top of a mast, with the raging waves beneath—as if all his past life were a dream, and the dream were now at an end. He has been . . .

hunting butterflies,

blowing soap bubbles,

fishing for minnows,

picking daisies,

building houses of cards, and

idling life away like an idiot or a madman.

He had been perhaps wrapped up in a religious profession—advanced even to the office of a deacon, or mounted in a pulpit. He had learned to talk about Christ, and election, and grace, and fill his mouth with the language of Zion.

But what did he experimentally know of these things? Nothing, absolutely nothing!

Ignorant of his own ignorance (of all kinds of ignorance the worst)—he thought himself rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing—and knew not that he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. This wily devil!

What a foe to one's peace is one's own spirit! What shall I call it? It is often an infernal spirit. Why? Because it bears the mark of Satan upon it.

The pride of our spirit, the presumption of our spirit, the hypocrisy of our spirit, the intense selfishness of our spirit, are often hidden from us.

This wily devil, SELF, can wear such masks and assume such forms!

This serpent, SELF, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances—that it is often hidden from ourselves.

Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear? We all have our enemies. But who is our greatest enemy?

He whom you carry in your own bosom—your daily, hourly, and unmovable companion, who entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart—who . . .

sometimes puffs up with pride,

sometimes inflames with lust,

sometimes inflates with presumption, and

sometimes works under pretend humility and fleshly holiness.

God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let SELF, (which is but another word for the creature,) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified.

08.02. Volume 2

To bathe in the ocean of endless bliss!

"Blessed are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, ("weeping") they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion." Psalms 84:5-7

Every living soul that has been experimentally taught his lost condition—that has known something of a resting place in Christ—that has turned his back upon both the world and the professing church—and gone weeping Zionward, that he may . . .

live in Jesus

feel His power,

taste His love,

know His blood,

rejoice in His grace;

every such soul shall, like Israel of old, be borne safely through this waste howling wilderness—shall be carried through this valley of tears—and taken to enjoy eternal bliss and glory in the presence of Jesus—to bathe in the ocean of endless bliss! Your eyes will see the King in His beauty!

"Your eyes will see the King in His beauty!" Isaiah 33:17

Where in heaven or on earth can there be found such a lovely Object as the Son of God? If you have never seen any beauty in Jesus . . .

you have never seen Jesus,

He has never revealed Himself to you,

you never had a glimpse of His lovely face,

nor a sense of His presence,

nor a word from His lips,

nor a touch from His hand.

But if you have seen Him by the eye of faith—and He has revealed Himself to you even in a small measure—you have seen a beauty in Him beyond all other beauties, for it is . . .

a holy beauty,

a divine beauty,

the beauty of His heavenly grace,

the beauty of His uncreated and eternal glory.

How beautiful and glorious does He show Himself to be in His atoning blood and dying love. Even as sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane’s gloomy garden, and as hanging in torture and agony upon Calvary’s cross—faith can see a beauty in the glorious Redeemer, even in the lowest depths of ignominy and shame!

"How is your Beloved better than others?" "My Beloved is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" Song of Solomon 5:9-10 Can the Ethiopian change his skin?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 13:23

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin—and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

The soul is proud—and needs to be humbled.

The soul is careless—and needs to be awakened.

The soul is alive—and needs to be killed.

The soul is full—and requires to be emptied.

The soul is whole—and needs to be wounded.

The soul is clothed—and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous,

self-seeking,

buried deep in worldliness and carnality,

utterly blind and ignorant,

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit,

and enmity.

It hates all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element.

To make man the direct opposite of what he originally is . . .

to make him love God—instead of hating Him;

to make him fear God—instead of mocking Him;

to make him obey God—instead of rebelling against Him;

to make him to tremble at His dreadful majesty—

instead of defiantly charging against Him;

to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change—requires the implantation of a new nature by the immediate hand of God Himself!

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 13:23 That Heavenly Teacher

We do not learn that we are sinners merely by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought—I might say, burnt into us.

Nor will anyone sincerely and spiritually cry for mercy—until sin is spiritually felt and known . . .

in its misery,

in its dominion,

in its guilt,

in its entanglements,

in its wiles and allurements,

in its filth and pollution, and

in its condemnation.

Where the Holy Spirit works, He kindles . . .

sighs,

groans,

supplications,

wrestlings, and pleadings to know Christ, feel His love, taste the efficacy of His atoning blood, and embrace Him as all our salvation and all our desire.

And though there may, and doubtless will be, much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and apparent carelessness often felt—still that heavenly Teacher will revive His work—though often by painful methods—nor will He let the quickened soul rest short of a personal and experimental enjoyment of Christ and His glorious salvation.

Preserving grace before regeneration

"To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ." Jude 1:1

What a mercy it is for God’s people that before they have a ’vital union’ with Christ—before they are grafted into Him experimentally—they have an ’eternal, immanent union’ with Him before all worlds. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world . . .

at such a time,

at such a place,

from such parents,

under such circumstances,

as God has appointed.

It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their lives are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are effectually called.

They cannot die until God has brought about a vital union with Christ!

Whatever sickness they may pass through—whatever injuries they may be exposed to—whatever perils assault them on sea or land—die they will not, die they cannot; until God’s purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of His love.

Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them until the appointed time and spot, when "the God of all grace," according to His eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls, and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

Free!

"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:36

To be made free implies a liberty from the WORLD and the spirit of covetousness in the heart. If we were to follow into their shops some who talk much of ’gospel liberty’, we might find that the world’s fetter had not been struck off their heart—that they had a ’golden’ chain, though invisible to their own eyes, very closely wrapped round their heart.

And there is a being made free from the power of SIN. I greatly fear, if we could follow into their holes and corners, and secret chambers, many who prattle about gospel liberty, we would find that sin had not yet lost its hold upon them, that there was some secret or open sin that entangled them, that there was . . .

some lust,

some passion,

some evil temper,

some wretched pride or other,

that wound its fetters very close round their heart.

And also there is a being made free from SELF . . .

proud self,

presumptuous self,

self-exalting self, flesh-pleasing self,

hypocritical self,

self in all its various shapes and turns,

self in all its crooked hypocrisy and windings.

"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

These fugitive, transitory things

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

There is a reality in true religion, and indeed, rightly viewed, a reality in nothing else. For every other thing passes away like a dream of the night, and comes to an end like a tale that is told. Now you cannot say of a thing that passes away and comes to an end—that it is real. It may have the appearance of reality—when in fact it is but a shadow.

Money, jewels, pictures, books, furniture, securities, are transitory. Money may be spent, jewels be lost, books be burnt, furniture decay, pictures vanish by time and age, securities be stolen.

Nothing is real but that which has an abiding substance.

Health decays, strength diminishes, beauty flees the cheek, sight and hearing grow dim, the mind itself gets feeble, riches make to themselves wings and flee away, children die, friends depart, old age creeps on, and life itself comes to a close.

These fugitive, transitory things are then mere shadows. There is no substance, no enduring substance in them. They are for time, and are useful for a time. Like our daily food and clothing, house and home—they support and solace us in our journey through life. But there they stop—when life ends they end with it.

But real religion—and by this I understand the work of God upon the soul—abides in death and after death, goes with us through the dark valley, and lands us safe in a blessed eternity. It is, therefore, the only thing in this world of which we can say that it is real.

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17 A sad motley mixture

(The following is an excerpt from Philpot’s letter to a church which desired him to come as their pastor)

"I am less than the least of all God’s people." Ephesians 3:8

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the worst." 1 Timothy 1:15

Many are foolishly apt to think that a minister is more spiritual than anyone else. But I am daily more and more sensible of the desperate wickedness of my deceitful heart, and my miserable ruined state as a sinner by nature and by practice. I feel utterly unworthy of the name of a Christian, and to be ranked among the followers of the Lamb.

I have no desire to palm myself off on any church, as though I were anything. I am willing to take a low place.

The more you see of me, you will be sure to find out more of my infirmities, failings, waywardness, selfishness, obstinacy, and evil temper. I am carnal, very proud, very foolish in imagination, very slothful, very worldly, dark, stupid, blind, unbelieving and ignorant.

I cannot but confess that I am a strange compound—a sad motley mixture of all the most hateful and abominable vices that rise up within me, and face me at every turn.

When You shall enlarge my heart.

"I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart." Psalms 119:32

The Word of God is full of precepts—but we are totally unable to perform them in our own strength. We cannot, without divine assistance, perform the precept . . .

with a single eye to the glory of God,

from heavenly motives, and

in a way acceptable to the Lord,

without special power from on high.

We need an extraordinary power to be put forth in our hearts—a special work of the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to spiritually fulfill in the slightest degree, the least of God’s commandments.

None but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people. None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godwards, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things—which is the plague and burden of a God-fearing soul.

When the Lord is absent, when He hides His lovely face, when He does not draw near to visit and bless, the heart contracts in its own narrow compass.

But when the Lord is pleased to favor the soul with His own gracious presence, and bring Himself near to the heart, His felt presence opens, enlarges, and expands the soul—so as to receive Him in all His love and grace. Our refuge!

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation—my stronghold." Psalms 18:2

On every side are hosts of enemies ever invading our souls—trampling down every good thing in our hearts—accompanied by a flying troop of temptations, doubts, fears, guilt and bondage sweeping over our soul. And we, as regards our own strength, are helpless against them.

But there is a refuge set before us in the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King in Zion, is there held up before our eyes as . . .

the Rock of our refuge,

our strong Tower,

our impregnable Fortress;

and we are encouraged by every precious promise and every gospel invitation when we are overrun and distressed by these wandering, ravaging, plundering tribes—to flee unto and find a safe refuge in Him.

"Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge." Psalms 16:1

"O Lord my God, I take refuge in You; save and deliver me from all who pursue me." Psalms 7:1

Supernatural light

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

Until, then, this supernatural light of God enters into the soul, a man has no saving knowledge of Jehovah. He may . . .

say his prayers,

read his Bible, attend preaching,

observe ordinances,

bestow all his goods to feed the poor,

or give his body to be burned;

but he is as ignorant of God as the cattle that graze in the fields!

He may—call himself a Christian, and be thought such by others—talk much about Jesus Christ, hold a sound creed—maintain a consistent profession—pray at a prayer meeting with fluency and apparent feeling, stand up in a pulpit and contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace—excel hundreds of God’s children in zeal, knowledge and conversation.

And yet, if this ray of supernatural light has never shone into his soul—he is only twofold more the child of hell than those who make no profession!

Little heathen?

(from Philpot’s biography, written by his son)

There was nothing my father mistrusted more than ’childhood piety.’ He insisted that children should never be taught or allowed to use the language of ’personal possession’ in reference to God. To sing, for instance, "Rock of Ages, cleft for ME" or, "MY Jesus".

Herein he was most logical. For by early influence and example you can train up a child to be . . .

a little patriot,

a little Catholic,

a little Calvinist, or

a little Bolshevist.

But no power on earth can make him a child of God.

He took great care that we, his children, attended the means of grace, and never missed chapel or family prayers. But he never expected us to be anything but little heathen. We had, it is true, to be well behaved little heathen. If not, we got "the stick", or its equivalent.

"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." John 1:13 My desire is . . .

to exalt the grace of God;

to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ alone;

to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and

hopelessness of man in a state of nature;

to describe the living experience of the children of God in their . . .

trials,

temptations,

sorrows,

consolations

and blessings. And how is he lost?

"O visit me with Your salvation." Psalms 106:4

Salvation only suits the condemned—the lost. A man must be lost—utterly lost—before he can prize God’s salvation.

And how is he lost? By . . .

losing all his religion,

losing all his righteousness,

losing all his strength,

losing all his confidence,

losing all his hopes,

losing all that is of the flesh;

losing it by its being taken from him,

and stripped away by the hand of God.

Wearied, torn, and half expiring

The poor sheep has gone astray; and having once left the fold, it is pretty sure to have gotten into some strange place or other. It has fallen down a rock—or has rolled into a ditch—or is hidden beneath a bush—or has crept into a cave—or is lying in some deep, distant ravine, where none but an experienced eye and hand can find it out.

Just so with the Lord's lost sheep. They get into strange places. They . . .

fall off rocks,

slip into holes,

hide among the bushes, and

sometimes creep off to die in caverns.

When the sheep has gone astray, the shepherd goes after it to find it. Here he sees a footprint; there a little lock of wool torn off by the thorns. Every nook he searches—into every corner he looks– until at last he finds the poor sheep wearied, torn, and half expiring, with scarcely strength enough to groan forth its misery. The shepherd does not beat it home, nor thrust the goad into its back—but he gently takes it up, lays it upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing.

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin and compassed with infirmity. But I bless God that He has in some measure shown me the power of eternal things, and by free and sovereign grace stopped me in that career of vanity and sin in which, to all outward appearance, I was fast hurrying down to the chambers of death. By the grace of God

"By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Corinthians 15:10

What but sovereign grace—rich, free and super-abounding grace—has made the difference between you and the world who cannot receive Him?

But for His divine operations upon your soul, you would still be of the world, hardening your heart against everything good and godlike, walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief and self-righteousness, until you sank down into the chambers of death! The outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God

"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6

What heart can conceive, what tongue express what the holy soul of Christ endured when "the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all?"

In the garden of Gethsemane . . .

what a load of guilt,

what a weight of sin,

what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God,

did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall

as sweat from His brow!

When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin offering) for us, He endured in His holy soul all the pangs of . . .

distress,

horror,

alarm,

misery, and

guilt that all the elect would have felt in hell forever as they would have experienced under the outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God . . .

the anguish,

the distress,

the darkness,

the condemnation,

the shame,

the guilt,

the unutterable horror.

What heart can conceive—what tongue express—the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Substitute under this agonizing experience?

Struggling against the power of sin?

How many poor souls are struggling against the power of sin, and yet never get any victory over it!

How many are daily led captive by . . .

the lusts of the flesh,

the love of the world,

and the pride of life,

and never get any victory over them!

How many fight and grapple with tears, vows, and strong resolutions against their besetting sins, who are still entangled and overcome by them again and again! Now, why is this?

Because they do not know the secret of spiritual strength against, and spiritual victory over them.

It is only by virtue of a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ—drinking into His sufferings and death—and receiving out of His fullness, that we can gain any victory over . . .

the world,

sin,

death,

or hell.

Sin is never really or effectually subdued in any other way.

It is not by legalistic strivings and earnest resolutions, vows, and tears—the vain struggle of 'religious flesh' to subdue 'sinful flesh'—that can overcome sin.

But it is by a believing acquaintance with, and a spiritual entrance into the sufferings and sorrows of the Son of God—having a living faith in Him, and receiving out of His fullness supplies of grace and strength. The anointing

"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you." 1 John 2:27

All the powers of earth and hell are combined against this holy anointing, with which the children of God are so highly favored. But if God has locked up in the bosom of a saint one drop of this divine unction, that one drop is armor against . . .

all the assaults of sin,

all the attacks of Satan,

all the enmity of self, and

all the charms, pleasures, and amusements of the world.

Waves and billows of affliction may roll over the soul—but they cannot wash away this holy drop of anointing oil.

Satan may shoot a thousand fiery darts to inflame all the combustible material of our carnal mind—but all his fiery darts cannot burn up that one drop of oil which God has laid up in the depths of a broken spirit.

The world, with all its charms and pleasures, and its deadly opposition to the truth of God, may stir up waves of ungodliness against this holy anointing—but all the powers of earth combined can never extinguish that one drop which God has Himself lodged in the depths of a believer's heart.

And so it has been with all the dear saints of God. Not all their . . .

sorrows,

backslidings,

slips,

falls,

miseries, and

wretchedness, have ever—all combined, drunk up the anointing that God has bestowed upon them. If sin could have done it—we would have sinned ourselves into hell long ago; and if the world or Satan could have destroyed it or us—they would long ago have destroyed both. If our carnal mind could have done it—it would have swept us away into floods of destruction.

But the anointing abides sure, and cannot be destroyed; and where once lodged in the soul, it is secure against all the assaults of earth, sin, and hell.

"But the anointing which you have received fromHim abides in you." 1 John 2:27 Can I be a child of God, and be thus?

Perhaps you are a poor, tempted creature—and your daily sorrow, your continual trouble is that

you are so soon overcome—that . . .

your temper,

your lusts,

your pride,

your worldliness, and

your carnal, corrupt heart are perpetually getting the mastery.

And from this you sometimes draw bitter conclusions. You say, in the depth of your heart, "Can I be a child of God, and be thus? What mark have I of being in favor with God when I am so easily—so continually overcome?"

But the Spirit reveals Christ—taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us—applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul. It is only in this way that He overcomes all unbelief and infidelity, doubt and fear, and sweetly assures us that all is well between God and the soul.

Faith keeps eyeing the atonement—faith looks not so much to sin, as to salvation from sin—at the way

whereby sin is pardoned, overcome, and subdued. The truth shall make you free!

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!" John 8:32

To a spiritual mind, sweet and self-rewarding is the task, if task it can be called, of searching the Word as for hidden treasure. No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit of prayer and meditation, of separation from the world, of holy fear, of a desire to know the will of God and do it, of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity—to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which are stored up in the Scriptures—and this, not to furnish the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the bread of life.

Truth, received in the love and power of it . . .

informs and establishes the judgment,

softens and melts the heart,

warms and draws upward the affections,

makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender;

is the food of faith,

is the strength of hope,

is the main-spring of love.

To know the truth is to be made blessedly free . . .

free from error;

free from the vile heresies which everywhere abound;

free from presumption;

free from self-righteousness;

free from the curse and bondage of the law;

free from the condemnation of a guilty conscience;

free from a slavish fear of the opinion of men;

free from the contempt of the world;

free from the scorn of worldly professors;

free from following a multitude to do evil;

free from companionship with those who have a name to live, but are dead.

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!" John 8:32

Sin cannot be subdued in any other way.

"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." Galatians 2:20

There is no way except by being spiritually immersed into Christ's death and life—that we can ever get a victory over our besetting sins. If, on the one hand, we have a view of a suffering Christ, and thus become immersed into His sufferings and death—the feeling, while it lasts, will subdue the power of sin.

Or, on the other hand, if we get a believing view of a risen Christ, and receive supplies of grace out of His fullness—that will lift us above sin's dominion.

If sin is powerfully working in us, we need one of these two things to subdue it.

When there is a view of the sufferings and sorrows, agonies and death of the Son of God—power comes down to the soul in its struggles against sin—and gives it a measure of holy resistance and

subduing strength against it.

So, when there is a coming in of the grace and love of Christ—it lifts up the soul from the love and power of sin into a purer and holier atmosphere. Sin cannot be subdued in any other way. You must either be immersed into Christ's sufferings and death—or you must be immersed into Christ's resurrection and life. A sight of Him as a suffering God—or a view of Him as a risen Jesus—must be connected with every successful attempt to get the victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave.

You may strive, vow, and repent—and what does it all amount to? You sink deeper and deeper into sin than before. Pride, lust, and covetousness come in like a flood—and you are swamped and carried away almost before you are aware!

But if you get a view of a suffering Christ, or of a risen Christ—if you get a taste of His dying love—a drop of His atoning blood—or any manifestation of His beauty and blessedness—there comes from this spiritual immersion into His death or His life a subduing power—and this gives a victory over temptation and sin which nothing else can or will give.

Yet I believe we are often many years learning this divine secret—striving to repent and reform, and cannot; until at last by divine teaching we come to learn a little of what the Apostle meant when he said, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." And when we can get into this life of faith—this hidden life, then our affections are set on things above.

There is no use setting to work by 'legal strivings'—they only plunge you deeper in the ditch. You must get Christ into your soul by the power of God—and then He will subdue—by His smiles, blood, love, and presence—every internal foe.

Two kinds of repentance

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret—but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

There are two kinds of repentance which need to be carefully distinguished from each other, though they are often sadly confounded—evangelical repentance, and legal repentance.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented—but their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience—not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry judge—but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father. They neither hated their sins nor forsook them—they neither loved holiness nor sought it.

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord; Esau plotted Jacob's death; Saul consulted the witch of Endor; Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison; and Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God—that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit's gracious operations.

This repentance does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law—but from His mercy in a blessed gospel—from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross—from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and

self-abhorrence, with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it, with most hearty, sincere, and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil, and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God. Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes! Our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, our trials, and above all, the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .

everything worth having, everything worth a moment's anxious thought, everything for time and eternity!

After you have suffered a while

"But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while—make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10

There is no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement—except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is . . .

to perfect,

to establish,

to strengthen,

and to settle it. By suffering, a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the character of Jehovah as revealed in the Scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose"—in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God's eternal purpose—and are all tending to the good of the Church, and to God's eternal glory.

His soul, too, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature; into the conviction that the world is but a shadow—and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped—that of all things sin is most to be dreaded—and the favor of God above all things most to be coveted—that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified—that all things are passing away—and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity.

Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home. In this scene of confusion and distraction

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for—but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Romans 8:26

"We do not know what we ought to pray for." How often do we find and feel this to be our case . . .

darkness covers our mind;

ignorance pervades our soul;

unbelief vexes our spirit;

guilt troubles our conscience;

a crowd of evil imaginations, or foolish or worse than foolish wanderings distract our thoughts;

Satan hurls in thick and fast his fiery darts;

a dense cloud is spread over the mercy-seat;

infidelity whispers its vile suggestions, until, amid all this rabble throng, such confusion and bondage prevail that words seem idle breath, and prayer to the God of heaven but empty mockery.

In this scene of confusion and distraction, when all seems going to the wreck—how kind, how gracious is it in the blessed Spirit to come, as it were, to the rescue of the poor bewildered saint, and to teach him how to pray and what to pray for.

He is therefore said "to help our weaknesses," for these evils of which we have been speaking are not willful, deliberate sins, but wretched infirmities of the flesh. He helps, then, our infirmities—by subduing the power and prevalence of unbelief—by commanding in the mind a solemn calm—by rebuking and chasing away Satan and his fiery darts—by awing the soul with a reverential sense of the power and presence of God—by presenting Jesus before our eyes as the Mediator at the right hand of the Father—by raising up and drawing forth faith upon His Person and work, blood and righteousness—and, above all, by Himself interceding for us and in us "with groans that words cannot express." His own sore and his own afflictions

"When a prayer or plea is made by any of Your people Israel—each one aware of his own sore and his own afflictions, and spreading out his hands toward this Temple—then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." 2 Chronicles 6:29-30

The man for whom Solomon prays is he who knows and feels, painfully feels, his "own sore" and his "own afflictions"—whose heart is indeed a grief to him—whose sins do indeed trouble him.

How painful this sore often is! How it runs night and day! How full of ulcerous matter! How it shrinks from the probe!

Most of the Lord’s family have a "sore"—each some tender spot—something perhaps known

to himself and to God alone—the cause of his greatest grief. It may be . . .

some secret slip he has made,

some sin he has committed,

some word he has spoken, or

some evil thing he has done.

He has been entangled, and entrapped, and cast down—and this is his grief and his sore which he feels—and that at times deeply before God.

For such Solomon prays, "then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." Yes—God alone knows the heart—He knows it completely—and sees to its very bottom.

What are we, when we have no trials?

The Lord has appointed the path of sorrow for the redeemed to walk in. Why? One purpose is to wean them from the world—another purpose is to show them the weakness of the creature—a third purpose is to make them feel the liberty and vitality of genuine godliness made manifest in their soul's experience.

What are we, when we have no trials? Light, frothy, worldly-minded, carnal, frivolous.

We may talk of the things of God, but they are at a distance—there are . . .

no solemn feelings,

no melting sensations,

no real brokenness,

no genuine contrition,

no weeping at the divine feet,

no embracing of Christ in the arms of affection.

What can bring a man here? A few dry notions floating to and fro in his brain? That will never bring the life and power of vital godliness into a man's heart. It must be by being 'experimentally acquainted with trouble'. When he is led into the path of tribulation, he then begins to long after, and, in God's own time and way, he begins to drink into, the sweetness of vital godliness, made manifest in his heart by the power of God.

When affliction brings a man down, it empties him of all his high thoughts, and lays him low in his own eyes.

Spiritual poverty

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Matthew 5:5

Spiritual poverty is a miserable feeling of soul-emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the lowest hell.

To be poor in spirit, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God.

He who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings forth of heart as a needy, naked wretch—he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God—has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor.

Satisfaction!

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

What a sweetness there is in the word "satisfy!"

The world cannot satisfy the child of God. Have we not tried, some of us perhaps for many years, to get some satisfaction from it?

But can wife or husband satisfy us? Can children or relatives satisfy us? Can all the world calls good or great satisfy us? Can the pleasures of sin satisfy us?

Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything that is of the creature, and of the flesh? Do we not find that there is little else but sorrow to be reaped from everything in this world? There is little else to be gathered from the world but . . .

disappointment,

dissatisfaction,

"vanity and vexation of spirit."

The poor soul looks round upon the world and the creature—upon all the occupations, amusements and relations of life—and finds all one melancholy harvest—so that all it reaps is sorrow, perplexity, and dissatisfaction.

Now when a man is brought here—to desire satisfaction, something to make him happy, something to fill up the aching void, something to bind up broken bones, bleeding wounds, and leprous sores—and after he has looked at everything—at doctrines, opinions, notions, speculations, forms, rites and ceremonies in religion—at the world with all its charms—and at self with all its varied workings, and found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch—why, then when the Lord opens up to him something of the bread of life, he finds a satisfaction in that which he never could gain from any other quarter.

And that is the reason why the Lord so afflicts his people; why some carry about with them such weak, suffering bodies; why some have so many family troubles; why others are so deeply steeped in poverty; why others have such rebellious children; and why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be the end.

It is all for one purpose—to make them miserable out of Christ—dissatisfied except with gospel food—to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy, and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds. The religion of a dead professor . . .

How different the religion of a child of God is, from the religion of a dead professor!

The religion of a dead professor . . .

begins in self, and ends in self;

begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly;

begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness;

begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation!

There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord.

But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens and sorrows—yet he never can be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory.

Everything short of that leaves him empty.

All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to . . .

feel His presence,

taste His love,

enjoy His favor,

see His glory;

nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges His people with. Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight and pierces your hand." Isaiah 36:6

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us . . .

our own strength and resolutions,

the world and the church,

sinners and saints,

friends and enemies, have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls.

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from the world,

from friends,

from enemies,

from self,

in order to bring us to lean upon Himself; and every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon His Person, love, blood, and righteousness.

Poor, moping, dejected creatures

We are, most of us, so fettered down by . . .

the chains of time and sense,

the cares of life and daily business,

the weakness of our earthly frame,

the distracting claims of a family, and

the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature, that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

Many of us are poor, moping, dejected creatures.

We have . . .

a variety of trials and afflictions,

a daily cross and the continual plague of an evil heart.

We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart. As then . . .

the weary man seeks rest,

the hungry man seeks food,

the thirsty man seeks drink,

and the sick man seeks health,

so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with Him. He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side.

He makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God’s wrath, that we

may hide ourselves under His justifying robe.

He puts gall and wormwood into the world’s choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from Him. No sight, short of this

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:24

We beg of the Lord, sometimes, to give us . . .

a broken heart,

a contrite spirit,

a tender conscience,

and a humble mind.

But it is only a view by faith of what the gracious Redeemer endured upon the cross, when He bore our sins in his own body with all their weight and pressure, and with all the anger of God due to them, that can really melt a hard, and break a stony heart.

No sight, short of this, can make sin felt to be hateful; bring tears of godly sorrow out of the eyes, sobs of true repentance out of the breast, and the deepest, humblest confessions before God as to what dreadful sinners and base backsliders we have been before the eyes of His infinite Purity, Majesty, and Holiness.

Oh, what hope is there for our guilty souls; what refuge from the wrath of God so justly our due;

what shelter from the curse of a fiery law, except it be in the cross of Jesus?

O for a view of Him revealed to the eyes of our enlightened understanding, as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree! The penetrating light of the Spirit

"For God . . . made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." 1 John 2:20

The only saving light is the light of God shining into the soul—giving us to see and know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

A man may have the clearest light in his judgment, and yet never have the penetrating light of the Spirit producing conviction in his soul. He may have the soundest knowledge of the doctrines of grace, and see the harmonious scheme of salvation—and yet never have by divine teaching, seen a holy God, nor have ever felt the spirituality of God’s righteous law condemning him as a transgressor.

If we do not have this penetrating light of the Spirit, we shall be sure to go astray. We shall . . .

be entangled in some error,

plunge into some heresy,

imbibe some doctrine of devils,

drink into some dreadful delusion,

or fall into some dreadful sin, and

have our faith shipwrecked forever.

A false light can but wreck us on the rocks of presumption or despair. But the light of divine life in the soul is accompanied with all the graces of the Spirit. It is . . .

the light of the glory of God,

the light of Jesus’ countenance,

and the light of the Spirit’s teaching,

and therefore an infallible guide and guard.

And this infallible pilot will guide the soul to whom it is given safe into the harbor of endless rest and peace.

08.03. Volume 3

All true religion

Jesus is . . .

our sun, and without Him all is darkness;

our life, and without Him all is death;

the beginner and finisher of our faith;

the substance of our hope;

the object of our love.

It is the Spirit who quickens us . . .

to feel our need of Christ;

to seek all our supplies in Him and from Him;

to believe in Him unto everlasting life,

and thus live a life of faith upon Him.

By His . . .

secret teachings,

inward touches,

gracious smiles,

soft whispers,

sweet promises,

manifestations of Christ’s glorious Person and work,

Christ’s agonizing sufferings and dying love,

the Holy Spirit draws the heart up to Christ.

He thus wins our affections, and setting Christ before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One," draws out that love and affection towards Jesus which puts the world under our feet.

All true religion flows from the Spirit’s grace, presence and power.

The regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit

From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible for a dead soul to . . .

believe in God,

know God,

or love God.

It must be quickened into spiritual life before it can savingly know the only true God. And thus there lies at the very threshold—in the very heart and core of the case—the absolute necessity of the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit upon the soul.

The very completeness and depth of the fall render the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as necessary, as indispensable as the redeeming work of the Son of God. This hard school of painful experience

In times of trial and darkness, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God—they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie—they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing—that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God—and that all they are and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace—the rich, free, undeserved, yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God.

They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness—and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility, that lovely, becoming garb—cease from their own strength and wisdom—and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

Many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances

"Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know Him!" Hosea 6:3

The expression, "press on," implies that there are many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances in a man’s way, which keep him back from "knowing the Lord." Now the work of the Spirit in his soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles—to lead him forward—to keep alive in him the fear of God—to strengthen him in his inner man—to drop in those hopes—to communicate that inward grace—so that he is compelled to press on.

Sometimes he seems driven, sometimes drawn, sometimes led, and sometimes carried, but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarcely knows how—he still "presses on."

His very burdens make him groan for deliverance—his very temptations cause him to cry for help—the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step—the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide—so that the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on—and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, until He sets him in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. The Christian is a marvel to himself. Carried on, and yet so secretly—worked upon, and yet so mysteriously; and yet led on, guided, and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles—that he is a miracle of mercy as he is carried on amid all . . .

difficulties,

obstacles,

trials, and

temptations. The poison fang of sin!

We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are, and what they are capable of—we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind—before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it—but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores—they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Isaiah 1:6

When the Church of God fell in Adam, she fell with a crash which broke every bone and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from head to toe.

Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed . . .

her understanding was blinded;

her conscience stupefied;

her affections alienated.

Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted.

When Adam fell into sin and temptation—sin rushed into every faculty of body and soul—and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being.

As when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent, the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot; so did the poison fang of sin penetrate into Adam’s inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown.

But it is only as sin’s desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality.

"The whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint."

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved . . .

the will chooses evil;

the affections cleave to earthly things;

the memory, like a broken sieve,

retains the bad and lets fall the good;

the judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge,

pronounces heedless or wrong decisions;

the conscience, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence. A penitent backslider and a forgiving God!

"And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." Luke 15:20

After a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of His dear Son, he may wander from his mercies—stray away from these choice gospel pastures—and get into a waste howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water—and yet, though half starved for poverty, has in himself no power to return.

But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place he brings him to is the mercy seat—confessing his sins and seeking mercy.

O what a meeting!

A penitent backslider and a forgiving God!

O what a meeting!

A guilty wretch drowned in tears—and a loving Father falling upon his neck and kissing him!

O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace super-abounding over all his abounding sins—and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day—and melting his heart into contrition and love!

Salvation!

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now has come the salvation." Revelation 12:10

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is "salvation."

To be saved from . . .

death and hell;

the worm which dies not;

the fire which is not quenched;

the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;

the companionship of tormenting fiends;

all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;

blaspheming God in unutterable woe;

an eternity of misery without hope;

and saved into . . .

heaven;

the sight of Jesus as He is;

perfect holiness and happiness;

the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints! And all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word salvation! A peculiar people

"But you are . . .a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Peter 2:9

May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave Himself to purify unto Himself a peculiar people . . .a people whose thoughts are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ; a people whose affections are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above; a people whose prayers are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication; a people whose sorrows are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source; a people whose joys are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger cannot understand; a people whose hopes are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil; a people whose expectations are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world—but are looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God.

They make it manifest that they are a peculiar people by . . .

walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb,

taking up the cross,

denying themselves, and

living to the honor, praise, and glory of God.

Softened, broke, and melted your heart

"I drew them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love." Hosea 11:4

When God draws His people near unto Himself, it is not done in a mechanical way. They are drawn, not with cords of iron, but with the cords of kindness; not as if God laid an iron arm upon His people to drag them to Himself—whether they wished to come or not. God does not so act in a way of mechanical force.

We therefore read, "Your people shall be made willing in the day of Your power." He touches their heart with His gracious finger, and he communicates to their soul both faith and feeling. He melts, softens, and humbles their heart by a sense of His goodness and mercy—for it is His goodness,

as experimentally felt and realized, which leads to repentance.

If you have ever felt any secret and sacred drawing of your soul upward to heaven—it was not compulsion, not violence, not a mechanical constraint—but an arm of pity and compassion let down into your very heart, which, touching your inmost spirit, drew it up into the bosom of God.

It was some view of His goodness, mercy, and love, with some dropping into your spirit of His pity and compassion towards you, which softened, broke, and melted your heart. You were not driven onward by being flogged and scourged, but blessedly drawn with the cords of kindness, which seemed to touch every tender feeling and enter into the very depths of your soul.

Fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand.

Truth, as it stands in the naked word of God, is lifeless and dead—and as such, has no power to communicate what it has not in itself—that is, life and power to the hearts of God's people. It stands there in so many letters and syllables, as lifeless as the types by which they were printed.

But when the incarnate Word takes of the written word, and speaks it home into the heart and conscience of a vessel of mercy, whether in letter or substance—then He endues it with divine life—and it enters into the soul, communicating to it a life that can never die.

Eternal realities are then brought into the soul, fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand. The conscience is made alive in the fear of God; and the soul is raised up from a death in sin, to a heavenly, new, and supernatural life. When we are reduced to poverty and beggary

How often we seem not to have any real religion, or enjoy any solid comfort! How often are our minds covered with deep darkness! How often does the Lord hide Himself, so that we cannot behold Him, nor get near to Him! What a painful path is this to walk in, but how profitable!

When we are reduced to poverty and beggary, we learn to value Christ's glorious riches.

The worse opinion we have of our own heart, and the more deceitful and desperately wicked that we find it—the more we put our trust in His faithfulness.

The more black we are in our own esteem—the more beautiful and lovely does He appear in our eyes.

As we sink—Jesus rises.

As we become feeble—He puts forth his strength.

As we come into danger—He brings deliverance.

As we get into temptation—He breaks the snare.

As we are shut up in darkness and obscurity; He causes the light of His countenance to shine.

Now it is by being led in this way, and walking in these paths, that we come rightly to know who Jesus is; and to see and feel how suitable and precious such a Savior is to our undone souls! We are needy, He has in Himself all riches.

We are hungry—He is the bread of life.

We are thirsty—He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

We are naked—and He has clothing to bestow.

We are fools—and He has wisdom to grant.

We are lost, and He speaks— "Look unto Me, and be saved."

Thus, so far from our misery shutting us out from God’s mercy—it is the only requisite for it.

So far from our guilt excluding His pardon, it is the only thing needful for it.

So far from our helplessness ruining our souls, it is the needful preparation for the manifestation of His power in our weakness.

We cannot heal our own wounds and sores. That is the very reason why He should stretch forth His arm.

It is because there is no salvation in ourselves, or in any other creature, that He says, "Look unto Me, for I am God, and there is no other." Not a grain! Not an atom!

What am I?

What are you?

Are we not filthy, polluted, and defiled?

Do not we, more or less, daily feel altogether as an unclean thing? Is not every thought of our heart altogether vile?

Does any holiness, any spirituality, any heavenly-mindedness, any purity, any resemblance to the divine image dwell in our hearts by nature?

Not a grain! Not an atom!

How then can I, a polluted sinner, ever see the face of a holy God?

How can I, a worm of earth, corrupted within and without by indwelling and committed sin, ever hope to see a holy God without shrinking into destruction?

When we view the pure and spotless holiness of Jesus imputed to His people, and view them . . .

holy in Him,

pure in Him,

without spot in Him,

how it does away with all the wrinkles of the creature, and makes them stand holy and spotless before God.

They will come with weeping

"They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back." Jeremiah 31:9

As they come, they weep. They mourn . . .

over their base backslidings,

over the many evils they have committed,

over the levity of mind which they have indulged,

over the worldliness of spirit,

over the—

pride,

presumption,

hypocrisy,

carnality,

carelessness, and

obstinacy of their heart.

They go and weep with a broken heart and softened spirit—seeking the Lord their God—seeking the secret manifestations of His mercy, the visitations of His favor, the "lifting up of the light of His countenance"— seeking after a revelation of the love of Jesus—to know Him by a spiritual discovery of Himself.

Being thus minded . . .

they seek not to establish their own righteousness;

they seek not the applause of the world;

they seek not the good opinion of professors;

they seek not the smiles of saints. But they . . .

seek the Lord their God,

seek His face day and night,

seek His favor,

seek His mercy,

seek His grace,

seek His love,

seek His glory,

seek the sweet visitations of His presence and power,

seek Him until they find Him to be their covenant God,

who heals all their backslidings. This is the saint’s inheritance!

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory." Romans 8:17

This is the especial blessedness of being a child of God: that death, which puts a final extinguisher on all the hopes and happiness of all the unregenerate—gives him the fulfillment of all his hopes and the consummation of all his happiness—for it places him in possession of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven."

In this present earthly life, we have sometimes sips and tastes of sonship, feeble indeed and interrupted; yet are they so far pledges of an inheritance to come.

But this life is only an introduction to a better. In this life we are but children—but in the life to come, we shall be put into full possession of the eternal inheritance.

And what is this? Nothing less than God Himself. "Heirs of God!" says the Apostle. God Himself is the inheritance of His people—yes, He Himself in all His glorious perfections . . .

all the love of God,

all the goodness of God,

all the holiness of God,

all His happiness, bliss, and blessedness,

all His might, majesty, and glory, in

all the blaze of one eternal, unclouded day!

This is the saint’s inheritance!

Let us press on by faith and prayer to win this eternal and glorious crown!

Savory food such as their soul loves

"For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink." John 6:55

This food is specially for the elect . . .

blood shed for their sins, and for their sins only;

righteousness brought in for them, and for them only;

love bestowed upon them, and upon them only;

promises revealed for their comfort, and for their comfort only;

an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for them, and for them only.

The elect are the only people . . .

who hunger after it,

who have an appetite for it,

who have a mouth to feed upon it,

who have a stomach to digest it.

They are the only people whose eyes

are really open to see what "food" is.

All others feed upon shadows—they know nothing of the savory food of the gospel. "I have food to eat

which you know not of." Jesus' food was . . .

the hidden communications of God's love,

the visitations of His Father's presence,

the divine communion that He enjoyed with His Father.

So, for the children of God, there is food in Christ; and this food the Lord gives them a hunger after. He not only sets before their eyes what the food is, but He kindles inexpressible longings in their soul to be fed with it.

God's people cannot feed . . .

upon husks,

nor upon ashes,

nor upon chaff,

nor upon the wind,

nor upon grapes of gall and the bitter clusters of Gomorrah.

They must have real food, "savory food such as their soul loves," that which God Himself communicates, and which His hand alone can bring down, and give unto them, so that they may receive it from Him as their soul-satisfying portion.

"For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink." A smoother way to glory?

"They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that they MUST enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations." Acts 14:22

The Lord has chosen that His people should pass through deep and cutting afflictions, for it is "through many tribulations" they are to enter the Kingdom of God above, and into the sweetness and power of the Kingdom of God below.

But every man will resent this doctrine, except God has led him experimentally into it. It is such a rough and rugged path—it is so contrary to flesh and blood—it is so inexplicable to nature and reason—that man, proud, rebellious man, will never believe that he must "enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations."

And this is the reason why so many find, or seek to find, a smoother way to glory than the Lord has appointed His saints to walk in. But shall the Head travel in one path—and the members in another? Shall the Bridegroom walk and wade through seas of sorrow—and the bride never so

much as wet her feet with the water? Shall the Bridegroom be crucified in weakness and suffering—and there be no inward crucifixion for the dearly beloved of His heart?

Shall the Head . . .

suffer,

grieve,

agonize,

groan,

and die—and the members dance down a flowery road, without inward sorrow or outward suffering?

But, perhaps, there are some who say in their heart, "I am well convinced of this—but my coward flesh shrinks from it. I know if I am to reach the Canaan above, I must pass through the appointed portion of tribulation. But my coward flesh shrinks back!"

It does! it does! Who would willingly bring trials upon himself? Therefore the Lord does not leave these trials in our hands—but He Himself appoints a certain measure of tribulation for each of His people to pass through. They will come soon enough; you need not anticipate them; you need not wish for them. God will bring them—in His own time and in His own way.

And what is more, God will not merely bring you into them, but God will bring you through them, and God will bring you out of them! It will be our mercy if enabled to ask the Lord . . .

to bless us with faith and patience under tribulation;

to give us strength to bear the storm;

to lie as clay in His hands;

to conform us to the image of His Son;

to guide us through this valley of tears below;

and eventually to take us to be with Him above! Should you then seek great things for yourself?

"Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers often seek . . .

great gifts,

great eloquence,

great congregations,

great popularity.

They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things. Let them rather seek real things, gracious things, things that will make their souls blessed here and hereafter.

We stand upon slippery places!

"The Lord keep you." Numbers 6:24

How we need the Lord to keep us!

We stand upon slippery places!

Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction.

Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest—has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds. Nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him—and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God does not keep him.

Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul, "The Lord keep me" . . .

keep me in His providence, keep me by His grace;

keep me by planting His fear deep in my soul, and

maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart;

keep me waking, keep me sleeping;

keep me by night, keep me by day;

keep me at home, keep me abroad;

keep me with my family, keep me with my friends;

keep me in the world, and keep me in the church.

May the Lord keep me, according to His promise, every moment—keep me by His Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in His words, "O keep me as the apple of Your eye!"

My friends, you can know . . .

little of your own heart,

little of Satan’s devices,

little of the snares spread for your feet,

unless you feel how deeply you need this blessing—"The Lord keep you."

And He will, for we read of the righteous, that they are kept "by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of His saints."

One grain of holiness?

Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one.

Can all the men in the world, by all their united exertions, raise up a grain of spiritual holiness in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts.

If all the preachers in the world were to unite together for the purpose of working a grain of holiness in one man's soul, they might strive to all eternity—they could no more by their preaching create holiness, than by their preaching they could create a lump of gold.

But Jesus imparts a measure of His own holiness to His people. He sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires. He communicates a heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature—which bathes in eternal things as its element—and enjoys spiritual things as sweet and precious. It may indeed be small in measure;

and he that has it is often troubled because he has so little of it—yet he has enough to know what it is.

Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind—has it not felt, does it not sometimes feel—a measure of holiness Godwards?

Do you ever feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God . . .

heavenly desires,

pure affections,

singleness of eye,

simplicity of purpose,

a heart that longs to have the mind, image,

and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it?

This is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of his fullness to His poor and needy family.

What is this hidden manna?

"To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat." Revelation 2:17

What is this hidden manna?

Is it not God's Word applied with power to the heart?

What does the prophet Jeremiah say? "Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

When the Lord is pleased . . .

to drop a word into the heart from his own lips;

to apply some promise;

to open up some precious portion of his Word;

to whisper softly some blessed Scripture into the heart;

is not this manna?

Whence did the manna flow? Was it cultivated by the hand of man? No—it fell from heaven. And is not this true of the Word of the Lord applied with power to the heart? It is not our searching the Scriptures, though it is good to search the Scriptures—but it is the Lord Himself being pleased to apply some precious portion of truth to our hearts—and when this takes place, it is "manna;" it is . . .

sweet,

refreshing,

strengthening,

comforting,

encouraging;

yes, it is angels' food—the very flesh and blood of the Lamb with which the Lord is pleased from time to time to feed and favor hungry souls.

But, in the text it is called "hidden." Why "hidden"? Because hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent. Hidden from the eyes of self-righteous pharisees; hidden from those who fight in their own strength, and seek to gain the victory by their own brawny arm; hidden from all but God's tried and tempted family; hidden from all but those who know the plague of their own hearts; hidden from all but those who have learned the secret of overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of His testimony.

When the Lord leads us to sink down into weakness, and in weakness to find his strength made perfect—to fall down all guilty—and then to feel the application of atoning blood—this is manna.

The children of Israel had to endure hunger in the wilderness before manna fell—and thus the Lord's people learn the value of the hidden manna—the sweet communications from above—by hungering and thirsting in a waste-howling wilderness.

This is hidden from all eyes except those that are anointed by the Spirit to see it—and hidden from all hearts except those that are prepared to receive and feed upon it.

"I am the living bread who came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." John 6:51

Entangled, perplexed and distressed?

How many of the Lord's people are continually under bondage to evil! What power the lusts of the flesh have over some—how perpetually they are entangled with everything sensual and carnal! What power the pride of the heart has over another! And what strength covetousness exercises over a third! What power the love of the world and the things of time and sense exercise over a fourth!

How then are they to overcome sin?

By making resolutions? By endeavoring to overcome it in their own strength? No! Sin will always break through man’s strength. It will always be stronger than any resolution we can make not to be overcome by it.

The Lord allows His people to be so long and often entangled, perplexed and distressed, that they may learn this secret—which is hidden from all but God’s living family—that the strength of Christ is made perfect in their weakness.

Have not some of you had to learn this lesson very painfully? There was a time when you thought you would get better and better, holier and holier—that you would not only not walk in open sin as before,

but would not be . . .

entangled by temptation,

overcome by besetting lusts,

or cast down by hidden snares.

There was a time when you thought you were going forward—attaining some more strength—some better wisdom than you believed you once possessed.

How has it been with you?

Have these expectations ever been realized?

Have you ever attained these fond hopes?

Has sin become weaker?

Has the world become less alluring?

Have your lusts become tamer?

Has your temper become milder?

Have the corruptions of your heart become feebler and feebler?

If I can read the heart of some poor tried, tempted soul here present, he would say, "No! To my shame and sorrow, be it spoken, I find on the contrary that sin is stronger and stronger—that the evils of my heart are more and more powerful than ever I knew them in my life—and as to my own endeavors to overcome them, I find indeed that they are fainter and fainter, and weaker and weaker. This it is that casts me down. If I could have more strength against sin—if I could stand more boldly against Satan—if I could overcome my besetting lusts—live more to God’s glory—and be holier and holier—then, then, I could have some comfort. But to feel myself so continually baffled, so perpetually disconcerted, so incessantly cast down by the workings of my corrupt nature—it is this, it is this that cuts so keenly—it is this, it is this that tries me so deeply!"

My friend, you are on the high road to victory. This is the very way by which you are to overcome.

When you feel . . .

weaker and weaker,

poorer and poorer,

guiltier and guiltier,

viler and viler,

so that really through painful experience you are compelled to call yourself, not in the language of mock humility, but in the language of self abhorrence—the chief of sinners—then you are on the high road to victory.

Then the blood of the Lamb is applied to the sinner's conscience, and the Word of God's testimony comes with power into his soul—it gives him the victory over those lusts with which he was before entangled—it brings him out of the world that had so allured him—and breaks to pieces the dominion of sin under which he had been so long laboring. A very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge

"We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true." 1 John 5:20

There is a difference between a gracious, enlightened understanding of the truth of God which springs out of the teaching of the Spirit—and what is commonly called "head knowledge." There is such a thing—and a most dangerous, delusive thing it is—as "mere head knowledge" and it is widely prevalent in the churches.

You may say, "How am I to distinguish between mere head knowledge and this spiritual understanding?"

I will tell you. When a special light is cast into your mind—when the Word is opened up in its spiritual, experimental meaning—when the Holy Spirit seals it with sweetness and power upon your heart—and you not only understand what you read but receive it in faith, feel its savor, and enjoy its blessedness. Is not this a very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge?

Poor in spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

None are really poor in spirit, but those whom the hand of God has stripped—whom He has brought down—and made to abhor themselves in dust and ashes—and to see and feel themselves destitute of everything good, holy, heavenly, and pleasing in His pure and heart searching eyes.

The heart must be stripped and emptied, and laid bare effectually—by a work of grace that goes to the very bottom, and penetrates into the recesses of the soul—so as to detect all the corruption that lurks and festers within.

The really "poor" man is one who has had everything taken from him—who has had not merely his dim views of a merciful God (such as natural men have) taken from him—not merely his legal righteousness stripped away—but all that kind of notional, traditional religion, which is so rife in the present day, taken from him also—and who has been brought in guilty before God, naked, in the

dust, having nothing whereby to conciliate Him, or gain His favor.

God’s purpose

"That no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Corinthians 1:29

Man may glory in himself—but God has forever trampled man’s glory under foot. God’s purpose is to stain the pride of human glory.

Utter fools!

"Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead." Romans 1:22

What am I by nature? A fool! All my wisdom, outside of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness—and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance!

Left to ourselves we are utter fools! We have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet. We are . . .

blind,

ignorant,

weak,

helpless, and

utterly unable to find our way to God.

All wisdom which does not come down from the Father is folly. All strength not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness. All knowledge that does not spring from the Lord’s own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance.

We must know the value of the gem before we can really prize it. When diamonds were first discovered in Brazil, nobody knew that they were diamonds. They were handed about as pretty, shining pebbles. But as soon it was discovered they were diamonds, they were eagerly sought, and their value rose a thousandfold.

So spiritually. Until we can distinguish between the "pebble of man’s teaching" and the "diamond of divine illumination" we shall neglect, we shall despise, we shall not value divine wisdom. The heart of God’s child

There is much . . .

presumption, pride,

hypocrisy,

deceit,

delusion,

formality,

superstition,

will-worship and self-righteousness to be purged out of the heart of God's child.

But all these things . . .

keep him low,

mar his pride,

crush his self righteousness,

cut the locks of his presumption,

stain his self-conceit,

stop his boasting,

preserve him from despising others,

make him take the lowest room,

teach him to esteem others better than himself,

drive him to earnest prayer,

fit him as an object of mercy,

break to pieces his free-will, and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone! A spirit of delusion

A spirit of delusion seems to us widely prevalent . . .

a carnal confidence,

a dead assurance,

a presumptuous claim,

a daring mimicry of the spirit of adoption.

Who that has eyes or heart does not see and feel the wide spread of this gigantic evil?

No brokenness of heart, no tenderness of conscience, no spirituality of mind, no heavenly affections, no prayerfulness and watchfulness, no godly devotedness of life, no self denial and crucifixion, no humility or contrition, no separation from the world, no communion with the Lord of life and glory.

In a word, none of the blessed graces and fruits of the Spirit attend this carnal confidence.

On the contrary . . .

levity,

jesting,

pride,

covetousness,

self-exaltation, and often gross self-indulgence are evidently stamped upon many, if not most, of these hardened professors. The husks which the swine eat

All forms, opinions, rites, ceremonies and notions to me are nothing—and worse than nothing. They are the husks which the swine eat—not the food of the living soul.

To have the heart deeply penetrated with the fear of Jehovah—to be melted and filled with a sweet sense of Jesus' dying love—to have the affections warmed and drawn forth under the anointings of the Eternal Comforter—this is the only religion that can suit and satisfy a regenerate soul!

Then they cried

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Psalms 107:4-6

Until they wandered in the wilderness; until they felt it to be a solitary way; until they found no city to dwell in; until hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them; there was no cry.

There might have been a prayer, a desire, a feeble wish, and now and then a sigh or a groan.

But this was not enough. Something more was needed to draw forth loving-kindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the Church.

A cry was needed—a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. A cry implies urgent need—a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is this solemn feeling in the heart that there is no other refuge but God.

The Lord brings all His people here—to have no other refuge but Himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintance—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is . . .

no refuge,

nor shelter,

nor harbor,

nor home into which they can fly, except the Lord.

Thus troubles force us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much; and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists;

and they bring a man to this solemn spot—that he must have God to support him—and bring him out of his trouble. But what a mercy it is when there is a cry!

And when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble, He is sure in his own time and way to send deliverance out of it.

O what painful work it is!

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house." 1 Peter 2:5

God’s people require . . .

many severe afflictions,

many harassing temptations,

and many powerful trials to hew them into any good shape, to chisel them into any conformity to Christ’s image.

For they are not like the passive marble under the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and indeed without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that jutting angle rounded by the chisel.

But God’s people are living stones, and therefore, they feel every stroke. We are so tender skinned that we cannot bear a ’thread of trouble’ to lie upon us—we shrink from even the touch of the chisel.

To be hewed, then, and squared, and chiseled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please Him—O what painful work it is!

If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls . . .

we have not had,

we are not now having,

we shall never have . . .

one stroke too much,

one stroke too little,

one stroke in the wrong direction.

But there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God’s sight—and to make us that which He would have us to be.

What a great deal of trouble would we be spared if we could only patiently submit to the Lord’s afflicting stroke—and know no will but His.

We get no better, but rather worse

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

We are ever looking for something in SELF to make ourselves acceptable to God—and are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find . . . that holiness,

that obedience,

that calm submission to the will of God,

that serenity of soul,

that spirituality and heavenly mindedness,

which we believe to be acceptable in His sight.

Our crooked tempers, our fretful peevish minds, our rebellious thoughts, our coldness, our barrenness, our alienation from good, our headlong proneness to evil, with the daily feeling that we get no better, but rather worse—make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves. We seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ, and get into the miserable dregs of SELF. We are so vile, and only get worse as we get older.

Now the more we get into these dregs of SELF, and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view—the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel—and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God.

It is "in the Beloved" alone, that we are accepted—and not for any . . .good words,

good works,

good thoughts,

good hearts, or

good intentions of our own.

And a saving knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved," independent of everything in us either good or bad, is a firm foundation for our faith and hope—and will keep us from sinking altogether into despair.

Blundering and stumbling on in darkness

After the Lord has quickened our souls, for a time we often go blundering on, not knowing there is a Jesus.

We think that the way of life is to . . .

keep God’s commandments,

obey the law,

cleanse ourselves from sin,

reform our lives,

cultivate universal holiness in thought, word, and action—and so we go—blundering and stumbling on in darkness—and all the while never get a single step forward. But when the Lord has allowed us to weary ourselves to find the door, and let us sink lower and lower into the pit of guilt and ruin, from feeling that all our attempts to extricate ourselves have only plunged us deeper and deeper—and when the Spirit of God opens up to the understanding and brings into the soul some spiritual discovery of Jesus, and thus makes known that there is a Savior, a Mediator, and a way of escape—this is the grand turning point in our lives, the first opening in the valley of Achor (trouble) of the door of hope. When you are in the wilderness

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Hosea 2:14

When you are in the wilderness, you have . . .

no friend,

no creature help,

no worldly comfort—

these have all abandoned you.

God has led you into the wilderness to bereave you of these earthly ties, of these 'creature refuges and vain hopes', that He may Himself speak to your soul.

If, then, you are separated from the world by being brought into the wilderness—if you are passing through trials and afflictions—if you are exercised with a variety of temptations—and are brought into that spot where the creature yields neither help nor hope—then you are made to see and feel that nothing but God's voice speaking with power to your soul can give you any solid grounds of rest or peace.

But is not this profitable? It may be painful—it is painful—but it is profitable, because by it we learn to look to the Lord and the Lord alone—and this must ever be a blessed lesson to learn for every child of God.

O what crowds of pitiable objects

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

What heart can conceive or tongue recount the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ's all-conquering grace?

We see scarcely a millionth part of what He, as a King on his throne, is daily doing. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds His throne! What urgent needs and woes to answer; what cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage; what broken hearts to bind up; what wounded consciences to heal; what countless prayers to hear; what earnest petitions to grant; what stubborn foes to subdue; what guilty fears to quell!

What grace, what kindness, what patience, what compassion, what mercy, what love, what power, what authority, does this Almighty Sovereign display!

No circumstance is too trifling; no petitioner too insignificant; no case too hard; no difficulty too great; no seeker too importunate; no beggar too ragged; no bankrupt too penniless; no debtor too insolvent; for Him not to notice and not to relieve.

Sitting on His throne of grace . . .

His all-seeing eye views all,

His almighty hand grasps all,

and His loving heart embraces all whom the Father chose—whom He himself redeemed by His blood—and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by His invincible power.

The hopeless, the helpless; the outcasts whom no man cares for; the tossed with tempest and not comforted; the ready to perish; the mourners in Zion; the bereaved widow; the wailing orphan; the sick in body; and still more sick in heart; the racked with hourly pain; the fevered consumptive; the wrestler with death's last struggle.

O what crowds of pitiable objects surround His throne—and all needing . . .

a look from His eye,

a word from His lips,

a smile from His face,

a touch from His hand!

O could we but see what His grace is—what His grace has—what His grace does—and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we would have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high by Zion's enthroned King!

08.04. Volume 4

Trouble, sorrow, and affliction

"And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalms 107:7

Those very times when God's people think they are faring ill, may be the seasons when they are really faring well. For instance, when their souls are bowed down with trouble, it often seems to them that they are faring ill. God's hand appears to be gone out against them. Yet perhaps they never fare better than when under these circumstances of trouble, sorrow, and affliction. These things wean them from the world.

If their heart and affections were going out after idols—they instrumentally bring them back.

If they were hewing out broken cisterns—they dash them all to pieces.

If they were setting up, and bowing down to idols in the chambers of imagery, affliction and trouble smite them to pieces before their eyes—take away their gods—and leave them no refuge but the Lord God of hosts.

So that when a child of God thinks he is faring very ill, because burdened with sorrows, temptations, and afflictions—he is never faring so well. The darkest clouds in due time will break, the most puzzling enigmas will sooner or later be unriddled by the blessed Spirit interpreting them—and the darkest providences cleared up—and we shall see that God is in them all—leading and guiding us by the right way, that we may go to a city of habitation.

If you are at home in the world

"We are here for only a moment, sojourners and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace." 1 Chronicles 29:15

If you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you, like them, confess that you are a stranger; and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a sincere experience.

You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world.

It is not your element.

It is not your home.

You are in it during God's appointed time, but you wander up and down this world . . .

a stranger to its company,

a stranger to its maxims,

a stranger to its fashions,

a stranger to its principles,

a stranger to its motives,

a stranger to its lusts,

a stranger to its inclinations—and all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God’s sovereign power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it.

I can tell you plainly if you are at home in the world—if the things of time and sense are your element—if you feel one with . . .

the company of the world,

the maxims of the world,

the fashions of the world, and

the principles of the world,

grace has not reached your heart—the faith of God’s elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to separate.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers, and go out into a land that God would show him. And so God’s own word to His people is now, "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Separation, separation, separation from the world; is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness.

There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is . . .

separation of heart,

separation of principle,

separation of affection,

separation of spirit.

And if grace has touched your heart, and you are a partaker of the faith of God’s elect—you are a stranger in the world—and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such. From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are—riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the eye has seen, or the ear heard, or has

entered into the carnal heart of man—put side by side with being saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation?

For consider what we are saved FROM, as well as what we are saved UNTO.

From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

From endless wrath—to eternal glory!

From the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented—to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels—and, above all, to seeing the glorious

Son of God as he is, in all the perfection of His beauty, and all the ravishments of His presence and love.

To be done forever with . . .

all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life;

all the pains and aches of the present clay tabernacle;

all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of sin and death.

To be perfectly holy in body and soul, being in both without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, and ever to enjoy uninterrupted communion with God! Our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength

"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise." 1 Corinthians 3:18

The fruit and effect of divine teaching is—to cut in pieces, and root up all our fleshly . . .

wisdom,

strength, and

righteousness.

God never means to patch a new piece upon an old garment. All our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness must be torn to pieces! It must all be plucked up by the roots—that a new wisdom, a new strength, and a new righteousness may arise upon its ruins.

But until the Lord is pleased to teach us—we never can part with our own righteousness, never give up our own wisdom, never abandon our own strength. These things are a part and parcel of ourselves—so ingrained within us—so innate in us—so growing with our growth—that we cannot willingly part with an atom of them until the Lord Himself breaks them up, and plucks them away.

Then, as He brings into our souls some spiritual knowledge of our own dreadful corruptions and horrible wickedness—our righteousness crumbles away at the divine touch.

As He leads us to see and feel our ignorance and folly in a thousand instances—and how unable we are to understand anything aright but by divine teaching—our wisdom fades away.

As He shows us our inability to resist temptation and overcome sin, by any exertion of our own—our strength gradually departs—and we become like Samson, when his locks were cut off.

Upon the ruins, then, of our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, does God build up Christ's wisdom, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's strength.

But only so far as we are favored with this special teaching are we brought to pass a solemn sentence of condemnation upon our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness—and sincerely seek after the Lord's.

Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace!

"For it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:8

We are saved by grace . . .

free grace,

rich grace,

sovereign grace,

distinguishing grace—

without one atom of works,

without one grain of creature merit,

without anything of the flesh.

Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace!

Oh! what a help—what a strength—what a rest for a poor toiling, striving, laboring soul—to find that grace has done all the work—to feel that grace has triumphed in the cross of Christ—to find that . . .

nothing is required, nothing is needed, nothing is to be done!

Dying?

"As dying, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

Though we die, and die daily—yet, behold, we live. And in a sense, the more we die, the more we live.

The more we die to self, the more we die to sin.

The more we die to pride and self-righteousness, the more we die to creature strength.

The more we die to sinful nature, the more we live to grace.

This runs all the way through the life and experience of a Christian.

Nature must die, that grace may live.

The weeds must be plucked up, that the crop may grow.

The flesh must be starved, that the spirit may be fed.

The old man must be put off, that the new man may be put on.

The deeds of the body must be mortified, that the soul may live unto God.

As then we die—we live.

The more we die to our own strength, the more we live to Christ's strength.

The more we die to creature hope, the more we live to a good hope through grace.

The more we die to our own righteousness, the more we live to Christ's righteousness.

The more we die to the world, the more we live to and for heaven.

This is the grand mystery—that the Christian is always dying, yet always living—and the more he dies, the more he lives.

The death of the flesh, is the life of the spirit.

The death of sin, is the life of righteousness.

The death of the creature, is the very life of God in the soul.

"As dying, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

You were bought with a price!

"You were bought with a price!" 1 Corinthians 6:20

How deep, how dreadful, of what alarming magnitude, of how black a dye, of how ingrained a stamp—must sin be, to need such an atonement, no less than the blood of the Son of God, to put it away!

What a slave to sin and Satan, what a captive to the power of lust, how deeply sunk, how awfully degraded, how utterly lost and undone, must guilty man be—to need a sacrifice like this!

Have you ever felt your bondage to sin, Satan, and the world? Have you ever—groaned, cried, grieved, sorrowed, and lamented under your miserable captivity to the power of sin?

Has the iron ever entered into your soul? Have you ever clanked your fetters, and as you did so, and tried to burst them—they seemed to bind round about you with a weight scarcely endurable?

You were slaves of sin and Satan. You were shut up in the dark cell, where all was gloom and despondency. There was little hope in your soul of ever being saved.

But there was an entrance of gospel light into your dungeon—there was a coming out of the house of bondage! "You were bought with a price!" Which is better?

"You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Remember that you must belong to someone.

If God is not your master—the devil will be.

If grace does not rule—sin will reign.

If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be.

We must have a master of one kind or another.

Which is better . . .

a bounteous benevolent Benefactor;

a merciful, loving, and tender Parent;

a kind, forgiving Father and Friend;

a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?

or

a cruel devil,

a miserable world, and

a wicked, vile, abominable heart?

Which is better . . .

to live under the sweet constraints of the

dying love of a dear Redeemer—under . . .

gospel influences,

gospel principles,

gospel promises, and

gospel encouragements?

or

to live with sin in our heart, binding us in

iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the 'present life'—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness . . .

in half an hour with God,

in reading his Word with a believing heart,

in finding access to His sacred presence,

in knowing something of His favor and mercy—

than in . . .

all the delights of sin,

all the lusts of the flesh,

all the pride of life, and

all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a deathbed repentance, at last to cheat the devil.

Conflicts, trials, painful exercises, sharp sorrows, and deep temptations

"The Lord tries the righteous." Psalms 11:5

To keep water fresh, it must be perpetually running. And to keep the life of God up in the soul, there must be continual trials.

This is the reason why the Lord's people have so many . . .

conflicts,

trials,

painful exercises,

sharp sorrows,

and deep temptations—

to keep them alive unto God—to bring them out of, and to keep them out of that slothful, sluggish, wretched state of carnal security.

The Lord, therefore, "tries the righteous." He will not allow His people . . .

to be at ease in Zion;

to be settled on their lees, and

get into a wretched Moabitish state.

He therefore sends upon them afflictions, tribulations, and trials—and allows Satan to tempt and harass them.

Personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Jesus

It is our dim, scanty, and imperfect knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal love—and in His grace and glory—which leaves us so often cold, lifeless, and dead in our affections towards Him.

If there were more blessed revelations to our soul of the Person and work, grace and glory, beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ—it is impossible but that we would more and more warmly and tenderly fall in love with Him—for He is the most glorious object that the eyes of faith can see!

He fills heaven with the resplendent beams of His glorious majesty—and has ravished the hearts of thousands of His dear family upon earth by the manifestations of His bleeding, dying love. Just in proportion to our personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Him, will be our love to Him.

I have loved you with an everlasting love

The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3

There can be no new thought in the mind of GOD.

New thoughts, new feelings, new plans, new resolutions continually occur to OUR mind—for ours is but a . . .

poor,

fallen,

fickle,

changeable nature.

But God has no new—thoughts, feelings, plans or resolutions. For if He had, He would be a 'changeable' Being—not one great, eternal, unchangeable 'I Am'. All His thoughts, therefore, all His plans, all His ways are like Himself . . .

eternal,

infinite,

unchanging,

unchangeable.

The love of Christ to His Church is also—eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. And why? Because He loves as Deity.

O what a mercy it is for those who have any gracious, experimental knowledge of the love of Christ—to believe it is from everlasting to everlasting—that no incidents of time, no storms of sin or Satan, can ever change or alter that eternal love—but that it remains now and will remain the same to all eternity!

Help from the sanctuary

"May the Lord answer you when you are in distress—may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion." Psalms 20:1-2

When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it needs help from the sanctuary. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it.

Help is sent from the sanctuary because his name has been from all eternity . . .

registered in the Lamb's book of life,

engraved upon the palms of His hands,

borne on His shoulder,

and worn on His heart.

Communications of life and grace from the sanctuary produce spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. The breath of heaven in his soul . . .

draws his affections upward,

weans him from earth, and

makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below,

"looking for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Holy wrestling

Wherever the Lord brings trials upon the soul, He pours out upon it the spirit of grace and supplication.

If the child of God has a burden; if he is laboring under a strong temptation; if his soul is passing through some pressing trial; he is not satisfied with merely going through a 'form of prayer'. There is at such times and seasons, a holy wrestling . . .

there are fervent desires;

there are unceasing groans;

there is a laboring to enter into rest;

there is a struggling after deliverance;

there is a crying unto the Lord—until He appears and manifests Himself in the soul. A disciple of Jesus

A disciple of Jesus is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into His school—whom He Himself condescends personally to instruct—and who therefore learns of Him to be meek and lowly of heart.

A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet—receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from His lips.

But a true and sincere disciple not only listens to his Master's instructions, but acts as He bids. So a disciple of Jesus is one who copies his Master's example—and is conformed to his Master's image.

A disciple of Jesus is also characterized by the love which he bears to his Master—he is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart—ponders over His precious promises—and delights in His glorious Person, love, and blood.

A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection to the image of his heavenly Master—he carries it about with him wherever he goes—that men may take knowledge of him, that he has

been with Jesus. The true disciple shines before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God.

To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip, and life—is to be a disciple of Jesus.

To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus—to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words—to lean upon Jesus' breast is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love—and to feel this pulsation, causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison—to look up to Jesus, is to see a face more marred than the sons of men; yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity, and glory.

To be a disciple of Jesus, is to copy His example—to do the things pleasing in His sight—and to avoid the things which He abhors.

To be a disciple of Jesus, is to be as . . .

meek as He was;

humble as He was;

lowly as He was;

self-denying as He was;

separate from the world as He was;

living a life of communion with God— as He lived when He walked here below.

To take a worm of the earth and make him a disciple of Jesus is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man! To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus—is the highest favor God can bestow upon any child of the dust.

How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow His grace on an enemy—and to soften and meeken him by His Spirit—and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of His own dear Son. Compared with this high privilege—all earthly honors, titles and robes sink into utter insignificance.

Sovereign, supreme disposal

"And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything," Ephesians 1:22

How vast—how numerous—how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Christian here below, as he travels onward to his heavenly home!

But if all things are put under Jesus' feet—there cannot be a single circumstance over which He has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to His disposal. There is not . . .

a trial,

a temptation,

an affliction of body or soul,

a loss,

a cross,

a painful bereavement,

a vexation,

a grief,

a disappointment,

a case, state or condition,

which is not put under Jesus' feet.

He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite knowledge He sees them—as possessed of infinite wisdom He can manage them—and as possessed of infinite power He can dispose and direct them for our good and His own glory.

How much trouble and anxiety would we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this!

If we could see by the eye of faith that . . .

every foe and every fear,

every difficulty and perplexity,

every trying or painful circumstance,

every looked-for or unlooked-for event,

every source of care, whether at present or in prospect—are all put under His feet—at His sovereign disposal—what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders!

You must not love one of these glittering baubles

"Do not love the world or anything in the world." 1 John 2:15

This is a very wide sentence. It stretches forth a hand of vast grasp. It places us, as it were, upon a high mountain, and it says to us, "Look around you—there is not one of these things which you must love."

It takes us, again, to the streets of a crowded city—it shows us shop windows filled with objects of beauty and ornament—it points us to all the wealth and grandeur of the rich and noble, and everything that the human heart admires and loves. And having thus set before us, it says, "None of these things are for you. You must not love one of these glittering baubles—you must not touch one of them, or scarcely look at them, lest, as with Achan, the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment should tempt you to take them and hide them in your tent."

The precept takes us through the world as a mother takes a child through a bazaar—with playthings and ornaments on every side—and says, "You must not touch one of these things."

In some such similar way the precept would, as it were, take us through the world—and when we had looked at all its playthings and its ornaments, it would sound in our ears—"Don't touch any one of them; they are not yours—not for you to enjoy, not for you even to covet!"

Can anything less than this be intended by those words which should be ever sounding in the ears of the children of God—"Do not love the world or anything in the world"?

One unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

O that we could lift our eyes to those blessed abodes—those mansions of heavenly bliss—where no sorrow intrudes, where sin is unknown, where tears are wiped from off all faces, where there is . . .

no languishing body,

no wasting sickness,

no pining soul,

no doubt,

no fear,

no darkness,

no distress— but one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure—and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of the Lamb!

And what crowns the whole—there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God forevermore!

But how lost are we in the contemplation of these things—and though our imagination may seem to stretch itself beyond the utmost conception of the mind, into the countless ages of a never-ending eternity, yet are we baffled with the thought—though faith embraces the blessed truth.

But in that happy land, the immortal soul and the immortal body will combine their powers and faculties to enjoy to the uttermost all that God has prepared for those who love Him. The rod was dipped in love

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Micah 7:9

It is a view of our sins against God that enables us to bear the indignation of the Lord against us and them.

As long as we are left to a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, we murmur at the Lord's dealings when His hand lies heavy upon us.

But let us only truly feel what we rightly deserve—that will silence at once all murmuring. You may murmur and rebel sometimes at your hard lot in providence. But if you feel what you deserve—it will make you water with ’tears of repentance’ the hardest cross. So in grace, if you feel the weight of your sins, and mourn and sigh because you have sinned against God, you can lift up your hands sometimes with holy wonder at God’s patient mercy that He has borne with you so long—that He has not smitten you to the earth, or sent your guilty soul to hell.

You will see, also, that the heaviest strokes were but fatherly chastenings—that the rod was dipped in love—and that it was for your good and His glory that it was laid on you.

When this sense of merited indignation comes into the soul, then meekness and submission come with it, and it can say with the prophet—"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

You would not escape the rod if you might.

You can trust no minister really and fully.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17

The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Beg of Him to teach you Himself—for He is the best teacher. The words which He speaks, they "are spirit and life." What He writes upon our hearts is written in characters which will "stand every storm and live at last."

We forget what we learn from ’man’—but we never forget what we learn from Jesus.

’Men’ may deceive—Christ cannot.

You can trust no minister really and fully.

Though you may receive truth from his lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus—you get in all its purity and power.

It comes warm from Him—it comes cold from ’men’.

It drops like the rain and distills like the dew from His mouth—it comes only second-hand from men.

If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. But it is He who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good. Look then away from me—look beyond me—to Him who alone can teach us both.

By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of His bosom into your own—from His heart into your heart—and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of His own declaration—"I am the truth."

Buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1 How many there are even of those who desire to fear God who are kept down by the world, and to whom it has not lost its attractive power.

They are held fast, at least for a time, by worldly business—or entangled by worldly people or worldly

engagements . . .

their partners in business or their partners in life;

their carnal relatives or their worldly children;

their numerous connections or their social habits;

their strong passions or their deep rooted prejudices;

all bind and fetter them down to earth.

There they grovel and lie amid "the smoke, and stir of this dim spot which men call earth;" and so bound are they with the cords of their sins, that they scarcely seek deliverance from them—or ever desire to rise beyond the mists and fogs of this dim spot into a purer air—so as to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and rise up with Jesus from the grave of their corruptions.

But they shall never be buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness. A solitary drop of this holy anointing oil

"As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit . . ." 1 John 2:27

Have you ever had a solitary drop of this holy anointing oil fall upon your heart?

One drop, if it be but a drop, will sanctify you forever to the service of God. There was not much of the holy anointing oil used for the service of the tabernacle, when we consider the size and quantity of what had to be consecrated. When he went through the sacred work, he touched one vessel after another with a drop of oil—for one drop sanctified the vessel to the service of the tabernacle.

There was no repetition of the consecration needed—it abode. So if you ever had a drop of God’s love shed abroad in your heart—a drop of the anointing to teach you the truth as it is in Jesus—a drop to penetrate, to soften, to heal, to feed—and give light, life, and power to your soul—you have the unction from the Holy One—you know all things which are for your salvation, and by that same holy oil you have been sanctified and made fit for an eternal inheritance.

’Practical atheists’, we daily prove ourselves to be.

We profess to believe in an All-mighty, All-present, All-seeing God. But we would be highly offended if a person said to us, "You do not really believe that God sees everything—that He is everywhere present—that He is an Almighty Jehovah." We would almost think that he was taking us for an atheist! And yet ’practical atheists’, we daily prove ourselves to be.

For instance, we profess to believe that God sees everything. And yet we are plotting and planning as though He saw nothing.

We profess to know that God can do everything. And yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though He were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice.

We profess to believe that God is everywhere present to relieve every difficulty and bring His people out of every trial. And yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial—we speak, think, and act, as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of our case, and can stretch forth His hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because we are such blind fools, that we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with—until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us.

This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges His people so deeply into a sense of sin. It is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin, there is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the same reason, too, they walk in such scenes of temptation. It is in order to show them what a wonder-working God He is, in bringing them out.

This too is the reason why many of them are so harassed and plagued. It is that they may not live and act as though there were . . .

no God to go to,

no Almighty friend to consult,

no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon.

It is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know until the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn—and actually forces them to believe what they profess to believe.

Such pains is he obliged to take with us—such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are. No child at a school ever gave his master a thousandth part of the trouble that we have given the Lord to teach us.

In order, then, to teach us what a merciful and compassionate God He is—in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of His love—He is compelled to treat, at times, His people very roughly—and handle them very sharply. He is obliged to make very great use of His rod, because He sees that "foolishness is so bound up in the hearts" of His children—that nothing but the repeated "rod of correction will ever drive it far from them."

Dead in sin

"As for you, you were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1

To be dead in sin is to have . . .

no present part or lot with God;

no knowledge of Him;

no faith, no trust, no hope in Him;

no sense of His presence;

no reverence of His awesome Majesty;

no desire after Him or inclination toward Him;

no trembling at His word;

no longing for His grace;

no care or concern for His glory.

To be dead in sin is to be as a beast before Him, intent like a brute on satisfying the cravings of lust, or the movements of mere animal passion—without any thought or concern what shall be the outcome, and to be bent upon carrying out into action every selfish purpose, as if we were . . .

self creators,

our own judge,

our own lord,

and our own God.

O what a terrible state is it to be thus dead in sin, and not to know it—not to feel it—to be in no way sensible of its present danger and certain end—unless delivered from it by a mighty act of sovereign power!

It is this lack of all sense and feeling which makes the death of the soul to be but the prelude to that second death which stretches through a boundless eternity.

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You—Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146

If you know anything for yourself, inwardly and experimentally of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and that daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven; you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. There is present salvation—an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You—Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146 The fatal mistake of thousands

The fatal mistake of thousands is to offer unto God the fruits of the flesh—instead of the fruits of the Spirit.

Fleshly holiness, fleshly exertions, fleshly prayers, fleshly duties, fleshly religious forms, fleshly zeal—

these are what men consider good works, and present them as such to God.

But well may He "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity", say to all such fleshly workers, "If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the crippled and the diseased, is it not evil?"

All that the flesh can do is evil, for "every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually;" and to present the fruits of this filthy heart to the Lord of hosts, is "to offer defiled food upon His altar."

A broken heart, a contrite spirit, a tender conscience, a filial fear of God, a desire to please Him, a dread to offend the great God of heaven, a sense of the evil of sin, a desire to be delivered from sin’s dominion, a mourning over our repeated backslidings, grief at being so often entangled in our lusts and passions, an acquaintance with our helplessness and weakness, simplicity and godly sincerity, a hanging upon grace for daily supplies, watching the hand of Providence, a singleness of eye to the glory of God,—these are a few of the fruits of the Spirit. The great secret of vital godliness

The great secret of vital godliness is to be nothing—that Christ may be all in all.

Every stripping, sifting, and emptying—every trial, exercise and temptation that the soul passes through, has but one object—to beat out of man’s heart that cursed spirit of independence which the devil breathed into him when he said, "You shall be as gods".

A man must well near be bled to death before this venom can be drained out of his veins! The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels

In the first awakenings of the soul, we do not usually know much, nor feel much, of our fallen sinful nature. We feel more the guilt of sin ’committed’ than of sin ’indwelling’.

The way in which SIN sometimes seems to sleep, and at other times to awake up with renewed strength—its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature, the many shapes and colors it wears, the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels, the corners into which it creeps, its deceitfulness, its hypocrisy, its craft, its deceptive attraction, its intense selfishness, its utter recklessness, its

desperate madness, and insatiable greediness—are secrets, painful secrets, only learned by bitter experience.

If the devil ever feels joy

If the devil ever feels joy—it is in making souls miserable.

The cries of the damned are his music.

Their curses and blasphemies are his songs of triumph. Their anguish and despair are his wretched feast. Do not fear.

Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4

"Do not fear." "Ah! but Lord," the soul says, "I do fear. I fear myself more than anybody. I fear . . .

my base, wicked heart,

my strong lusts and passions,

my numerous inward enemies,

the snares of Satan,

and the temptations of the world.

I do fear. I cannot help but fear."

Still the Lord says, "Do not fear."

Here is a child trembling before a large mastiff dog; but the father says, "Do not fear, he will not hurt you, only keep close to me."

Who is that dog but Satan, that huge mastiff, whose jaws are reeking with blood? If the Lord says, "Do not fear," why need we fear him? He is a chained enemy.

But how the timid soul needs the divine "Fear nots!" For without Him, it is all weakness—with Him, all strength; without Him, all trembling—with Him, all boldness.

Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4 The desire of our soul

"The desire of our soul is to Your Name, and to the remembrance of You." Isaiah 26:8

How sweet and expressive is the phrase, "The desire of our soul!" How it seems to carry our feelings with it! How it seems to describe the longings and utterings of a soul into which God has breathed the spirit of grace and mercy!

"The desire of our soul"—the breathing of our heart, the longing of our inmost being, the cry, the sigh, the panting of our new nature, the—heavings, gaspings, lookings, longings, pantings, hungerings, thirstings, and ventings forth of the new man of grace; all are expressed in those sweet and blessed words—"The desire of our soul."

And what a mercy it is, that there should ever be in us "the desire" of a living soul—that though the righteous dealings of God are painful and severe, running contrary to everything nature loves—yet that with all these, there should be dropped into the heart that mercy, love, and grace—which draw forth the desire of the soul toward the Name of God.

This is expressed in the words that follow, "My soul yearns for You in the night—in the morning my spirit longs for You!" Isaiah 26:9.

Is your soul longing after the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is it ever, in the night season, panting after the manifestation of His presence? hungering and thirsting after the dropping of some word from His lips—some sweet whisper of His love to your soul?

These are marks of saving grace. The carnal, the unregenerate, the ungodly, have no such desires and feelings as these!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself—my . . .

vile,

proud,

lustful,

hypocritical,

worldly,

covetous,

presumptuous,

obscene self.

O self! Self! Your desperate wickedness, your depravity, your love of sin, your abominable pollutions, your monstrous heart wickedness, your wretched deadness, hardness, blindness, and indifference. You are a treacherous villain, and, I fear, always will be such!

What are all the gilded toys of time?

What are all the gilded toys of time compared with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!

But, alas! what wretches are we when left to . . .

sin,

self, and

Satan!

How unable to withstand the faintest breath of temptation!

How bent upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace, can either suit or save such wretches?

That dear, idolized creature

"I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live." Galatians 2:20

The crucifixion of self is indispensable to following Christ.

What is so dear to a man as himself?

Yet this beloved self is to be crucified.

Whether it be . . .

proud self,

or ambitious self,

or selfish self,

or covetous self,

or, what is harder still, religious self;

that dear, idolized creature, which has been the subject of so much . . .

fondling,

petting,

pampering,

nursing–

this fondly loved self has to be taken out of our bosom by the hand of God, and nailed to Christ's cross! The same grace which pardons sin also subdues it!

To be crucified with Christ! To have everything that the flesh loves and idolizes put to death! How can a man survive such a process?

"Nevertheless I live!"

As the world, sin, and self are crucified, subdued, and subjugated by the power of the cross, the life of God springs up with new vigor in the soul.

Here, then, is the great secret of vital godliness: that the more that sin and self, and the world are mortified, the more do holiness and spirituality of mind, heavenly affections and gracious desires spring up and flourish in the soul.

O! blessed death! O! still more blessed life!

"I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live." Galatians 2:20

Unquenched, unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love; neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7

The bride uses a figure which shall express the insuperable strength of divine love against all opposition; and she therefore compares it to a fire which burns and burns unquenched and unquenchable, whatever be the amount of water poured upon it. Thus the figure expresses the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of the Redeemer as unquenchable by any opposition made to it.

How soon is earthly love cooled by opposition! A little ingratitude, a few hard speeches, cold words or even cold looks, seem often almost sufficient to quench love that once shone warm and bright. And how often, too, even without these cold waters thrown upon it, does it appear as if ready to die out by itself.

But the love of Christ was unquenchable by all those waters. Not all the ingratitude, unbelief, or coldness of His people could quench His eternal love to them!

He knew what the Church was in herself, and ever would be . . .

how cold and wandering her affections,

how roving her desires,

how backsliding her heart!

But all these waters could not extinguish His love!

It still burnt as a holy flame in His bosom, unquenched, unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love; neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7

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He can crawl like a serpent, and he can roar like a lion!

"So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan well knows both how to allure and how to attack; for he can crawl like a serpent, and he can roar like a lion! He has snares whereby he entangles, and fiery darts whereby he impales.

Most men are easily led captive by him at his will, ensnared without the least difficulty in the traps that he lays for their feet; for they are as ready to be caught as he is to catch them! Why would Satan need to roar against them as a lion, if hecan wind himself around them and bite them as a serpent?

If you want to see what sin really is

To cast the sinning angels out of heaven; to banish Adam from Paradise; to destroy the old world by a flood; to burn Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven–these examples of God's displeasure against sin were not sufficient to express His condemnation of it. He would therefore take another way of making it manifest.

And what was this?

By sending His own Son out of His bosom, and offering Him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, He would make it manifest how He abhorred sin, and how His righteous character must forever condemn it.

See here the love of God to poor guilty man in not sparing His own Son; and yet the hatred of God against sin, in condemning it in the death of Jesus.

It is almost as if God said, "If you want to see what sin really is, you cannot see it in the depths of hell. I will show you sin in blacker colors still– you shall see it in the sufferings of My dear Son; in His agonies of body and soul; and in what He as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under My wrath, when He consented to take the sinner's place."

What wondrous wisdom, what depths of love, what treasures of mercy, what heights of grace were thus revealed and brought to light in God's unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in His full and free pardon of the sinner!

If you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross; if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you, falling upon the head of the God-Man; and viewed a bleeding, agonizing Immanuel; then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience what a dreadful thing sin is. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto Him whom he has pierced, and mourns and grieves bitterly for Him, as for a firstborn son who has died.

Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is.

"Oh," he says, "did God afflict His dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save my soul from the bottomless pit? O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies, and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?"

Christians hate their sins. They hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often, which has so continually, betrayed them into sin. And thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh; upon all its actings and workings; upon all its thoughts and words and deeds; and hate it as the prolific parent of that sin which crucified Christ, and torments and plagues them.

The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor

We are surrounded with snares.

Temptations lie spread every moment in our path.

These snares and these temptations are so suitable to the lusts of our flesh, that we would certainly fall into them, and be overcome by them, but for the restraining providence or the preserving grace of God. The Christian sees this; the Christian feels this.

The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor sees no snares. He is entangled in them, he falls by them, and not repenting of his sins or forsaking them, he makes utter shipwreck concerning the faith.

The child of God . . .

sees the snare,

feels the temptation,

knows the evil of his heart,

and is conscious that if God does not hold him up, he shall stumble and fall.

As then a burnt child dreads the fire, so he dreads the consequence of being left for a moment to himself; and the more is he afraid that he shall fall.

If his eyes are more widely opened to see . . .

the purity of God,

the blessedness of Christ,

the efficacy of atoning blood,

and the beauties of holiness,

the more also does he see the evil of sin, the dreadful consequences of being entangled therein. And not only so, but his own helplessness and weakness and inability to stand against temptation

in his own strength.

And all these feelings combine to raise up a more earnest cry, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

A stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they have gone." Ezekiel 11:16

Every place in which the Lord manifests Himself, is a sanctuary to a child of God.

Jesus is now our sanctuary, for He is "the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands." We see the power and glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Every place is a sanctuary, where God manifests Himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb; it was but a common thorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the thicket. But on one solemn occasion it was all "in a flame of fire," for "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire" out of the midst; and though it burned with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to take off his shoes from his feet. Was not this a sanctuary to Moses? It was, for a holy God was there! Thus wherever God manifests Himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul.

We don’t need places made holy by the ceremonies of man; but places made holy by the presence of God!

Then a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with His sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul.

Poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm!

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away." Isaiah 64:6

We once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favor of God, and induce Him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey His commandments.

And by these religious performances we thought we would surely be able to make a ladder whereby we could climb up to heaven. This was our tower of Babel, whose top was to reach unto heaven, and by mounting which, we thought to scale the stars.

But the same Lord who stopped the further building of the tower of Babel, by confounding their speech and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth; began to confound our speech, so that we could not pray, or talk, or boast as before; and to scatter all our religion like the chaff of the threshing floor. Our mouths were stopped; we became guilty before God; and our bricks and

mortar became a pile of confusion!

When, then, the Lord was pleased to discover to our souls by faith, His being, majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity; and thus gave us a corresponding sense of our filthiness and folly; then all our creature religion and natural piety which we once counted as gain, we began to see was but loss; that our very religious duties and observances, so far from being for us, were actually against us; and instead of pleading for us before God as so many deeds of righteousness, were so polluted and defiled by sin perpetually mixed with them, that our very prayers were enough to sink us into hell, had we no other iniquities to answer for in heart, lip or life.

But when we had a view by faith of the Person, work, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we began more plainly and clearly to see, with what religious toys we had been so long amusing ourselves, and what is far worse, mocking God by them.

We had been secretly despising . . .

Jesus and His sufferings,

Jesus and His death,

Jesus and His righteousness,

and setting up the poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm in the place of the finished work of the Son of God.

Mere toys and baubles

True religion must be everything or nothing with us. In religion, indifference is ruin; neglect is destruction.

Of all losses, the loss of the soul is the only one that is utterly irreparable and irremediable. You may lose property, but you may recover the whole or a portion of it; you may lose health, but you may be restored to a larger measure of bodily strength than before your illness; you may lose friends, but you may obtain new ones, and those more sincere and valuable than any whom you have lost. But if you lose your soul, what is to make up for that loss?

Do you ever feel what a tremendous stake heaven or hell is? Have you ever felt that to gain heaven is to gain everything that can make the soul eternally happy; and to lose heaven is not only to lose eternal bliss, but to sink down into . . .

unfathomable,

everlasting,

unutterable woe?

It is this believing sight and pressing sense of eternal things; it is this weighty, at times overpowering, feeling that they carry in their bosom an immortal soul, which often makes the children of God view the things of time and sense as . . .

mere toys and baubles,

trifles lighter than vanity,

and pursuits empty as air,

and gives them to feel that the things of eternity are the only solid, enduring realities.

Heavenly dew

"My words descend like dew." Deuteronomy 32:2

The dew falls imperceptibly. No man can see it fall. Yet its effects are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon His Word. It penetrates the heart without noise; it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on. And as the dew opens the pores of the earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul.

Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its effects, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head.

Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects? Silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet producing an evident impression . . .

softening the heart when hard,

refreshing it when dry,

melting it when obdurate,

secretly keeping the soul alive, so that it is neither withers up by the burning sun of temptation, nor dies for lack of grace.

"May God give you the dew of heaven." Genesis 27:28

Coming up from the wilderness

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

To come up from the wilderness, is to come up out of OURSELVES; for we are ourselves the wilderness. It is our wilderness heart that makes the world what it is to us . . .

our own barren frames;

our own bewildered minds;

our own worthlessness and inability;

our own lack of spiritual fruitfulness;

our own trials, temptations, and exercises;

our own hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

In a word, it is what passes in our own bosom that makes the world to us a dreary desert.

Carnal people find the world no wilderness. It is an Eden to them! Or at least they try hard to make it so. They seek all their pleasure from, and build all their happiness upon it. Nor do they dream of any other harvest of joy and delight, but what may be repaid in this 'happy valley', where youth, health, and good spirits are ever imagining new scenes of gratification.

But the child of grace, exercised with a thousand difficulties, passing through many temporal and spiritual sorrows, and inwardly grieved with his own lack of heavenly fruitfulness, finds the wilderness

within.

But he still comes up out of it, and this he does by looking upward with believing eyes to Him who alone can bring him out.

He comes up out of his own righteousness, and shelters himself under Christ's righteousness.

He comes up out of his own strength, and trusts to Christ's strength.

He comes up out of his own wisdom, and hangs upon Jesus' wisdom.

He comes up out of his own tempted, tried, bewildered, and perplexed condition, to find rest and peace in the finished work of the Son of God.

And thus he comes up out of the wilderness of self, not actually, but experimentally. Every desire of his soul to be delivered from his 'wilderness sickening sight' that he has of sin and of himself as a sinner. Every aspiration after Jesus, every longing look, earnest sigh, piteous cry, or laboring groan, all are a coming up from the wilderness.

His turning his back upon an ungodly world; renouncing its pleasures, its honors, its pride, and its ambition; seeking communion with Jesus as his chief delight; and accounting all things but loss and rubbish for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus his Lord as revealed to his soul by the power of God; this, also, is coming up from the wilderness.

When we gaze upon the lifeless corpse

From the cradle to the coffin, affliction and sorrow are the appointed lot of man. He comes into the world with a wailing cry, and he often leaves it with an agonizing groan! Rightly is this earth called "a valley of tears," for it is wet with them in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. In every land, in every climate, scenes of misery and wretchedness everywhere meet the eye, besides those deeper griefs and heart-rending sorrows which lie concealed from all observation. So that we may well say of the life of man that, like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written with lamentations, and mourning and woe."

But this is not all. The scene does not end here!

We see up to death, but we do not see beyond death.

To see a man die without Christ is like standing at a distance, and seeing a man fall from a lofty cliff—we see him fall, but we do not see the crash on the rocks below.

So we see an unsaved man die, but when we gaze upon the lifeless corpse, we do not see how his soul falls with a mighty crash upon the rock of God’s eternal justice! When his temporal trials come to a close, his eternal sorrows only begin! After weeks or months of sickness and pain, the pale, cold face may lie in calm repose under the coffin lid; when the soul is only just entering upon an eternity of woe!

But is it all thus dark and gloomy both in life and death? Is heaven always hung with a canopy of black? Are there no beams of light, no rays of gladness, that shine through these dark clouds of affliction, misery, and woe that are spread over the human race?

Yes! there is one point in this dark scene out of which beams of light and rays of glory shine! "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:9

There, on the other side, is my solitary soul

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

Here is my scale of profit and loss.

I have a soul to be saved or lost.

What then shall I give in exchange for my soul?

What am I profited if I gain the whole world and lose my soul?

This deep conviction of a soul to be saved or lost lies at the root of all our religion.

Here, on one side, is the WORLD and all . . .

its profits

its pleasures,

its charms,

its smiles,

its winning ways,

its comforts,

its luxuries,

its honors,

to gain which is the grand struggle of human life.

There, on the other side, is my solitary SOUL, to live after death, forever and ever, when the world and all its pleasures and profits will sink under the wrath of the Almighty.

And this dear soul of mine, my very self, my only self, my all, must be lost or saved.

Even your own relatives think you are almost insane

"The Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him." John 14:17

The world—that is, the world dead in sin, and the world dead in profession—men destitute of the life and power of God—must have something that it can see. And, as heavenly things can only be seen by heavenly eyes, they cannot receive the things which are invisible.

Now this explains why a religion that presents itself with a degree of beauty and grandeur to the natural eye will always be received by the world; while a . . .

spiritual,

internal,

heartfelt and

experimental religion will always be rejected.

The world can receive a religion that consists of . . .

forms,

rites, and

ceremonies.

These are things seen.

Beautiful buildings, painted windows, pealing organs, melodious choirs, the pomp and parade of an earthly priesthood, and a whole apparatus of ’religious ceremony’, carry with them something that the natural eye can see and admire. The world receives all this ’external religion’ because it is suitable to the natural mind and intelligible to the reasoning faculties.

But the . . .

quiet,

inward,

experimental,

divine religion,

which presents no attractions to the outward eye, but is wrought in the heart by a divine operation—the world cannot receive this—because it presents nothing that the natural eye can rest upon with pleasure, or is adapted to gratify their general idea of what religion is or should be.

Do not marvel, then, that worldly professors despise a religion wrought in the soul by the power of God. Do not be surprised if even your own relatives think you are almost insane, when you speak of the consolations of the Spirit, or of the teachings of God in your soul. They cannot receive these things, for they have no experience of them; and being such as are altogether opposed to the carnal mind, they reject them with enmity and scorn.

Make straight paths for your feet.

"Make straight paths for your feet." Hebrews 12:13

Surrounded as we are with a crooked generation, professing and profane, whose ways we are but too

apt to learn; beset on every hand by temptations . . .

to turn aside into some crooked path,

to feed our pride,

to indulge our lusts,

to gratify our covetousness;

blinded and seduced sometimes by the god of this world; hardened at other times by the deceitfulness of sin; here misled by the example, and there bewitched by the flattery of some friend or companion; at one time confused and bewildered in our judgment of right and wrong; at another time entangled, half resisting, half complying, in some snare of the wicked one; what a struggle have some of us had to make straight paths for our feet; and what pain and grief that we should ever have made crooked ones.

"But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold." Psalms 73:2

When I said, "My foot is slipping," Your love, O Lord, supported me. Psalms 94:18

"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." Psalms 40:2

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

"I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths." Proverbs 4:11

Have nothing to do with them.

"They mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs. They worshiped their idols, and this led to their downfall." Psalms 106:35-36

The ’carnal professors’ of the day see nothing wrong, nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent in their conduct or spirit, though they are sunk in . . .

worldliness,

carnality, or

covetousness.

But where there is divine life, where the blessed Spirit moves upon the heart with His sacred operations and secret influences, there will be light to see, and a conscience to feel, what is . . .

wrong,

sinful,

inconsistent,

and improper.

It its but too evident that we cannot be mixed up with the professors of the day without drinking, in some measure, into their spirit and being more or less influenced by their example.

We can scarcely escape the influence of those with whom we come much and frequently into contact. If they are dead, they will often benumb us with their corpse-like coldness. If they are light and trifling, they will often entangle us in their carnal levity. If they are worldly and covetous, they may afford us a shelter and an excuse for our own worldliness and covetousness.

Abhor that loose profession, that ready compliance with everything which feeds the . . .

pride,

worldliness,

covetousness,

and lusts of our depraved nature,

which so stamps the present day with some of its most perilous and dreadful characters.

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them." 2 Timothy 3:5

The foulest filth under the cleanest cloak

"Take heed unto yourselves!" Acts 20:28

There are few Christians who have not ever found SELF to be their greatest enemy. The pride, unbelief, hardness, and impenitence of a man’s own heart; the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature; the lusts and passions, filth and folly of his own carnal mind; will not only ever be his greatest burden, but will ever prove his most dreaded foe!

Enemies we shall have from outside, and we may at times keenly feel their bitter speeches and cruel words and actions. But no enemy can injure us like ourselves! In five minutes a man may do himself more real harm, than all his enemies united could do to injure him in fifty years!

To yourself you can be the most insidious enemy and the greatest foe!

In all its forms, SELF in its inmost spirit is still a . . .

deceitful,

subtle,

restless,

proud, and

impatient

creature; masking its real character in a thousand ways, and concealing its destructive designs by countless devices.

We have but to look on the professing church to find . . .

the highest pride under the lowest humility,

the greatest ignorance under the vainest self-conceit,

the basest treachery under the warmest profession,

the vilest sensuality under the most heavenly piety,

and the foulest filth under the cleanest cloak.

"Take heed unto yourselves!" Acts 20:28

Familiarity with sacred things

"Take heed unto yourselves!" Acts 20:28

This was Paul’s public warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus. It was Paul’s private warning to his friend and disciple, his beloved son, Timothy. And do not all who write or speak in the name of the Lord need the same warning?

Familiarity with sacred things has a natural tendency to harden the conscience, where grace does not soften and make it tender.

Men may preach and pray until both become a mere mechanical habit; and they may talk about Christ and His sufferings until they feel as little touched by them as a ’tragic actor’ on the stage,of the sorrows which he impersonates.

Well, then, may the Holy Spirit sound this note of warning, as with trumpet voice, in the ears of the servants of Christ. "Take heed unto yourselves!"

Pride, self-conceit, and self-exaltation

Pride, self-conceit, and self-exaltation, are both the chief temptations, and the main besetting sins, of those who occupy any public position in the church.

Therefore, where these sins are not mortified by the Spirit, and subdued by His grace; instead of being, as they should be, the humblest of men; they are, with rare exceptions, the proudest.

Did we bear in constant remembrance our slips, falls, and grievous backslidings; and had we, with all this, a believing sight of the holiness and purity of God, of the sufferings and sorrows of His dear Son, and what it cost Him to redeem us from the lowest hell; we would be, we must be clothed with humility; and would, under feelings of the deepest self-abasement, take the lowest place among the family of God, as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all the saints.

This should be the feeling of every child of God.

Until this pride is in some measure crucified, until we hate it, and hate ourselves for it, the glory of God will not be our main object.

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

Every sin that we have committed?

Do we not sin with every breath that we draw?

Is not every lustful desire sin? And is not every proud thought sin? And is not every wicked imagination sin? And is not every unkind suspicion sin? Every act of unbelief sin? And every working of a depraved nature sin?

We committed sin when we sucked our mother's breast! We committed sin as soon as we were able to stammer out a word. And as we grew in body, we grew in sinfulness.

Will He forgive . . .

sins of thought,

sins of look,

sins of action,

sins of omission,

sins of commission,

sins in infancy,

sins in childhood,

sins in youth,

sins in old age?

Will He forgive . . .

all the base lusts,

all the filthy workings,

all the vile actions,

all the pride,

all the hypocrisy,

all the covetousness,

all the envy, hatred, and malice,

all the aboundings of inward iniquity?

"The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

This sacred anointing

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One." 1 John 2:20

Wherever the anointing of the Holy One touches a man's heart it spreads itself, widening and extending its operations. It thus communicates divine gifts and graces wherever it comes. It . . .

bestows and draws out faith,

gives repentance and godly sorrow,

causes secret self-loathing, and

separation from the world,

draws the affections upwards,

makes sin hated, and

Jesus and His salvation loved.

Wherever the anointing of the Holy Spirit touches a man's heart it diffuses itself through his whole soul, and makes him wholly a new creature. It . . .

gives new motives,

communicates new feelings,

enlarges and melts the heart, and

spiritualizes and draws the affections upwards.

Without this sacred anointing . . .

all our religion is a bubble,

all our profession a lie, and

all our hopes will end in despair.

O what a mercy to have one drop of this heavenly anointing! To enjoy one heavenly feeling! To taste the least measure of Christ's love shed abroad in the heart! What an unspeakable mercy to have one touch, one glimpse, one glance, one communication out of the fullness of Him who fills all in all!

By this anointing from the Holy One, the children of God are supported under . . .

afflictions,

perplexities,

and sorrows.

By this anointing from the Holy One, they see the hand of God . . .

in every chastisement,

in every providence,

in every trial,

in every grief, and

in every burden.

By this anointing from the Holy One they can bear chastisement with meekness; and put their mouth in the dust, humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Every good word, every good work, every gracious thought, every holy desire, every spiritual feeling do we owe to this one thing: the anointing of the Holy One.

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One." 1 John 2:20

What makes the children of God so strange?

"To God’s elect, strangers in the world." 1 Peter 1:1

Strangers!

What makes the children of God so strange?

The grace of God which calls them out of this wretched world. Every man who carries the grace of God in his bosom is necessarily, as regards the world, a stranger in heart, as well as in profession, and life.

As Abraham was a stranger in the land of Canaan; as Joseph was a stranger in the palace of Pharaoh; as Moses was a stranger in the land of Egypt; as Daniel was a stranger in the court of Babylon; so every child of God is separated by grace, to be a stranger in this ungodly world.

And if indeed we are to come out from it and to be separate, the world must be as much a strange place to us; for we are strangers to . . .

its views,

its thoughts,

its desires,

its prospects,

its anticipations,

in our daily walk,

in our speech,

in our mind,

in our spirit,

in our judgment,

in our affections.

We will be strangers from . . .

the world’s company,

the world’s maxims,

the world’s fashions,

the world’s spirit.

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13 By His wounds we are healed

Sin has thoroughly diseased us, and poisoned our very blood.

Sin has diseased our understanding, so as to disable it from receiving the truth.

Sin has diseased our conscience, so as to make it dull and heavy, and undiscerning of right and wrong.

Sin has diseased our imagination, polluting it with every idle, foolish, and licentious fancy.

Sin has diseased our memory, making it swift to retain what is evil, slow to retain what is good.

Sin has diseased our affections, perverting them from all that is heavenly and holy, and fixing them on all that is earthly and vile.

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Strangle and suffocate it!

"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself! But in Me is your help." Hosea 13:9

Is not this a true charge? Does not your conscience agree with it, as a well founded accusation? Have you not willingly with your eyes open, run into some sin, which, but for God’s mercy and upholding hand, would have proved your certain destruction? Have you not stood upon the very brink of some deep pit, down into which one more step would have plunged you?

As you realize the evils of your heart, you see what a marvel it is, that grace is kept alive in your bosom! You see yourself surrounded on every side with that which would inevitably destroy it—but for the mighty power of God!

You look back and wonder how the life of God in your soul has been preserved so many years. Sometimes you have been sunk into such carnality. You have felt such emptiness of all good, and such proneness to all evil, that you wonder how you have not been swallowed up, overcome, and carried away into the pit of destruction!

David said, "I am as a wonder to many." But you can say, "I am a wonder to myself!" The world, the devil, and your own evil heart, have been for years all aiming to destroy the precious life of God in your soul—all stretching out their hands to strangle and suffocate it!

And yet, in His mysterious wisdom, unspeakable grace, and tender compassion, He has kept the holy principle alive in your soul.

O, the mystery of redeeming love!

O, the blessedness of preserving grace! We have been preserved, upheld, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

"O Lord, You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit!" Psalms 30:3

"He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping!" Psalms 66:9

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

They will never perish!

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay! And God, in His mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation." 1 Peter 1:4-5

The elect are preserved in Christ, BEFORE they are called by grace. They are kept by the power of God from perishing in their unregeneracy.

Have not you been almost miraculously preserved in the midst of dangers, and escaped when others perished by your side—or been raised up as it were, from the very brink of destruction and the very borders of the grave?

Besides some striking escapes from what are called ’accidents’, three times in my life—once in infancy, once in boyhood, and once in manhood, I have been raised up from the borders of the grave, when almost everyone who surrounded my bed thought I would not survive the violence of the attack.

Were not these instances of being kept by the power of God? I could not die until God had manifested His purposes of electing grace and mercy to my soul.

But the elect are also kept by the mighty power of God AFTER they are called by grace; for they are in the hollow of His hand, and are kept as the apple of His eye.

I will not say they are kept from all sins. Yet I will say that they are kept from damning sins. They are kept especially from three things . . .

from the dominion of sin,

from daring and final presumption,

from lasting and damnable error.

They are never drowned in the sins and evils of the present life so as to be swallowed up in them—for it is impossible that they can ever be lost!

They are therefore preserved in hours of temptation, for they are guarded by all the power of Omnipotence, shielded by the unceasing care and watchfulness of Him who can neither slumber nor sleep.

Looking back through a long vista of years, can you not see how the hand of God has been with you—how He has held you up, and brought you through many a storm, and preserved you under powerful temptations? How gently He sometimes drew you on, or sometimes kept you back?

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish! No one can snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28

Having chosen us, God begets us with His word, regenerates us by a divine influence, and makes us new creatures by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

All things!

"You crowned Him with glory and honor and put all things under His feet. In putting all things under Him, God left nothing that is not subject to Him." Hebrews 2:7-8

See the sovereign supremacy of Jesus!

There may be circumstances in your earthly lot which at this moment are peculiarly trying. You look around and wonder how this or that circumstance will terminate. At present it looks very dark—clouds and mists hang over it, and you fear lest these clouds may break, not in showers upon your head, but burst forth in the lightning flash and the thunder stroke!

But all things are put in subjection under Christ's feet! That which you dread cannot take place except by His sovereign will—nor can it move any further except by His supreme disposal. Then make yourself quiet. He will not allow you to be harmed. That frowning providence shall only execute His sovereign purposes, and it shall be among those all things which, according to His promise, shall work together for your good.

None of our trials come upon us by chance! They are all appointed in weight and measure—are all designed to fulfill a certain end. And however painful they may at present be, yet they are intended for your good.

When the trial comes upon you, what a help it would be for you if you could view it thus, "This trial is sent for my good. It does not spring out of the dust. The Lord Himself is the supreme disposer of it. It is very painful to bear; but let me believe that He has appointed me this peculiar trial, along with every other circumstance. He will bring about His own will therein, and either remove the trial, or give me patience under it, and submission to it."

You may be afflicted by sickness. It is not by chance that such or such sickness visits your body—that the Lord sees fit to afflict head, heart, chest, liver, hand, foot, or any other part of your body. All things are put in subjection under Him, and He has not exempted sickness and disease! Whatever you suffer in bodily disease, He appoints and arranges it for your good. Be resigned to His holy and almighty will.

All your afflictions are put under the feet of Jesus! You may think at times how harshly you are dealt with—mourning, it may be, under family bereavements, sorrowing after the loss of your 'household treasures'—a beloved husband, wife, or child. But O that you could bear in mind that all your afflictions, be they what they may, are put under the feet of Jesus, so that, so to speak, not one can crawl from under His feet but by His permission—and, like scolded hounds, they crawl again beneath them at a word of command from His lips!

Let us then hold fast this truth, for on it depends so much of our comfort.

Without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish!

"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish! Instead, she will be holy and without fault." Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:27

What are we ourselves as viewed by our own eyes? Full of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes! And What do we see in ourselves every day, but sin and filth and folly? What evil is there in the world that is not in us, and in our hearts? It is true others cannot read our hearts. But we read them; yes, are every day, and sometimes all the day reading them. And what do we read there? Like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written within and without;" and we may well add, if we rightly read what is there written, we have every reason to say it is "full of lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Ezekiel 2:10

For I am sure that there is nothing that we see there every day and every hour, but would cover us with shame and confusion of face, and make us blush to lift up our eyes before God, or almost to appear in the presence of our fellow man!

But neither others, nor we ourselves, now see what the church one day will be, and what she ever was in the eyes of Jesus! He could look through all the sins and sorrows of this intermediate period, and fix His eye upon the bridal day—the day when before assembled angels, in the courts of heaven, in the realms of eternal bliss, He would present her to Himself a glorious church, without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy, and without fault.

O what a day will that be, when the Son of God shall openly wed His espoused bride; when there shall be heard in heaven, "what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting—Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns! Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready." Revelation 19:6-7

Bitten by this serpent's tooth

No man has ever sounded the depths of the fall.

The children of God have indeed discoveries of the evil of sin. And they have such views at times of the desperate wickedness and awful depravity of human nature, that they seem as if filled with unspeakable horror at the hideous enormity of the corruption that works in their carnal mind.

But no man has ever seen, as no man ever can see, in this time-state, what sin is to its full extent, and as it will be hereafter developed in the depths of hell.

We may indeed in our own experience see something of its commencement; but we can form little idea of its progress, and still less of its termination. For sin has this peculiar feature attending it, that it ever spreads and spreads until it involves everything that it touches in utter ruin.

We may compare it in this point of view to the venom-fang of a serpent. There are serpents of so venomous a kind, as for instance the Cobra de Capello, or hooded snake, that the introduction of the minutest portion of venom from their poison tooth will in a few hours convert all the fluids of the body into a mass of putrefaction. A man shall be in perfect health one hour, and bitten by this serpent's tooth shall in the next, be a loathsome mass of rottenness and corruption. Such is sin.

The introduction of sin into the nature of Adam at the fall was like the introduction of poison from the fang of a deadly serpent into the human body. It at once penetrated into his soul and body, and filled both with death and corruption.

Or, to use a more scriptural figure, sin may be compared to the disease of leprosy, which usually began with a "bright spot," or "rising in the skin", scarcely perceptible, and yet spread and spread until it enveloped every member, and the whole body becoming a mass of putrefying hideous corruption.

Or sin may be compared to a cancer, which begins perhaps with a little lump causing a slight itching, but goes on feeding upon the part which it attacks, until the patient dies worn out with pain and suffering.

Now if sin be . . .

this venom fang,

this spreading leprosy,

this loathsome cancer;

if its destructive power be so great that, unless arrested and healed, it will destroy body and soul alike in hell, the remedy for it, if remedy there be, must be as great as the malady. Thus if there be . . .

a cure for sin,

a remedy for the fall,

a deliverance from the wrath to come,

it must be at least as full and as complete as the ruin which sin has entailed upon us.

The man who has slight, superficial views and feelings of sin will have equally slight and superficial views of the atonement made for sin. The groans of Christ will never sound in his ears as the dolorous groans of an agonizing Lord; the sufferings of Christ will never be opened up to his soul as the sorrows of Immanuel, God with us; the death of Christ will never be viewed by him, as the blood shedding of the darling Son of God. While he has such slight, superficial views of the malady, his views of the remedy will be equally slight and superficial.

As we are led down into a spiritual knowledge of self and sin, so we are led up into a gracious knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By suffering all the penalties of our sin, Jesus redeems us from the lowest hell and raises us up to the highest heaven—empowering poor worms of earth to soar above the skies and live forever in the presence of Him who is a consuming fire!

"And she will have a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Like a weed upon a dung-heap!

"I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13

Our hearts are desperately proud.

If there is one sin which God hates more than another, and more sets Himself against, it is the sin of pride.

Like a weed upon a dung-heap, pride grows more profusely in some soils, especially when

well fertilized by . . .

rank,

riches,

praise,

flattery,

our own ignorance,

and the ignorance of others.

We all inherit pride from our fallen ancestor Adam, who got it from Satan, that "king over all the children of pride."

Those, perhaps, who think they possess the least pride, and view themselves with wonderful self-admiration as the humblest of mortals, may have more pride than those who feel and confess it. It may only be more deeply hidden in the dark recesses of their carnal mind.

As God then sees all hearts, and knows every movement of pride, whether we see it or not, His purpose is to humble us!

When I look back upon my life, and see . . .

all my sins,

all my follies,

all my slips,

all my falls,

my conscience testifies of the many things I have thought, said, and done, which . . .

grieve my soul,

make me hang my head before God,

put my mouth in the dust, and

confess my sins unto Him.

When I contrast my own exceeding sinfulness with . . .

God’s greatness,

God’s majesty,

God’s holiness, and

God’s purity . . .

I fall down, humbly and meekly before Him,

I put my mouth in the dust,

I acknowledge I am vile.

"I am nothing but dust and ashes." (Abraham)

"Behold, I am vile!" (Job)

"Woe to me! I am ruined!" (Isaiah)

"I am a sinful man!" (Peter)

He alone can rescue me

"My eyes are always looking to the Lord for help, for He alone can rescue me from the traps of my enemies." Psalms 25:15

"Oh, please help us against our enemies, for all human help is useless." Psalms 60:11

What a mighty God we have to deal with!

And what would suit our case but a mighty God?

Have we not mighty sins?

Have we not mighty trials?

Have we not mighty temptations?

Have we not mighty foes and mighty fears?

And who is to deliver us from all this mighty army, except the mighty God? It is not a ’little God’ (if I may use the expression) that will do for God’s people. They need a ’mighty God’, because they are in circumstances where none but a mighty God can intervene in their behalf.

And it is well worth our notice that the Lord puts His people purposely into circumstances where they may avail themselves, so to speak, of His omnipotent power, and thus know from living personal experience, that He is a mighty God, not in mere doctrine and theory, but a mighty God in their special and particular behalf.

Why, if you did not feelingly and experimentally know . . .

your mighty sins,

your mighty trials,

your mighty temptations,

your mighty fears,

you would not need a mighty God.

O how this brings together the strength of God and the weakness of man! How it unites poor helpless creatures with the Majesty of heaven! How it conveys to feeble, worthless worms the very might of the Omnipotent Jehovah!

This sense of . . .

our weakness and His power,

our misery and His mercy,

our ruin and His recovery,

the aboundings of our sin and

the super-aboundings of His grace;

a feeling sense of these opposite yet harmonious things, brings us to have personal, experimental dealings with God. And it is in these personal dealings with God that the life of all religion consists.

"The Lord hears His people when they call to Him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles." Psalms 34:17

The Lord sometimes flogs His children home!

"As chastened, yet not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9

The Lord does not see fit to lay the same chastisements upon all His people. He has rods of different sizes and different descriptions; though all are felt to be rods when God brings them upon the back.

The Lord chastises with one hand, and upholds with the other. In your spiritual experience, you may have passed under many chastising strokes. And when they fell upon you, they seemed to come as a killing sentence from God’s lips. You feared your illness might end in death. Under your bereavement, you felt as if you could never hold up your head again. You thought your providential losses might prove to be your earthly ruin. Your family afflictions seemed to be so heavy, as to be radically incurable.

All these were killing strokes. But though chastened, you were not killed. You lost no divine life thereby; but you lost much that pleased the flesh; much that gratified the creature; much that looked well for days of prosperity, but would not abide the storm.

But you lost nothing that was for your real good.

If you lost bodily health; you gained spiritual health.

If you lost a dear husband or child; God filled up the void in your heart by making Christ more precious.

If you had troubles in your family; the Lord made it up by giving more manifestations of His love and grace.

Your very losses in providence were for your good; for God either made them up, or what you lost in providence He doubled in grace.

So that though chastened; you are not killed!

Has anything that has happened to you quenched or extinguished the life of God in your soul?

As the dross and tin were more separated; has not the gold shone more brightly? Have you not held spiritual things with a tighter grasp? When God chastens His people, it is not to kill them; it is . . .

to make them partakers of His holiness,

to revive their drooping graces,

to make them more sincere, upright and tender in conscience,

to make them more separate from the world,

to make them seek more His glory,

to make them have a more single eye to His praise,

to make them live more a life of faith.

Here is the blessedness—that when God chastises His people, it is not for their injury, but for their profit; not for their destruction, but for their salvation; not to treat them with the unkindness of an enemy, but with the love of a friend!

Look at the afflictions, chastenings and grievous sorrows that you have passed through. Have they been . . .

friends to you, or enemies?

instruments of helping you, or hindrances?

ladders whereby you have climbed up to heaven,

or steps whereby you have descended into hell?

means of taking you nearer to Christ, or means of carrying you more into the world?

If you know anything of God’s chastening, you will say, "Every stroke has brought me nearer to God! He has flogged me home!" As a father will seize his truant boy out of a horde of other children and flog him home, so the Lord sometimes flogs His children home! Every stroke laid upon their back brings them a step nearer to their home in the mansions above!

In your own experience, you know that God’s chastenings have not killed you. But rather they have been the means of reviving and keeping alive the work of grace upon your heart!

"As chastened, yet not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9

He may talk like an angel, and live like a devil.

There is "a knowledge of the things of God" which a man may possess without a personal experience of the new birth—without any divine operation upon his soul whatever, or any participation of the grace of God.

>From reading the scriptures and hearing the Gospel preached, many attain to a carnal, intellectual, barren head knowledge of the truth; who, as to any experimental, vital, saving acquaintance with it, are still in the very gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

A man may have the ’knowledge of an apostle’ and the ’worldliness of a Demas’.

He may be clear in head, and rotten in heart.

He may talk like an angel, and live like a devil.

He may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and be nothing but a hypocrite and an impostor.

In our day such characters abound in the churches.

But distinct from this "head knowledge", as distinct from it as heaven from hell, there is a most blessed "spiritual knowledge" of the things of God, with which the people of God are favored.

"Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45 This idol-making, idol-loving world

’You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I brought you to Myself and carried you on eagle’s wings." Exodus 19:4

The idea here, is of snatching His people out of Egypt as an eagle would snatch her young away from the hands of the spoiler of her nest, and bear them away and aloft on her outstretched wings.

Deliverance . . .

from idolatry,

from bondage,

from a state of degradation and abject slavery,

is the leading idea of bringing His people out of Egypt.

So, spiritually, the Lord bears us out of a worse Egypt, by His Almighty power. Has He given you some deliverance from the world and the spirit of it, and brought you to Himself by the power of His grace? Has He carried you up out of sin . . .

its open commission,

its secret practice,

its inward indulgence,

and broken in some measure the love and the power of it?

Has He carried you not only out of the grosser iniquities of Egypt, but its more ’refined and acceptable sins’, such as . . .

creature idolatry,

religious lip-service,

self-righteousness, and

mocking God by superstition, tradition, and vain ceremony?

Has He carried you, as on eagles’ wings, out of all the idols of Egypt? For Egypt was a land teeming with idolatry, and therefore an apt emblem of this idol-making, idol-loving world.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians." Leviticus 26:13

"Praise be to the Lord, for He has saved you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has rescued His people from the power of Egypt!" Exodus 18:10

Accomplished actors

"The pulpit has its accomplished actors, as well as the playhouse!"

He has given me a cup of deep sorrow to drink

"He has filled me with bitterness. He has given me a cup of deep sorrow to drink." Lamentations 3:15

The Lord’s people have many hard lessons which they have to learn in the ’school of Christ’. Each one has to carry a daily cross, and are burdened and pressed down under its weight. This daily cross may and does differ in individuals. But every child of God has his own cross, which laid upon his shoulders by an invincible hand, he has, for the most part, to carry down to the very grave.

Thus, some of God’s people are afflicted in body from the very time the Lord begins His work of grace upon their heart. Or if exempt from disease, are shattered in nerve, depressed in spirits, and weighed down by lassitude and languor, often harder to bear than disease itself.

Some are tied to ungodly partners, meeting with opposition and persecution at every step.

Others have nothing but trouble in their family, either from the invasion of death into their circle, or what sometimes is worse than death—disgrace, shame, and ungodliness.

Others have little else but one continual series of losses and crosses in their circumstances, wave after wave rolling over their heads.

O, view the family of God toiling homeward . . .

some dragging along an afflicted body;

others a wounded spirit;

others carrying upon their shoulders dying children;

others with scarcely a rag to their back or a crust in their hand;

footsore,

fearful in heart,

trembling at a rustling leaf,

a deep river to pass, and

a furious enemy in sight.

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength!"

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Were we left wholly in its hands!

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man." 1 Corinthians 10:13

There is not a single sin ever perpetrated by man which does not lie deeply hidden in the recesses of our fallen nature! But these sins do not stir into activity until temptation draws them forth.

Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart, what fire is to stubble. Sin lies quiet in our carnal mind until temptation comes to set it on fire.

Temptation is to our corrupt nature, what the spark is to gunpowder. Have you not found this sad truth: how easily by temptation are the corruptions of our wretched heart set on fire, and burst into every kind of daring and dreadful iniquity?

In temptation, we learn what sin is . . .

its dreadful nature,

its aggravated character,

its fearful workings,

its mad, its desperate upheavings against God,

and what we are or would be,

were we left wholly in its hands!

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." Matthew 26:41

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

Romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy?

"The things on earth will be shaken, so that only eternal things will be left." Hebrews 12:27

Man is always seeking happiness in some shape or other, in the things of this world. He does not see or feel that outside of God, happiness is impossible; and that to seek it in 'the creature' is to add sin to sin. But look at this vain attempt in a variety of instances.

Look at people young in life. What romantic prospects dance before their eyes! "What dreams of love and home by flowery streams!" But what a rude shock do these 'dreams of earthly happiness' usually experience! This is true of most, if not all, who build their hopes of happiness on 'the creature'. But particularly so in the case of the family of God. How jealous is He of all such schemes of earthly bliss—and how, sooner or later, He shatters them all by His mighty hand!

Look, for instance, at health, that indispensable element of all earthly happiness! What a rude shock many of the dear family of God have experienced in their earthly tabernacle, even in their youthful days, by accident or disease, so as to mar all earthly happiness almost before the race of life was begun!

Look again at wedded happiness—that "perpetual fountain of domestic sweets"—how bitter a drop often falls from the hands of God into that honeyed cup! Why does that mourning widow sigh? Why does her heart swell, and her eye run over? What does that scalding drop on her cheek mean?

How many a blooming daughter has faded away in consumption before a mother's eye! How many a fine strong son has been cut down by an accident—or sudden illness has borne him away to the cold grave, in the very pride and prospect of life!

But apart from these elements of shattered and broken creature happiness, what disappointment, what vexation, what sorrow and care we find in everything we put our hands to! Even with health and home unbroken, wife and child untouched by death's cold hand, there is sin and misery enough in a man's own bosom to fill his heart with continual sorrow!

Thus wisely and mercifully, all our attempts to grasp earthly happiness fail and come to nothing.

Child of grace, do not murmur at the hand of the Lord which has broken your 'dreams of creature happiness'. God does not intend that you should have your heaven here on earth, nor live after the fashion of this world. It is a kind hand, though a rough one, which blasts all your schemes of creature happiness, which breaks your body into pieces with sickness, blights all your prospects of wealth, and fame, and reputation, and ambition, and pours bitter gall into each honeyed cup.

Why does the Lord brake all your earthly schemes of human happiness? Why does He blight all . . .

your prospects,

your plans of ambition and of success in life,

your romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy?

That they may all be removed out of your hearts' affections; and give you happiness which shall endure forever and ever!

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." Hebrews 12:28

The love of the truth

"They perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thessalonians 2:10

There is a receiving of 'the truth', and a receiving of 'the love of the truth'. These two things widely differ.

To receive the truth will not necessarily save; for many who receive the truth, never receive 'the love of the truth'.

Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed; but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive 'the love of the truth' by Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself.

"Yes, He is very precious to you who believe." 1 Peter 2:7

These "lovers" of ours

"I will run after my lovers and sell myself to them for food and drink, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil." Hosea 2:5

Here is the opening up of what we are by nature, what our carnal mind is ever bent upon, what we do or are capable of doing, except as held back by the watchful providence and unceasing grace and goodness of the Lord.

These "lovers" of ours are our old sins and former lusts which still crave for gratification. To these sometimes the carnal mind looks back and says, "Where are my lovers that gave me my food and drink? Where are those former delights that so pleased my vile passions, and so gratified my base desires?"

These lovers, then, are . . .

the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eyes,

and the pride of life;

all which, unless subdued by sovereign grace,

still work in our depraved nature, and seek to regain their former sway.

But the Lord, for the most part, mercifully interposes, nor will He usually let His children do what they gladly would do; or be what they gladly would be. He says, "therefore I will block your path with thornbushes; I will wall you in so that your cannot find your way." (Hosea 2:6)

The Lord, in His providence or in His grace, prevents our carnal mind from carrying out its base desires; hedges up our way with thorns—by which we may spiritually understand prickings of conscience, stings of remorse, pangs of penitence—which are so many thorny and briery hedges

that fence up the way of transgression, and thus prevent our carnal mind from breaking forth into its old paths, and going after these former lovers to renew its ungodly alliance with them.

A hedge of thorns being set up by the grace of God, our soul is unable to break through this strong fence, because the moment that it seeks to get through it, or over it, every part of it presents a pricking brier or a sharp and strong thorn, which wounds and pierces our conscience.

What infinite mercy, what surpassing grace, are hereby manifested! Were our conscience not made thus tender so as to feel the pricking brier, we can hardly tell what might be the fearful consequence, or into what a miserable abyss of sin and transgression our soul would fall.

But these lacerating briers produce remorse of soul before God; for finding, as the Lord speaks, "that when she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them but not find them," there comes a longing in her mind for purer pleasures and holier delights than her adulterous lovers could give her. And thus a change in her feelings is produced, a revolution in her desires. "Then she will say, I will go back to my Husband as at first, for then I was better off than now." The idea is of an adulterous wife contrasting the innocent enjoyments of her first wedded love—with the state of misery into which she had been betrayed by base seducers.

And thus the soul spiritually contrasts its former enjoyment of the Lord's presence and power—with its present state of darkness and desertion. "Where," she would say, "are my former delights, my first joys, and the sweetness I had in days now passed, in knowing, serving, and worshiping the Lord? Ah! He was a kind and loving husband to me in those days. I will return to Him if He will graciously permit me, for it was better with me when I could walk in the light of His countenance, than since I have been seeking for my lovers, and reaping nothing but guilt, death, and condemnation."

It is in these storms

"When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone; but the righteous stand firm forever." Proverbs 10:25

The very storms through which the believer passes, will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ.

As the same wind that blows down the shallow-rooted tree, only establishes the deep-rooted tree—so the same storms which uproot the 'shallow professor', only establish the 'true believer' more firmly in Christ.

Though these storms may shake off some of his 'leaves', or break off some of the 'rotten boughs' at the end of the branch, they do not uproot the believer's faith, but rather strengthen it.

It is in these storms that he learns . . .

more of his own weakness, and of Christ's strength;

more of his own misery, and of Christ's mercy;

more of his own sinfulness, and of superabounding grace;

more of his own poverty, and of Christ's riches;

more of his own desert of hell, and of his own title to heaven.

It is in these storms that the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on; and goes on to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart; and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus.

"Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to You for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of Your wings until this violent storm is past." Psalms 57:1

08.05. Volume 5 cont'd

His secret power and influence

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44

"I have loved you, My people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to Myself." Jeremiah 31:3

None can really come to Jesus by faith, unless this drawing power is put forth.

The Holy Spirit—that gracious and blessed Teacher, acts upon the soul by His secret power and influence, puts 'cords of love' and 'bands of mercy' around the heart, and by the attractive influence that He puts forth, draws the soul to Jesus' feet; and in due time reveals Him as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one.

As the Spirit reveals and manifests these precious things of Christ to the soul, He raises up a living faith whereby Jesus is sought unto, looked unto, laid hold of, and is brought into the heart with a divine power, there to be enshrined in its warmest and tenderest affections.

All through its Christian pilgrimage, this blessed Spirit goes on to deepen His work in the soul, and to discover more and more of the suitability, beauty, and blessedness of the Lord Jesus, as He draws the soul more and more unto Him. There is no maintaining of the light, life, and power of God in our souls, except as we are daily coming unto Jesus as the living stone, and continually living upon Him as the bread of life.

Every kind of sin

"He gave Himself to redeem us from every kind of sin." Titus 2:14

Sins of heart.

Sins of lip.

Sins of life.

There are five things as regards sin, from which our blessed Lord came to redeem us . . .

its guilt,

its filth,

its power,

its love,

its practice.

By His death, He redeemed us from sin's guilt.

By the washing of regeneration, He delivers us from sin’s filth.

By the power of His resurrection, He liberates us from sin’s dominion.

By revealing His beauty, He frees us from sin’s love.

By making the conscience tender in His fear, He preserves us from sin’s practice.

"The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

If your flesh had its full swing?

"The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit desires. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so that you cannot do the things that you would do." Galatians 5:17

At times, we can hardly tell how we are kept from evil.

There is in those who fear God, a spiritual principle which holds them up, and keeps them back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. This inner principle of grace and godly fear has, in thousands of instances, preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have . . .

ruined their reputation,

blighted their character,

brought reproach upon the cause of God, and

the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

They cannot do the EVIL things that they would do.

The flesh is always lusting towards evil, but grace is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. Grace does not wholly overcome the evil lustings of the flesh, but it can prevent those lustings from being carried out into open action. For the Spirit fights against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have its own will and way unchecked.

What a mercy lies couched here! For what would you be, if your flesh had its full swing?

What evil is there which you would not do?

What crime which you would not commit?

What slip which you would not make?

What open and horrid fall which you would not be guilty of—unless you were upheld by Almighty

power—and the flesh curbed and checked from running its destructive course?

We can never praise God sufficiently for His restraining grace—for what would we be without it?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117 A coward’s castle

A pastor has no right to turn the pulpit into a coward's castle, and from there attack those in the congregation, whom he is afraid to meet face to face privately.

It is cruelly unfair to attack an individual who cannot defend himself—to hold him up, as if on the horns of the pulpit, before the congregation, (who generally know pretty well who is meant), and to condemn him without hearing his side, with the pastor being the only judge and jury.

08.06. Volume 6

Some beloved idol?

"Because the whole land is filled with idols, and the people are madly in love with them." Jeremiah 50:38

Have we not all in our various ways, set up some beloved idol . . .

something which engaged our affections,

something which occupied our thoughts,

something to which we devoted all the energies of our minds,

something for which we were willing to labor night and day?

Be it money, be it power, be it esteem of men, be it respectability, be it worldly comfort, be it literary knowledge, there was a secret setting up of SELF in one or more of its various forms, and a bowing down to it as an idol.

The man of business makes money his god.

The man of pleasure makes the lust of the flesh his god.

The proud man makes his adored SELF his god.

The Pharisee makes self-righteousness his god.

The Arminian makes free-will his god.

The Calvinist makes dry doctrine his god.

All in one way or other, however they may differ in the object of their idolatrous worship, agree in this: that they give a preference in their esteem and affection to their peculiar idol, above the one true God.

"Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed." Isaiah 2:18

There is, then, a time to break down these idols which our fallen nature has set up.

And have not we experienced some measure of this breaking down, both externally and internally?

Have not our idols been in a measure smashed before our eyes, our prospects in life cut up and destroyed, our airy visions of earthly happiness and our romantic paradises dissolved into thin air, our creature-hopes dashed, our youthful affections blighted, and the objects from which we had fondly hoped to reap an enduring harvest of delight removed from our eyes?

And likewise, as to our religion . . .

our good opinion of ourselves,

our piety and holiness,

our wisdom and our knowledge,

our understanding and our abilities,

our consistency and uprightness;

have they not all been broken down, and

made a heap of ruins before our eyes?

That monstrous creature within us!

"I abhor the pride of Jacob." Amos 6:8

O cursed pride, that is ever lifting up its head in our hearts! Pride would even pull down God that it might sit upon His throne. Pride would trample under foot the holiest things to exalt itself!

Pride is that monstrous creature within us, of suchravenous and indiscriminate gluttony, that the more it devours, the more it craves!

Pride is that chameleon which assumes every color; that actor which can play every part; and yet which is faithful to no one object or purpose, but to exalt and glorify self!

"I will put an end to the pride of the mighty." "God will bring down their pride." (Ezekiel 7:24, Isaiah 25:11)

God means to kill man’s pride! And oh, what cutting weapons the Lord will sometimes make use of to kill a man’s pride!

How He will bring him sometimes into the depths of temporal poverty, that He may make a stab at

his worldly pride!

How He will bring to light the iniquities of his youth, that He may mortify his self-righteous pride!

How He will allow sin to break forth, if not openly, yet so powerfully within, that piercing convictions shall kill his spiritual pride!

And what deep discoveries of internal corruption will the Lord sometimes employ, to dig down to the root, and cut off the core of that poisonous tree, pride!

The Searcher of hearts dissects and anatomizes this inbred evil, cuts down to it through the quivering and bleeding flesh, and pursues with His keen knife its multiplied windings and ramifications.

"The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted." Isaiah 2:11

"The arrogance of all people will be brought low. Their pride will lie in the dust. The Lord alone will be exalted!" Isaiah 2:17

"The Lord Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show His contempt for all human greatness." Isaiah 23:9

Salvation

And they were shouting with a mighty shout, "Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is salvation.

Saved FROM . . .

death and hell;

the worm which never dies;

the fire which is never quenched;

the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;

the companionship of tormenting fiends and

all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;

blaspheming God in unutterable woe;

an eternity of misery without end or hope!

Saved INTO . . .

heaven;

the sight of Jesus as He is;

perfect holiness and happiness;

the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints;

and all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word salvation? The soul’s natural element

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

It is proud, and needs to be humbled.

It is careless, and needs to be awakened.

It is alive, and needs to be killed.

It is full, and requires to be emptied.

It is whole, and needs to be wounded.

It is clothed, and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous;

self-seeking;

buried deep in worldliness and carnality;

utterly blind and ignorant;

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit

and enmity;

hateful to all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is the soul's natural element.

Some of the features of the unregenerate nature of man are . . .

covetousness,

lust,

worldly pleasure,

desire of the praise of men,

an insatiable thirst after self-advancement,

a complete abandonment to all that can please and gratify every new desire of the heart,

an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves.

Education, moral restraints, or the force of habit, may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption, and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin, so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate the land. But no moral check can alter human nature.

A chained tiger is a tiger still.

"The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots."

To make man the direct contrary of what he originally is; to make him . . .

love God instead of hating Him;

fear God, instead of mocking Him;

obey God, instead of rebelling against Him;

to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change, requires the implantation of a new nature

by the immediate hand of God Himself.

Natural light, natural love, natural faith, natural obedience, in a word, all natural religion, is here useless and ineffectual.

Godly sorrow

Godly sorrow springs from a view of a suffering Savior, and manifests itself by . . .

hatred of self,

abhorrence of sin,

groaning over our backslidings,

grief of soul for being so often entangled by our lusts and passions,

and is accompanied by . . .

softness,

meltings of heart,

flowings of love to the Redeemer,

indignation against ourselves,

and earnest desires never to sin more.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10

What benefit is there in afflictions?

Does God send them without an object in view?

Do they come merely, as the men of the world think, by chance? No! There is benefit intended by them.

The branch cannot bear fruit unless it be pruned.

The love of sin cannot be cast out; the soul cannot be meekened, humbled, softened, and made contrite; the world cannot be embittered; the things of time and sense cannot be stripped of their false hue and their magic appearance—except through affliction.

Our greatest blessings usually spring from our greatest afflictions—they prepare the heart to receive them; they empty the vessel of the poisonous ingredients which have filled it, and fit it to receive gospel wine and milk.

To be without . . .

these afflictions,

these griefs,

these trials,

these temptations,

is to write ourselves destitute of grace.

But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

We are willing to walk to heaven; but not to walk there in God's way. Though we see in the Scripture that the path to glory is a rough and rugged way; yet when our feet are planted in that painful and trying path, we shrink back; our coward flesh refuses to walk in that road.

God therefore, as a sovereign, brings those afflictions upon us which He sees most fit for our profit and His glory, without ever consulting us, without ever allowing us a choice in the matter.

And He will generally cause our afflictions to come from the most unexpected source, and in a way most cutting to our feelings—in the way that of all others we would least have chosen—and yet in a way which of all others, is most for our profit.

God deals with us like a surgeon dealing with a diseased organ. How painful the operation!

How deep the knife cuts!

How long it may be before the wound is healed!

Yet every stroke of the knife is indispensable! A skillful and faithful surgeon would not do his duty if he did not dissect it to the very bottom.

As pain before healing is necessary, and must be produced by the knife; so spiritually, we must be wounded and cut in our souls, as long, and as deeply as God sees needful, that in His own time we may receive the consolation.

Do the afflictions we pass through humble us?

Do they deaden the love of the world in our hearts?

Do they purge out hypocrisy?

Do they bring us more earnestly to the throne of grace?

Do they discover to us sins that we have not before seen?

Do they penetrate into our very hearts?

Do they lay bare the corrupt fountain that we carry within us?

Do they search and test us before a heart-searching God?

Do they meeken and soften our spirit?

"I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10

The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

The sin of our fallen nature is a very mysterious thing. We read of "the mystery of iniquity". Sin has depths which no human plumbline ever fathomed, and lengths which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out.

Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep; and at other times to awake with renewed strength; its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature; the many shapes and colors it wears; the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels; the corners into which it creeps; its deceitfulness; its hypocrisy; its craftiness; its persuasiveness; its intense selfishness; its utter recklessness; its desperate madness; its insatiable greediness; are secrets, painful secrets, only learned by bitter experience.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9 The Lord’s secret power in our souls?

"He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; and increases strength to the weak." Isaiah 40:29

The Lord’s people are often in the state that they have no might. All their power seems exhausted, and their strength completely drained away; sin appears to have gotten the mastery over them; and they feel as if they had neither will nor ability to run the race set before them, or persevere in the way of the Lord.

Now what has kept us to this day? Some of you have made a profession ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years.

What has kept us?

When powerful temptations were spread for our feet, what preserved us from falling headlong into them?

When we felt the workings of strong lusts, what kept us from being altogether carried captive by them?

When we look at the difficulties of the way, the perplexities which our souls have had to grapple with, the persecutions and hard blows from sinners and saints that we have had to encounter—what has still kept in us a desire to fear God, and a heart in some measure tender before Him?

When we view the . . .

infidelity,

unbelief,

carnality,

worldly-mindedness,

hypocrisy,

pride, and

presumption of our fallen nature,

what has kept us still . . .

believing,

hoping,

loving,

longing,

and looking to the Lord?

When we think of our . . .

deadness,

coldness,

torpidity,

rebelliousness,

perverseness,

love to evil,

aversion to good, and

all the abounding corruptions of our nature,

what has kept us from giving up the very profession of religion, and swimming down the powerful current that has so long and so often threatened to sweep us utterly from the Lord? Is it not the putting forth of the Lord's secret power in our souls?

Can we not look back, and recall to mind our first religious companions; those with whom we started in the race; those whom we perhaps envied for their greater piety, zeal, holiness, and earnestness; and with which we painfully contrasted our own sluggishness and carnality; admiring them, and condemning ourselves?

Where are they all, or the greater part of them? Some have embraced soul-destroying errors; others are buried in a worldly religious system; and others are wrapped up in delusion and fleshly confidence.

Thus, while most have fallen into the snares of the devil; God, by putting forth His secret power in the hearts of His fainting ones, keeps His fear alive in their souls; holds up their goings in His paths

that their footsteps slip not; brings them out of all their temptations and troubles; delivers them from every evil work; and preserves them unto His heavenly kingdom. He thus secures the salvation of His people by His own free grace.

How sweet and precious it is . . .

to have our strength renewed;

to have fresh grace brought into the heart;

to feel the mysterious sensations of renovated life;

to feel the everlasting arms supporting the soul . . .

fighting our battles for us,

subduing our enemies,

overcoming our lusts,

breaking our snares, and

delivering us out of our temptations!

God’s house?

In the New Testament Scriptures, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God." The New Testament never, in any one instance, means, by "the house of God," any material building.

It has come to pass, through the traditions received from the fathers, that . . .

buildings erected by man,

collections of bricks and mortar,

piles of squared and cemented stones,

are often called "the house of God."

In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of "God’s house", thus endeavoring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that He was only to be found in some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies.

The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the Church of England; and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God."

And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in this morning, "the house of God."

How frequently does the expression drop from the pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer

meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God.

It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for His service. When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel

We often know the theory of the gospel, before we know the experience of the gospel.

We often receive the doctrines of grace into our judgment, before we receive the grace of the doctrines into our soul.

We therefore need to be . . .

brought down,

humbled,

tried,

stripped of every prop;

that the gospel may be to us . . .

more than a sound,

more than a name,

more than a theory,

more than a doctrine,

more than a system,

more than a creed;

that it may be . . .

soul enjoyment,

soul blessing,

and soul salvation.

When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and tried—it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner’s broken heart.

We get entangled with some idol

Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its partaker to desire to live to His honor and glory.

But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing. Such is . . .

the weakness of the flesh,

the power of sin,

the subtlety of Satan,

the strength of temptation, and

the snares spread on every side for our feet,

that we can neither do what we want, nor be what we want. Before we are well aware, we get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings darkness into the mind, and may cut us out some bitter work for the rest of our days.

But we thus learn not only the weakness of the flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies.

And as the grace of the Lord Jesus, in its suitability, in its sufficiency and its super-aboundings, becomes manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh; a sense of His wondrous love and care in so bearing with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us with a holy obligation to walk in His fear and to live to His praise. The sins and slips of the saints?

The Scriptures faithfully record the falls of believers . . .

the drunkenness of Noah,

the incest of Lot,

the unbelief of Abraham,

the peevishness of Moses,

the adultery of David,

the idolatry of Solomon,

the pride of Hezekiah,

the cowardice of Mark and

the cursing and swearing of Peter.

But why has the Holy Spirit left on record the sins and slips of the saints?

First, that it might teach us that they were saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners; in the same way as we hope to be saved.

Secondly, that their slips and falls might be so many beacons and warnings, to guard the people of God against being overtaken by the same sins; as the apostle speaks, "All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us."

And thirdly, that the people of God, should they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast into despair; but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the slips and failings of the saints of old, they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

These two kinds of repentance are to be carefully distinguished from each other; though they are often sadly confounded. Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented. But their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience, not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry Judge, but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father.

They neither hated their sins nor forsook them.

They neither loved holiness nor sought it.

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Esau plotted Jacob’s death.

Saul consulted the witch of Endor.

Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison.

Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God; that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit’s gracious operations!

Godly sorrow does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law, but from His mercy in a blessed gospel; from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross; from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence; with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it; with most hearty, sincere and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil; and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God.

Here, and here alone

Standing then at the cross of our adorable Lord, we may see . . .

the law thoroughly fulfilled,

its curse fully endured,

its penalties wholly removed,

sin eternally put away,

the justice of God amply satisfied,

all His perfections gloriously harmonized,

reconciliation completely effected,

redemption graciously accomplished,

and the church everlastingly saved.

Here, and here alone, we see sin in its blackest colors, and holiness in its most attractive beauties.

Here, and here alone, we see the love of God in its tenderest form, and the anger of God in its deepest expression.

Here, and here alone, we see the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of His inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of His heart to the election of grace.

Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace.

Here, and here alone, penitential grief and godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes.

Here, and here alone, is . . .

sin subdued and mortified,

holiness communicated,

death vanquished,

Satan put to flight, and

happiness and heaven begun in the soul.

What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners and a sin-pardoning God! What a healing-place for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders! What a door of hope in the valley of Achor for the self-condemned and self-abhorred! What a safe spot for seeking souls! And what a blessed resorting-place for the whole family of grace in this valley of grief and sorrow.

Experimental knowledge

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." John 17:3

An experimental knowledge of Christ in the soul, is the only relief for sin’s . . .

poverty,

guilt,

leprosy,

bankruptcy,

and damnation.

This is the true way of preaching Christ crucified; not the mere doctrine of the Cross, but a crucified

Jesus experimentally known to the soul.

I am deeply conscious of my own . . .

baseness,

ignorance,

blindness

and folly.

But my malady is too deeply rooted to be healed by dry doctrines and speculative theological opinions.

The blood of the Lamb, spiritually and supernaturally sprinkled and applied, is the only healing balm for a sin-sick soul.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

I find that sin has such power over me, that though I call on the Lord again and again for deliverance, I seem to be as weak as ever when temptation comes.

If a window were placed in my bosom, what filth and vileness would be seen by all.

"O you hideous monster sin, What a curse, have you brought in!"

I love it; I hate it.

I want to be delivered from the power of it; and yet am not satisfied without drinking down its poisoned sweets.

Sin is my hourly companion; and my daily curse.

Sin is the breath of my mouth; and the cause of my groans.

Sin is my incentive to prayer; and my hinderer of it.

Sin made my Savior suffer; and makes my Savior precious.

Sin spoils every pleasure; and adds a sting to every pain.

Sin fits a soul for heaven; and ripens a soul for hell.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

Is your heart, as my heart?

Alas! Alas! We feel sin’s power daily and hourly. We sigh and groan at times, to be delivered from the giant strength of our corruptions, which seem to carry us captive at their will. Though sin is a sweet morsel to our carnal mind, it grieves our soul.

I am sure I must be a monument of grace and mercy, if saved from the guilt, curse, and power of sin! My greatest enemy?

I have ever found myself to be my greatest enemy. I never had a foe that troubled me so much as my own heart; nor has any one ever wrought me half the mischief or given me half the plague that

I have felt and known within. And it is a daily sense of this which makes me dread myself more than anybody that walks upon the face of the earth!

Keep a watchful eye upon every inward foe; and if you fight, fight against the enemy that lurks and works in your own breast!

There are many devices in a man’s heart

"There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Proverbs 19:21.

The devices of our heart are generally to find some easy, smooth, flowery path. Whatever benefits we have derived from affliction, whatever mercies we have experienced in tribulation, the flesh hates and shrinks from such a path with complete abhorrence.

And, therefore, there is always a secret devising in a man’s heart . . .

to escape the cross,

to avoid affliction, and

to walk in some flowery meadow,

away from the rough road which cuts his feet, and wearies his limbs.

Another "device in a man’s heart" is, that he shall have worldly prosperity; that his children shall grow up around him, and when they grow up, he shall be able to provide for them in a way which shall be best suited to their station in life; that they shall enjoy health and strength and success; and that there shall not be any cutting affliction in his family, or fiery trial to pass through.

Now these devices the Lord frustrates. What grief, what affliction, what trouble, is the Lord continually bringing into some families! Their dearest objects of affection removed from them, at the very moment when they seemed clasped nearest around their hearts!

And those who are spared, perhaps, growing up in such a searedness of conscience and hardness of heart, and, perhaps, profligacy of life, that even their very presence is often a burden to their parents instead of a blessing; and the very children who should be their comfort, become thorns and briars in their sides!

Oh, how the Lord overturns and brings to nothing the "devices of a man’s heart" to make a paradise here upon earth.

When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord’s dealings with him from the first, he sees it was a kind hand which "blasted his gourds, and laid them low;" it was a kind hand that swept away his worldly prospects; which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty; which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations; because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally precious.

"There are many devices in a man’s heart."

Now you have all your devices; that busy workshop is continually putting out some new pattern; some new fashion is continually starting forth from the depths of that ingenious manufactory which

you carry about with you; and you are wanting this, and expecting that, and building up airy castles, and looking for that which shall never come to pass; for "there are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

And so far as you are children of God, that counsel is a counsel of wisdom and mercy. The purposes of God’s heart are purposes of love and affection toward you, and therefore you may bless and praise God, that whatever be the devices of your hearts against God’s counsel, they shall be frustrated, that He may do His will and fulfill all His good pleasure.

All are more or less deeply infected with it

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

As we are led aside by the powerful workings of our corrupt nature, we are often seeking great things for ourselves.

Riches, worldly comforts, respectability, to be honored, admired, and esteemed by men, are the objects most passionately sought after by the world. And so far as the children of God are under the influence of a worldly principle, do they secretly desire similar things.

Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life. All are more or less deeply infected with it, until delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after "great things," and a secret plotting in his mind how he may obtain them.

But the Lord is determined that His people shall not have great things. He has purposed to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. He therefore nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their flattering prospects, and makes them for the most part, poor, needy, and despised in this world.

Whatever schemes or projects the Lord’s people may devise that they may prosper and get on in the world, He rarely allows their plans to thrive. He knows well to what consequences it would lead; that this ivy creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate and strangle the tree.

The more that worldly goods increase . . .

the more the heart is fixed upon them,

the more the affections are set upon idols,

the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord.

He will not allow His people to have their portion here below. He has in store for them a better city, that is a heavenly one, and therefore will not allow them to build and plant below the skies.

A child of God may be secretly aiming at great things, such as respectability, bettering his condition in life, rising step by step in the scale of society. But the Lord will usually . . .

disappoint these plans,

defeat these projects,

wither these gourds,

and blight these prospects.

He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job; smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah; take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob; or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of His unerring bow into the conscience.

God has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart? When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (so through ignorance esteemed) sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces.

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of . . .

a greater gift in preaching,

a readier utterance,

a more abundant variety,

a more striking delivery than they possess.

And this, not for the glory of God, but for the glory of the creature. Not that praise may be given God, but that pride, cursed pride, may be gratified; that they may be admired by men.

My desire and aim is . . .

not to deceive souls by flattery;

not to please any party;

not to minister to any man’s pride or presumption;

but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God’s glory,

with His fear working in my heart, to speak to the edification of His people.

A minister who stands up with any other motives, and aiming at any other ends than the glory of God, and the edification of His people, bears no scriptural marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by God Himself.

Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes! Our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, our trials, and above all the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .

everything worth having!

everything worth a moment’s anxious thought!

everything for time and eternity!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself; my . . .

vile,

proud,

lustful,

hypocritical,

worldly,

covetous,

presumptuous,

obscene self.

O self! Self! Your desperate wickedness, your depravity, your love of sin, your abominable pollutions,

your monstrous heart wickedness, your wretched deadness, hardness, blindness, and indifference.

You are a treacherous villain, and, I fear, always will be such!

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146

If you know anything for yourself, inwardly and experimentally of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and that daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven; you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. There is present salvation: an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146 Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that

have run into our hands, and pierced us!

Our own strength and resolutions; the world and the church; sinners and saints; friends and enemies; have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls!

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from leaning on the world,

from leaning on friends,

from leaning on enemies,

from leaning on self,

in order to bring us to lean upon Himself.

And every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon Him.

Superabounding grace

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

What are all the gilded toys of time compared with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!

But, alas! what wretches are we when left to sin, self, and Satan! How unable to withstand the faintest breath of temptation! How bent upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace, can either suit or save such wretches?

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

Job’s religion

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

What a mere shallow pretense to vital godliness satisfies most ministers, most hearers, and most

congregations!

But there was a reality in Job's religion.

It was not of a flimsy, notional, superficial nature. It was not merely a sound Calvinistic creed, and nothing more. It was not a religion of theory and speculation, nor a well-compacted system of doctrines and duties. There was something deeper, something more divine in Job's religion than any such mere pretense, delusion, imitation, or hypocrisy.

And if our religion be of the right kind, there will be something deeper in it, something more powerful, spiritual, and supernatural, than notions and doctrines, theories and speculations, merely passing to and fro in our minds, however scriptural and correct.

There will be a divine reality in it, if God the Spirit be the author of it. And there will be no trifling with the solemn things of God, and with our own immortal souls.

The heart of God's child

There is much . . .

presumption,

pride,

hypocrisy,

deceit,

delusion,

formality,

superstition and

self-righteousness

to be purged out of the heart of God's child.

But all these things . . .

keep him low,

mar his pride,

crush his self-righteousness,

cut the locks of his presumption,

stain his self conceit,

stop his boasting,

preserve him from despising others,

make him take the lowest room,

teach him to esteem others better than himself,

drive him to earnest prayer,

fit him as an object of mercy,

break to pieces his free will, and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone!

The way in which the Spirit of God works

As pride rises, it must be broken down.

As self-righteousness starts up, it must be brought low.

As the wisdom of the creature exalts itself against the wisdom of God, it must be laid prostrate.

The way in which the Spirit of God works is to lay the creature low, by bringing it into nothingness, and crushing it into self-abasement and self-loathing, so as to press out of it everything on which the creature can depend.

Like a surgeon, who will run his lancet into the abscess, and let out the gory matter, in order to effect a thorough cure; so the Spirit of the Lord thrusting His sharp sword into the heart, lets out the inward corruption, and never heals the wound until He has thoroughly probed it.

And when He has laid bare the heart, He heals it by pouring in the balmy blood of Jesus, as that which, by its application, cleanses from all sin.

The world passes away, and the lust thereof

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof." 1 John 2:17

The world and all that is in it comes to an end. Where are the great bulk of the men and women who fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago trod London streets? Where are they who rode about in their gay carriages, gave their splendid entertainments, decked themselves with feathers and jewels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of life?

Where are they?

The grave holds their bodies, and hell holds their souls.

"The world passes away." It is like a pageant, or a gay and splendid procession, which passes before the eye for a few minutes, then turns the corner of the street, and is lost to view. It is now to you who had looked upon it just as if it were not, and is gone to amuse other eyes.

So, could you go on for years . . .

enjoying all your natural heart could wish;

lay up money by thousands;

ride in your carriage;

deck your body with jewelry;

fill your house with splendid furniture;

enjoy everything that earth can give;

then there would come, some day or other, sickness to lay you upon a dying bed. To you the world has now passed away with all its lusts; with you all is now come to an end; and now you have, with a guilty soul, to face a holy God.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

All these lusts for which men have sold body and soul, half ruined their families, and stained their own name; all these lusts for which they were so mad that they would have them at any price, snatch them even from hell's mouth; all these lusts are passed away, and what have they left? A gnawing worm; a worm that can never die, and the wrath of God as an unquenchable fire.

That is all which the love of the world can do for you, with all your toil and anxiety, or all your amusement and pleasure.

You have not gained much perhaps of this world's goods, with all your striving after them. But could the world fill your heart with enjoyment, and your money bags with gold, as the dust of the grave will one day fill your mouth, it would be much to the same purpose. If you had got all the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin was screwed down, but gravedust in your mouth.

Such is the end of the world.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

DEATH is the great and final extinguisher of all human hopes and pleasures. Look and see how man sickens and dies, and is tumbled into the cemetery, where his body is left to the worms, and his soul to face an angry God, on the great judgment day.

"The world passes away, and the lust thereof."

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Weary?

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

The Lord's purpose in laying burdens upon us is to weary us out. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each; and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely wearied out of sin and self, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own.

The effect, then, of all spiritual labor is to bring us to this point: to be weary of the world, for we feel it, for the most part, to be a valley of tears; to be weary of self, for it is our greatest plague; weary of professors, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value; weary of the profane, for their ungodly conversation only hurts our minds; weary of our bodies, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul; and weary of life, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable.

By this painful experience we come to this point: to be worn out and wearied; and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ.

As long as we can rest in the world, we shall rest in it. As long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them. As long as we can find anything pleasing in self, we shall be pleased with it. As long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them.

But when we get weary of all things visible, tangible, and sensible—weary of ourselves, and of all things here below—then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone.

"Then Jesus said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are LOST." Luke 19:10

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

How comfortably he could walk to church with his Bible under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly also, he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well, with one foot in heaven.

But a ray of heavenly light has beamed into his soul, and shown him who and what God is; what sin and a sinful heart is; and who and what he himself as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of

God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let out, where is the clean heart once boasted of?

Where is his religion now?

All buried beneath a load of filth!

Where is all his holiness gone? His . . .

holy looks,

holy expressions,

holy manners,

holy gestures,

holy garb;

where are they all gone?

All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures; and he is, as Job says, 'in the ditch.'

We never find the right religion, until we have lost the wrong one. We never find Christ, until we have lost SELF. We never find grace, until we have lost our own pitiful self-holiness.

"And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are LOST." Luke 19:10

It is a creature of many lives!

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners, and yet a Pharisee!

A wretch, and the vilest of wretches, and yet pluming himself on his good works!

Did not experience convince us to the contrary, we would scarcely believe that a monster like man, a creature, as someone has justly said, "half beast and half devil," should dream of pleasing God by his obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart. Deep is the root, broad the stem, wide the branches, but poisonous the fruit, of this gigantic tree, planted by pride and unbelief in the soil of human nature.

Self-righteousness is not peculiar to only certain individuals. It is interwoven with our very being.

It is the only religion that human nature . . .

understands,

relishes, or

admires.

Again and again must the heart be ploughed up, and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the growth of this pharisaic spirit.

It is a creature of many lives! It is not one blow, nor ten, nor a hundred that can kill it. Stunned it may be for a while, but it revives again and again!

Pharisaism can live and thrive under any profession. Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he carries, that constitutes the man.

The believer’s chief troubles

As earth is but a valley of tears, the Christian has many tribulations in common with the world. Family troubles were the lot of Job, Abraham, Jacob and David. Sickness befell Hezekiah, Trophimus and Epaphroditus. Reverses and losses fell upon Job. Poverty and famine drove Naomi into the land of Moab.

Trouble, then, is in itself no sign of grace; for it inevitably flows from, and is necessarily connected with, man’s fallen state.

But we should fix our eye on two things, as especially marking the temporal afflictions of the Lord’s family:

1. That they are all weighed out and timed by special appointment. For though "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," yet "affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground." Job 5:6

2. That they are specially sanctified, and made to "work together for good" to those who love God.

But the believer’s chief troubles are internal, and arise from . . .

the assaults of Satan,

powerful temptations,

the guilt of sin laid on the conscience,

doubts and fears about a saving interest in Christ, and

a daily, hourly conflict with a nature ever lusting to evil.

A religion that satisfies thousands.

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power." 2 Timothy 3:5

Much that passes for religion, is not true religion at all.

Much that goes for hopes of salvation, is nothing but lying refuges.

Much is palmed off for the teaching of the Spirit, which is nothing but delusion.

Vital godliness is very rare.

There are very few people spiritually taught of God.

There are very few ministers who really preach the truth.

Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands.

A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself, cannot take up with a religion in the flesh.

He cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be deceived by Satan’s delusions. He has a secret gnawing of conscience, which makes him dissatisfied with a religion that satisfies thousands.

Then down they sink to the bottom!

"Until the pit is dug for the wicked." Psalms 94:13

In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the bottom. And when the pit has been dug sufficiently deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth, and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed—the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this!

Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes; prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer, thinking only of . . .

some worldly profit,

some covetous plan,

some lustful scheme,

something the carnal mind delights in;

but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit."

The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them. The pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts; they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed.

So it is with the wicked; both with religious professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shown the way; no pausing, no turning back. On they go, on they go; heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly; pursuing some beloved object. On they go, on they go; until in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit!

There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are. He knows where the pit is. He knows their steps. He sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them . . .

no forewarning,

no notice of their danger,

no teachings,

no chastenings,

no remonstrances,

no frowns,

no stripes.

They are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and then down they sink to the bottom! Who can come out of the battle alive?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

We know little of ourselves, and less of one another. We do not know . . .

our own needs,

what is for our good,

what snares to avoid,

what dangers to shun.

Our path is . . .

bestrewed with difficulties,

beset with temptations,

surrounded with foes,

encompassed with perils.

At every step there is a snare!

At every turn an enemy lurks!

Pride digs the pit, carelessness blindfolds the eyes, carnality drugs and intoxicates the senses, the lust of the flesh seduces, the love of the world allures, unbelief paralyzes the fighting hand and the praying knee, sin entangles the feet, guilt defiles the conscience, and Satan accuses the soul.

Under these circumstances, who can come out of the battle alive? Only he who is kept by the mighty power of God. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

MERCY!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me." Psalms 119:132

When shall we ever get beyond the need of God’s mercy?

We feel our need of continual mercy . . .

as our sins abound,

as our guilt is felt,

as our corruption works,

as our conscience is burdened,

as the iniquities of our heart are laid bare,

as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit’s light.

We need . . .

mercy for every adulterous look;

mercy for every covetous thought;

mercy for every light and trifling word;

mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts;

mercy while we live;

mercy when we die;

mercy to accompany us every moment;

mercy to go with us down to the portals of the grave;

mercy to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan;

mercy to land us safe before the Redeemer’s throne!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me."

Why me? Because I am so vile a sinner. Because I am so base a backslider. Because I am such a daring transgressor. Because I sin against You with every breath that I draw. Because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves. Because nothing but Your mercy can blot out such iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind.

I need . . .

inexhaustible mercy,

everlasting mercy,

super-abounding mercy.

Nothing but such mercy as this can suit such a guilty sinner!

A flowery path?

Does the road to heaven lie across a smooth, grassy meadow, over which we may quietly walk in the cool of a summer evening, and leisurely amuse ourselves with gathering of flowers and listening to the warbling of the birds?

No child of God ever found the way to heaven a flowery path. It is the wide gate and broad way which leads to perdition. It is the strait gate and narrow way, the uphill road, full of . . .

difficulties,

trials,

temptations,

and enemies,

which leads to heaven, and issues in eternal life.

But our Father manifests mercy and grace. He never leaves nor forsakes the objects of His choice. He . . .

fulfills every promise,

defeats every enemy,

appears in every difficulty,

richly pardons every sin,

graciously heals every backsliding,

and eventually lands them in eternal bliss!

Toys and playthings of the religious babyhouse

"I will feed My flock." Ezekiel 34:15

The only real food of the soul must be of God’s own appointing, preparing, and communicating.

You can never deceive a hungry child. You may give it a plaything to still its cries. It may serve for a few minutes; but the pains of hunger are not to be removed by a doll. A toy horse will not allay the cravings after the mother’s breast.

So with babes in grace. A hungry soul cannot feed upon playthings.

Altars, robes, ceremonies, candlesticks, bowings, mutterings, painted windows, intoning priests, and singing men and women; these dolls and wooden horses; these toys and playthings of the religious babyhouse, cannot feed the soul that, like David, cries out after the living God. (Psalms 42:2-3)

Christ, the bread of life, the manna that came down from heaven, is the only food of the believing soul. (John 6:51) But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict!

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more." Ezekiel 21:27

Jesus wants our hearts and affections. Therefore every idol must go down, sooner or later, because the idol draws away the affections of the soul from Christ. Everything that is loved in opposition to Him must sooner or later be taken away, that the Lord Jesus alone may be worshiped. Everything which exacts the allegiance of the soul must be overthrown.

Jesus shall have our heart and affections, but in having our heart and affection, He shall have it . . .

wholly,

solely, and

undividedly.

He shall have it entirely for Himself.

He shall reign and rule supreme.

Now, here comes the conflict and the struggle. SELF says, "I will have a part." Self wants to be . . .

honored,

admired,

esteemed,

bowed down to.

Self wants to indulge in, and gratify its desires.

Self wants, in some way, to erect its throne in opposition to the Lord of life and glory.

But Jesus says, "No! I must reign supreme!"

Whatever it is that stands up in opposition to Him, down it must go! Just as Dagon fell down before the ark, so self must fall down before Christ . . .

in every shape,

in every form,

in whatever subtle guise self wears,

down it must come to a wreck and ruin before the King of Zion!

So, if we are continually building up SELF, Jesus will be continually overthrowing self.

If we are setting up our idols, He shall be casting them down.

If we are continually hewing out "cisterns that can hold no water," He will be continually dashing these cisterns to pieces.

If we think highly of our knowledge, we must be reduced to total folly.

If we are confident of our strength, we must be reduced to utter weakness.

If we highly esteem our attainments, or in any measure are resting upon the power of the creature, the power of the creature must be overthrown, so that we shall stand weak before God, unable to lift up a finger to deliver our souls from going down into the pit.

In this way does the Lord teach His people the lesson that Christ must be all in all. They learn . . .

not in the way of speculation,

nor in the way of mere dry doctrine,

not from the mouth of others, but

they learn these lessons in painful soul-experience.

And every living soul that is sighing and longing after a manifestation of Christ and desiring to have Him enthroned in the heart; every such soul will know, sooner or later . . .

an utter overthrow of self,

a thorough prostration of this idol,

a complete breaking to pieces of this beloved image,

that the desire of the righteous may be granted, and

that Christ may reign and rule as King and Lord in him and over him, setting up His blessed kingdom there, and winning to Himself every affection of the renewed heart.

Are there not moments, friends, are there not some few and fleeting moments when the desire of our souls is that Christ should be our Lord and God; when we are willing that He should have every affection; that every rebellious thought should be subdued and brought into obedience to the cross of Christ; that every plan should be frustrated which is not for the glory of God and our soul's spiritual profit?

Are there not seasons in our experience when we can lay down our souls before God, and say "Let Christ be precious to my soul, let Him come with power to my heart, let Him set up His throne as Lord and King, and let self be nothing before Him?" But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict! when God answers these petitions!

When our plans are frustrated, what a rebellion works up in the carnal mind!

When self is cast down, what a rising up of the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature!

When the Lord does answer our prayers, and strips off all false confidence; when He does remove our rotten props, and dash to pieces our broken cisterns, what a storm; what a conflict takes place in the soul!

But He is not to be moved; He will take His own way. "I will overturn, let the creature say what it will. I will overturn, let the creature think what it will. Down it shall go to ruin! It shall come to a wreck! It shall be overthrown! My purpose shall be accomplished, and I will fulfill all My pleasure. Self is a rebel who has set up an idolatrous temple, and I will overturn and bring the temple to ruin, for the purpose of manifesting My glory and My salvation, that I may be your Lord and your God."

If God has overturned our bright prospects, shall we say it was a cruel hand that laid them low? If He has overthrown our worldly plans, shall we say it was an unkind act? If He has reduced our false righteousness to a heap of rubbish, in order that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, shall we say it was a cruel deed?

Is he an unkind father who takes away poison from his child, and gives him food? Is she a cruel mother who snatches her boy from the precipice on which he was playing? No! The kindness was manifested in the act of snatching the child from destruction!

So if the Lord has broken and overthrown our purposes, it was a kind act; for in so doing He brings us to nothing, that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, that our hearts may echo back, "O Lord, fulfill all Your own promises in our souls, and make us willing to be nothing; that upon the nothingness of self, the glory and beauty and preciousness of Christ may be exalted!" A snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart.

We need not go very far to find the most convincing proofs of this. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly; and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God.

It is true that now this sin does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped—at least the calf is not, if the gold is. Nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone.

But that rank, property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; are as much idolized now, as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea.

What is an idol?

It is that which occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, which is due to God only. Whatever is to us, what the Lord alone should be—that is an idol to us.

It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times, the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size. So is it in these inner idols, of which the outer idols are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been . . .

too base or too brutal,

too great or too little,

too noble or too vile,

from the sun walking in its brightness—to a snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag—which man has not worshiped. And these intended representations of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what man inwardly worshiped. For the inward idol preceded the outward—and the fingers merely carved what the imagination had previously devised. The gross material idol, then, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man.

But we need not dwell on this part of the subject. There is another form of idolatry much nearer home; the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan, or a modern Hindu—but that of a Christian.

Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to each find out our own idol . . .

what it is,

how deep it lies,

what worship it obtains,

what honor it receives,

and what affection it engrosses.

Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?"

If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another, "What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?"—for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to . . .

the farm,

the shop,

the business,

the investment,

to the husband, wife, or child,

to that which feeds lust or pride,

worldliness or covetousness,

self-conceit or self-admiration;

that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and yet we may both be idolaters! You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool, or such a sinner, as to hug it to my bosom! And I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours! You may condemn me, and I condemn you. And the Word of God, and the verdict of a living conscience may condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable these idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning, literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. Music—vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second—so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid

pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. Science, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind. These are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper—or even that less debasing but enervating idol—sleep and indolence, as if life's highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty.

You middle-class people—who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ball field—may still have an idol. Your garden, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty children, so admired as they walk in the street; or your new house and all the new furniture; or your son who is getting on so well in business; or your daughter so comfortably settled in life; or your dear husband so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer SELF that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to.

Who shall count the thousands of idols which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone?

You may not be found out. Your idol may be so hidden, or so peculiar, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer; it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with divine eye-salve.

Hidden diseases the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor's. But an idol is still an idol, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

An idol is not to be admired for its beauty, or loathed for its ugliness—but to be hated because it is an idol.

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21 The mother and mistress of all the sins

"I hate pride and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Proverbs 16:5

Of all sins, pride seems most deeply imbedded in the very heart of man. Unbelief, sensuality, covetousness, rebellion, presumption, contempt of God's holy will and word, deceit and falsehood, cruelty and wrath, violence and murder—these, and a forest of other sins have indeed struck deep roots into the black and noxious soil of our fallen nature; and, interlacing their lofty stems and gigantic arms, have wholly shut out the light of heaven from man's benighted soul.

But these and their associate evils do not seem so thoroughly interwoven into the very constitution of the human heart, nor so to be its very life-blood, as pride. The lust of the flesh is strong, but there are respites from its workings. Unbelief is powerful, but there are times when it seems to lie dormant. Covetousness is ensnaring, but there is not always a bargain to be made, or an advantage to be clutched.

These sins differ also in strength in different individuals. Some seem not much tempted with the grosser passions of our fallen nature; others are naturally liberal and benevolent, and whatever other idol they may serve, they bend not their knee to the golden calf.

But where lust may have no power, covetousness no dominion, and anger no sway—there, down, down in the inmost depths, heaving and boiling like the lava in the crater of a volcano, works that master sin—that sin of sins, pride!

Pride is the mother and mistress of all the sins; for where she does not conceive them in her ever-teeming womb, she instigates their movements, and compels them to pay tribute to her glory.

The 'origin of evil' is hidden from our eyes. Whence it sprang, and why God allowed it to arise in His fair creation, are mysteries which we cannot fathom. But thus much is revealed—that of this mighty fire which has filled hell with sulphurous flame, and will one day envelop earth and its inhabitants in the general conflagration, the first spark was pride!

Pride is therefore emphatically the devil's own sin. We will not say his darling sin, for it is his torment, the serpent which is always biting him, the fire which is ever consuming him. But it is the sin which hurled him from heaven, and transformed him from a bright and holy seraph, into a foul and hideous demon!

How subtle, then, and potent must that poison be, which could in a moment change an angel into a devil! How black in nature, how concentrated in virulence that venom—one drop of which could utterly deface the image of God in myriads of bright spirits before the throne—and degrade them into monsters of uncleanness and malignity!

I needed no monkish rules then.

A man may . . .

have a consistent profession of religion,

have a sound, well ordered creed,

be a member of a Christian church,

attend to all ordinances and duties,

seek to frame his life according to God's word,

have his family prayer, and private prayer,

be a good husband, father, and friend,

be liberal and kind to God's cause and people,

and yet with all this bear no fruit Godwards.

What is all this but pitiful self-holiness?

Real gospel fruit is only produced by the word of God's grace falling into the heart, watering

and softening it. Without this there is . . .

not one gracious feeling,

not one spiritual desire,

not one tender thought,

not one heavenly affection.

We have tried, perhaps, to make ourselves holy. We have watched our eyes, our ears, our tongues; have read so many chapters every day out of God's word; continued so long upon our knees; and so tried to work a kind of holiness into our own souls.

Many years ago, I used to try to pray for the better part of an hour; and I am ashamed to say, I have been glad to hear the clock strike. What was this but a monkish, self-imposed rule, to please God by the length of my prayers?

But when the Lord was pleased to touch my conscience with His finger, He gave me a remarkable spirit of grace and supplication; I needed no monkish rules then. The strong man sinks down into a babe!

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust." Psalms 18:2

As long as a man has any strength of his own, he will never have any strength in the Lord; for the strength of Jesus is made perfect in our weakness.

Oh, what a painful lesson we have to learn to find all our strength is weakness. There was a time when we thought we had strength, and could . . .

resist Satan,

overcome the world,

endure persecution,

bear the reproach of man,

mortify and keep down pride, and the evils of our heart.

Have we found ourselves able to carry out our fancied strength? What has been our experience in this matter? That we have discovered more and more our own weakness; that we cannot stand against one temptation; the least gust blows us down!

Our besetting lusts, our vile passions, and the wicked desires of our hearts, so entice our eyes and thoughts; so entwine themselves around our affections; that we give out in a moment, unless God Himself holds us up! We cannot stand against sin; our heart is as weak as water.

Thus we learn our weakness, by feeling ourselves to be the very weakest of the weak, and the very vilest of the vile.

As the Lord leads a man deeper down into the knowledge of his corruptions, it makes him more and more out of conceit with his righteous, pious, holy self. The more the Lord leads a man into the knowledge of . . .

temptation,

his besetting sin,

the power of his corruptions,

the workings of his vile nature;

the more deeply and painfully he learns what a poor, helpless, weak, powerless wretch he is.

As the Lord is pleased to unfold before his eyes the strength, power, and fullness lodged in Jesus Christ; He draws him, leads him, brings him, encourages him, and enables him to come to this fullness. And by the hand of faith he draws supplies out of that fullness.

As the Lord enables the soul to look to Jesus, His blessed strength is communicated and breathed into his soul. Then the 'poor worm Jacob' threshes the mountains, beats down the hills, and makes them fly before him as chaff. When the Lord strengthens him, he can . . .

stand against temptation,

overcome sin,

bear persecution,

subdue the evils of his heart, and

fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

When the Lord leaves him, he is like Samson with his locks cut. He sinks into all evil, and feels the helplessness of his fallen nature. Let the Lord but remove His gracious presence, and the strong man sinks down into a babe! And he that in the strength of the Lord could thresh the mountains, falls down as weak and helpless as a little child.

Thus the Lord painfully and solemnly teaches us, that being nothing in ourselves, and feeling our weakness, helplessness, and wretchedness; in Him alone we have strength.

Save me, and I shall be saved!

"Save me, and I shall be saved!" Jeremiah 17:14

This implies salvation from the power of sin; the secret dominion sin possesses in the heart.

O, what a tyrannical rule does sin sometimes exercise in our carnal minds! How soon are we entangled in flesh-pleasing snares! How easily brought under the secret dominion of some hidden corruption! And how we struggle in vain to deliver ourselves when we are caught in the snares of the devil, or are under the power of any one lust, besetment, or temptation!

The Lord, and the Lord alone can save us from all these things. He saves from the power of sin by . . .

bringing a sense of His dying love into our hearts,

delivering us from our idols,

raising our affections to things above,

breaking to pieces our snares,

subduing our lusts,

taming our corruptions, and

mastering the inward evils of our dreadfully fallen nature.

Here is this sin! Lord, save me from it.

Here is this snare! Lord, break it to pieces.

Here is this temptation! Lord, deliver me out of it.

Here is this lust! Lord, subdue it.

Here is my proud heart! Lord, humble it.

None but the Lord can do these things for us . . .

nothing but the felt power of God,

nothing but the putting forth of His mighty arm,

nothing but the shedding abroad of His dying love,

nothing but the operations of His grace upon our soul,

can deliver us from the secret power of evil.

"Save me, and I shall be saved!"

Crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!

"Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" Mark 8:34

To deny and renounce self lies at the very foundation of vital godliness.

It is easy in some measure to leave the world; easy to leave the professing church; but to go forth out of self, there is the difficulty, for this "self" embraces such a variety of forms.

What varied shapes and forms does this monster SELF assume! How hard to trace his windings! How difficult to track this wily foe to his hidden den; drag him out of the cave; and immolate him at the foot of the cross, as Samuel hewed down Agag in Gilgal.

Proud self, righteous self, covetous self, ambitious self, sensual self, deceitful self, religious self, flesh-pleasing self.

How difficult to detect, unmask, strip out of its changeable suits of apparel, this ugly, misshaped creature, and then stamp upon it, as if one would crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!

Who will do such violence to beloved self, when every nerve quivers and shrinks; and the coward heart cries to the uplifted foot, "Spare, spare!"

But unless there is this self crucifixion, there is no walking hand in hand with Christ, no heavenly communion with Him; for there can no more be a partnership between Christ and self, than there can be a partnership between Christ and sin.

Poor, moping, dejected creatures

We are, most of us, so fettered down by . . .

the chains of time and sense,

the cares of life and daily business,

the weakness of our earthly frame,

the distracting claims of a family, and

the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature,

that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

Many of us are poor, moping, dejected creatures. We have . . .

a variety of trials and afflictions,

a daily cross and

the continual plague of an evil heart.

We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart. As then . . .

the weary man seeks rest,

the hungry man seeks food,

the thirsty man seeks drink,

and the sick man seeks health,

so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with Him.

He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side.

He makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God’s wrath, that we may hide ourselves under His justifying robe.

He puts gall and wormwood into the world’s choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from Him.

What a battlefield is the heart

I have so much opposition within, so many temptations, lusts, and follies; so many snares and besetments; and a vile heart, dabbling in all carnality and filth.

I am indeed exercised "by sin and grace."

Sin or grace seems continually uppermost; striving and lusting against one another. What . . .

lustings, sorrowings;

fallings, risings;

defeats, and victories.

What a battlefield is the heart, and there the fight is lost and won. When sin prevails, mourning over its wounds and slaughter. When grace and godly fear beat back temptation, a softening into gratitude.

How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness?

If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner—you will see yourself surrounded by . . .

enemies,

temptations,

sins, and

snares.

You will feel yourself utterly defenseless, as weak as water, without any strength to stand against them. You will see a mountain of difficulties before your eyes.

If you know anything inwardly and experimentally of yourself of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and the daily conflict between nature and grace,

the flesh and the Spirit, which are the peculiar marks of the true child of God—you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality.

How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies . . .

external,

internal,

infernal,

and reach heaven’s gates safe at last?

There is present salvation, an . . .

inward,

experimental,

continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator.

Don't you need to be daily and almost hourly saved? But from what? Why, from everything in you that fights against the will and word of God.

Sin is not dead in you.

If you have a saving interest in the precious blood of Christ—if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and heaven is your eternal home—that does not deliver you from the indwelling of sin, nor from the power of sin—except as grace gives you present deliverance from it.

Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will work in it until your dying hour. What then you need to be saved from is the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of that sin which ever dwells and ever works in you, and often brings your soul into hard and cruel bondage.

Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for His dear people, that He may be ever saving them by His life. There He reigns and rules as their glorious covenant Head, ever watching over, feeling for and sympathizing with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the deliverance and consolation for all His suffering saints spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth; and as He lives on their behalf, He maintains by His Spirit and grace, His life in their soul.

Each Christian has to walk through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought (Deuteronomy 8:15); where he is surrounded with temptations and snares—his own evil heart being his worst foe.

How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness unless he has a Friend at the right hand of God to send him continual supplies of grace—who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle—who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them—who observes from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it bursts into word or action?

He needs an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can . . .

save him from pride by giving him true humility;

save him from hardness of heart by bestowing repentance;

save him from carelessness by making his conscience tender;

save him from all his fears by whispering into his soul, "Fear not, I have redeemed you."

The Christian has to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

to revive his soul when drooping,

to manifest His love to his heart when cold and unfeeling,

to sprinkle his conscience with His blood when guilty and sinking,

to lead him into truth,

to keep him from error and evil,

to preserve him through and amid every storm,

to guide every step that he takes in his onward journey,

and eventually bring him safe to heaven.

We need continual supplies of His grace, mercy, and love received into our hearts, so as to save us . . .

from the love and spirit of the world,

from error,

from the power and strength of our own lusts,

and the base inclinations of our fallen nature.

These will often work at a fearful rate; but this will only make you feel more your need of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus to save you from them all.

You are a poor, defenseless sheep, surrounded by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and defense of the good Shepherd.

You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all wise and able pilot to take you safe into harbor.

There a single thing on earth or in hell which can harm you—if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength from Him.

What trifles, what toys, what empty vanities

What trifles, what toys, what empty vanities do the great bulk of men pursue!

If God left us for a single hour

"Don’t leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9

How much is summed up in those three words!

What would it be for God to leave us?

What and where would we be, if God left us for a single hour?

What would become of us?

We would fall at once into the hands . . .

of sin,

of Satan, and

of the world.

We would be abandoned to our own evil hearts—abandoned, utterly abandoned to the unbelief, the infidelity, to all the filth and sensuality of our wicked nature—to fill up the measure of our iniquities, until we sank under His wrath to rise no more!

"Don’t leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9

An idol is an idol

"Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts! They have embraced things that lead them into sin." Ezekiel 14:3

An idol is an idol, whether worshiped inwardly in heart, or adorned outwardly by the knee.

Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign Lord: "Repent and turn away from your idols, and stop all your loathsome practices. I, the Lord, will punish all those, both Israelites and foreigners, who reject Me and set up idols in their hearts, so that they fall into sin." Ezekiel 14:6-7

A worldly spirit will ever peep out

"He gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age." Galatians 1:4

The first effect of sovereign grace in its divine operation upon the heart of a child of God, is to separate him from the world by infusing into him a new spirit. There is little evidence that grace ever touched our hearts if it did not separate us from this ungodly world.

Where there is not this divine work upon a sinner’s conscience—where there is no communication of this new heart and this new spirit, no infusion of this holy life, no animating, quickening influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul—whatever a man’s outward profession may be, he will ever be of a worldly spirit.

A set of doctrines, however sound, merely received into the natural understanding—cannot divorce a man from that innate love of the world which is so deeply rooted in his very being. No mighty power has come upon his soul to revolutionize his every thought, cast his soul as if into a new mold—and by stamping upon it the mind and likeness of Christ to change him altogether. This worldly spirit may be . . .

checked by circumstances,

controlled by natural conscience, or

influenced by the example of others;

but a worldly spirit will ever peep out from the thickest disguise, and manifest itself, as occasion draws it forth, in every unregenerate man.

What a lesson is here for ministers!

"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" 1 Corinthians 2:4

The word "enticing" is as we now say, "persuasive." It includes, therefore, every branch of skillful oratory, whether it be logical reasoning to convince our understanding—or appeals to our feelings to stir up our passions—or new and striking ideas to delight our intellect—or beautiful and eloquent language to please and captivate our imagination.

All these "enticing words" of man’s wisdom—the very things which our popular preachers most speak and aim at—this great apostle renounced, discarded, and rejected!

He might have used them all if he liked. He possessed an almost unequalled share of natural ability and great learning—a singularly keen, penetrating intellect—a wonderful command of the Greek language—a flow of ideas most varied, striking, and original—and powers of oratory and eloquence such as have been given to few. He might therefore have used enticing words of man’s wisdom, had he wished or thought it right to do so—but he would not. He saw what deceptiveness was in them, and at best they were mere arts of oratory. He saw that these enticing words—though they might . . .

touch the natural feelings,

work upon the passions,

captivate the imagination,

convince the understanding,

persuade the judgment, and to a certain extent force their way into men’s minds—yet when all was done that could thus be done, it was merely man’s wisdom which had done it.

Earthly wisdom cannot communicate heavenly faith. Paul would not therefore use enticing words of man’s wisdom, whether it were force of logical argument, or appeal to natural passions, or the charms of vivid eloquence, or the beauty of poetical composition, or the subtle nicety of well arranged sentences. He would not use any of these enticing words of man’s wisdom to draw people into a profession of religion—when their heart was not really touched by God’s grace, or their consciences wrought upon by a divine power.

He came to win souls for Jesus Christ, not converts to his own powers of oratorical persuasion—to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God—not to charm their ears by poetry and eloquence—but to bring them out of the vilest of sins that they might be washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit of God—and not entertain or amuse their minds while sin and Satan still maintained dominion in their hearts!

All the labor spent in bringing together a church and congregation of professing people by the power of logical argument and appeals to their natural consciences would be utterly lost, as regards fruit for eternity—for a profession so induced by him and so made by them would leave them just as they were . . .

in all the depths of unregeneracy,

with their sins unpardoned,

their persons unjustified,

and their souls unsanctified.

He therefore discarded all these ways of winning over converts—as deceitful to the souls of men, and as dishonoring to God.

It required much grace to do this—to throw aside what he might have used, and renounce what most men, as gifted as he, would have gladly used.

What a lesson is here for ministers!

How anxious are some men to shine as great preachers! How they covet and often aim at some grand display of what they call eloquence to charm their hearers—and win praise and honor to self!

How others try to argue men into religion, or by appealing to their natural feelings, sometimes to frighten them with pictures of hell, and sometimes to allure them by descriptions of heaven.

But all such arts, for they are no better, must be discarded by a true servant of God. Only the Spirit can reveal Christ, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us, applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul.

"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Unless we have a measure of the same demonstration of the Spirit, all that is said by us in the pulpit drops to the ground—it has no real effect—there is no true or abiding fruit—no fruit unto eternal life. If there be in it some enticing words of man’s wisdom, it may please the mind of those who are gratified by such arts—it may stimulate and occupy the attention for the time—but there it ceases, and all that has been heard fades away like a dream of the night. A peculiar, indescribable, invincible power

"Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The gospel comes to some in word only. They hear the word of the gospel, the sound of truth; but it reaches the outward ear only—or if it touches the inward feelings, it is merely as the word of men.

But where the Holy Spirit begins and carries on His divine and saving work, He attends the word with a peculiar, an indescribable, and yet an invincible power.

It falls as from God upon the heart. He is heard to speak in it—and in it His glorious Majesty appears to open the eyes, unstop the ears, and convey a message from His own mouth to the soul.

Some hear the gospel as the mere word of men, perhaps for years before God speaks in it with a divine power to their conscience. They thought they understood the gospel—they thought they felt it—they thought they loved it. But all this time they did not see any vital distinction between receiving it as the mere word of men, and as the word of God.

The levity, the superficiality, the emptiness stamped upon all who merely receive the gospel as the word of men—is sufficient evidence that it never sank deep into the heart, and never took any powerful grasp upon their soul.

It therefore never brought with it any real separation from the world—never gave strength to mortify the least sin—never communicated power to escape the least snare of Satan—was never attended with a spirit of grace and prayer—never brought honesty, sincerity, and uprightness into the heart before God—never bestowed any spirituality of mind, or any loving affection toward the Lord of life and glory. It was merely the reception of truth in the same way as we receive scientific principles, or learn a language, a business, or a trade. It was all . . .

shallow,

superficial,

deceptive,

hypocritical.

But in some unexpected moment, when little looking for it, the word of God was brought into their conscience with a power never experienced before. A light shone in and through it which they never saw before . . .

a majesty,

a glory,

an authority,

an evidence

accompanied it which they never knew before. And under this light, life, and power they fell down, with the word of God sent home to their heart.

When then Christ speaks the gospel to the heart—when He reveals Himself to the soul—when His word, dropping as the rain and distilling as the dew, is received in faith and love—He is embraced as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one—He takes His seat upon the affections and

becomes enthroned in the heart as its Lord and God.

Is there life in your bosom?

Has God’s power attended the work?

Is the grace of God really in your heart?

Has God spoken to your soul?

Have you heard His voice, felt its power, and fallen under its influence?

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

The deep things of God

"But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:10

The Spirit of God in a man’s bosom searches the deep things of God, so as to lead him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of them.

What depths do we sometimes see in a single text of Scripture as opened to the understanding, or applied to the heart?

What a depth in the blood of Christ—how it "cleanses from all sin,"—even millions of millions of the foulest sins of the foulest sinners!

What a depth in His bleeding, dying love, that could stoop so low to lift us so high!

What a depth in His pity and compassion to extend itself to such guilty, vile transgressors as we are!

What depth in His rich, free, and sovereign grace, that it should super-abound over all our aggravated iniquities, enormities, and vile abominations!

What depth in His sufferings—that He should have voluntarily put Himself under such a load of guilt, such outbreakings of the wrath of God—as He felt in His holy soul when He stood in our place to redeem poor sinners from the bottomless pit—that those who deserved hell, should be lifted up into the enjoyment of heaven!

The religionists of the day

"And everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me." Luke 21:17

Professors of religion have always been the deadliest enemies of the children of God.

Who were so opposed to the blessed Lord as the Scribes and Pharisees? It was the religious teachers and leaders who crucified the Lord of glory!

And so in every age the religionists of the day have been the hottest and bitterest persecutors of the Church of Christ.

Nor is the case altered now. The more the children of God are firm in the truth, the more they enjoy its power, the more they live under its influence, and the more tenderly and conscientiously they walk in godly fear, the more will the professing generation of the day hate them with a deadly hatred.

Let us not think that we can disarm it by a godly life; for the more that we walk in the sweet enjoyment of heavenly truth and let our light shine before men as having been with Jesus, the more will this draw down their hatred and contempt.

"And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not." John 17:14

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My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!

"My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" Isaiah 24:16

There is no more continual source of lamentation and mourning to a child of God than a sense of his own barrenness. He would be fruitful in every good word and work. But when he contrasts . . .

his own miserable unprofitableness,

his coldness and deadness,

his proneness to evil,

his backwardness to good,

his daily wanderings and departings from God,

his depraved affections,

his stupid frames,

his sensual desires,

his carnal projects, and

his earthy grovelings,

with what he sees and knows should be the fruit that should grow upon a fruitful branch in the only true Vine, he sinks down under a sense of his own wretched barrenness and unfruitfulness.

Yet what was the effect produced by all this upon his own soul? To wean him from the creature; to divert him from looking to any for help or hope, but the Lord Himself. It is in this painful way that the Lord often, if not usually, cuts us off from all human props, even the nearest and dearest, that we may

lean wholly and solely on Himself.

Those poor stupid people!

"The world knows us not." 1 John 3:1

Both the openly profane world, and the professing world, are grossly ignorant of the children of God. Their . . .

real character and condition,

state and standing,

joys and sorrows,

mercies and miseries,

trials and deliverances,

hopes and fears,

afflictions and consolations,

are entirely hidden from their eyes.

The world knows nothing of the motives and feelings which guide and actuate the children of God. It views them as a set of gloomy, morose, melancholy beings, whose tempers are soured by false and exaggerated views of religion—who have pored over the thoughts of hell and heaven until some have frightened themselves into despair, and others have puffed up their vain minds with an imaginary conceit of their being especial favorites of the Almighty. "They are really," it says, "no better than other folks, if so good. But they have such contracted minds—are so obstinate and bigoted with their poor, narrow, prejudiced views—that wherever they come they bring disturbance and confusion."

But why this harsh judgment?

Because the world knows nothing of the spiritual feelings which actuate the child of grace, making him act so differently from the world which thus condemns him.

It cannot understand our sight and sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—and that is the reason why we will not run riot with them in the same course of ungodliness.

It does not know with what a solemn weight eternal things rest upon our minds—and that that is the cause why we cannot join with them in pursuing so eagerly the things of the world, and living for time as they do—instead of living for eternity.

Being unable to enter into the spiritual motives and gracious feelings which actuate a living soul, and the movements of divine life continually stirring in a Christian breast, they naturally judge us from their own point of view, and condemn what they cannot understand.

You may place a horse and a man upon the same hill—while the man would be looking at the woods and fields and streams—the horse would be feeding upon the grass at his feet. The horse, if it could reason, would say, "What a fool my master is! How he is staring and gaping about! Why does he not sit down and open his basket of provisions—for I know he has it with him, for I carried it—and feed as I do?"

So the worldling says, "Those poor stupid people, how they are spending their time in going to chapel, and reading the Bible in their gloomy, melancholy way. Religion is all very well—and we ought all to be religious before we die—but they make so much of it. Why don’t they enjoy more of life? Why don’t they amuse themselves more with its innocent, harmless pleasures—be more gay, cheerful, and sociable, and take more interest in those things which so interest us?"

The reason why the world thus wonders at us is because it knows us not, and therefore cannot understand that we have . . .

sublimer feelings,

nobler pleasures, and

more substantial delights,

than ever entered the soul of a worldling!

Christian! the more you are conformed to the image of Christ—the more separated you are from the world, the less will it understand you. If we kept closer to the Lord and walked more in holy obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we would be more misunderstood than even we now are! It is our worldly conformity that makes the world understand many of our movements and actions so well.

But if our movements were more according to the mind of Christ—if we walked more as the Lord walked when here below—we would leave the world in greater ignorance of us than we leave it now—for the hidden springs of our life would be more out of its sight, our testimony against it more decided, and our separation from it more complete.

We were not always a set of poor mopes

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3

Men’s pursuits and pleasures differ as widely as their station or disposition—but a life of selfish gratification reigns and rules in all.

Now it is by this death that we die unto . . .

the things of time and sense;

to all that charms the natural mind of man;

to the pleasures and pursuits of life;

to that busy, restless world which once held us so fast and firm in its embrace—and whirled us round and round within its giddy dance.

Let us look back. We were not always a set of poor mopes—as the world calls us. We were once as merry and as gay as the merriest and gayest of them.

But what were we really and truly with all our mirth?

Dead to God—alive to sin. Dead to everything holy and divine—alive to everything vain and foolish, light and trifling, carnal and sensual—if not exactly vile and abominable.

Our natural life was with all of us a life of gratifying our senses—with some of us, perhaps, chiefly of pleasure and worldly happiness—with others a life of covetousness, or ambition, or self-righteousness.

Sin once put forth its intense power and allured us—and we followed like the fool to the stocks.

Sin charmed—and we listened to its seductive wiles.

Sin held out its bait—and we too greedily, too heedlessly swallowed the hook.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14 To walk after the flesh

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1

To walk after the flesh carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us—as our leader, guide, and example—and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws we move after it, as the needle after the magnet.

To walk after the flesh, then, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to . . .

the commands of the flesh,

the lusts of the flesh,

the inclinations of the flesh,

and the desires of the flesh,

whatever shape they assume,

whatever garb they wear,

whatever name they may bear.

To walk after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh, whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume—whether molded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world—or the more refined and deceptive religion of the professing church.

But are the grosser and more manifest sinners the only people who may be said to walk after the flesh? Does not all human religion, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes! Every one who is entangled in and led by a fleshly religion, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences.

Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that false religion has slain its thousands, if open sin has slain its ten thousands.

To walk after the flesh, whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term, is the same in the sight of God. The very thought is appalling!

"Once you were alienated from God and were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions." Colossians 1:21

All man’s sins, comparatively speaking, are but ’motes in the sunbeam’ compared with this giant sin of enmity against God. A man may be given up to fleshly indulgences; he may sin against his fellow creature—may rob, plunder, oppress, even kill his fellow man. But viewed in a spiritual light, what are they compared with the dreadful, the damnable sin of enmity against the great and glorious Majesty of heaven?

This is a sin that lives beyond the grave!

Many sins, though not their consequences, die with man’s body, because they are bodily sins.

But this is a sin that goes into eternity with him, and flares up like a mighty volcano from the very depths of the bottomless pit! Yes, it is the very sin of devils, which therefore binds guilty man down with them in the same eternal chains, and consigns him to the same place of torment!

O the unutterable enmity of the heart against the living God! The very thought is appalling!

How utterly ruined, then, how wholly lost must that man’s state and case be, who lives and dies as he comes into the world . . .

unchanged,

unrenewed,

unregenerated!

I will not dwell longer upon this gloomy subject, on this sad exhibition of human wickedness and misery, though it is needful we should know it for ourselves, that we should have a taste of this bitter cup in our own most painful experience, that we may know the sweetness of the cup of salvation when presented to our lips by free and sovereign grace.

Nothing but the mighty power of God Himself can ever turn this enemy into a friend!

"Once you were alienated from God and were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now He has brought you back as His friends. He has done this through His death on the cross in His own human body. As a result, He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault." Colossians 1:21-22

I will give you rest

Are you ever weary . . .

of the world,

of sin,

of self,

of everything below the skies?

If so, you want something to give you rest.

You look to SELF—it is but shifting sand, tossed here and there with the restless tide, and ever casting up mire and dirt. No holding ground; no anchorage; no rest there.

You look to OTHERS—you see what man is, even the very best of men in their best state—how fickle, how unstable, how changing and changeable; how weak even when willing to help; how more likely to add to, than relieve your distress; if desirous to sympathize with and comfort you in trouble and sorrow, how short his arm to help, how unsatisfactory his aid to relieve! You find no

rest there.

You lean upon the WORLD—it is but a broken reed which runs into your hand and pierces you. You find no rest there.

So look where you will, there is no rest for the sole of your foot.

But there is a rest. Our blessed Lord says, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

That which is highly esteemed among men

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

The pride, the ambition, the pleasures, the amusements, in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged—and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God.

Whereas, such things as . . .

faith,

hope,

love,

humility,

brokenness of heart,

tenderness of conscience,

contrition of spirit,

sorrow for sin,

self-loathing,

self-abasement,

looking to Jesus,

taking up the cross,

denying one’s self,

walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life—in a word, the power of godliness—these things are despised by all—and by none so much as mere heady professors who have a name to live while dead.

"That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

Invincibly and irresistibly drawn

As the Lord is pleased to enlighten his mind, the Christian sees . . .

such a beauty,

such a blessedness,

such a heavenly sweetness,

such a divine loveliness,

such a fullness of surpassing grace,

such tender condescension,

such unwearied patience,

such infinite compassion,

in the Lord of life and glory—that he is as if invincibly and irresistibly drawn by these attractive influences to come to His feet to learn of Him. So far as the Lord is pleased to reveal Himself in some measure to his soul, by the sweet glimpses and glances which he thus obtains of His Person and countenance, he is drawn to His blessed Majesty by cords of love to look up unto Him and beg of Him that He would drop His word with life and power into his heart.

Woman’s chief besetting sins

"The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments, headbands, and crescent necklaces; their earrings, bracelets, and veils. Gone will be their scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and

charms; their rings, jewels, party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; their mirrors, linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls." Isaiah 3:18-23

"The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion." Isaiah 4:4

These women of Zion are typical representatives of women professing godliness in all ages. The Lord looked at their hearts, and the motives of their gaudy attire. There He saw pride, luxury, love of dress and admiration—woman’s chief besetting sins—and all this was in His eyes so much filth!

But as I do not wish to be too hard upon the women, I may say, that we men have our hidden filth to as great, or worse degree, than they. In us there are . . .

many secret and powerful lusts,

much hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and

various other sinful and sensual abominations.

You are not your own!

"You are not your own! For you are bought with a price—therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Your eyes are not your own—that you may feed your lusts, that you may go about gaping, and gazing, and looking into every shop window to see the fashions of the day—learn the prevailing pride of life—and thus lay up food for your vain mind—either in coveting what must be unfitting to

your profession—or applying your money to an improper use—or being disappointed because you cannot afford to buy it.

Your ears are not your own—that you may listen to every foolish tale—drink in every political, worldly, or carnal report which may fall upon them—and thus feed that natural desire for news, gossip, and even slander—which is the very element of the carnal mind.

Your tongue is not your own—that you may speak what you please, and blurt out whatever passes in the chambers of your heart, without check or fear.

Your hands are not your own—that you may use them as implements of evil—or employ them in any other way than to earn with them an honest livelihood. Our hands were not given us for sin—but for godly uses.

Your feet are not your own—that you may walk in the ways of the world—or that they should carry you to haunts where all around you are engaged upon errands of vanity and sin.

All must be held according to the disposal of God, and under a sense of our obligations to Him.

But perhaps you will say, in the rebellion of your carnal mind, "What restraint all this lays upon us. Cannot we look with our eyes as we like—hear with our ears as we please—and speak with our tongues as we choose? Will you so narrow our path that we are to have nothing of our own—not even our time or money, our body or soul? Surely we may have a little enjoyment now and then—a little recreation, a little holiday sometimes, a little relaxation from being always so strict and so religious—a little feeding of our carnal mind which cannot bear all this restraint?"

Well, but what will you bring upon yourself by . . .

the roving eye,

the foolish tongue,

the loose hand,

the straying foot?

Darkness, bondage, guilt, misery, death!

"But," you say, "we are not to be tied up so tightly as all this! We have gospel liberty, but you will not allow us even that!"

Yes, blessed be God, there is gospel liberty, for there is no real happiness in religion without it; but not liberty to sin—not liberty to gratify the lusts of the flesh—not liberty to act contrary to the gospel we profess, and the precepts of God’s Word—for this is not liberty but licentiousness.

"You are not your own! For you are bought with a price—therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Do you seek you great things for yourself?

"Do you seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5

O the pride of man's heart! How it will work and show itself even under a guise of religion and holiness!

Few can see that in religion, what are considered great things—are really very little; and what are considered little—are really very great. How few can see that . . .

a broken heart,

a contrite spirit,

a humble mind,

a tender conscience,

a meek, quiet, and patient bearing of the cross,

a believing submission and resignation to the will of God,

a looking to Him alone, for all supplies in providence and grace,

a continual seeking of His face,

a desiring nothing so much as the visitations of His favor,

a loving, affectionate, forbearing, and forgiving spirit,

a bearing of injuries and reproaches without retaliation,

a liberal heart and hand, and

a godly, holy, and separate life and walk—

are the things which in God's sight are great.

While a knowledge of doctrine, clear insight into gospel mysteries, and a ready speech are really very little things—and are often to be found side by side and hand in hand with a proud, covetous, worldly, unhumbled spirit, and a living in what is sinful and evil.

How many ministers are seeking after great gifts— thirsting after popularity, applause, and acceptance among men! They are not satisfied with being simply and solely what God may make them by His Spirit and grace—with the blessing which He may make them to a scattered few here and there. This inferior position, as they consider it, so beneath their grace and gifts, their talents and abilities—does not satisfy their restless mind and aspiring desires. Their ambition is . . .

to stand at the very head of their peers,

be looked up to and sought after as a leader and a guide,

have a larger building,

have a fuller congregation,

have a better salary, and

have a wider field for the display of their gifts and abilities.

Gladly would they . . .

stand apart from all others,

brook no rival to their ’pulpit throne’, and be lord paramount at home and abroad.

And what is the consequence of this proud, ambitious spirit? What envy, what jealousy, what detraction do we see in men who want to stand at the top of the tree! How, again and again, do they seek to rise by standing, as it were—on the slain bodies of others!

"Do you seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5

We would not be such muck-worms!

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened—in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you—what a rich and glorious inheritance He has given to His people." Ephesians 1:18

If the Spirit would but enlighten the eyes of our heart, how this would lift us up out of the mud and mire of this wretched world! We would not be such muck-worms, raking and scraping a few straws together—or running about like ants with our morsel of grain! We would have our affections fixed more on things above. We would . . .

know more of Christ,

enjoy more of Christ,

be more like Christ,

walk more like Christ walked, and

look forward to our glorious inheritance.

If these things were brought into our hearts with divine power—how they would sweeten every bitter cup, and carry us through every changing scene, until at last we were landed above—to see the Lord as He is, in the full perfection of His infinite glory! The multitude of Your tender mercies

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Psalms 51:1

What a sweet expression it is—and how it seems to convey to our mind that God’s mercies do not fall ’drop by drop’—but are as innumerable . . ..

as the sand upon the sea-shore;

as the stars that stud the midnight sky;

as the drops of rain that fill the clouds before they discharge their copious showers upon the earth.

It is the multitude of His mercies that makes Him so merciful a God. He does not give but a drop or two of mercy—that would soon be gone, like the rain which fell this morning under the hot sun. But His mercies flow like a river! There is in Him . . .

a multitude of mercies,

for a multitude of sins,

and a multitude of sinners!

This felt and received in the love of it—breaks, humbles, softens, and melts a sensible sinner's heart—and he says, "What, sin against such mercies? What, when the Lord has remembered me in my low estate, and manifested once more a sense of His mercy? What, shall I go on to provoke Him again—walk inconsistently again—be entangled in Satan's snares again? O, forbid it God, forbid it gospel, forbid it tender conscience, forbid it every constraint of dying love!"

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Psalms 51:1

Can Christ love one like me?

"To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19

You may wonder sometimes—and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise—how such a glorious Jesus can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such worms of earth—what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked Him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, how this exalted Christ, in the height of His glory, can look down from heaven on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we—this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment!

We feel we are such crawling reptiles—such undeserving creatures—and are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from Him, that we say, "Can Christ love one like me? Can the glorious Son of God cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me—who can scarcely at times bear with myself—who sees and feels myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? O, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?"

And yet, He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." His love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown!

Its breadth exceeds all human span; its length outvies all creature line; its depth surpasses all finite measurement; its height excels even angelic computation!

Because His love is . . .

so wondrous,

so deep,

so long,

so broad,

so high;

it is so suitable to our every want and woe.

"To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19 A woman’s best ornament

"Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." 1 Peter 3:3-4

This "beauty that comes from within" is that . . .

meekness,

quietness,

gentleness,

brokenness of heart,

contrition of spirit,

humility of mind,

tenderness of conscience,

which are fitting to the children of God.

A gentle and quiet spirit is a woman’s best ornament.

As to other gay and unbecoming ornaments, let those wear them, who wish to serve and to enjoy . . .

the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eyes,

and the pride of life.

Let the "daughters of Zion" manifest they have other ornaments than what the world admires and approves. Let them covet . . .

the teachings of God,

the smiles of His love,

the whispers of His favor.

The more they have of these, the less will they care for the adornments which the "daughters of Canaan" run so madly after; by which also they often impoverish themselves, and by opening a way for admiration, too often open a way for seduction and ruin.

O you filthy creature!

"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

No doubt you have your enemies—and so have we all.

But I will tell you where you have an enemy—and a greater enemy than ever you have found in others—yourself! I have often felt that I could do myself more harm in five minutes, than all my enemies could do me in fifty years! I need not fear what others may do or say—I fear myself more than them all—knowing what I am as a sinner—the strength of sin—and the power of temptation.

Be sure of this—that YOU are the worst enemy you ever had . . .

your sin,

your lust,

your covetousness,

your pride,

your self-righteousness.

God Himself will make you feel your enemy. You shall see something of his accursed designs; how sin has deceived you, betrayed you, brought guilt upon your conscience, and made you a burden to yourself. You shall be brought to feel, and say, "There is nothing I hate so much as my own vile heart—my own dreadfully corrupt nature. O what an enemy do I carry in my own bosom! Of all my enemies, he is surely the worst! Of all my foes, he is the most subtle and strong!"

Have you not sometimes felt as though you could take your lusts by the neck and dash their heads against a stone? Have you not felt you could take out of your breast this vile, damnable heart, lay it upon the ground, and stamp upon it? And when tempted with . . .

pride,

or unbelief,

or infidelity,

or blasphemy,

or any hateful lust,

how you have cried out again and again with anguish of spirit, "O this heart of mine!"

We hate our sins, and would, if possible, have no more to do with them, and would say to this lust, idol, or temptation, "O you filthy creature! What an enemy you are to my soul! O that I could forever be done with you!"

"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thanks be to God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 7:24-25

You never knew what real happiness was!

One false charge against the children of God, is that they are a poor, moping, miserable people, who . . .

know nothing of happiness,

renounce all cheerfulness, mirth, and gladness,

hang their heads down all their days like a bulrush,

are full of groundless fears,

nurse the gloomiest thoughts in a kind of melancholy,

grudge others the least enjoyment of pleasure and happiness,

and try to make everyone else as dull and as miserable as their dull and miserable selves.

Is not this a false charge?

You know—that you never had any real happiness in the things of time and sense—that under all your 'pretended gaiety' there was real gloom—that every 'sweet' was drenched with bitterness—that vexation was stamped upon all that is called pleasure and enjoyment.

You never knew what real happiness was, until you knew the Lord, and were blessed with His presence, and some manifestation of His goodness and mercy!

Were it no bigger than a child's doll

"I will cleanse you from all your idols." Ezekiel 36:25

Idolatry takes a wide range. There are 'respectable' idols and 'vulgar' idols—just as there are marble statues, and other objects of worship made up of shells and feathers. And yet each will still be an idol.

Respectable idols we can admire—vulgar idols we detest. But an idol is an idol—however respectable, or however vulgar—however admired, or however despised they may be.

But O how numerous are these respectable idols!

Love of money, ambition, craving after human applause, desire to rise in the world; all these we may think are natural desires that may be lawfully gratified. But O, what idols may they turn out to be!

But there are more secret and more dangerous idols. You may have a husband, or wife, or child—whom you love almost as much as yourself—you bestow upon this idol of yours all the affections of your heart. Nothing is too good for it, nothing too dear for it.

You don't see how this is an idol.

But, whatever you love more than God, whatever you worship more than God, whatever you crave for more than God, is an idol.

It may lurk in the chambers of imagery—you may scarcely know how fondly you love it. But let God take that idol out of your breast—let Him pluck that idol from its niche—and you will then find how you have allowed your affections to wander after that idol and loved it more than God Himself. It is when the idol is taken away, removed, dethroned—that we learn what an idol it has been.

How we hug and embrace our idols!

How we cleave to them!

How we delight in them!

How we bow down to them!

How we seek gratification from them!

How little are we aware what affections entwine around them—how little are we aware that they claim what God has reserved for Himself when He said, "My son, give Me your heart."

Many a weeping widow learns for the first time that her husband was an idol. Many a mourning husband learns for the first time how too dearly, how too fondly, how too idolatrously he loved his wife. Many a man does not know how dearly he loves money until he incurs some serious loss. Many do not know how dearly they hold name, fame, and reputation until some slanderous blight seems to touch that tender spot. Few indeed seem to know how dear SELF is, until God takes it out of its niche and sets Himself there in its room.

Self, pride, reputation, the love of money the love of name and fame—these idols you cannot take with you into the courts of heaven. How would God be moved to jealousy if you could you carry an idol—were it no bigger than a child's doll—into the courts above!

"I will cleanse you from all your idols." Ezekiel 36:25

Your filth will be washed away!

O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity—how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be—when the guilt of our sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not sometimes loathed yourselves on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of your sin sometimes disgusted you;

the opening up of that horrible, that ever running sewer, which you daily carry about with you?

We complain, and justly complain—of a reeking sewer which runs through a street—or of a ditch filled with everything disgusting. But do we feel as much—do we complain as often—of the foul sewer which is ever running in our soul—of the filthy ditch in our own bosom?

As the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes—and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-abhorrence before the eyes of a holy God.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away!" Ezekiel 36:25-26

Php 3:7

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." Php 3:7

This includes the loss . . .

of all your fancied holiness,

of all your vaunted strength,

of all your natural or acquired wisdom,

of all your boasted knowledge;

in a word, of everything in creature religion of which the heart is proud, and in which it takes delight.

All, all must be counted loss for Christ's sake—all, all must be sacrificed to His bleeding, dying love.

Our dearest joys, our fondest hopes, our most cherished idols, must all sink and give way to the grace, blood, and love of an incarnate God.

Strangers & Pilgrims

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world; it is not your element—it is not your home. You are in it during God's appointed time—but you wander up and down this world a stranger . . .

to its company,

to its maxims,

to its fashions,

to its principles,

to its motives,

to its lusts,

to its inclinations, and

all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God's distinguishing power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it. You feel yourself to be a stranger here—as David says, "a stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

I can tell you plainly . . .

if you are at home in the world;

if the things of time and sense are your element;

if you feel one with . . .

the company of the world,

the maxims of the world,

the fashions of the world,

the principles of the world,

grace has not reached your heart—the faith of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to SEPARATE.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers and go out into a land that God would show him.

And so God’s own word to His people is now, "Come out from among them, and be separate."

Separation, separation, separation from the world is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness!

There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is . . .

separation of heart,

separation of principle,

separation of affection,

separation of spirit.

And if grace has touched your heart and you are a partaker of the faith of God’s elect—you are a stranger in the world, and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such.

But they were also pilgrims—that is, sojourners through weary deserts—longing, longing for home, possessing nothing in which they could take pleasure—feeling the weariness of a long journey and anxious for rest.

Are you not at times almost worn out by . . .

sin,

self,

trials,

temptations,

afflictions;

so that you would gladly lay down your weary body in the grave—that your soul might rest in the sweet enjoyment of the King of kings?

If such is your spirit, you have something of the spirit of the pilgrim sojourning in a weary land, and and longing for . . .

rest,

happiness,

and peace

in a better country.

"But they desire a better place—a heavenly homeland." Hebrews 11:16

Looking down into a filthy pit!

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

Sometimes we are so astonished . . .

at what we are,

at what we have been, or

at what we are capable of.

We stand sometimes and look at our heart, and see what a seething, boiling, and bubbling is there! And we look at it with indignant astonishment, as we would look into a pool of filthy black mud, all swarming and alive with every hideous creature!

So when a man takes a view of his own heart . . .

its dreadful hypocrisy,

its vile rebellion,

its alarming deceitfulness,

its desperate wickedness,

of what his heart is capable of plotting,

of what evil it can conceive and imagine,

it is as if he stood looking down into a filthy pit and saw with astonishment, mingled with self-abhorrence, what his heart is, as the fountain of all iniquity.

A man must have some knowledge of his own heart to understand such language as this.

You that are so exceedingly ’pious’ and so ’extra good’, and from whose heart the veil has never been taken away to show you what you are, will perhaps think that I am drawing a caricature of human nature, and painting it as the haunt of thieves and prostitutes.

Could you but have the veil taken off your heart, you would see that you were capable of doing all that wickedness that others have done, or can do!

By this sight of ourselves, we learn what a wonderful God we have to deal with! Surely none so highly prize the grace of God as those who are most led into a knowledge of the fall, and the havoc and ruin, and the guilt and misery which it has brought into our own hearts.

The largest slice of the well-sugared cake

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

Many profess that they are strangers and pilgrims here below. But they take care to have as much of this world’s comforts as they can scrape together by hook and by crook.

They talk about being ’strangers’, yet can be in close friendship with men of the world. And could you see them at the exchange, at the market, behind the counter, or at home with their families—you would not find one mark to distinguish them from the ungodly!

Yet they come to chapel—and if called upon to pray, they will tell the people they are "poor strangers and pilgrims in a valley of tears"—while all the time their hearts are in the world—and their eyes stand out with fatness—and they are as light and trifling as a comic actor—and have no concerns except to get the largest slice of the well-sugared cake that the world sets before them!

It is not the ’mere profession of the lips’—but ’grace in the heart’, that makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim.

God’s people are strangers and sojourners—the world is not their home—nor can they take pleasure in it. Sin is often a burden to them—guilt often lies as a heavy weight upon their conscience—a thousand troubles harass their minds—a thousand perplexities oppress their souls. They cannot bury their minds in business and derive all their happiness from their successes, for they feel that this earth is not their home. They are often cast down and exercised, because they have to live with such an ungodly heart in such an ungodly world.

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

The things which men despise

"The things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God!" Luke 16:15

The pride, ambition, pleasures, and amusements, in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged —and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God!

Whereas the things which men despise, such as . . .

faith,

hope,

love,

humility,

brokenness of heart,

tenderness of conscience,

contrition of spirit,

sorrow for sin,

self-loathing,

self-abasement,

looking to Jesus,

taking up the cross,

denying one’s self,

walking in the narrow path that leads to eternal life,

—are despised by all—and by none so much as mere heady religious professors—who have a name to live, while dead.

"The things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15

Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 1:1

The Lord’s people are a tempted people. Satan is ever waiting at their gate, constantly suggesting every hateful and improper thought—perpetually inflaming the rebellion and enmity of their carnal mind—and continually plaguing, harassing, and besieging them in a thousand ways!

Can they repel him?

Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

Can they beat back this leviathan? They cannot—they feel they cannot. They know that nothing but the voice of Jesus, inwardly speaking with power to their souls, can beat back the lion of the bottomless pit! One whisper, one soft word from the lips of His gracious Majesty, can and will put every temptation to flight!

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name—you are Mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble—I will be with you! When you go through rivers of difficulty—you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression—you will not be

burned up—the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel—your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

When it comes in the guise of a friend

"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Does not this show that the world is an enemy to the Lord, and to the Lord’s people? and never so much an enemy—never to be so much dreaded—as when it comes in the guise of a friend. When it . . .

steals upon your heart,

engrosses your thoughts,

wins your affections,

draws away your mind from God,

—then it is to be dreaded.

When the world smites us as an enemy—its blows are not to be feared. It is when it smiles upon us as a friend—it is most to be dreaded.

When our eyes begin to drink it in, when our ears begin to listen to its voice, when our hearts become entangled in its fascinations, when our minds get filled with its anxieties, when our affections depart from the Lord and cleave to the things of time and sense,—then the world is to be dreaded.

Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations

"You shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their engraved images with fire!" Deuteronomy 7:5

Our hearts are by nature full of Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations, which must be destroyed!

Lusts after evil things, adulterous images, idolatrous desires, strong hankerings after sin—along with evils which have the impudence to wear a religious garb—such as . . .

towering thoughts of our own ability,

pleasing dreams of creature holiness,

swellings up of pride—dressed out and painted in all the tawdy colors of Satanic delusion—how can these abominations be allowed to run rampant in the human heart?

The altars and religious rites of Canaanites were to be destroyed as much as their idols! And thus we may say of that very religious being—man, that his false worship and heathenish notions of God must be destroyed—as well as his more flagrant, though not more dangerous, lusts and abominations.

The sentence against both is, "Destroy them!" They must not stand side by side with Immanuel, who is to have the preeminence in all things, and who is "the Alpha and the Omega—the first and the last."

And O what a mercy it is to have both our FLESHLY and RELIGIOUS abominations both destroyed! For I am sure that God and self never can rule in the same heart—that Christ and the devil can never reign in the same bosom—each claiming the supremacy!

This inward conflict

"I know that nothing good lives in me—that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good—but I cannot carry it out." Romans 7:18

Now it is this which makes the Lord’s people such a burdened people—that makes them so oppressed in their souls as to cry out against themselves daily, and sometimes hourly—that they are what they are—that they would be spiritual, yet are carnal—that they would be holy, yet are unholy—that they would have sweet communion with Jesus, yet have such sensual alliance with the things of time and sense—that they would be Christians in word, thought, and deed; yet, in spite of all, they feel their carnal mind, their wretched depravity intertwining, interlacing, gushing forth—contaminating with its polluted stream everything without and within—so as to make them

sigh, groan, and cry being burdened, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24

He would not be entangled in these snares for ten thousand worlds—he hates the evils of his heart, and mourns over the corruptions of his nature. They make the tear fall from his eye, and the sob to heave from his bosom—they make him a wretched man—and fill him day after day with sorrow, bitterness, and anguish.

None but a saved soul, under divine teaching, can see this evil—and mourn and sigh under the depravity, the corruption, the unbelief, the carnality, the wickedness, and the deceitfulness of his evil heart. This inward conflict, this sore grief, this internal burden, that all the family of God are afflicted with—is an evidence that the life and grace of God are in their bosoms.

"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord! So you see how it is—in my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin." Romans 7:25

Who really knows how bad it is?

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked! Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

Without a knowledge of the corruptions and abounding evils of our deceitful and desperately wicked heart . . .

unbelief,

infidelity,

pride,

hypocrisy,

worldly mindedness,

carnality,

sensuality,

selfishness;

there will be . . .

no humility,

no self loathing,

no dread of falling,

no desire to be kept,

no knowledge of the super-aboundings of grace, over the aboundings of sin. So many truly sincere and religious people

"Cornelius and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." Acts 10:2

Yet Cornelius and his family weren't saved! (Acts 11:14)

–A generous centurion build a synagogue. (Luke 7:3-5)

–A young man keeps the commandments from his youth up. (Luke 18:21)

–Balaam prophesies. (Numbers 23:16)

–Saul weeps. (1 Samuel 24:16)

–Judas preaches the gospel. (Matthew 10:5-8)

Yet none of these men were saved!

It is at times, enough to fill one's heart with mingled astonishment and sorrow, to see so many truly sincere and religious people, whose religion will leave them short of eternal life—because they are destitute of saving grace.

To see so much . . .

amiability,

benevolence,

devotedness,

self-denial,

liberality

loveliness of character,

integrity,

consistency of life,

all inescapably dashed against the rock of inflexible justice,

and there shattered and lost—swallowed up with its unhappy possessors in the raging billows beneath—such a sight, did we not know that the Judge of the whole earth cannot do wrong, would indeed stagger us to the very center of our being!

Sick of SIN, sick of SELF, sick of the WORLD

"Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalms 37:4

By nature we delight in SIN. It is the very element of our nature—and even after the Lord has called us by His grace and quickened us by his Spirit—there is the same love to sin in the heart as there was before. We delight in it—we would wallow in it—take our full enjoyment of it—and swim in it as a fish swims in the waters of the sea!

By nature we also are prone to IDOLATRY. Self is the grand object of all our sensual and carnal worship. Our own exaltation, our own amusement, our own pleasure, our own gratification. Something whereby SELF may be . . .

flattered,

admired,

adored,

delighted,

is the grand end and aim of man's natural worship.

By nature we also delight in the WORLD. It is . . .

our element,

our home,

what our carnal hearts are intimately blended with. From all these things, then, which are intrinsically evil—which a pure and holy God must hate with absolute abhorrence—we must be weaned and effectually divorced—we need to have these things embittered to us.

All the time we are doing homage and worship to self—all the time we are loving the world—all the time we delight in sin—all the time we are setting up idols in the secret chambers of imagery—there is no delighting ourselves in the Lord.

We cannot delight ourselves in the Lord until we are purged of creature love—until the idolatry of our hearts is not merely manifested, but hated and abhorred—until by . . .

cutting temptations,

sharp exercises,

painful perplexities,

and various sorrows,

we are brought to this state—to be . . .

sick of SIN,

sick of SELF,

sick of the WORLD.

Until we are brought to loathe ourselves, we are not brought to that spot where none but God Himself can comfort, please, or make the soul really happy.

Now the very means that God employs to embitter the world to us are cutting and grievous dispensations—as unexpected reverses in fortune—or afflictions of body, of family, or of soul. But these very means that the Lord employs to divorce our carnal union from the world, stir up the self-pity, the murmuring, the peevishness, and the rebelliousness of our nature. So that we think

we

are being very harshly dealt with, in being compelled to walk in this trying path.

But only by these cutting dispensations we are eventually brought to delight ourselves in Him, who will give us the desires of our heart.

How long you shall be walking in this painful path—how heavy your trials—what their duration shall be—how deep you may have to sink—how cutting your afflictions may be in body or soul, God has not defined, and we cannot. But they must work until they have produced this result—weaned, divorced, and separated us from all that we naturally love and idolatrously cleave unto—and all that we adulterously roam after. If our trials have not done this, they must go on until they produce that effect.

The burden must be laid upon the back, affliction must try the mind, perplexities must encumber the feet, until we are brought to this point—that none but the Lord Himself, with a taste of His dying love, can comfort our hearts, or give us that inward peace and joy which our soul is taught to crave after.

A hundred doctrines floating in the head

By five minutes real communion with the Lord . . .

we learn more,

we know more,

we receive more,

we feel more, and

we experience more

than by a thousand years of merely studying the Scriptures, or using external forms, rites, and ceremonies.

One truth written by the Spirit in the heart, will bring forth more fruit in the life, than a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

However low we may sink

What a mercy it is to have a faithful, gracious, and compassionate High Priest who can sympathize with His poor, tried, tempted family—so that however low we may sink . . .

His piteous eye can see us in our low estate,

His gracious ear hear our cries,

His loving heart melt over us, and

His strong arm pluck us from our destructions!

Oh, what would we do without such a gracious and most suitable Savior as our blessed Jesus! How He seems to rise more and more . . .

in our estimation,

in our thoughts,

in our desires,

in our affections,

as we see and feel . . .

what a wreck and ruin we are,

what dreadful havoc sin has made with us,

what miserable outcasts we are by nature.

But oh, how needful it is, dear friend, to be brought down in our soul to be the . . .

chief of sinners,

viler than the vilest,

worse than the worst,

that we may really and truly believe in, and cleave unto, this most precious and suitable Savior!

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

J. C. Philpot, October 1, 1868

Nothing but a slave!

"Once you were slaves of sin!" Romans 6:17

What a picture does this draw of our sad state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy!

The Holy Spirit here sets forth Sin as a harsh master, exercising tyrannical dominion over his slaves! How this portrays our state and condition in a state of unregeneracy—slaves to sin!

Just as a master commands his slave to go here and there—imposes on him certain tasks—and has entire and despotic authority over him—so sin . . .

had a complete mastery over us,

used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure,

drove us here and there on its commands.

But in this point we differed from physical slaves—that we did not murmur under our yoke—but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all sin’s commands—and never tired of doing the most servile drudgery!

Thus some have had sin as a very vulgar and tyrannical master, who drove them into open acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy—yes, everything base, vile, and evil.

Others have been preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity—and outward breakings forth of evil. But still sin secretly reigned in their hearts . . .

pride,

worldliness,

love of the things of time and sense,

hatred to God and aversion to His holy will,

selfishness and stubbornness,

in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them! And though sin ruled over them more as a gentleman—he kept them in a more refined, though not less real or absolute slavery! Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master's command.

What a picture does the Holy Spirit here draw of what a man is! Nothing but a slave!—and sin, as his master, first driving him upon upon God's sword, and then giving him eternal death as his wages!

"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness—and He has brought us into the Kingdom of His dear Son!" Colossians 1:13

A glory, a beauty, and a sweetness

How sweet it is to trace the Lord's hand in providence . . .

to look back on the chequered path that He has led us by;

to see how His hand has been with us for good;

what difficulties He has brought us through;

in what straits He has appeared;

how in things most trying He has wrought deliverance;

and how He has sustained us to the present hour.

How sweet are providential favors when they come stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!" How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our very food, lodging, and clothing!

How sweet is the least thing when it comes down to us as from God's hands! A man cannot know the sweetness of his daily bread until he sees that God gives it to him—nor the blessedness of any providential dealing until he can say, "God has done this for me—and given that to me." When a man sees the providence of God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, a beauty, and a sweetness over every day of his life!

Having nothing—and yet possessing all things.

"Having nothing—and yet possessing all things." 2 Corinthians 6:10

How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled?

It is resolved thus—"having nothing" in self, "possessing all things" in Christ.

And just in proportion as I have nothing in self experimentally—so I possess all things in Christ.

My own beggary leads me out of self into His riches.

My own unrighteousness leads me out of self into Christ's righteousness.

My own defilement leads me out of self into Christ's sanctification.

My own weakness leads me out of self into Christ's strength.

My own misery leads me out of self into Christ's mercy.

"Having nothing—and yet possessing all things." 2 Corinthians 6:10

These two branches of divine truth, so far from clashing with each other—sweetly, gloriously, and blessedly harmonize. And just in proportion as we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "having nothing," in self—just so much shall we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "possessing all things" in Christ.

Riches, honors, and comforts

"But we have this precious treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

How different is the estimate that the Christian makes of riches, honors, and comforts—from that made by the world and the flesh!

The world's idea of riches are only such as consist in gold and silver, in houses, lands, or other tangible property.

The world's estimate of honors, are only such as man has to bestow.

The world's notion of comfort, is "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

But the true Christian takes a different estimate of these matters, and feels that . . .

the only true riches are those of God's grace in the heart,

the only real honor is that which comes from God,

the only solid comfort is that which is imparted by the Holy Spirit to a broken and contrite spirit.

Now, just in proportion as we are filled by the Spirit of God—shall we take faith's estimate of riches, honors, and comforts. And just so much as we are imbued with the spirit of the world—shall we take the flesh's estimate of these things.

When the eye of the world looked on the Apostles, it viewed them as a company of poor ignorant men—a set of wild enthusiasts, who traveled about the country preaching Jesus, who they said, had been crucified, and was risen from the dead. The natural eye saw no beauty, no power, no glory in the truths they brought forth. Nor did it see that the poor perishing bodies of these outcast men contained in them a heavenly treasure—and that they would one day shine as the stars

forever and ever—while those who despised their word would sink into endless woe.

The spirit of the world can never understand or love the things of eternity—it can only look to, and can only rest upon, the poor perishing things of time and sense.

The continued teachings of the Spirit

When once, by the operation of the Spirit on our conscience, we have been stripped of . . .

formality,

superstition,

self-righteousness,

hypocrisy,

presumption,

and the other delusions of the flesh that hide themselves under the mask of religion—we have felt the difference between having a name to live while dead, and the power of vital godliness—and as a measure of divine life has flowed into the heart out of the fullness of the Son of God—we desire no other religion but that which stands in the power of God—by that alone can we live, and by that alone we feel that we can die.

And, at last, we are brought to this conviction and solemn conclusion—that there is no other true religion but that which consists in the continued teachings of the Spirit, and the communications of the life of God to the soul.

And with the Spirit's teachings are connected . . .

all the actings of faith in the soul,

all the anchorings of hope in the heart,

all the flowings forth of love,

every tear of genuine contrition that flows down the cheeks,

every sigh of godly sorrow that heaves from the bosom,

every cry and groan because of the body of sin,

every breath of spiritual prayer that comes from the heart,

every casting of our souls upon Christ,

all submission to Him,

all communion with Him,

all enjoyment of Him, and

all the inward embracements of Him

in His suitability and preciousness.

It will come in at every chink and crevice!

"I know that nothing good lives in me." Romans 7:18

The world within us is ten thousand times worse than the world outside of us!

We may shut and bar our doors, and exclude the outside world—but the world within cannot be so shut out! More—we might go and hide ourselves in a hermit's cave, and never see the face of man again—but even there we would be as carnal and worldly as if we lived in Vanity Fair!

We cannot shut out the world—it will come in at every chink and crevice! This wretched world will intrude itself into our every thought and imagination!

I don't know how it may be with you, but I have no more power to keep out the workings of sin in my heart—than I have power by holding up my hand to stop the rain from coming down to the earth! Sin will come in at every crack and crevice, and manifest itself in the wretched workings of an evil heart!

The seeds of every crime are in our nature—and therefore, could your flesh have its full swing—there would not be a viler wretch in London than you!

At last to cheat the devil!

If God is not your master—the devil will be.

If grace does not rule—sin will reign.

If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be.

It is not as though we could roam abroad in total liberty. We must have a master of one kind, or another.

And which is best?

A bounteous, benevolent Benefactor, a merciful, loving, and tender Parent, a kind, forgiving Father and Friend, a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?

OR

A cruel devil, a miserable world, a wicked, vile, abominable heart?

Which is better?

To live under the sweet constraints of the dying love of a dear Redeemer—under . . .

gospel influences,

gospel principles,

gospel promises, and

gospel encouragements?

OR

To walk in imagined liberty, with sin in our heart, exercising dominion and mastery there—and binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the present life—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness in half an hour with God, in sweet union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, in reading His word with a believing heart, in finding access to His sacred presence, in knowing something of the droppings in of His favor and mercy—than in . . .

all the delights of sin,

all the lusts of the flesh,

all the pride of life, and

all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a death-bed repentance—at last to cheat the devil!

This is what the Lord says

This is what the Lord says—"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." Jeremiah 17:5

The Lord here does not lay down a man’s moral or immoral character as a test of salvation. He does not say, "Cursed is . . .

the thief,

the adulterer,

the extortioner,

the murderer,

the man that lives in open profanity."

He puts all that aside, and fixes His eye and lays His hand upon one mark—which may exist with the greatest morality and with the highest profession of religion.

"I will tell you," the Lord says, "who are under My curse—the person who trusts in man—who depends on flesh for his strength—and in so doing, his heart turns away from Me."

This is what the Lord says—"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." Jeremiah 17:5 That hideous idol SELF in his little shrine

Never again will we say any more to the work of our hands—"You are our gods!" Hosea 14:3

The besetting sin of Israel was the worship of idols.

Perhaps, if you have walked into the British Museum, and seen the idols that were worshiped in former days in the South Sea Islands, you have been amazed that rational beings could ever bow down before such ugly monsters.

But does the heart of a South Sea Islander differ from the heart of an Englishman? Not a bit! The latter may have more civilization and cultivation—but his heart is the same! And though you have not bowed down to these monstrous objects and hideous figures—there may be as filthy an idol in your heart! Where is there a filthier idol than the lusts and passions of man's fallen nature?

You need not go to the British Museum to see filthy idols and painted images. Look within!

Where is there a more groveling idol than Mammon, and the covetousness of our heart? You need not wonder at heathens worshiping hideous idols—when you have pride, covetousness, and above all that hideous idol SELF in his little shrine, hiding himself from the eyes of man—but to which you are so often rendering your daily and hourly worship!

If a person does not see that the root of all idolatry is SELF, he knows but little of his heart.

Such a perpetual and unceasing conflict?

"I do not understand what I do! For what I want to do I do not do; but what I hate I do. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:15, Romans 7:18-19, Romans 7:21, Romans 7:24

What a picture of that which passes in a godly man's bosom! He has in him two distinct principles, two different natures—one . . .

holy,

heavenly,

spiritual,

panting after the Lord, and

finding the things of God its element.

And yet in the same bosom a principle . . .

totally corrupt,

thoroughly and entirely depraved,

perpetually striving against the holy principle within,

continually lusting after evil,

opposed to every leading of the Spirit in the soul,

and seeking to gratify its filthy desires at any cost!

Now, must there not be a feeling of misery in a man's bosom to have these two armies perpetually fighting? That when he desires to do good, evil is present with him—when he would be holy, heavenly minded, tender hearted, loving, seeking God's glory, enjoying sweet communion with

Jehovah—there is a base, sensual, earthly heart perpetually at work—infusing its baneful poison into every thought, counteracting every desire, and dragging him from the heaven to which he would mount, down to the very hell of carnality and filth?

There is a holy, heavenly principle in a man’s bosom that knows, fears, loves, and delights in God. Yet he finds that sin in himself, which is altogether opposed to the mind of Christ, and lusts after that which he hates. Must there not be sorrow and grief in that man’s bosom to feel such a perpetual and unceasing conflict?

Is there ever this piteous cry forced by guilt, shame, and sorrow out of your bosom, "O wretched man that I am!" If not, be assured that you are dead in sin, or dead in a profession.

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But who is our greatest enemy?

The pride of our heart, the presumption of our heart, the hypocrisy of our heart, the intense selfishness of our heart, are often hidden from us.

This wily devil, self, can wear such masks and assume such forms.

This serpent, self, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances, that it is often hidden from ourselves.

Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear?

We all have our enemies.

But who is our greatest enemy?

He who you carry in your own bosom—your daily, hourly, and ever-present companion, that entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart—that . . .

sometimes puffs up with pride,

sometimes inflames with lust,

sometimes inflates with presumption, and

sometimes works under feigned humility and fleshly holiness.

God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let self (which is but another word for the creature) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified.

Now this self must be overcome. The way to overcome self is by looking out of self to Him who was crucified upon Calvary's tree—to receive His image into your heart—to be clothed with His likeness—to drink into His spirit—and "receive out of His fullness grace for grace."

We need grace, free grace

"May grace and peace be multiplied unto you." 2 Peter 1:2

When we see and feel how we need grace every moment in our lives, we at once perceive the beauty in asking for an abundant, overflowing measure of grace.

We cannot walk the length of the street without sin.

Our carnal minds, our vain imaginations, are all on the lookout for evil. Sin presents itself at every avenue, and lurks like the prowling night-thief for every opportunity of secret plunder. In fact, in ourselves, in our fallen nature, except as restrained and influenced by grace, we sin with well near every breath that we draw. We need, therefore, grace upon grace, or, in the words of the text,

grace to be "multiplied" in proportion to our sins. Shall I say in proportion? No! If sin abounds, as to our shame and sorrow we know it does, we need grace to much more abound!

When the ’tide of sin’ flows in with its muck and mire, we need the ’tide of grace’ to flow higher still, to carry out the slime and filth into the depths of the ocean, so that when sought for, they may be found no more.

We need grace, free grace . . .

grace today,

grace tomorrow,

grace this moment,

grace the next,

grace all the day long.

We need grace, free grace . . .

healing grace,

reviving grace,

restoring grace,

saving grace,

sanctifying grace.

And all this multiplied by all our . . .

wants and woes,

sins,

slips,

falls, and

unceasing and aggravated backslidings.

We need grace, free grace . . .

grace to believe,

grace to hope,

grace to love,

grace to fight,

grace to conquer,

grace to stand,

grace to live,

grace to die.

Every moment of our lives we need . . .

keeping grace,

supporting grace,

upholding grace,

withholding grace.

"May grace and peace be multiplied unto you." 2 Peter 1:2 Are you seeking great things for yourself?

Oh, how many ministers do I see led by . . .

ambition,

pride,

self-interest, or

covetousness!

How few have singleness of eye to God’s glory!

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers often seek . . .

great gifts,

great eloquence,

great knowledge of mysteries,

great congregations,

great popularity and influence.

"Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don’t do it!" Jeremiah 45:5

We are not flogged into loving Him

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Where are your affections to be set?

Are they to be set on "things on the earth" . . .

those perishing toys,

those polluting vanities,

those carking cares,

which must ever dampen the life of God in the soul?

The expression, "things on the earth," takes in a wide scope. It embraces not only the vain toys, the ambitious hopes, the perishing pleasures in which a gay, unthinking world is sunk and lost—but even the legitimate calls of business, the claims of wife and home, family and friends, with every social tie that binds to earth. Thus . . .

every object on which the eye can rest;

every thought or desire that may spring up in the mind;

every secret idol that lurks in the bosom;

every care and anxiety that is not of grace;

every fond anticipation of pleasure or profit that the world may hold out, or the worldly heart embrace—all, with a million pursuits in which man's fallen nature seeks employment or happiness—are "things on the earth" on which the affections are not to be set.

We may love our wives and children. We should pursue our lawful callings with diligence and industry. We must provide for our families according to the good providence of God. But we may not so set our affections on these things, that they pull us down from heaven to earth. He who is worthy of all our affections claims them all for Himself. He who is the Bridegroom of the soul demands, as He has fairly won, the unrivaled love of His bride.

But how are we to do this?

Can we do this great work by ourselves? No! it is only the Lord Himself, manifesting His beauty and blessedness to our soul, and letting down the golden cord of His love into our bosom, that draws up our affections, and fixes them on Himself. In order to do this, He captivates the heart by . . .

some look of love,

some word of His grace,

some sweet promise, or

some divine truth spiritually applied.

When He thus captivates the soul, and draws it up, then the affections flow unto Him as the source and fountain of all blessings.

We are not flogged into loving Him, but are drawn by love into love. Love cannot be bought or sold. It is an inward affection that flows naturally and necessarily towards its object, and all connected with it. And thus, as love flows out to Jesus, the affections instinctively and necessarily set themselves "on things above, and not on things on the earth."

Jesus must be revealed to our soul by the power of God before we can see His beauty and blessedness—and so fall in love with Him as "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether

lovely One." Then everything that . . .

speaks of Christ,

savors of Christ,

breathes of Christ,

becomes inexpressibly sweet and precious!

In no other way can our affections be lifted up from earth to heaven. We cannot control our affections—they will run out of their own accord. If then our affections are earthly, they will run towards earthly objects. If they are carnal and sensual, they will flow towards carnal and sensual objects.

But when the Lord Jesus Christ, by some manifestation of His glory and blessedness—or the Holy Spirit, by taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul—sets Him before our eyes as the only object worthy of, and claiming every affection of our heart—then the affections flow out, I was going to say naturally, but most certainly spiritually, towards Him. And when this is the case, the affections are set on things above.

O what a company of lusts!

"We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to do. But our eyes are upon You!" 2 Chronicles 20:12

There is no use fighting the battle in our own strength. We have none.

O, when temptation creeps like a serpent into the carnal mind, it winds its secret way and coils around the heart. As the boa-constrictor is said to embrace its victim, entwining his coil around it, and crushing every bone without any previous warning—so does temptation often seize us suddenly in its powerful embrace. Have we in ourselves any more power to extricate our flesh from its slimy folds, than the poor animal has from the coils of the boa-constrictor?

So with the corruptions and lusts of our fallen nature. Can you always master them? Can you seize these serpents by the neck and wring off their heads?

To examine our heart is something like examining by the microscope a drop of ditch-water—the more minutely it is looked into, the more hideous forms appear. All these strange monsters, too, are in constant motion, devouring or devoured. And, as more powerful lenses are put on the microscope,

more and more loathsome creatures emerge into view, until eye and heart sicken at the sight.

Such is our heart. Superficially viewed—passably fair. But examined by the spiritual microscope, hideous forms of every shape and size appear—lusts and desires in unceasing movement, devouring each other, and yet undiminished—and each successive examination bringing new monsters to light! O what a company of lusts! How one seems to introduce and make way for the other! and how one, as among the insect tribe, is the father of a million!

We must take these lusts and passions by the neck, and lay them down at the feet of God, and thus bring the omnipotence of Jehovah against what would destroy us—"Here are my lusts, I cannot manage them. Here are my temptations, I cannot overcome them. Here are my enemies, I cannot conquer them. Lord, I do not know what to do. Will You not subdue my enemies?"

This is fighting against sin—not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Not by the law, but by the gospel. Not by self, but by the grace of God. And if your soul has had many a tussle, and many a wrestle, and many a hand-to-hand conflict with sin, you will have found this out before now—that nothing but the grace, power, and Spirit of Christ ever gave you the victory, or the least hope of victory.

"We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to do. But our eyes are upon You!" 2 Chronicles 20:12

As if this beautiful viper had no poison fang!

"Deliver me from all my transgressions!" Psalms 39:7

Ah! how rarely it is that we see sin in its true colors —that we feel what the apostle calls, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin!" O how much is the dreadful evil of sin for the most part veiled from our eyes! Our deceitful hearts so gloss it over, so excuse, palliate, and disguise it—that it is daily trifled, played, and dallied with, as if this beautiful viper had no poison fang!

It is only as the Spirit is pleased to open the eyes to see, and awaken the conscience to feel "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and thus discover its dreadful character, that we have any real sight or sense of its awful nature.

Sins of heart, sins of lip, sins of life, sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of ingratitude, sins of unbelief, sins of rebellion, sins of lust, sins of pride, sins of worldliness! As all these transgressions, troop after troop, come in view, and rise up like spectres from the grave, well may we cry with stifled voice, "Deliver me, O deliver me from all my transgressions! Deliver me from . . .

the guilt of sin,

the filth of sin,

the love of sin,

the power of sin, and

the practice of sin!"

The very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under!

Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings.

Thus no one can really desire to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and is brought to know and feel in the conscience, that his good works would damn him as equally with his bad works.

When grace is thus opened up to the soul, it sees that grace flows only through the Savior’s blood—and that grace . . .

superabounds over all the aboundings of sin,

heals all backslidings,

covers all transgressions,

lifts up out of darkness,

pardons iniquity,

and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under!

Weaned from feeding on husks and ashes

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

The Lord has given a special promise to Zion’s poor—"I will satisfy her poor with bread."

Nothing else? Bread? Is that all?

Yes! That is all God has promised—bread, the staff of life.

But what does He mean by "bread"?

The Lord Himself explains what bread is. He says, "I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. I am the living Bread who came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." John 6:35, John 6:51

The bread, then, that God gives to Zion’s poor is His own dear Son—fed upon by living faith, under the special operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

But must not we have an appetite before we can feed upon bread? The rich man who feasts continually upon juicy meat and savory sauces, would not live upon bread. To come down to live on such simple food as bread—why, one must be really hungry to be satisfied with that.

So it is spiritually. A man fed upon ’mere notions’ and a number of ’speculative doctrines’ cannot descend to the simplicity of the gospel. To feed upon a crucified Christ, a bleeding Jesus!—he is not sufficiently brought down to the starving point, to relish such spiritual food as this!

Before, then, he can feed upon this Bread of life he must be made spiritually poor. And when he is brought to be nothing but a mass of wretchedness, filth, guilt, and misery—when he feels his soul sinking under the wrath of God, and has scarcely a hope to buoy up his poor tottering heart—when he finds the world embittered to him, and he has no one object from which he can reap any abiding consolation—then the Lord is pleased to open up in his conscience, and bring the sweet savor of the love of His dear Son into his heart—and he begins to taste gospel bread.

Being weaned from feeding on husks and ashes, and sick "of the vines of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah," and being brought to relish simple gospel food, he begins to taste a sweetness in ’Christ crucified’ which he never could know—until he was made experimentally poor.

The Lord has promised to satisfy such.

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

That secret loveliness

"I drew them with My cords of kindness and love." Hosea 11:4

Where Christ is made in any measure experimentally known, He has gained the affections of the heart. He has, more or less, taken possession of the soul. He has, in some degree, endeared Himself as a bleeding, agonizing Savior to every one to whom He has in any way revealed Himself. And, thus, the strong cord of love and affection is powerfully wreathed around the tender spirit and broken heart. Therefore . . .

His name becomes as 'ointment poured forth',

there is a preciousness in His blood,

there is a beauty in His Person,

there is that secret loveliness in Him,

which wins and attracts and draws out the tender affections of the soul. And thus this cord of love entwined round the heart, binds it fast and firm to the cross of the Lord Jesus.

"I drew them with My cords of kindness and love." Hosea 11:4

Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness!

"O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me." Psalms 43:3

The Christian is often dissatisfied with his state. He is well aware of the shallowness of his attainments in the divine life, as well as of the ignorance and the blindness that are in him. He cannot perceive the path of life. He sees and feels so powerfully the workings of sin and corruption, that he often staggers, and is perplexed in his mind.

And therefore, laboring under the feeling of . . .

his own shortcomings for the past,

his helplessness for the present,

and his ignorance for the future,

he wants to go forward wholly and solely

in the strength of the Lord, to be . . .

led,

guided,

directed,

kept,

not by his own wisdom and power—but by the supernatural entrance of light and truth into his soul.

When thus harassed and perplexed, he will at times and seasons, as his heart is made soft, cry out with fervency and importunity, as a beggar that will not take a denial, "O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me!" As though he would say, "Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness! I know I must go astray, if You do not condescend to guide me. I have been betrayed a thousand times when I have trusted my own heart. I have been entangled in my base lusts. I have been puffed up by presumption. I have been carried away by hypocrisy and pride. I have been drawn aside into the world. I have never taken a single step aright when left to myself. And therefore feeling how unable I am to guide myself a single step of the way, I come unto You, and ask You to send forth Your light and Your truth, that they may guide me, for I am utterly unable to lead myself."

The child of God—feeling his own ignorance, darkness, blindness, and sinfulness—causes him to moan, and sigh, and cry unto God—that he might be . . .

led every step,

kept every moment,

guided every inch.

"O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them guide me." Psalms 43:3

O what a way of learning religion!

"I was caught up into paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be told!" 2 Corinthians 12:4

Now, doubtless, the apostle Paul, after he had been thus favored—thus caught up into paradise—thought that he would retain the same frame of mind that he was in when he came down from this heavenly place; that the savor, the sweetness, the power, the unction, the dew, the heavenly feeling would continue in his soul. And no doubt he thought he would walk all through his life with a measure of the sweet enjoyments that he then experienced. But this was not God’s way of teaching religion!

God had another way which Paul knew nothing of, and that was—if I may use the expression—to bring him from the third heaven, where his soul had been blessed with unspeakable ravishment—down to the very gates of hell. For he says, "I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to BUFFET me."

The idea "buffeting" is that of a strong man beating a weak one with violent blows to his head and face—bruising him into a shapeless mass!

O what a way of learning religion!

Now I want you to see the contrast we have here.

The blessed apostle caught up into the third heavens, filled with light, life, and glory—enjoying the presence of Christ—and bathing his soul in the river of divine consolation.

Now for a reverse—down he comes to the earth.

A messenger of Satan is let loose upon him, who buffets, beats and pounds this blessed apostle into a shapeless mummy—no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no features—but one indistinguishable mass of black and blue!

Such is the mysterious way in which a man learns religion!

But what was all this for?

Does it not appear very cruel—does it not seem very unkind that, after the Lord had taken Paul up into the third heaven, He would let the devil buffet him?

Does it not strike our natural reason to be as strange and as unheard of a thing, as if a mother who had been fondling her babe in her arms, suddenly were to put it down, and let a large savage dog ravage it—and look on, without interfering, while he was tearing the child which she had been a few minutes before dandling in her lap, and clasping to her bosom?

"But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to BUFFET me and keep me from getting proud." Here we have this difficult enigma solved, this mysterious knot untied!

We find that the object and end of all these severe dealings was to keep Paul from pride!

Three times Paul besought his loving and sympathizing Redeemer, that the trial might be taken away, for it was too grievous to be borne. The Lord heard his prayer and answered it—but not in the way that Paul expected.

His answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you." As though He would say, "Paul, beloved Paul, I am not going to take away your trial; it came from Me—it was given by Me. But My grace shall be sufficient for you, for My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. There is a lesson to be learned, a path to be walked in, an experience to be passed through, wisdom to be obtained in this path—and therefore you must travel in it. Be content then with this promise from My own lips—My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

The apostle was satisfied with this—he wanted no more, and therefore he burst forth, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities—that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

O what a way of learning religion!

In a most mysterious and inexplicable manner

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

I am often a marvel to myself, feeling at times . . .

such barrenness,

such leanness,

such deadness,

such carnality,

such inability to any spiritual thought.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive.

Carried on, and yet so secretly—worked upon, and yet so mysteriously—and yet led on, guided and preserved through so many difficulties and obstacles—the Christian is a miracle of mercy!

He is astonished how he is preserved amid all his . . .

difficulties,

obstacles,

trials, and

temptations.

Sometimes he seems driven and sometimes drawn, sometimes led and sometimes carried—but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarce knows how, he still presses on!

His very burdens make him groan for deliverance.

His very temptations cause him to cry for help.

The very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step.

The very perplexity of the path compels him to cry out for a guide—so that the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on—and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle—until He sets him in glory!

He will then understand, that he has . . .

not had one trial too heavy,

nor shed one tear too much,

nor put up one groan too many,

but all these things have, in a most mysterious and inexplicable manner, worked together for his spiritual good!

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Wrought with divine power

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Most men’s religion is nothing else but ’a round of forms’ . . .

some have their ’doings’,

some have their ’doctrines’,

and others have their ’duties’.

And when the one has performed his doings, the other learned his doctrines, and the third discharged his duties—why, he is as good a Christian, he thinks, as anybody. While all the time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands not in simply in word—but in power.

But as the veil of ignorance is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel that there is a power in vital godliness—a reality in the teachings of the Spirit—that religion is not to be put on and put off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes.

Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power in a man’s heart, and preached by the Holy Spirit into his conscience—it mingles, daily and often hourly, with his thoughts—entwines itself with his feelings—and becomes the very food and drink of his soul.

Now when a man comes to this spot—to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit—it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God.

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The more lovely does Jesus appear!

The poor believer feels, "I continually find all kinds of evil working in my mind; every base corruption crawling in my heart; everything vile, sensual, and filthy rising up from its abominable deeps. Can I think that God can look down in love and mercy on such a wretch?"

When we see . . .

our vileness,

our baseness,

our carnality,

our sensuality,

how our souls cleave to dust,

how we grovel in evil and hateful things,

how dark our minds,

how earthly our affections,

how depraved our hearts,

how strong our lusts,

how raging our passions;

we feel ourselves, at times, no more fit for God than Satan himself!

"You see, at just the right time, when we were utterly helpless, Christ died for the ungodly!" Romans 5:6

Christ does not justify those who are naturally righteous, holy, and religious.

But He takes the sinner as he is, in all his filth and guilt; washes him in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and clothes the naked shivering wretch, who has nothing to cover him but filthy rags, in His own robe of righteousness!

The gospel of the grace of God brings glad tidings . . .

of pardon to the criminal,

of mercy to the guilty, and

of salvation to the lost!

That the holy God should look down in love on wretches that deserve the damnation of hell; that the pure and spotless Jehovah should pity, save, and bless enemies and rebels, and make them endless partakers of His own glory; this indeed is a mystery, the depth of which eternity itself will not fathom!

The deeper we sink in self-abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ. And the blacker we are in our own view, the more lovely does Jesus appear! Have you not brought this on yourselves?

"Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the Lord your God when He led you in the way?" Jeremiah 2:17

"Have you not brought this on yourselves?" says the Lord to His sinning Israel. Who dares say he has not by . . .

his sins,

his carnality,

his pride,

his covetousness,

his worldly-mindedness,

his unbelief,

his foolishness,

his rebelliousness,

procured to himself many things that have grieved and distressed his soul?

If indeed we take no notice of the sin that dwells in us; and pay no regard to our thoughts, desires, words, and actions; and take our stand on our own righteousness; we may refuse to believe that we are such vile sinners.

But if we are compelled to look within, and painfully feel that SIN is an indweller, a lodger, whom we are compelled to harbor; a serpent that will creep in and nestle in our heart, whether we will or not; a thief that will break through and steal, and whom no bolt nor bar can keep out; a traitor in the citadel who will work by force or fraud, and against whom no resolution of ours has any avail; if such be our inward experience and conviction, I believe there is not a man or woman here who will not confess, "Guilty, guilty! Unclean, unclean!"

"Some became fools through their rebellious ways, and suffered affliction because of their iniquities." Psalms 107:17

We bring affliction upon ourselves. We procure suffering by our own iniquities. "O!", says the fool . . .

"my worldly-mindedness,

my pride,

my covetousness,

my carnality,

my neglect of divine things,

my rebelliousness,

my recklessness,

the snares I entangled myself in,

my various besetting sins;

this it is which has provoked the Lord to afflict me so severely, and leave me, fool that I am, to reap the fruit of my own devises!"

A religious animal

"Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious, for as I was walking along I saw your many altars. And one of them had this inscription on it—TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." Acts 17:22-23

Man has been called, and perhaps with some truth, a religious animal. Religion of some kind, at any rate, seems almost indispensable to his very existence—for from the most civilized nation, to the most barbarous tribe upon the face of the earth—we find some form of religion practiced. Whether this is ingrained into the very constitution of man, or whether it be received by custom or tradition—I will not pretend to decide. But that some kind of religion is almost universally prevalent, is a fact that cannot be denied.

We will always find these two kinds of religion . . .

false and true,

earthly and heavenly,

fleshly and spiritual,

natural and supernatural.

Compare this vital, spiritual, heavenly, divine, supernatural religion . . .

this work of grace upon the soul,

this teaching of God in the heart,

this life of faith within—with its flimsy counterfeit.

Compare the actings of . . .

real faith,

real hope,

real love;

the teachings, the dealings, the leadings, and the operations of the blessed Spirit in the soul—with rounds of . . .

duties,

superstitious forms,

empty ceremonies, and

a notional religion, however puffed up and varnished.

Compare the life of God in the heart of a true Christian, amid all his dejection, despondency, trials, temptations, and exercises; compare that precious treasure, Christ's own grace in the soul—with all mere . . .

external religion,

superficial religion,

notional religion.

O, it is no more to be compared than a grain of dust with a diamond! No more to be compared than a criminal in a dungeon to the King on the throne! In fact, there is no comparison between them.

What a contrast!

"Those who endure to the end will be saved." Mark 13:13

Saved!

Saved from what?

Saved from hell!

Saved from an eternity of endless misery and horror!

Saved from the worm which never dies!

Saved from the fire which is never quenched!

Saved from the sulphurous flames!

Saved from the companionship of devils and damned spirits!

Saved saved from ever-rolling ages of ceaseless misery and horror!

Have you not thought sometimes about eternity? What must an eternity of misery must be—when you can scarcely bear the pain of toothache half an hour! O! to be in torment forever! How it racks the soul to think of it! What tongue, then, can express the mercy and blessedness of being saved . . .

from hell,

from the billows of the sulphurous lake,

from infinite despair!

When a soul strikes upon the 'rock of perdition', it is at once swallowed up in a dreadful eternity!

Not only are believers saved from all this infinite and unending misery—but they are saved into

unspeakable happiness and glory! They are . . .

saved into heaven,

saved into eternal communion with the infinite God,

saved into the eternal enjoyment of His blessed presence,

saved into the perfect enjoyment of that perfect and everlasting love in those regions of endless bliss where tears are wiped from off all faces!

What a contrast!

Heaven — hell!

Eternal misery — eternal bliss!

Ages of boundless joy — ages of infinite despair!

But salvation includes not only what we may call future salvation—but present salvation. Thus, there is a being saved in the present . . .

from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin,

from the curse and bondage of the Law,

from the spirit and love of the world,

from inward condemnation,

from the entanglements of Satan,

from worldly anxieties and cares,

from following after idols,

from carelessness,

from coldness,

from carnality,

from every evil way,

from every delusive path.

Sweet buy!

You say, "I am rich—I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me white garments, so you can cover your shameful nakedness. Revelation 3:17-18

The only qualification is a deep feeling of our necessity, our nakedness and our shame—and a feeling that there is no other covering for a needy, naked, guilty soul—but the robe of the Redeemer’s spotless righteousness.

And when the soul is led to His divine feet—full of guilt, shame, and fear—abhorring, loathing, and mourning over itself—and comes in the actings of a living faith—in the sighs and cries of a broken heart—in hungerings, thirstings, and longings—desiring that the Lord would bestow upon him that rich robe—then the blessed exchange takes place—then there is a ’buying’—then the Lord brings out of His treasure-house, where it has been locked up—the best robe—puts it upon the prodigal, and clothes him from head to foot with it!

Sweet buy!

Blessed exchange!

Our nakedness—for Christ’s justifying robe!

Our poverty—for Christ’s riches!

Our helplessness and insufficiency—for Christ’s power, grace, and love!

You say, "I am rich—I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me white garments, so you can cover your shameful nakedness. Revelation 3:17-18

God’s perfect will

"That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

God’s will is "perfect". In it, there is . . .

no spot,

no stain,

no weakness,

no error,

no instability.

It is and indeed must necessarily be as perfect as God Himself; for it emanates from Him who is all perfection; and is a discovery of His mind and character.

But when God's perfect will . . .

sets itself against our flesh,

thwarts our dearest hopes,

overturns our fondest schemes,

we cannot see that it is a perfect will. But rather, are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it.

God's perfect will may . . .

snatch a child from your bosom;

strike down a dear husband;

tear from your arms a beloved wife;

strip you of all your worldly goods;

put your feet into a path of suffering;

lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing;

cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods;

make your life almost a burden to yourself!

How can you, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, acknowledge and submit to God's perfect will; and let it reign and rule in your heart without a murmur of resistance to it?

Look back and see how God's perfect will has, in previous instances, reigned supreme in all points, for your good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to your injury; but all things have worked together for your good.

Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away. Whatever . . .

property,

or comfort,

or friends,

or health,

or earthly happiness we have been deprived of,

it was better for us to lose, than to retain them.

Was your dear child taken away? It might be to teach you resignation to God’s sacred will.

Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend.

Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith in the providence of God.

Have your fondest schemes been marred; your youthful hopes blighted; and you pierced in the warmest affections of your heart? It was . . .

to remove an idol,

to dethrone a rival to Christ,

to crucify the object of earthly love,

so that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might be enshrined in its stead.

To tenderly embrace God’s perfect will is the grand object of all gospel discipline.

The ultimatum of gospel obedience is to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His.

"That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

This sinner, not the Pharisee

The proud Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: "I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that publican over there! For I never cheat, I don’t sin, I don’t commit adultery, I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income." Luke 18:11-12

Man unites in himself, what at first sight seem to be completely opposite things. He is the greatest of sinners—and yet the greatest of Pharisees.

Now, what two things can be so opposed to each other as sin and self-righteousness? Yet the very same man who is a sinner from top to toe, with the whole head sick and the whole heart faint—who is spiritually nothing else but a leper throughout—how contradictory it appears that the same man has in

his own heart a most stubborn self-righteousness!

Now, against these two evils God, so to speak, directs His whole artillery—He spares neither one nor the other.

But it is hard to say which is the greatest rebellion against God—the existence of sin in man and what he is as a fallen sinner—or his Pharisaism, the lifting up his head in pride of self-righteousness.

It is not easy to decide which is the more obnoxious to God—the drunkard who sins without shame—or the Pharisee puffed up with how pleasing he is to God.

The one is abhorrent to our feelings—and, as far as decency and morality are concerned, we would rather see the Pharisee. But when we come to matters of true religion, the Pharisee seems the worst! At least our Lord intimated as much when He said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.

"But the publican stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner!' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:13-14

Five devilisms!

As regards sin in its workings, we may say there are five devilisms from which we need to be saved . . .

1. The GUILT of sin.

2. The FILTH of sin.

3. The LOVE of sin.

4. The DOMINION of sin.

5. The PRACTICE of sin.

1. We need the application of Christ's precious blood to our conscience, to take away the guilt of sin.

2. We need the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and to wash the soul in the fountain, to cleanse from the filth of sin.

3. We need the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, to take away the love of sin.

4. We need the power of Christ, to rescue us from the dominion of sin.

5. We need the grace of Christ, to preserve us from the practice of sin.

It is feeling sin in its various workings, which makes us value Christ! Strange mysterious way! O, strange path! that to be exercised with sin, is the path to the Savior!

Very painful, very mysterious, very inexplicable —that the more you feel yourself a wretched,

miserable sinner; the more you long after Jesus, who is able to save you to the uttermost!

Thus, we shall find that we need all that Christ is. For we are no little sinners; and He is no little Savior!

We are great sinners!

He is a Savior—and a great one!

"He is able to save to the uttermost!" Hebrews 7:25

This is the struggle!

"Oh, what a wretched man I am! Who will free me from this body that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

If a person were to tell me he did not love sin in his carnal mind, I would say with all mildness, "You do not speak the truth!" If your carnal mind does not love sin . . .

Why do you think of it?

Why do you secretly indulge it in your imagination?

Why do you play with it?

Why do you seek to extract a devilish sweetness out of it?

O, what a mercy it would be, if there were not this dreadful love of sin in our heart! This is the struggle—that there should be this traitor in the camp; that our carnal mind should be so devilish as to love that which made the blessed Jesus die; as to love that which crucified the Lord of glory, and to love it with a vehement love!

"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:25

It is I

"Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid." Mark 6:50

It is I who formed you in the womb, and brought you forth into your present existence. It is I, the Lord your God, who has fed you, and clothed you from that hour up to the present moment. It is I, the Lord your God, who has preserved you on every side. When you were upon a sick bed, it was I, the Lord your God, who visited your soul, raised up your body, and gave you that measure of health which you do now enjoy. It is I, the Lord your God, who placed you in the situation of life which you do now occupy.

It is I, the Lord your God . . .

who deals out to you every trial,

who allots you every affliction,

who brings upon you every cross,

who works in you everything according to My own good pleasure.

When we can thus believe that the Lord our God is about our bed and our path, and spying out all our ways; when we can look up to Him, and feel that He is the Lord our God, there is no feeling . . .

more sweet,

more blessed,

more heavenly!

"Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid." Mark 6:50

That sweet grace

"Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, to humble you." Deuteronomy 8:2

We learn humility by a deep discovery of what we are; by an opening up of . . .

the corruption,

the weakness,

the wickedness,

of our fallen nature.

The Lord’s way of teaching His people humility is by placing them first in one trying spot, and then in another; by allowing . . .

some temptation to arise;

some stumbling block to be in their path;

some besetting sin to work upon their corrupt affections;

some idol to be embraced by their idolatrous heart;

something to take place to draw out the sin which is in their heart; and thus make it manifest to their sight.

As a general rule, we learn humility, not by hearing ministers tell us what wicked creatures we are; nor by merely looking into our bosoms and seeing a whole swarm of evils working there; but from being compelled by painful necessity to believe that we are vile, through circumstances and events time after time bringing to light those hidden evils in our heart, which we once thought ourselves pretty free from.

We learn humility, not merely by a discovery of what we are, but also by a discovery of what Jesus is.

We need a glimpse . . .

of Jesus,

of His love,

of His grace,

of His blood. When these two feelings meet together in our bosom . . .

our shame, and the Lord’s goodness;

our guilt, and His forgiveness;

our wickedness, and His superabounding mercy;

they break us, humble us, and lay us, dissolved in tears of godly sorrow and contrition, at the footstool of mercy!

And thus we learn humility, that sweet grace, that blessed fruit of the Spirit in real, vital, soul-experience.

Slaves of Satan!

"Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." 2 Timothy 2:26

In our natural state, we are all the slaves of Satan!

We love our foul master, hug his chain, and delight in his servitude, little thinking what awful wages are to follow.

This mighty conqueror has with him a numerous train of captives! This haughty master, the ’god of this world’, has in his fiendish retinue, a whole array of slaves who gladly do his behests. They obey him cheerfully, though he is leading them down to the bottomless pit! For though he amuses them while here in this world with a few toys and baubles, he will not pay them their wages until he has enticed and flattered them into that ghastly gulf of destruction, in which he himself has been weltering for ages. "Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe." 2 Corinthians 4:4

To keep me from getting puffed up

"But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time He said to me, ’My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in your weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me." 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Depend upon it, the Lord’s family have to go through much tribulation on their way to heaven. So says the unerring word of truth, and so speaks the experience of every God-taught soul. Now . . .

in these seasons of trouble,

in these painful exercises,

in these perplexing trials,

the Lord’s people need strength; yet the Lord sends these trials in order to drain and exhaust them of ’creature strength’.

Such is the ’self-righteousness’ of our heart; such the ’legality’ intertwined with every fiber of our natural disposition—that we cleave to our own righteousness as long as there is a thread to cleave to; we stand in our own strength as long as there is a point to stand upon; we lean upon our own wisdom as long as a particle remains!

In order, then, to exhaust us, drain us, strip us, and purge us of this pharisaic leaven, the Lord sends . . .

trials,

temptations,

sorrows,

perplexities.

What is their effect?

To teach us our weakness, and bring us to that one and only spot where God and the sinner meet—the spot of creature helplessness.

In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally the strength of Christ, and feel it to be more than a doctrine, a notion, or a speculation—to know it as an internal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul—to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot—to feel our own utter weakness.

If anyone loves the world

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

If the love of the Father is in us, we will not love the world—nor will the world love us!

If your heart and spirit are still in the world, and you are not separated from . . .

its society,

its amusements,

its pursuits,

its pleasures,

its delights,

its men,

its maxims,

you certainly lack any evidence of a divine change having been wrought in your soul.

"Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." James 4:4

Paul’s highest attainment

"I am nothing." 2 Corinthians 12:11

This was Paul’s highest attainment in the knowledge of self.

To be a daily pauper living on alms is humbling to proud nature, which is always seeking to be something, and to do something.

If this self-nothingness was wrought in us, we would be spared much pain, in wounded pride.

People are building up religion all over the country, but there is not one of a thousand who has yet learned the first lesson—to be nothing. Of all this noisy crowd, how few lie at Jesus' feet, helpless and hopeless, and find help and hope in Him!

If you can venture to be nothing, it will save you a world of anxiety and trouble! But proud, vain, conceited flesh wants to be something . . .

to preach well,

to make a name for one's self,

and be admired as a preacher.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the worst." 1 Timothy 1:15

"I am less than the least of all God's people." Ephesians 3:8

"I am nothing." 2 Corinthians 12:11

Let God but take the cover off

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

It is our mercy, if we only feel and groan under corruption inwardly, without it breaking forth outwardly—to wound our own souls, grieve the people of God, and gladden our enemies.

Let God but take the cover off the boiling cauldron of our corrupt nature, and the filthy scum would surface in the sight of all men!

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

When the cold winds are whistling over your grave

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18

How really empty and worthless are all human cares and anxieties, as well as all human hopes and pleasures—when viewed in the light of a vast and endless eternity!

In twenty years, today's price of oil will probably mean little to you. But it will matter much whether

your soul is in heaven or hell.

When the cold winds are whistling over your grave, or the warm sun resting on it—what will it matter whether sheep sold badly or well at the market?

Could we realize eternal things more, we would be less anxious about temporal things. It is only our unbelief and carnality which fetter us down to the poor things of time and sense.

"This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever." 1 John 2:17 The art of preaching

We are overrun with a shallow, superficial ministry, which is destitute of all life, savor, and power. A dry, dead-letter scheme of doctrine, as mathematically correct as the squares of a chess-board, prevails, where what is called "truth" is preached. And to move Bible texts on the squares as pawns, is called "the art of preaching".

How simple is truth!

Man’s misery—God’s mercy.

The aboundings of sin—the super-aboundings of grace.

The depths of the fall—the heights of the recovery.

The old man—the new man.

The diseases of the soul—the balm of a Savior’s blood.

These lessons learned are in the furnace of inward experience. How different from . . .

the monkish austerity of the Ritualist,

the lip service of the Pharisee, and

the dry Calvinistic formulary!

What a dreadful lack is there of true preaching now! I look round and see so few men qualified to feed the church of God. We are overrun with parsons, but, oh dear! what are they? I cannot but attribute much of the low state of the churches to the ministers!

Ezekiel 34 is a true picture of the false shepherds. My desire is . . .

1. To exalt the grace of God.

2. To proclaim salvation alone through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. To declare the sinfulness, helplessness, and hopelessness of man in a state of nature.

4. To describe, as far as I am able, the living experience of the saints of God in their trials, temptations, and sorrows—and in their consolations and blessings. A great and inestimable mercy

It is a great and inestimable mercy when our various trials and troubles are made a means of driving us to the Lord, as our only hope and help.

Those circumstances, outward or inward, temporal or spiritual, which . . .

stir up an earnest spirit of prayer,

make us cease from the creature,

beat us out of all false refuges,

wean us from the world,

show us the vileness and deceitfulness of our hearts,

lead us up to Jesus, and make Him near, dear, and

precious—must be considered blessings.

It is true, troubles rarely come to us as such, or at the time appear as such—no, they usually appear as if they would utterly swallow us up! But we must judge of them by their fruits and effects.

Job could not see the hand of God in his troubles and afflictions. But it was made plain after he was brought to abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes.

I am very sure, if we are in the right way, we shall find it a rough way, and have many trials and troubles.

"God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:10-11

Such freaks are more fit for a traveling circus

I have been much puzzled by those in the professing church. Most have a great assurance and unwavering confidence—unaccompanied by godly fear, and the other fruits and graces of the Spirit. I see this as presumption or delusion.

Where the Holy Spirit works faith, He also works . . .

sorrow for sin,

deadness to the world,

tenderness of conscience,

brokenness of spirit,

humility,

simplicity,

sincerity,

meekness,

patience,

spiritual affections,

holy and heavenly desires,

true hope, and

love toward the Lord and His people.

Where we see these fruits and graces of the Spirit lacking, or sadly deficient, there we must conclude that true faith, the root from which they all grow, is lacking or deficient likewise.

There are no ’freaks’ in the kingdom of heaven. I mean such as have . . .

’little hearts’ and ’large heads’,

active legs and withered hands,

nimble tongues and crippled arms.

Such freaks are more fit for a traveling circus than the Church of the living God.

To fear God, to tremble at His word, to be little and lowly in our own eyes, to hate sin and ourselves as sinners, to pour out our hearts before the Lord, to seek His face continually, to lead a life of faith and prayer, to be dead to the world, to feel Jesus to be precious, to behold His dying love by the eyes of living faith; these realities are almost despised and overlooked by many 'great professors' in our day!

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An apostolic face and a Judas heart

Many think that a minister is exempt from such coldness, deadness, and barrenness, as private Christians feel. And the hypocritical looks and words of many of Satan’s ministers favor this delusion. Holiness is so much on their tongues, and on their faces, that their deluded hearers necessarily conclude that it is in their hearts.

But, alas! nothing is easier or more common, than an apostolic face and a Judas heart.

Most pictures that I have seen of the "Last Supper" represent Judas with a ferocious countenance. Had painters drawn a holy, meek-looking face, I believe they would have given a truer resemblance.

Many pass for angels in the pulpit, who if the truth were known, would be seen to be devils and beasts in heart, lip, and life at home.

"How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! You try to look like upright people outwardly, but inside your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness." Matthew 23:25, Matthew 23:28 A languishing body

(Letters of J. C. Philpot)

(February 1, 1840, to a dying youth)

My dear friend,

A languishing body is a heavy cross. Sickness often . . .

depresses our spirits,

shatters our nerves, and

casts a gloom over our minds.

But it is good thus to be weaned and detached, and gradually loosened from the strong ties that bind us to earth. I was ill once for many months, and many thought I would never recover. I found it a heavy trial, but I believe it was profitable to my soul. May the Lord make all your bed in your sickness, give you many testimonies of His special favor—and when He sees fit to take down your earthly tabernacle, remove you to that happy country where the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick," where tears are wiped away from all faces, and sorrow and sighing flee away.

May the Lord speedily grant your desires, and visit your soul with looks of love, rays of mercy, and beams of tender kindness, so as to smile you into . . .

humility,

resignation,

patience,

gratitude,

contrition,

love, and

godly sorrow.

Yours affectionately in the bonds of the gospel,

J. C. Philpot A painted bauble

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

What a wonderful revolution is effected by divine teaching and heavenly visitations!

The soul is brought to live in a new world and breathe a new element. Old things pass away, and behold, all things become new.

New desires, feelings, hopes, fears, and exercises arise, and the soul becomes a new creature. The world appears in its true colors, as a painted bauble, and as its pleasures are valued at their due worth, so its good opinion is little cared for or desired.

What is this poor vain world with all its gilded clay, deceptive honors and respectability, and soap-bubble charms—compared to one smile from our loving Savior?

"And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves." 1 John 2:17 The religion which I want

I am quite sick of modern religion—it is such a mixture, such a medley, such a compromise. I find much, indeed, of this religion in my own heart, for it suits the flesh well—but I would not have it so, and grieve it should be so.

The religion which I want is that of the Holy Spirit.

I know nothing but what He teaches me.

I feel nothing but what He works in me.

I believe nothing but what He shows me.

I only mourn when He smites my rocky heart.

I only rejoice when He reveals the Savior.

This religion I am seeking after, though miles and miles from it—but no other will satisfy or content me.

When the blessed Spirit is not at work in me, and with me, I fall back into all the . . .

darkness,

unbelief,

earthliness,

idleness,

carelessness,

infidelity, and

helplessness of my Adam nature.

True religion is a supernatural and mysterious thing.

It will matter little when I lie in my coffin!

What does it really matter where we spend the few years of our pilgrimage here below?

Life is short, vain, and transitory; and if I live in comfort and wealth, or in comparative poverty, it will matter little when I lie in my coffin!

This life is soon passing away, and an eternal state fast coming on! It will greatly matter whether . . .

our religion was natural or spiritual,

our faith human or divine,

our hope a heavenly gift or a spider’s web!

But our blind, foolish hearts are so concerned about things which are but the dust of the balance, and so little anxious about our all in all.

There is no greater inheritance than to be a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty. To have a saving interest in . . .

the electing love of the Father,

the redeeming blood of the Son,

and the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit,

is worth a million of worlds! Without such, we must be eternally miserable; and with it eternally happy.

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" 1 Peter 1:4 A little drop of purity in the midst of impurity

How mysterious is the life of God in the soul. It seems like a little drop of purity in the midst of impurity.

We shall always find sin to be our worst enemy, and self our greatest foe. We need not fear anything but sin—nothing else can do us any real injury. Though the Lord in tender mercy forgives His erring wandering children, yet He makes them all deeply feel that indeed it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against Him.

If Mr. Pride gets a wound in the head

"Some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives."

Php 1:15

I hope I can rejoice in the Lord's blessing the labors of other good men. It is indeed a sad spirit when ministers are jealous of each other, and would rather cavil and find fault with each other, instead of desiring that the blessing of God might rest upon them and their labors. Oh that miserable spirit of detraction and envy, which would gladly pull others down, that we might stand as it were, a little higher upon their bodies! Where is there any . . .

true humility of mind,

simplicity of spirit,

brotherly love, or

an eye to God's glory,

when this wretched spirit is indulged?

If Mr. Pride gets a wound in the head, it will not be the worse for the grace of humility. Our greatest enemy

I am more afraid of myself—my lusts and passions, and strong and horrible corruptions—than of anybody in the whole world.

SELF is and ever will be our greatest enemy. And all our enemies would be as weak as water against us, were we not such vile wretches in ourselves. The end will make amends for all!

What a world it is of sin and sorrow!

How everything serves to remind us that we are all passing away!

I feel for you in your trials and afflictions, so various, painful, and multiplied. But dare I wish you free from what the all-wise, all-gracious Lord lays upon you? Could He not in a moment remove them all?

Our Father sees fit in His wisdom and mercy to afflict His children, and we know that He would not do so unless it were for the good of their soul. What can we say then? All we can do is to beg of the Lord that He would support, comfort, and bless them.

It is in the furnace that we learn our need of realities, and our own helplessness and inability. The furnace also brings to our mind the shortness of life, and how vain all things are here below.

Affliction are sent to . . .

wean from this world,

make life burdensome,

and death desirable.

I well know that the poor coward flesh is fretful and impatient under afflictions, and would gladly have a smoother, easier path. But we cannot choose our own trials, nor our own afflictions. All are appointed in fixed weight and measure; and the promise is that all things shall work together for good to those who love God.

Wherever we go, and wherever we are, we must expect trials to arise. But it will be our wisdom and mercy to submit to what we cannot alter, and not fret or repine under the trial—but accept it as sent for our good.

We need trial upon trial, and stroke upon stroke to bring our soul out of carnality. We slip insensibly into carnal ease; but afflictions and trials of body and mind stir us up to some degree of earnestness in prayer, show us the emptiness and vanity of earthly things, make us feel the suitability and preciousness of the Lord Jesus.

The path in which you have been led so many years is a safe way, though a rough and rugged way. The end will make amends for all!

We are no longer young

"My life is but a breath." Job 7:7

"My life passes more swiftly than a runner. It flees away, filled with tragedy." Job 9:25

My dear friend,

We are no longer young. Life is, as it were, slipping from under our feet. It is a poor life to live to sin, self, and the world—but it is a blessed life to live unto the Lord.

I never expect to be free from trial, temptation, pain, and suffering of one kind or another, while in this valley of tears. It will be my mercy if these things are sanctified to my soul’s eternal good.

I cannot choose my own path, nor would I wish to do so, as I am sure it would be a wrong one.

I desire to be led of the Lord Himself into the way of peace, and truth, and righteousness—to walk in His fear, live to His praise, and die in the sweet experience of His love.

I have many enemies, but fear none so much as myself. O may I be kept from all evil and all error, and do the things which are pleasing in God’s sight.

Our days are hastening away swifter than a runner. Soon with us it will be time no longer, and therefore how we should desire to live to the Lord, and not to self!

Yours affectionately in the truth,

J. C. Philpot, June 20, 1861

The afflictions of the ungodly

"It was good for me to be afflicted." Psalms 119:71

There is a great difference between the afflictions of the godly, and the afflictions of the ungodly.

To the godly afflictions are a blessing; but to the ungodly afflictions are a curse.

Afflictions soften the heart of the godly; but they harden the heart of the ungodly.

In the case of the godly, afflictions . . .

stir up the grace of prayer,

wean the heart from the world,

bring us to Word of God,

make us consider our latter end,

give power and reality to divine things,

show us the emptiness of all creature religion,

make us look more simply and believingly to the blessed Lord, to feel how suitable He is to every want and woe; and that in Him, and in Him alone, is pardon, acceptance, and peace.

But the afflictions of the ungodly only produce . . .

sullenness,

self-pity, and

rebellion.

Like a little child in the arms of eternal love

How I see men deluded and put off with a vain show, and how few there are, whether ministers or people, who seem to know anything of the transforming efficacy of real religion and vital godliness.

We desire to be more separated from the world in heart, spirit, and affection; to be spiritually minded, and to know more of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

And though we find sin still working in us, and sometimes as bad as ever, yet our desire is to have it subdued in its power, as well as purged away in its guilt and filth.

We have lived to see what the world can do for us—and found it can only entangle; and what sin can do—which is to please for a moment and then bite like an adder.

And we have seen also a little of the Person and work, blood and righteousness, grace and glory, blessedness and suitability of the Son of God; and He has won our heart and affections, so as at times to be the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One.

May you experience the sweetness and blessedness of calmly relying on the faithfulness of God, and lying like a little child in the arms of eternal love.

Yours very affectionately,

J. C. Philpot

The end of God in all His doings and dealings

Blessed are those chastenings and those teachings which bring us to the feet of Christ, and by which He is made precious to the soul.

This is the end of God in all His doings and dealings with His people—to strip and empty them wholly of self, and to manifest and make His dear Son feelingly and experimentally their All in all. In Him and in Him alone can we, do we, find either rest or peace.

The only smile worth having

All the vain applause of mortals, and all that is called popularity, I think little of. It leaves an aching void, and often a guilty conscience. The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and all else is poverty, rags, and shame.

Not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. God’s smile, not man’s, is the only smile worth having. The incredible greatness of His power

"I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of His power to us who believe Him." Ephesians 1:19

The work of God on the soul, is a work of sovereign and omnipotent power! See what a mighty power was put forth in turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; and how it was the outstretched arm of Omnipotence alone, which could deliver us from the power of darkness and bring us into the eternal heavenly kingdom.

Consider the difficulties which grace has to overcome, in the "quickening" of a dead soul into spiritual life. View the depths of the fall. Contemplate . . .

the death of the soul in trespasses and sins,

the thorough alienation from the life of God,

the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the understanding,

the perverseness of the will,

the hardness of the conscience,

and the depravity of the affections!

View the soul’s . . .

obduracy, stubbornness and obstinacy;

its pride, unbelief, infidelity and self-righteousness;

its passionate love to, habitual practice of, and long imprisonment to sin. Consider its strong prejudices

against everything godly and holy!

Contemplate the desperate, implacable enmity of the carnal mind against God Himself—its firm and deep rooted love to the world, in all its varied shapes and forms—and remember also how all its hopes, happiness, and prospects are bound up in the things of time and sense!

O what a complicated mass of difficulties, do all these foes form in their firm combination, like a compact, well armed, thoroughly trained army—against any power which would seek to dislodge them from their position!

Add to this—all the power, malice, and deceitful arts of Satan, as the strong armed man—keeping the palace night and day, and yielding to none but the stronger than he!

Consider, too, the sacrifices which must often be made by one who is to live godly in Christ Jesus . . .

the tenderest ties, perhaps, to be broken;

the lucrative prospects which have to be abandoned;

old friends to be renounced;

family connections to be given up;

position in life to be lost;

shame and contempt to be entailed on oneself!

Viewing, then, a soul dead in sin, with all these difficulties and obstacles in their complicated array, must we not pronounce that to be a mighty act of power which, in spite of all these apparently invincible hindrances, lifts it up and out of them all, into a new and spiritual life? So fully and thoroughly is this fruit and effect of omnipotent power, and of omnipotent power alone, that it is spoken of in the word as . . .

a new and heavenly birth;

a new creation;

a resurrection

—all which terms imply a putting forth of a divine power,

as distinct from and independent of any creature effort.

Contemplate also, the mighty power of God in "maintaining" divine life in our soul. We have to see and feel . . .

what mountains of difficulty,

what seas of temptation,

what winds and storms of error,

what assaults and snares of Satan,

what floods of vileness and ungodliness within and without,

what strong lusts and passions,

what secret slips and falls,

what backslidings and departures from the living God,

what long seasons of darkness, barrenness, and death,

what opposition of the flesh to the strait and narrow way,

what crafty hypocrites, pretended friends, false professors

—all striving to throw down or entangle our steps!

Consider also, what helplessness, inability, and miserable impotency in ourselves to all that is good; and what headlong proneness to all that is evil.

We have also to ponder over what we have been and what we still are, since we professed to fear God—and how, when left to ourselves, we have done nothing but sin against and provoke God to His face!

And thus as read over article by article, this long dark catalogue, still to have a sweet persuasion that the life of God is in our soul—we realize, believe, and feel, and bless God for His surpassing, superabounding grace, in maintaining this divine life in our soul.

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" Romans 5:20 The miserable dregs of self!

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

We are ever looking for something in SELF to make ourselves acceptable to God. We are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find in ourselves . . .

that holiness,

that obedience,

that calm submission to the will of God,

that serenity of soul,

that spirituality,

that heavenly-mindedness,

which we believe to be acceptable in His sight!

Our crooked tempers, our fretful, peevish minds, our rebellious thoughts, our coldness and barrenness, our alienation from good, our headlong proneness to evil, with the daily feeling that we get no better, but rather worse—make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves!

And this brings on great darkness of mind and bondage of spirit, until we seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ, and get into the miserable dregs of self—almost ready to quarrel with God because we are so vile, and only get worse as we get older!

Now the more we get into these dregs of self, and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view—the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel—and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God. It is "in the Beloved" that we are accepted—and not for any . . .

good words,

good works,

good thoughts,

good hearts, or

good intentions of our own!

If our acceptance with God depended on anything in ourselves, we would have to believe we might be children of God today and children of the devil tomorrow!

What, then, is to keep us from sinking altogether into despair, without hope or help? Why, a knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved," independent of everything in us—good or bad!

"And you are complete in Him!" Colossians 2:10

I am full of confusion!

"I am full of confusion!" Job 10:15

God is the great Ruler, Director, and Controller of all things!

We must not look on the varied events that are ever taking place in this world, as a mere matter of ’chance’—a confused medley—as though these multitudinous circumstances were all thrown like marbles into a bag, and thrown back out without any order or arrangement.

God is a God of order.

In the natural world, the world of creation—all is in order.

In the spiritual world, the world of grace—all is in order.

And in the providential world, the world of providence—all is order also.

To our mind, indeed, all often seems disorder. But this arises from our ignorance, and from not seeing the whole as one definitely arranged plan.

If you were to see a weaver working at a loom, and saw nothing but the threads and needles jumping up in continual motion, you would see nothing but confusion. Nor could you form the slightest conception of the pattern which was being worked. But when the whole was completed, and the silk taken off the roller—then you would see a pattern arranged in beautiful order—every thread concurring to form one harmonious design. But all this was known beforehand by the artist who designed the pattern, and every arrangement was made in strict subserviency to it.

But if this is the case as to Gods appointments in providence, how much more is it true of His glorious designs in grace. Every . . .

trial,

temptation,

affliction,

sorrow,

are but the result of a definite plan in His eternal mind!

Yet to us how often all seems confusion! This confusion is not so much in the things themselves—as in our mind. Job, when surrounded by trouble, cried out, "I am full of confusion!" Yet we can see in reading his history that all his trials were working toward an appointed end. So every trial, sorrow, temptation or affliction, which has ever lain, or ever will lie, in your path—has been marked out by infinite, unerring wisdom!

Is not the commonest road laid out according to a definite plan? And does not the surveyor, when he lays it out, put every mile-stone in its proper place?

So, does not the Lord lay out beforehand the road in which His people should walk? And does He not put a trial here and a sorrow there—an affliction at this turning and a cross at that corner? All is definitely planned in His infinite wisdom, to bring the traveler safely home to Zion!

What vain toys!

"This world is fading away, along with everything it craves! But the man who does the will of God

lives forever." 1 John 2:17

Compared with spiritual and eternal blessings, we see how vain and empty are all earthly things.

What vain toys!

What idle dreams!

What passing shadows!

We wonder at the folly of men in hunting after such vain shows—and spending time, health, money, and life itself, in a pursuit of nothing but misery and destruction!

We care little for the opinion of men as to what is good or great—but much for what God has stamped His own approval upon, such as . . .

a tender conscience,

a broken heart,

a contrite spirit,

a humble mind,

a separation from the world,

a submission to His holy will,

a meek endurance of the cross,

a conformity to Christ’s suffering image,

and a living to God’s glory.

"This world is fading away, along with everything it craves! But the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

Dying

"As dying, and, behold, we live!" 2 Corinthians 6:9

Though we die, and die daily, yet, behold, we live. And in a sense, the more we die, the more we live.

The more we die to self, the more we die to sin.

The more we die to pride and self-righteousness, the more we die to creature strength.

The more we die to sinful nature, the more we live to grace.

This runs all the way through the life and experience of a Christian. Nature must die—that grace may live.

The weeds must be plucked up, that the crop may grow.

The flesh be starved, that the spirit may be fed.

The old man put off, that the new man may be put on.

The deeds of the body be mortified, that the soul may live unto God.

As then we die—we live.

The more we die to our own strength, the more we live to Christ’s strength. The more we die to creature hope, the more we live to a good hope through grace.

The more we die to our own righteousness, the more we live to Christ’s righteousness.

The more we die to the world, the more we live to and for heaven.

This is the grand mystery, that the Christian is always dying—yet always living. And the more he dies—the more he lives.

The death of the flesh, is the life of the spirit.

The death of sin, is the life of righteousness.

The death of the creature, is the very life of God in the soul.

"As dying, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

If you are at home in the world

"We are here for only a moment, sojourners and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace." 1 Chronicles 29:15

If you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and, Jacob, you, like them, confess that you are a stranger; and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a sincere experience.

You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world.

It is not your element.

It is not your home.

You are in it during God’s appointed time, but you wander up and down this world . . .

a stranger to its company,

a stranger to its maxims,

a stranger to its fashions,

a stranger to its principles,

a stranger to its motives,

a stranger to its lusts,

a stranger to its inclinations, and all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God’s sovereign power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it.

I can tell you plainly—if you are at home in the world; if the things of time and sense are your element; if you feel one with . . .

the company of the world,

the maxims of the world,

the fashions of the world, and

the principles of the world

—grace has not reached your heart, the faith

of God’s elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to separate.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers, and go out into a land that God would show him. And so God’s own word to His people is now, "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Separation, separation, separation from the world is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness.

There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is . . .

separation of heart,

separation of principle,

separation of affection,

separation of spirit.

And if grace has touched your heart, and you are a partaker of the faith of God’s elect, you are a stranger in the world, and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such.

O what crowds of pitiable objects!

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence—so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need!" Hebrews 4:16

What heart can conceive, or tongue recount—the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ’s all conquering grace?

We see scarcely a millionth part of what He, as a King on His throne, is daily doing. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds His throne!

What urgent needs and woes to answer!

What cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage!

What broken hearts to bind up!

What wounded consciences to heal!

What countless prayers to hear!

What earnest petitions to grant!

What stubborn foes to subdue!

What guilty fears to quell!

What grace, what kindness, what patience, what compassion, what mercy, what love, what power, what authority, does this Almighty Sovereign display!

No circumstance is too trifling; no petitioner too insignificant; no case too hard; no difficulty too great; no seeker too importunate; no beggar too ragged; no bankrupt too penniless; no debtor too insolvent, for Him not to notice and not to relieve.

Sitting on His throne of grace . . .

His all seeing eye views all,

His almighty hand grasps all,

and His loving heart embraces all whom the Father chose—whom He himself redeemed by His blood—and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by His invincible power!

The hopeless; the helpless; the outcasts whom no man cares for; the tempest-tossed and not comforted; the ready to perish; the mourners in Zion; the bereaved widow; the wailing orphan; the sick in body; the still more sick in heart; the racked with hourly pain; the wrestler with death's last struggle.

O what crowds of pitiable objects surround His throne—and all needing . . .

a look from His eye,

a word from His lips,

a smile from His face,

a touch from His hand!

O could we but see what His grace is—what His grace has—what His grace does—and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we would have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high, by Zion's enthroned King!

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence—so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need!" Hebrews 4:16 Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"You are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it!" Isaiah 36:6

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Splintered reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us!

Our own strength and resolutions, the world and the church, sinners and saints, friends and enemies, have they not all proved, more or less, splintered reeds?

The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced

our souls!

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from the world,

from friends,

from enemies,

from self,

in order to bring us to lean upon Himself. And every prop He will sooner or later remove—that we may lean wholly and solely upon His Person, love, death, and righteousness!

Nothing but this can really break the sinner’s heart!

To view God’s mercy in its real character, we must go to Calvary! We must go by faith, under the secret teachings and leadings of the Holy Spirit, to see Immanuel, God with us, groveling in Gethsemane’s garden. We must view Him . . .

naked upon the cross,

groaning,

bleeding,

agonizing,

dying!

We must view that wondrous spectacle of love and suffering—and feel our eyes flowing down in streams of sorrow, humility, and contrition at the sight—in order to enter a little into the depths of the tender mercy of God.

Nothing but this can really break the sinner’s heart!

Law terrors, death and judgment, infinite purity, and eternal vengeance will not soften or break a sinner’s heart. But if he is led to view a suffering Immanuel, and a sweet testimony is raised up in his conscience that those sufferings were for him—this, and this alone will break his heart all to pieces!

The flesh

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3:6

There is no promise made that in this life, we shall be set free from the indwelling and the in-working of sin.

Many think that their flesh is to become "progressively holier and holier"—that sin after sin is to be removed gradually out of the heart—until at last they are almost made perfect in the flesh. But this is an idle dream, and one which, sooner or later will be crudely and roughly broken to pieces.

The flesh will ever remain the same—and we shall ever find that the flesh will lust against the Spirit. Our fleshly nature is corrupt to the very core. It cannot be mended. It cannot be sanctified. It is the same at the last, as it was at the first—inherently evil, and as such will never cease to be corrupt until we put off mortality—and with it the body of sin and death.

All we can hope for, long after, expect, and pray for—is that this evil fleshly nature may be subdued, kept down, mortified, crucified, and held in subjection under the power of grace. But as to any such change passing upon the flesh—or taking place in the flesh as to make it holy—it is but a pharisaic delusion, which, promising a holiness in the flesh, leaves us still under the power of sin.

The true sanctification of the new man of grace—which is wrought by a divine power—is utterly distinct from any imagined holiness in the flesh—or any vain dream of its progressive sanctification.

Only one hand can ease the trouble

"The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble!" Psalms 9:9

Do you not see how the Scriptures always put together the malady and the remedy? How they unfold the promises as suitable to certain states and cases of soul? And how all the perfections of God are adapted to His people only so far as they are brought into peculiar circumstances? This vein runs through all the Scripture.

So here the Lord is declared to be a refuge. But when? "In times of trouble!" We do not need Him to be a refuge when there is no trouble. Shall I use the expression without irreverence—'We can do without Him then.' We can . . .

love the world, amuse ourselves with the things of time and sense,

let our heads go astray after perishing, transitory vanities,

set up an idol in our heart,

bow down before a 'golden god',

have our affections wholly fixed on those naturally dear to us,

get up in the morning, pass through the day,

and lie down at night—very well without God.

But when times of trouble come, when afflictions lie heavily upon us, when we are brought into those scenes of tribulation through which we must pass to arrive at the heavenly Canaan; then we need something more than flesh and blood; then we need something more than the perishing creature can unfold; then we need something more than this vain world can amuse us with!

We then need God! We need His everlasting arms to be underneath our souls; we need His consolations; we need something from the Lord's own lips dropped with the Lord's own power into our hearts!

These times of soul trouble make God's people know that the Lord is their refuge. If I am in soul trouble; if my heart is surcharged with guilt; if my conscience is lacerated with the pangs of remorse—Can the creature give me relief? Can friends dry the briny tear? Can they still the convulsive sigh? Can they calm the troubled breast? Can they pour oil and wine into the bleeding conscience?

No! They are utterly powerless in the matter!

They may increase our troubles, and they often, like Job's friends, do so! But they cannot alleviate it!

Only one hand can ease the trouble—the same hand which laid it on! Only one hand can heal the wound; the same which mercifully inflicted it!

Now, in these times of soul trouble, if ever we have felt them—we shall make the Lord our refuge.

There is no other to go to! We may try every arm but His—we may look every way but the right way—and we may lean upon every staff but the true one. But, sooner or later, we shall be brought to this spot—that none but the Lord God Almighty, who made heaven and earth, who brought our souls and bodies into being, who has kept and preserved us to the present hour, who is around our bed, and about our path, and spies out all our ways, and who has sent his dear Son to pay for our sin—that none but this eternal Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, who made and upholds heaven and earth—can speak peace, pardon, and consolation to our hearts!

How sweet it is in these times of trouble to have a God to go to; to feel that there are everlasting arms to lean upon; that there is a gracious ear into which we may pour our afflictions; that there is a heart, a sympathizing heart, in the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, which feels for us; to know that there is a hand to relieve, and to experience, at times, relief from that Almighty and gracious hand! The afflictions the Lord sends on His people

"You have afflicted me with all Your waves." Psalms 88:7

Jesus was a man of sufferings—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And His people, in their measure, must have the same. The Lord has appointed it should be so. He has chosen His Zion in the furnace of affliction. There is no escape.

The afflictions the Lord sends on His people are of varied kinds. The Lord sees necessary to send afflictions suitable to the case, state and condition of each. What might be an affliction to one might not be so to another. Each must carry his own affliction. Each must bear his own load, and each endure his own appointed lot.

So a wise God sees exactly what affliction to lay on each and all . . .

when it shall come,

where it shall come,

why it shall come,

how it shall come,

how it shall work,

what it shall work,

how long it shall last,

when it shall be put on,

and when taken off.

In these matters the Lord acts as a sovereign.

We did not choose of what parents we would be born, nor our situation in life; neither had we any choice of our stature or skin color.

Likewise, the Lord appointed all our afflictions for us—and when He puts them on, no human arm can take them off!

He knows our constitution and troubles—our characteristics and the minutest things relating to our situation in life. The Lord knows all our concerns. Therefore He lays on each individual the very affliction He sees that individual needs; no greater, no less—exactly the very affliction which shall bring about the very appointed purpose intended by God to be brought about, which shall be for the soul's good and God's own glory. Who is this coming up from the wilderness?

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

A saved sinner is a spectacle for angels to contemplate!

That a sinful man who deserves nothing but the eternal wrath of God, should be lifted out of justly merited perdition, into salvation to which he can have no claim, must indeed ever be a holy wonder!

And that you or I should ever have been fixed on in the electing love of God; ever have been given to Jesus to redeem; ever quickened by the Spirit to feel our lost, ruined state; ever blessed with any discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His saving grace—this is and ever must be a matter of holy astonishment here—and will be a theme for endless praise hereafter!

To see a man altogether so different from what he once was—once so careless, carnal, ignorant, unconcerned—to see that man now upon his knees begging for mercy, the tears streaming down his face, his bosom heaving with convulsive sighs, his eyes looking upward that pardon may reach him in his desperate state—is not that a man to be looked at with wonder and admiration?

To see another who might have pushed his way in the busy, bustling scenes of life—who might have had honors, riches, and everything the world had to bestow heaped upon his head—abandon all for Jesus' sake, and with Moses, "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," is not that man a wonder?

To live while here on earth in union and communion with an invisible God—to talk to Jesus, whom the eye of sense has never seen, and whose voice the ear of sense has never heard—and yet to see Him as sensibly by the eye of faith as though the natural eye rested upon His glorious Person, and to hear His voice speaking into the inmost heart, as plainly and clearly as though the sound of His lips met the natural ear—is not that a wonder also?

To see a man preferring one smile from the face of Jesus, and one word from His peace-speaking lips, above all the titles, honors, pleasures, and power that the world can bestow—why surely if there is a wonder upon earth, that man is one!

May we not, then, say with admiring as well as wondering eyes, "Who is this?"

"Why, this man I knew—worldly, proud, ambitious, self-seeking. That man I knew given up to vanity and pride. Another man I knew buried in politics, swallowed up in pleasure and gaiety, abandoned to everything vile and sensual. But he has now become prayerful, watchful, tender-hearted, choosing the company of God's people, giving up everything that his carnal mind once approved of and delighted in; and manifesting in his walk, conversation, and whole deportment that he is altogether a new creature."

Whenever we see any of those near and dear to us . . .

touched by the finger of this all-conquering Lord,

subdued by His grace,

and wrought upon by His Spirit,

then not only do we look upon such with holy wonder,

but with the tenderest affection, mingled with the tears of thankful praise to the God of all our mercies.

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5 The scale!

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

Put your soul in one side of the scale—and put all that the world calls good and great in the other side. Think of everything that the heart of man can desire—riches, honor, pleasure, power. Heap it up well! Fill one side of the scale until there is no room for more. Put in . . .

all the gold of Australia,

all the diamonds of India,

all the delights of youthful love,

all the pleasures . . .

of wife and home,

of children and friends,

of health and strength,

of name and fame.

Put in all that the natural mind of man deems the height of happiness, and everything that may weigh this side of the scale down.

Now, when you have filled this side of the scale, put your soul into the other side—the state of your soul for all eternity. Represent to yourself your deathbed—hold the scale with dying hands as lying just at the brink of eternity. See how the scale now hangs!

What if you had the whole world that you have put into the scale, and could call it all your own—but at that solemn hour felt that your soul was forever lost—that you were dying under the wrath of God—and there was nothing before you but an eternity of misery! At such a moment as this, what could you put in the scale equal to the weight of your immortal soul?

Take the scale again. Put into one side, every affliction, trial, sorrow, and distress that imagination can conceive, or tongue express. Let them all be yours . . .

distress of mind,

pain of body,

poverty of circumstances,

contempt from man,

assaults from Satan,

Job’s afflictions,

Jacob’s bereavements,

David’s persecutions,

Jeremiah’s prison,

Hezekiah’s sickness.

Put into this side of the scale everything that makes life naturally miserable—and then put into the other side, a saved soul.

Surely, as in the case of worldly honors, and riches, and happiness—a lost soul must weigh them all down!

So in the case of afflictions and sorrows and troubles—a saved soul must weigh them all down too!

We are not to set our affections on them!

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Naturally we have no affection for anything else.

There is no such thing as a spiritual desire or a heavenly affection in our soul, when we are in a state of unregeneracy. So fallen are we that we love, and cannot but love the world, and the things of the world. We have no heart for anything but the things of time and sense. No, rather, as our carnal mind is enmity against God, we hate everything which is spiritual, heavenly, and holy.

One main part, therefore, of the work of God upon the soul, is to take off our affections from these earthly things—and to fix them upon Jesus where He sits enthroned above—that we may love and hate those same things which He loves and hates.

Our affections are not to be set upon things on the earth. Business, worldly cares, the interests of our family, the things of time and sense—in whatever form they come, whatever shape they may assume, must not so entwine themselves around our affections as to bind them down to the earth.

We may use them for the support and sustentation of our life—but we must not abuse them. We are not to set our affections on them!

Houses, gardens, land, property, friends, family; all these earthly things we are not to set our affections on—so that they become idols. Thus any lovely object may be foul—because turned to an idol.

It may be but a flower—and yet be an idol.

It may be a darling child whom everybody admires for its beauty and attractiveness—yet it may be a defiling idol.

A cherished project may be an idol.

A crop of wheat, a flock of sheep, a good farm, a thriving business, the respect of the world, may all be defiling idols—for all these things, when eagerly pursued and loved, draw the soul away from God, and by drawing it insensibly from Him, bring pollution and guilt into the conscience.

Now we are, or by grace in due time shall be, weaned and divorced from earth with all its charms and pleasures and all its polluting idols.

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols!" 1 John 5:21

"I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols!" Ezekiel 36:25

Snares, traps, baits!

The Lord’s people are, from time to time, deeply exercised with the power of sin. They find such ungodly lusts—they feel such horrid evils—the corruptions of their hearts are laid so naked and bare—and they find in themselves such a reckless propensity to all wickedness. They feel sin so strong—and themselves so weak!

O how many of the Lord’s people are tempted with sin morning, noon, and night! How many evils, horrid evils, are opening, as it were, their jaws to wholly swallow them up! Wherever they go, wherever they turn, snares, traps, baits seem lying on every side—strewed thickly in their path!

They feel so helpless—and so inwardly sensible that nothing but the almighty power of God can uphold them as they walk in this dangerous path—a path strewed with snares on every hand—that they are made to cry to the Lord, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

Nothing short of God’s salvation . . .

in its freeness,

in its fullness,

in its divine manifestation,

in its sin-subduing, lust-killing influence,

can save them from the power of sin!

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name—you are Mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble—I will be with you! When you go through rivers of difficulty—you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression—you will not be

burned up—the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel—your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3 The wilderness

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her." Hosea 2:14

The children of God would not voluntarily go into the wilderness—it is a place too barren for them to enter, except as allured in a special manner by the grace of God, and led by the power of God.

Nor do they for the most part know where the Lord is taking them. They follow His drawings; they are led by His allurings; they listen to His persuading voice, trusting to Him as to an unerring Guide.

But they do not know the 'place of barrenness' into which He is bringing them—this the Lord usually conceals from their eyes. He allures and they follow, but He does not tell them what He is going to do with them, or where He intends to take them. He hides His gracious purposes, that He may afterwards bring them more clearly to light.

Look at the place where He brings His people—the wilderness. This is a type and figure much used by the Holy Spirit, and conveys to us much deep and profitable instruction.

The wilderness is an isolated, solitary spot, far, far away from cities, and towns, and other busy haunts of men—a remote and often dreary abode, where there is no intruding eye to mark the wanderer's steps, where there is no listening ear to hear his sighs and cries. The Lord, when He puts forth His sacred power upon the heart, to allure His people into the wilderness, brings them into a spot where in solitude and silence they may be separated from everyone but Himself.

The 'wilderness', we take as an emblem of being alone with God—coming out of the world, away from sin and worldly company, out of everything carnal, sensual, and earthly, and being brought into that solemn spot where there are secret, sacred, and solitary dealings with God.

08.11. Volume 11

Sovereign, supreme disposal

"And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and He gave Him this authority for the benefit of the church." Ephesians 1:22

God has put all things, events, and circumstances under the authority of Christ! How vast, how numerous, how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the children of God here below, as they travel onward to their heavenly home! What an intricate maze they often seem, and how much they appear opposed to us, as if we never could get through them, or scarcely live under them!

Yet, there cannot be a single circumstance over which Jesus has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to His disposal. There is not . . .

a trial,

a temptation,

an affliction of body or soul,

a loss,

a cross,

a painful bereavement,

a vexation,

a grief,

a disappointment,

a case, state, or condition,

which is not put under Jesus' authority!

He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances! As possessed of infinite knowledge, He sees them. As possessed of infinite wisdom, He can manage them. As possessed of infinite power, He can dispose and direct them for our good and His own glory! How much trouble and anxiety we would save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this! If we could see by the eye of faith that . . .

every foe and every fear,

every difficulty and perplexity,

every trying or painful circumstance,

every looked-for or unlooked-for event,

every source of anxiety, whether at present or in prospect,

are all under His dominion, and at His sovereign disposal—what a load of anxiety and care would be taken off our shoulders!

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." Matthew 28:18

Pride, worldliness, and covetousness

Pride, worldliness, and covetousness may reign rampant, where grosser sins are not committed, or kept hidden from observation.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives." Jeremiah 17:9-10

All of us used to live that way

"Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins! You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of the children of disobedience. All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God’s wrath just like everyone else!" Ephesians 2:1-3

Paul reminds us of the state and condition in which we used to live, that he may thereby magnify the riches of God’s grace, and bring before us what should be a matter of the deepest humiliation and self-abhorrence. How clearly does he show that there is no difference between the saved and the lost—except what grace makes between them; that all, elect and non-elect, are equally dead in sin; that all equally live according to the ways of this world in their unregenerate condition; and that all are equally led and acted upon by Satan, that foul and accursed spirit which we see now working everywhere around us in the children of disobedience.

If we view the children of God only as they are by nature, there is no difference between them and the lost. Their sins are as great, if not greater; their nature as corrupt; their hearts as evil; the whole bent and course of their thoughts, words, and works, were as saturated with sin and crime. And all these things deserve wrath, and would draw down wrath as their everlasting portion—but for the sovereign grace of God! The very sweetness of grace lies in this—that it has put away deserved wrath!

Paul’s object is to remind us of our obligations to distinguishing, sovereign grace, by showing us that we deserve nothing at God’s hands but wrath; and that had we our just due, wrath would be poured out upon us to the uttermost! Surely every one who has felt anything of the wrath of God as his just due, on account of his personal sins, will freely acknowledge that he is by nature a child of wrath, and that there are thousands in hell who have not sinned as great as he has!

"But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so very much, that even while we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. It is only by grace that you have been saved!" Ephesians 2:4-5

Fall down in reverent astonishment

"His great love for us." Ephesians 2:4

"You love them as much as You love Me." John 17:23

The love of God to His dear Son must be so infinite as to exceed all conception of men or angels. Now, that He should love the people of His choice with the same love—the same in nature, the same in degree as that with which He loves His dear Son—is one of the most overwhelming thoughts which can move and stir a human bosom! Indeed, so overwhelming is it in its sublime mystery and unapproachable depth, that as it can only be received by faith! Faith itself can only fall down in reverent astonishment and admiration before it, and cry out, "O the depth! O the blessedness of this love!"

"I love you the same way as My Father has loved Me." John 15:9

Don't you realize!

"Don't you realize that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16

Alas! how little is this truth contemplated and acted upon!

Were we more deeply and powerfully impressed with the solemn truth that God Himself dwells in us through the Spirit, how much more careful we would be to maintain . . .

truth and reality,

life and power in experience,

godliness and holiness in life!

What a reverential fear would possess our minds, that we might not defile the Lord's temple, or sin against and before, so holy and all-seeing a Guest!

If we realized this, and lived under its solemn weight and influence, how careful we would be not to defile that body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. How desirous and anxious we would be not to pollute . . .

our eyes by wandering lusts;

our ears by listening to worldly and carnal conversation;

our lips by speaking deceit, or light and frothy talk;

our hands by putting them to anything that is evil;

our feet by running on errands of vanity and folly.

We are to view our body as God's temple, and therefore sanctified to His service and to His glory!

"God bought you with a high price! So you must honor God with your body." 1 Corinthians 6:20

Strangers!

"To God's elect, strangers in the world." 1 Peter 1:1

"I am a stranger with you and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." Psalms 39:12

"I am but a stranger here on earth." Psalms 119:19

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

The main character of a child of God is that he is a stranger upon earth. One of the first effects of the grace of God upon our soul was to separate us from the world, and make us feel ourselves strangers in it.

The world was once our home—the active, busy center of all our thoughts, desires, and affections. But when grace planted imperishable principles of life in our bosom, it at once separated us from the world in heart and spirit, if not in actual life and walk. We are strangers inwardly and experimentally, by the power of divine grace making this world a wilderness to us.

Money!

"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money." 2 Timothy 3:2

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." 1 Timothy 6:10

Money feeds the lusts of the flesh by giving its possessor the power to gratify them.

Money nurses his pride by making its possessor, so to speak, independent of the providence of God.

Money fosters the love of the world by giving its possessor a portion in it.

"You cannot serve both God and Money!" Luke 16:13

"Not greedy for money." 1 Peter 5:2

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have." Hebrews 13:5

"The Pharisees, who dearly loved their money, scoffed at all this." Luke 16:14

All the ravishments of His presence and love!

"Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the outward eye has seen, or natural ear heard, or has entered into the carnal heart of man—put side by side with being saved by Jesus with an everlasting salvation?

Consider what we are saved from—as well as what we are saved unto. From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven! From endless wrath—to eternal glory! From the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented—to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels! And, above all, to seeing the glorious Son of God as He is, in all the perfection of His beauty, and all the ravishments of His presence and love!

To be done forever with . . .

all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life;

all the pains and aches of this poor clay tabernacle;

all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of

sin and death—to be perfectly holy in body and soul,

being in both without spot, or blemish—and ever to enjoy uninterrupted union and communion with God!

O what a heaven lies before the children of God!

Fashionable sins

"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil lusts you had when you lived in ignorance." 1 Peter 1:14

Peter warns us against yielding ourselves to the power and practice of any of those lusts which had dominion over us in the days of our ignorance—such as the base and sensual lusts of the flesh—or the more refined lusts of . . .

money,

power,

pleasure,

fashion,

pride,

worldliness,

fleshly ease—those more fashionable sins in which a man may live and walk, and yet preserve his character and good name.

Let the children of disobedience follow after and be conformed to all these worldly lusts; but let the children of obedience shun and abhor them as . . .

hateful to God,

deceitful and dangerous to themselves, and

contrary to a holy, godly profession.

"But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do." 1 Peter 1:15 At the cross alone

"Jesus has become our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14

An experimental knowledge of crucifixion with his crucified Lord, made Paul preach the cross—not only in its power to save, but in its power to sanctify.

The cross is not only the meritorious cause of all salvation—but is the instrumental cause of all sanctification. As there is no other way of salvation than by the blood of the cross—so there is no other way of holiness than by the power of the cross.

Through the cross, that is, through union and communion with Him who suffered upon it, not only is there a fountain opened for all sin—but for all uncleanness!

All our . . .

pardon and peace,

acceptance and justification,

happiness and holiness,

wisdom and strength,

victory over the world,

mortification of the body of sin and death,

hope and confidence,

prayer and praise,

gracious feelings,

spiritual desires,

warm supplications,

honest confessions,

godly sorrows for sin,

spring from the cross!

At the cross alone can we . . .

be made wise unto salvation,

become righteous by a free justification,

receive of His Spirit to make us holy, and

be redeemed and delivered from . . .

sin, Satan, death and hell.

To the cross we are to bring . . .

our sorrows,

our trials,

our temptations,

our sufferings,

to get life from His death,

pardon and peace from His atoning blood,

justification from His divine obedience, and

resignation to the will of God from His holy example.

At the cross alone is . . .

the world crucified to us, and we to the world;

sin mortified, and its reigning power dethroned;

the old man crucified and put off, and the new man put on.

For the most part, it is only through a long series of . . .

afflictions,

bereavements,

disappointments,

vexations,

illnesses,

pains of body and mind,

hot furnaces, and

deep waters,

as sanctified to his soul’s profit by the Holy Spirit,

that the child of God comes to the cross. The kingship of Christ

"King of kings and Lord of lords!" Revelation 19:16

The kingship of Christ is full of sweet consolation to the tried family of God. As Zion’s enthroned King, He supplies His people out of His own inexhaustible fullness!

To Him, as our enthroned King, we give the allegiance of our hearts. Before His feet, as our rightful Sovereign, we humbly lie. And we beg of Him, as possessed of all power, to subdue our iniquities and rebellious lusts, and sway His peaceful scepter over every faculty of our soul.

The kingship of Christ is a blessed subject of meditation, when we consider its bearing upon our helpless, defenseless condition. We stand surrounded by foes . . .

internal,

external,

infernal,

all armed against us with deadly enmity!

Every child of God is surrounded by a multitude of enemies without and within, who, unless they are overcome—will most certainly overcome him. And to be overcome is to be lost, forever lost, and to perish under the wrath of God!

What hope or help can we have, but in . . .

that all-seeing eye, which sees our condition;

that all-sympathizing heart, which feels for us;

that all-powerful hand, which delivers the objects of

His love from all the snares and traps—and defeats all the plans and projects of these mighty, implacable foes?

We daily and hourly feel the workings of our . . .

mighty sins,

raging lusts,

powerful temptations,

besetting evils,

against the least and feeblest of which, we have no strength!

But as the eye of faith views our enthroned King, we are led by the power of His grace to . . .

look unto Him,

hang upon Him, and

seek help from Him.

Trials in providence, afflictions in the family, sickness and infirmities in the body, opposition and persecution from the world, a vile, unbelieving heart, which we can neither sanctify nor subdue, a rough and rugged path, increasing in difficulty as we journey onward, doubts, fears, and misgivings in our own bosom, inward slips and falls, wanderings, startings aside, hourly backslidings from the strait and narrow path, jealous enemies ever watching for our halting, with no eye to pity, nor arm to help—but the Lord's!

How all these foes and fears make us feel our need of an enthroned King, Head and Husband . . .

whose tender heart is soft to pity,

whose mighty arm is strong to relieve!

We should be ever looking up to our enthroned King, not only that He might sway His scepter over our hearts, controlling our rebellious wills, and subduing us to His gentle might; but as King over all our enemies—of which our internal foes are much more numerous and mighty than any external enemies!

When we feel the power of sin, the tyranny of our vile lusts and passions, and what our nature is capable of if left to its own will and way—how sweet and suitable is the promise, "You will again have compassion on us; You will subdue our iniquities and hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea!" Micah 7:19

"We are powerless against this mighty army that is attacking us! We do not know what to do, but we

are looking to You for help." 2 Chronicles 20:12

"The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save!" Zephaniah 3:17 The chief burden of the Lord’s children

The chief burden of the Lord’s children is sin. This is the main cause of all their sighs and groans, from the first quickening breath of the Spirit of God in their hearts until they lay down their bodies in dust. The wrath of God due to them fell upon Him!

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us." 2 Corinthians 5:21

"Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18

If we would we see, feel, and realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is not by viewing the lightnings and hearing the thunders of Sinai’s fiery top—but in seeing the agony and bloody sweat, and hearing the groans and cries of the suffering Son of God, as made sin for us—in the garden and upon the cross.

To look upon Him whom we have pierced will fill heart and eyes with godly sorrow for sin, and a holy mourning for and over a martyred, injured Lord. (Zechariah 12:10.)

To see, by the eye of faith, as revealed to the soul by the power of God—the darling Son of God bound, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, mocked—and then, as the climax of cruel scorn and infernal cruelty, crucified between two thieves—this believing sight of the sufferings of Christ, will melt the hardest heart into contrition and repentance.

But when we see, by the eye of faith, that this was the smallest part of His sufferings—that there were depths of soul trouble and of intolerable distress and agony from the hand of God as a consuming fire, as the inflexible justice and righteous indignation against sin, and that our blessed Lord had to endure the wrath of God until He was poured out like water, and His soft, tender heart in the flames of indignation became like wax, and melted within Him—then we can in some measure conceive what He undertook in becoming a sin offering. For as all the sins of His people were put upon Him—the wrath of God due to them fell upon Him!

No less real, and far more severe, were the agonies of His soul—for the wrath of God in the Redeemer’s heart was as real as the nails that pierced His hands and feet!

When the sins of the elect were found on Christ, justice viewed Him and treated Him as the guilty criminal. Separation from God, under a sense of His terrible displeasure on account of sin—that abominable thing which His holy soul hates—is not this hell? This, then, was the hell experienced by the suffering Redeemer when the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all.

What heart can conceive or tongue express what must have been the feelings of the Redeemer's soul when He, the beloved Son of God, who who had lain in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, was by imputation, made a sinner—the deep wounds of suffering love felt by the Son of God when His Father, His own Father, hid His face from Him? A gracious influence

The love of Jesus has a gracious influence on the life, conduct, and conversation of a true believer. The tree is known by its fruit; and those branches alone which bring forth fruit unto God, are in manifest union with the only true Vine.

Love to Jesus is the constraining principle of all holy obedience. "If you love Me, keep my commandments," was His dying injunction to His disciples. As, then, His bleeding love is experimentally known, there will be . . .

a conformity to His image,

an obedience to His will,

a walking in His footsteps.

At the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ

By the death Jesus, all our horrible filth and defilement, however black, monstrous, aggravated and abominable, however deep and dreadful, was thoroughly and forever . . .

put away,

cast behind God's back,

blotted out as a thick cloud, and

drowned in the depths of the sea!

In the pierced hands, and feet and side of Immanuel, a fountain was opened for all sin and uncleanness!

At the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

justice and mercy met together,

righteousness and peace kissed each other,

mercy rejoiced over judgment,

grace abounded over sin!

Justice, with all its inflexible requisitions, was thoroughly satisfied; the law, with all its holy, unbending demands fully magnified; every perfection of God eternally glorified; every apparently barring attribute entirely harmonized; so that Jehovah, in all the blaze of ineffable purity, majesty,

power, and holiness—can now be just, infinitely just—and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.

Here, then, at the foot of the cross, is pardon and peace for guilty criminals! Here is thorough justification for the self-condemned and self-abhorred! Here is salvation, complete and everlasting, for all the redeemed family of God! Here is a fountain, ever open, full and free! Here is a robe, in which the spouse of Jesus stands without blemish and without spot before the throne of God! Here mercy is magnified forever! Here dying love displays itself in all its breadth, and length, and depth, and height! Here grace, all-glorious, all-triumphant grace, reigns unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord!

Authority, glory and sovereign power!

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns!" Revelation 19:6

The unlimited dominion of King Jesus extends over . . .

all things,

all events,

all circumstances,

all people!

All are subjected to the sovereign control of the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Everywhere on this earthly globe—as far as waves roll, winds blow, sun shines, or stars hold on their nightly courses—does the scepter of Jesus sway the destinies, and control the designs and actions of men.

"He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language obey Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed!" Daniel 7:14

Pilgrims and strangers on this earthly ball

"To God’s elect, strangers in the world." 1 Peter 1:1

"Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." 1 Peter 1:17

Our life on earth is but a vapor! We are but pilgrims and strangers on this earthly ball, mere sojourners, without fixed or settled habitation, and passing through this world as not our home or resting-place. The Apostle, therefore, bids us pass this time, whether long or short, of our earthly sojourn under the influence, and in the exercise, of reverent fear.

We are surrounded with enemies, all seeking, as it were, our life; and therefore we are called upon to move with great caution, knowing how soon we may slip and fall, and thus wound our own consciences, grieve our friends, gratify our enemies, and bring upon ourselves a cloud of darkness which may long hover over our souls.

Our life here below is not one of ease and quiet—but a warfare, a conflict, a race, a wrestling not with flesh and blood alone, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to dread ourselves more than anything or anybody else, and to view our flesh as our greatest enemy!

"Dear friends, I urge you, as pilgrims and strangers in the world, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against your soul." 1 Peter 2:11 In this scene of confusion and distraction

"The Spirit helps us in our infirmities. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Romans 8:26

"We do not know what we ought to pray for." How often do we find and feel this to be our case. Darkness covers our mind; ignorance pervades our soul; unbelief vexes our spirit; guilt troubles our conscience; a crowd of evil imaginations, or foolish or worse than foolish wanderings distract our thoughts; Satan hurls in his fiery darts thick and fast; a dense cloud is spread over the mercy seat;

infidelity whispers its vile suggestions, until, amid all this chaos, such confusion and bondage prevail that words seem idle breath, and prayer to the God of heaven but empty mockery.

In this scene of confusion and distraction, when all seems going to the wreck, how kind, how gracious is it for the blessed Spirit to come, as it were, to the rescue of the poor bewildered saint, and to teach him how to pray and what to pray for.

He is therefore said "to help us in our infirmities," for these evils of which we have been speaking are not willful, deliberate sins, but wretched infirmities of the flesh. He helps, then, our infirmities . . .

by subduing the power and prevalence of unbelief;

by commanding in the mind a solemn calm;

by rebuking and chasing away Satan and his fiery darts;

by awing the soul with a reverential sense

of the power and presence of God;

by presenting Jesus before our eyes and

drawing forth faith upon His Person and work;

and, above all, by Himself interceding for us and in us "with groans that words cannot express."

When the soul is favored thus to pray, its petitions are a spiritual sacrifice, and its cries enter the ears of the Lord Almighty, for "He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will." Romans 8:27

That is what some of you were!

The Holy Spirit undertakes to sanctify the objects of the Father’s eternal choice, and of the Son’s redeeming death.

Sanctification is as needful, as indispensable for the Church's salvation, as redemption!

For O! how low was the Church sunk in the Adam fall! The image of God, in which she was created—how defaced and as if blotted out! Death spreading itself with fatal effect over her every mental and bodily faculty! Sin, like a hideous leprosy, infecting her to the very heart's core! A thousand base lusts plunging her deeper and deeper into a sea of guilt and crime! Enmity against God boiling up in waves of ceaseless rebellion! Satan tyrannizing over her with cruel sway, sometimes drawing and sometimes driving, but by one or the other dragging her without hope or help towards the brink of the bottomless pit!

Hear that bold blasphemer!

See that drunken, raving prostitute!

Look at that murderer with his blood-red hand stealing off from his mangled victim!

Or, if you shrink from such sounds and such sights, picture to your imagination the vilest wretch who ever disgraced human nature—and you see in that portrait the features of the Church as implicated in the Adam fall—and sunk into original and actual transgression!

What a work, then, was undertaken by that most gracious and condescending Spirit, who solemnly pledged Himself, in the eternal covenant, to sanctify such wretches, and to fit and frame them to be partakers of holiness, and live forever in God's spotless presence!

It were easier for the wolf to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard to lie down with the sheep—than for ungodly sinners, unwashed, unregenerated, unsanctified, to dwell forever before the throne of God and of the Lamb!

But O, the wonders of wisdom, grace, and love!

Sinners, the vilest sinners, the worst of wretches, the basest of mortals—can and will enter through the gates into the holy city!

Paul, having enumerated some of the vilest crimes which stain human nature and sink it below the beasts that perish, says, "And that is what some of you were! But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11

To be washed and sanctified is as needful, as indispensable as to be justified.

Hidden treasure!

"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long!" Psalms 119:97

"Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold!" Psalms 119:127

"Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight!" Psalms 119:111

To a spiritual mind, sweet and soul-rewarding is the searching of the Word as for hidden treasure.

No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit . . .

of prayer and meditation,

of separation from the world,

of holy fear,

of a desire to know the will of God and do it,

of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity,

to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which are stored up in the Scriptures; and this, not to furnish the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the bread of life!

Truth, received in the love and power of it . . .

informs and establishes the judgment,

softens and melts the heart,

warms and draws upward the affections,

makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender,

is the food of faith,

is the strength of hope,

is the mainspring of love.

"My child, listen to Me and treasure My instructions. Search for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure!" Proverbs 2:1, Proverbs 2:4

The kingdom of Christ

"The kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21

A true experimental knowledge of Christ as Lord and King, has a holy sanctifying influence over a believer’s heart and life!

That Christ may reign and rule in the heart, there must be a previous breaking to pieces of all other authority and power . . .

the reign of sin must give way to the reign of grace;

idols must be dethroned;

rivals banished;

lusts subdued;

the flesh mortified and crucified;

the old man put off, the new man put on.

Pride and self-righteousness, unbelief and infidelity, hypocrisy and vain confidence, carnality and worldly mindedness, sin and self in all their various shapes and forms, must be smitten as with a deadly blow, and scattered to the winds of heaven!

This fall and ruin of self, makes way for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in the heart. Jesus reveals Himself to the soul, thus broken and humbled, as its Lord and King.

But who is sufficient for these things? Who will pluck out his own right eye, or cut off his own right hand? Who will drive the nails of crucifixion into his own quivering flesh? No one! The Lord, then, must do it all for and in us by His Spirit and grace.

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord Almighty. Zechariah 4:6

It has an influence over the life

"When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which effectually works in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Where God's word effectually works in the heart, it has an influence over the life. It . . .

separates from the world and the spirit of it;

keeps the consciences alive and tender in the fear of God;

produces uprightness and integrity of conduct;

extends its influence to the various relationships of life;

subdues pride, covetousness, and selfishness;

softens and meekens the spirit;

gives tender feelings and gracious affections;

fosters prayer, meditation, and spirituality of mind; and

makes itself manifest in the life, walk, and conversation.

The believer's rule of life

Were there no precepts in the New Testament, we would be without an inspired rule of life, without an authoritative guide for our walk and conduct before the Church and the world. We rightly discard and reject the 'law of Moses' as the believer's rule of life.

What, then, is our rule? Are we a set of lawless wretches who may live as we desire, according to the libelous charge of the enemies of truth? God forbid! We have a divine, authoritative rule of life, a code of directions of the amplest, fullest, minutest character, intended and sufficient to regulate and control every thought, word, and action of our lives; and all flowing from the eternal wisdom and will of the Father, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son, and inspired and revealed by the Holy Spirit.

When, then, it is thrown in our teeth that, by discarding the 'law of Moses' as our rule of life, we prove ourselves licentious, lawless Antinomians; this is our answer, and let God and His word decide whether it be not a sufficient one. We have a rule of life as far exceeding the 'law of Moses' as the new covenant

of grace and truth—exceeds and outshines the old covenant of works; and as much as the ministration of the Spirit, of life, and of righteousness—excels in glory the ministration of the letter, of death, and of condemnation. (2 Corinthians 3:6-11)

The gospel, not the Mosaic law, is the believer's rule of life.

In a word, the precepts of the New Testament, in all their fullness, minuteness, and comprehensiveness, are the believer's rule of life.

Is any spot too low for me to creep into and lie in?

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." (1 Peter 5:6.) I am here directed and enjoined to humble myself under the mighty hand of God. But can I do so? No, I cannot! I may make the attempt. I may fall on my knees, confess my sins, put my mouth in the dust—at least do all this in words. But can I produce in my soul . . .

that solemn humbling of my whole spirit before God,

that self-loathing,

that self-abhorrence,

that brokenness and contrition of heart,

that lying at His feet with weeping and supplications,

that giving up of myself into His hands,

without which all my humbling of myself is but lip service?

No! I can do none of these things! I am so thoroughly destitute and helpless that I cannot produce one grain of real humility in my own soul.

But let the Holy Spirit graciously work upon my heart; let Him fill me with a deep sense of the mighty hand of God over me and under me; let Him humble me in my inmost soul as the very chief of sinners; let my heart be broken and my spirit made contrite under a sight of my sins; and a sight, too, of the life and sufferings and death of my dear Redeemer—how then, can I not humble myself under the mighty hand of God?

Is any spot too low for me to creep into and lie in?

Where are my pride and self-righteousness now?

Does not sweet humility fill and possess my soul?

All doctrine, all experience, all precept

All doctrine, all experience, all precept center, as one grand harmonious whole, in the glorious Person of the Son of God. From Him they all come; to Him they all flow.

Severed from Him . . .

doctrine is seen to be but a withered branch;

experience but a delusive dream;

precept but a legal service.

But His light enlightening, His life quickening, His power attending the word of His grace—doctrine is seen to be no longer doctrine dry and dead, but glorious truth; experience to be not a mere matter of fluctuating feeling, but a blessed reality, as the very kingdom of God set up with a divine power in the heart; and obedience not a legal duty, but a high, holy, and acceptable service.

Gospel fruit

"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit." Matthew 12:33

Gospel fruit can only grow upon a gospel tree, and thus the fruits of a holy and godly life must spring out of the divine operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.

Chapter 132

09.01. PEARLS FROM PHILPOT

PEARLS FROM PHILPOT Man’s religion & God’s religion

Man’s religion is to build up the creature. God’s religion is to throw the creature down in the dust of self-abasement, and to glorify Christ.

What a mystery are you!

"So I find this law at work—When I want to do good, evil is right there with me." Romans 7:21

Are you not often a mystery to yourself?

Warm one moment—cold the next!

Abasing yourself one hour—exalting yourself the following!

Loving the world, full of it, steeped up to your head in it today—crying, groaning, and sighing for a sweet manifestation of the love of God tomorrow!

Brought down to nothingness, covered with shame and confusion, on your knees before you leave your room—filled with pride and self importance before you have got down stairs!

Despising the world, and willing to give it all up for one taste of the love of Jesus when in solitude—trying to grasp it with both hands when in business!

What a mystery are you!

Touched by love—and stung with hatred!

Possessing a little wisdom—and a great deal of folly!

Earthly minded—and yet having the affections in heaven!

Pressing forward—and lagging behind!

Full of sloth—and yet taking the kingdom with violence!

And thus the Spirit, by a process which we may feel but cannot adequately describe—leads us into the mystery of the two natures perpetually struggling and striving against each other in the same bosom. So that one man cannot more differ from another, than the same man differs from himself.

But the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is this—that our carnal mind undergoes no alteration, but maintains a perpetual war with grace. And thus, the deeper we sink in self abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ, and the blacker we are in our own view—the more lovely does Jesus appear.

What stupid blockheads!

"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. Matthew 15:16

What lessons we need day by day to teach us anything aright, and how it is for the most part, "line upon line, line upon line—here a little, and there a little." O . . .

what slow learners!

what dull, forgetful scholars!

what ignoramuses!

what stupid blockheads!

what stubborn pupils!

Surely no scholar at a school, old or young, could learn so little of natural things as we seem to have learned of spiritual things after . . .

so many years instruction,

so many chapters read,

so many sermons heard, so many prayers put up,

so much talking about religion.

How small, how weak is the amount of growth—compared with all we have read and heard and talked about!

But it is a mercy that the Lord saves whom He will save—and that we are saved by free grace—and free grace alone!

Take me as I am with all my sin and shame

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." Jeremiah 17:14

Here is this sin! Save me from it!

Here is this snare! Break it to pieces!

Here is this lust! Lord, subdue it!

Here is this temptation! Deliver me out of it!

Here is my proud heart! Lord, humble it!

Here is my unbelieving heart! Take it away, and give me faith; give me submission to Your mind and will.

Take me as I am with all my sin and shame and work in me everything well pleasing in Your sight.

Nothing but a huge clod of dust

"Set your affection on things above—not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Everything upon earth, as viewed by the eyes of the Majesty of heaven—is base and paltry.

Earth is after all, nothing but a huge clod of dust, and as such, as insignificant in the eyes of its Maker as the small dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket.

What, then, are . . .

its highest objects,

its loftiest aims,

its grandest pursuits,

its noblest employments,

in the sight of Him who inhabits eternity; but base and worthless?

Vanity is stamped on all earth's attainments.

All earthly pursuits and high accomplishments . . .

wealth,

rank,

learning,

power, or

pleasure,

end in death!

The breath of God's displeasure soon lays low in the grave all that is rich and mighty, high and proud.

But that effectual work of grace on the heart, whereby the chosen vessels of mercy are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, calls them out of . . .

those low, groveling pursuits,

those earthly toys,

those base and sensual lusts in which other men seek at once their happiness and their ruin.

How can they escape?

"He will keep the feet of His saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

The Lord sees His poor scattered pilgrims traveling through a valley of tears—journeying through a waste-howling wilderness—a path beset with baits, traps, and snares in every direction.

How can they escape?

Why, the Lord 'keeps their feet'. He carries them through every rough place—as a tender parent carries a little child. When about to fall—He graciously lays His everlasting arms underneath them. And when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip—He mercifully upholds them from

falling altogether.

But do you think that He has not different ways for different feet? The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike—and will He cause all His people to walk in precisely the same path? No. We have . . .

each our path,

each our troubles,

each our trials,

each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet.

And the wisdom of the all-wise God is shown by His eyes being in every place—marking the footsteps of every pilgrim—suiting His remedies to meet their individual case and necessity—appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good—watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of His

affection were bent on one individual—and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm!

God will meet all your needs

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Php 4:19

Until we are brought into the depths of poverty, we shall never know nor value Christ’s riches.

If, then, you are a child of God, a poor and needy soul, a tempted and tried believer in Christ, "God will meet all your needs."

They may be very great.

It may seem to you, sometimes, as though there were not upon all the face of the earth such a wretch as you—as though there never could be a child of God in your state . . .

so dark,

so stupid,

so blind and ignorant,

so proud and worldly,

so presumptuous and hypocritical,

so continually backsliding after idols,

so continually doing things that you know are hateful in God’s sight.

But whatever your need be—it is not beyond the reach of divine supply! And the deeper your need, the more is Jesus glorified in supplying it.

Do not say then, that . . .

your case is too bad,

your needs are too many,

your perplexities too great,

your temptations too powerful.

No case can be too bad!

No temptations can be too powerful!

No sin can be too black!

No perplexity can be too hard!

No state in which the soul can get, is beyond the reach of the almighty and compassionate love, that burns in the breast of the Redeemer! That sympathizing, merciful, feeling, tender, and compassionate heart

"For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15

The child of God, spiritually taught and convinced, is deeply sensible of his infirmities. Yes, that he is encompassed with infirmities—that he is nothing else but infirmities. And therefore the great High Priest to whom he comes as a burdened sinner—to whom he has recourse in the depth of his extremity—and at whose feet he falls overwhelmed with a sense of his helplessness, sin, misery, and guilt—is so suitable to him as one able to sympathize with his infirmities.

We would, if left to our own conceptions, naturally imagine that Jesus is too holy to look down in compassion on a filthy, guilty wretch like ourselves.

Surely, surely, He will spurn us from His feet. Surely, surely, His holy eyes cannot look upon us in our . . .

blood,

guilt,

filth,

wretchedness,

misery,

and shame.

Surely, surely, He cannot bestow . . .

one heart’s thought,

one moment’s sympathy,

or feel one spark of love towards those who are so unlike Him.

Nature, sense, and reason would thus argue, "I must be holy—perfectly holy—for Jesus to love; I must be pure—perfectly pure—spotless and sinless, for Jesus to think of. But . . .

that I, a sinful, guilty, defiled wretch;

that I, encompassed with infirmities;

that I, whose heart is a cage of unclean birds;

that I, stained and polluted with a thousand iniquities;

that I can have any inheritance in Him—or that He can have any love or compassion towards me—nature, sense, reason, and human religion in all its shapes and forms, revolts from the idea."

It is as though Jesus specially address Himself to the poor, burdened child of God who feels his infirmities, who cannot boast of his own wisdom, strength, righteousness, and consistency—but is all weakness and helplessness. It seems as if He would address Himself to the case of such a helpless wretch—and pour a sweet cordial into his bleeding conscience.

We, the children of God—we, who each knows his own plague and his own sore—we, who carry about with us day by day a body of sin and death, that makes us lament, sigh, and groan—we, who know painfully what it is to be encompassed with infirmities—we, who come to His feet as being nothing and having nothing but sin and woe—"we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities," but One who carries in His bosom that . . .

sympathizing,

merciful,

feeling,

tender, and

compassionate heart.

Why are you cast down, O my soul?

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God." Psalms 42:11

Do you forget, O soul, that the way to heaven is a very strait and narrow path—too narrow for you to carry your sins in it with you?

God sees it good that you should be cast down.

You were getting very proud, O soul.

The world had gotten hold of your heart.

You were seeking great things for yourself.

You were secretly roving away from the Lord.

You were too much lifted up in SELF.

The Lord has sent you these trials and difficulties and allowed these temptations to fall upon you, to bring you down from your state of false security.

There is reason therefore, even to praise God for being cast down, and for being so disturbed.

How this opens up parts of God’s Word which you never read before with any feeling.

How it gives you sympathy and communion with the tried and troubled children of God.

How it weans and separates you from dead professors.

How it brings you in heart and affection, out of the world that lies in wickedness.

And how it engages your thoughts, time after time, upon the solemn matters of eternity—instead of being a prey to every idle thought and imagination, and tossed up and down upon a sea of vanity and folly.

But, above all, when there is a sweet response from the Lord, and the power of divine things is inwardly felt, in enabling us to hope in God, and to praise His blessed name—then we see the benefit of being cast down and so repeatedly and continually disturbed.

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God." Psalms 42:11

Treasure in earthen vessels

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

Do not be surprised if you feel that in yourself you are but an earthen vessel—if you are made deeply and daily sensible of your frail body.

Do not be surprised . . .

if your clay house is often tottering;

if sickness sometimes assails your mortal tabernacle;

if in your flesh there dwells no good thing;

if your soul often cleaves to the dust; and

if you are unable to retain a sweet sense of God’s goodness and love.

Do not be surprised nor startled . . .

at the corruptions of your depraved nature;

at the depth of sin in your carnal mind;

at the vile abominations which lurk and work in your deceitful and desperately wicked heart.

Bear in mind that it is the will of God that this heavenly treasure which makes you rich for eternity, should be lodged in an earthen vessel.

We have ever to feel our native weakness—and that without Christ we can do nothing—that we may

be clothed with humility, and feel ourselves the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints.

We thus learn to prize the heights, breadths, lengths, and depths of the love of Christ, who stooped so low to raise us up so high!

All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings The very trials and afflictions, and the sore temptations through which God’s family pass, all eventually endear Christ to them. And depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will sooner or later, in your travels through this wilderness, find your need of Jesus as "able to save to the uttermost."

There will be such things in your heart, and such feelings in your mind—the temptations you will meet with will be such—that nothing short of a Savior that is able to save to the uttermost can save you out of your desperate case and felt circumstances as utterly lost and helpless. This a great point to come to. All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings that do not end here are valueless—because they lead the soul away from God. But the convictions, the trials, the temptations, the strippings, the emptyings, that bring us to this spot—that we have nothing, and can do nothing, but the Lord alone must do it all—these have a blessed effect, because they eventually make Jesus very near and dear unto us.

No fear!

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:18

Those who have every reason to fear as to their eternal state before God, have for the most part, no fear at all. They are secure, and free from doubt and fear.

The depths of human hypocrisy, the dreadful lengths to which profession may go, the deceit of the carnal heart, the snares spread for the unwary feet, the fearful danger of being deceived at the last; these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin.

As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction—they are glad to be deceived!

God does not see fit to disturb their quiet. He has no purpose of mercy towards them; they are not subjects of His kingdom; they are not objects of His love.

He therefore leaves them carnally secure, as in a dream—from which they will not awake until the day of judgment.

These difficulties . . .

"From all your idols will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

When there are no crosses, temptations, or trials, a man is sure to go out after and cleave to idols.

It matters not what experience he has had. If once he ceases to be plagued and tried, he will be setting up his household gods in the secret chambers of his heart.

Profit or pleasure, self-indulgence or self-gratification, will surely, in one form or another, engross his thoughts, and steal away his heart.

Nor is there anything too trifling or insignificant to become an idol. Whatever is meditated on preferably to God—whatever is desired more than He—whatever more interests us, pleases us, occupies our waking hours, or is more constantly in our mind—becomes an idol, and a source of sin.

It is not the magnitude of the idol, but its existence as an object of worship—that constitutes idolatry. I have seen some 'Burmese idols' not much larger than my hand; and I have seen some 'Egyptian idols' weighing many tons. But both were equally idols—and the comparative size had nothing to do with the question.

So spiritually, an idol is not to be measured by its size, or its relative importance or non-importance. A flower may be as much an idol to one man, as a chest full of gold to another.

If you watch your heart, you will see idols rising and setting all day long, nearly as thickly as the stars by night.

But God sends . . .

trials,

difficulties,

temptations,

besetments,

losses,

afflictions,

to pull down these idols—or rather to pull away our hearts from them.

These difficulties . . .

pull us out of fleshly ease,

make us cry for mercy,

pull down all rotten props,

hunt us out of false refuges, and

strip us of vain hopes and delusive expectations.

Idolatry!

"They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Nothing is too small or too insignificant which, at times, may not be an idol.

What is an idol? Something my carnal mind loves.

How may I know whether my carnal mind loves it? When we think of it, and are very much pleased with it. We pet it, love and fondle it, dallying and playing with it, like a mother with her babe. See how she takes the little thing and gazes at it. Her eyes are fixed on it—she dotes upon it because she loves it. Thus we may know an idol if we examine our own hearts—by what our imagination, desires and secret thoughts are going out after.

Instead of being spiritually minded, having his heart and affections in heaven, he has something in his mind which it is going out after—something or other laying hold of the affections.

The child of God has, more or less, all these evil propensities working within. There is idolatry in every man's heart. How deep this idolatry is rooted in a man's heart! How it steals upon his soul! Whatever is indulged in—how it creeps over him, until it gets such power that it becomes master.

A man does not know himself—if he does not know what power this idolatry has over him.

None but God can make the man know it—and when the Lord delivers him, he then turns to God and says, "What a vile wretch I have been! What a monster to go after these idols, loving this thing, and that. A wretch—a monster of iniquity, the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the face of God's earth—for my wicked heart to go out after these idols!"

When the soul is brought down to a sense of its vileness and loathsomeness—and God's patience and forbearance—it turns to God from idols, to serve the only living and true God, who pardons the idolater.

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings, mysterious changes, and ever-varying exercises of his soul, the true Christian becomes established in a deep experience of . . .

his own folly and God's wisdom,

his own weakness and Christ's strength,

his own sinfulness and the Lord's goodness,

his own backslidings and the Spirit's recoveries,

his own base ingratitude and Jehovah's patience,

the aboundings of sin and the super-aboundings of grace.

He thus becomes daily more and more confirmed in . . .

the vanity of the creature,

the utter helplessness of man,

the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of the human heart,

the sovereignty of distinguishing grace,

the fewness of heaven-taught ministers,

the scanty number of living souls,

and the great rareness of true religion.

Wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it—but only wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither soothed with ointment." Isaiah 1:5-6

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved.

The will chooses evil.

The affections cleave to earthly things.

The memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good.

The judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces mindless or wrong decisions.

The conscience, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence.

When all these 'master faculties of the mind' are so drunken and disorderly—need we wonder that the bodily members are a godless, rebellious crew?

Lusts call out for gratification.

Unbelief and infidelity murmur.

Tempers growl and mutter.

Every bad passion strives hard for the mastery.

O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose, have filled earth with misery, and hell with victims; which deluged the world with the flood—burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—and are ripening the world for the final conflagration!

Every sin which . . .

has made this fair earth a 'present hell';

has filled the air with groans; and

has drenched the ground with blood;

dwells in your heart and mine!

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the Spirit of God—we feel indeed to be of all men most sinful and miserable—and of all most guilty, polluted, and vile. But it is this—and nothing but this—which cuts to pieces our 'fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and strength'—which slays our delusive hopes—and lays us low at the footstool of mercy—without one good thought, word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge.

It is this which brings the soul to this point— that if saved, it can only be saved by the free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender compassion of Almighty God.

The wilderness wanderer

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Psalms 107:4

The true Christian finds this world to be a wilderness.

There is no change in the world itself.

The change is in the man’s heart.

The wilderness wanderer thinks it altered—a different world from what he has hitherto known . . .

his friends,

his own family,

the employment in which he is daily engaged,

the general pursuits of men—

their cares and anxieties,

their hopes and prospects,

their amusements and pleasures, and

what I may call ’the general din and whirl of life’,

all seem to him different to what they were—and for a time perhaps he can scarcely tell whether the

change is in them, or in himself.

This however is the prominent and uppermost feeling in his mind—that he finds himself, to his surprise—a wanderer in a world which has changed altogether its appearance to him. The fair, beautiful world, in which was all his happiness and all his home—has become to him a dreary wilderness.

Sin has been fastened in its conviction on his conscience. The Holy Spirit has taken the veil of unbelief and ignorance off his heart. He now sees the world in a wholly different light–and instead of a paradise it has become a wilderness—for sin, dreadful sin, has marred all its beauty and happiness.

It is not because the world itself has changed that the Christian feels it to be a wilderness—but because he himself has changed.

There is nothing in this world which can really gratify or satisfy the true Christian. What once was to him a happy and joyous world has now become a barren wilderness.

The scene of his former . . .

pursuits,

pleasures,

habits,

delights,

prospects,

hopes,

anticipations of profit or happiness—

is now turned into a barren wasteland.

He cannot perhaps tell how or why the change has taken place, but he feels it—deeply feels it. He may try to shake off his trouble and be a little cheerful and happy as he was before—but if he gets a little imaginary relief, all his guilty pangs come back upon him with renewed strength and increased violence.

God means to make the world a wilderness to every child of His, that he may not find his happiness in it, but be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth.

Temptation

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." 2 Peter 2:9

Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to be delivered from the power of a temptation—until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it.

But when we really feel the burden of a temptation; when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it—when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it—when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart, beseeching Him to deliver us from it—I believe, that the Lord will, sooner or later, either remove that temptation entirely in His providence or by His grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil.

As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "Their heart is divided—now shall they be found faulty" (Hosea 10:2)—as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes—"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways;" as long as we are hankering after the temptation, casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue; and though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away, there is . . .

no hearty cry,

nor sigh,

nor spiritual breathing of our soul,

that God would remove it from us.

But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted; and cry to Him that He would—for His honor and for our soul's good—take the temptation away, or dull and deaden its power—sooner or later the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those temptations, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

Idling life away like an idiot or a madman

When one is spiritually reborn, he sees at one and the same moment . . .

God and self,

justice and guilt,

power and helplessness,

a holy law and a broken commandment,

eternity and time,

the purity of the Creator, and

the filthiness of the creature.

And these things he sees—not merely as declared in the Bible—but as revealed in himself as personal realities, involving all his happiness or all his misery in time and in eternity. Thus it is with him as though a new existence had been communicated, and as if for the first time he had found there was a God!

It is as though all his days he had been asleep, and were now awakened—asleep upon the top of a mast, with the raging waves beneath—as if all his past life were a dream, and the dream were now at an end. He has been . . .

hunting butterflies,

blowing soap bubbles,

fishing for minnows,

picking daisies,

building houses of cards, and

idling life away like an idiot or a madman.

He had been perhaps wrapped up in a religious profession—advanced even to the office of a deacon, or mounted in a pulpit. He had learned to talk about Christ, and election, and grace, and fill his mouth with the language of Zion.

But what did he experimentally know of these things? Nothing, absolutely nothing!

Ignorant of his own ignorance (of all kinds of ignorance the worst)—he thought himself rich,and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing—and knew not that he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. This wily devil!

What a foe to one’s peace is one’s own spirit! What shall I call it? It is often an infernal spirit. Why? Because it bears the mark of Satan upon it.

The pride of our spirit, the presumption of our spirit, the hypocrisy of our spirit, the intense selfishness of our spirit, are often hidden from us.

This wily devil, SELF, can wear such masks and assume such forms!

This serpent, SELF, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances—that it is often hidden from ourselves.

Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear? We all have our enemies. But who is our greatest enemy?

He whom you carry in your own bosom—your daily, hourly, and unmovable companion, who entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart—who . . .

sometimes puffs up with pride,

sometimes inflames with lust,

sometimes inflates with presumption, and

sometimes works under pretend humility and fleshly holiness.

God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let SELF, (which is but another word for the creature,) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified.

To bathe in the ocean of endless bliss!

"Blessed are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, ("weeping") they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion." Psalms 84:5-7

Every living soul that has been experimentally taught his lost condition—that has known something of a resting place in Christ—that has turned his back upon both the world and the professing church—and gone weeping Zionward, that he may . . .

live in Jesus

feel His power,

taste His love,

know His blood,

rejoice in His grace;

every such soul shall, like Israel of old, be borne safely through this waste howling wilderness—shall be carried through this valley of tears—and taken to enjoy eternal bliss and glory in the presence of Jesus—to bathe in the ocean of endless bliss! Your eyes will see the King in His beauty!

"Your eyes will see the King in His beauty!" Isaiah 33:17

Where in heaven or on earth can there be found such a lovely Object as the Son of God? If you have never seen any beauty in Jesus . . .

you have never seen Jesus,

He has never revealed Himself to you,

you never had a glimpse of His lovely face,

nor a sense of His presence,

nor a word from His lips,

nor a touch from His hand.

But if you have seen Him by the eye of faith—and He has revealed Himself to you even in a small measure—you have seen a beauty in Him beyond all other beauties, for it is . . .

a holy beauty,

a divine beauty,

the beauty of His heavenly grace,

the beauty of His uncreated and eternal glory.

How beautiful and glorious does He show Himself to be in His atoning blood and dying love. Even as sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and as hanging in torture and agony upon Calvary's cross—faith can see a beauty in the glorious Redeemer, even in the lowest depths of ignominy and shame!

"How is your Beloved better than others?" "My Beloved is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" Song of Solomon 5:9-10 Can the Ethiopian change his skin?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 13:23

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin—and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

The soul is proud—and needs to be humbled.

The soul is careless—and needs to be awakened.

The soul is alive—and needs to be killed.

The soul is full—and requires to be emptied.

The soul is whole—and needs to be wounded.

The soul is clothed—and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous,

self-seeking,

buried deep in worldliness and carnality,

utterly blind and ignorant,

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit,

and enmity.

It hates all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element.

To make man the direct opposite of what he originally is . . .

to make him love God—instead of hating Him;

to make him fear God—instead of mocking Him;

to make him obey God—instead of rebelling against Him;

to make him to tremble at His dreadful majesty—

instead of defiantly charging against Him;

to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change—requires the implantation of a new nature by the immediate hand of God Himself!

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 13:23

That Heavenly Teacher

We do not learn that we are sinners merely by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought—I might say, burnt into us.

Nor will anyone sincerely and spiritually cry for mercy—until sin is spiritually felt and known . . .

in its misery,

in its dominion,

in its guilt,

in its entanglements,

in its wiles and allurements,

in its filth and pollution, and

in its condemnation.

Where the Holy Spirit works, He kindles . . .

sighs,

groans,

supplications,

wrestlings, and pleadings

to know Christ, feel His love, taste the efficacy of His atoning blood, and embrace Him as all our salvation and all our desire.

And though there may, and doubtless will be, much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and apparent carelessness often felt—still that heavenly Teacher will revive His work—though often by painful methods—nor will He let the quickened soul rest short of a personal and experimental enjoyment of Christ and His glorious salvation.

Preserving grace before regeneration

"To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ."

Jude 1:1

What a mercy it is for God’s people that before they have a ’vital union’ with Christ—before they are grafted into Him experimentally—they have an ’eternal, immanent union’ with Him before all worlds. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world . . .

at such a time,

at such a place,

from such parents,

under such circumstances,

as God has appointed.

It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their lives are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are effectually called.

They cannot die until God has brought about a vital union with Christ!

Whatever sickness they may pass through—whatever injuries they may be exposed to—whatever perils assault them on sea or land—die they will not, die they cannot; until God’s purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of His love.

Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them until the appointed time and spot, when "the God of all grace," according to His eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls,

and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

Free!

"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:36

To be made free implies a liberty from the WORLD and the spirit of covetousness in the heart. If we were to follow into their shops some who talk much of 'gospel liberty', we might find that the world's fetter had not been struck off their heart—that they had a 'golden' chain, though invisible to their own eyes, very closely wrapped round their heart.

And there is a being made free from the power of SIN. I greatly fear, if we could follow into their holes and corners, and secret chambers, many who prattle about gospel liberty, we would find that sin had not yet lost its hold upon them, that there was some secret or open sin that entangled them, that there was . . .

some lust,

some passion,

some evil temper,

some wretched pride or other,

that wound its fetters very close round their heart.

And also there is a being made free from SELF . . .

proud self,

presumptuous self,

self-exalting self, flesh-pleasing self,

hypocritical self,

self in all its various shapes and turns,

self in all its crooked hypocrisy and windings.

"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

These fugitive, transitory things

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

There is a reality in true religion, and indeed, rightly viewed, a reality in nothing else. For every other thing passes away like a dream of the night, and comes to an end like a tale that is told. Now you cannot say of a thing that passes away and comes to an end—that it is real. It may have the appearance of reality—when in fact it is but a shadow.

Money, jewels, pictures, books, furniture, securities, are transitory. Money may be spent, jewels be lost, books be burnt, furniture decay, pictures vanish by time and age, securities be stolen.

Nothing is real but that which has an abiding substance.

Health decays, strength diminishes, beauty flees the cheek, sight and hearing grow dim, the mind itself gets feeble, riches make to themselves wings and flee away, children die, friends depart, old age creeps on, and life itself comes to a close.

These fugitive, transitory things are then mere shadows. There is no substance, no enduring substance in them. They are for time, and are useful for a time. Like our daily food and clothing, house and home—they support and solace us in our journey through life. But there they stop—when life ends they end with it.

But real religion—and by this I understand the work of God upon the soul—abides in death and after death, goes with us through the dark valley, and lands us safe in a blessed eternity. It is, therefore, the only thing in this world of which we can say that it is real.

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17 A sad motley mixture

(The following is an excerpt from Philpot's letter to a church which desired him to come as their pastor)

"I am less than the least of all God's people." Ephesians 3:8

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the worst." 1 Timothy 1:15

Many are foolishly apt to think that a minister is more spiritual than anyone else. But I am daily more and more sensible of the desperate wickedness of my deceitful heart, and my miserable ruined state as a sinner by nature and by practice. I feel utterly unworthy of the name of a Christian, and to be ranked among the followers of the Lamb.

I have no desire to palm myself off on any church, as though I were anything. I am willing to take a low place.

The more you see of me, you will be sure to find out more of my infirmities, failings, waywardness, selfishness, obstinacy, and evil temper. I am carnal, very proud, very foolish in imagination, very slothful, very worldly, dark, stupid, blind, unbelieving and ignorant.

I cannot but confess that I am a strange compound—a sad motley mixture of all the most hateful and abominable vices that rise up within me, and face me at every turn. When You shall enlarge my heart.

"I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart." Psalms 119:32

The Word of God is full of precepts—but we are totally unable to perform them in our own strength. We cannot, without divine assistance, perform the precept . . .

with a single eye to the glory of God,

from heavenly motives, and

in a way acceptable to the Lord,

without special power from on high.

We need an extraordinary power to be put forth in our hearts—a special work of the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to spiritually fulfill in the slightest degree, the least of God’s commandments.

None but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people. None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godwards, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things—which is the

plague and burden of a God-fearing soul.

When the Lord is absent, when He hides His lovely face, when He does not draw near to visit and bless, the heart contracts in its own narrow compass.

But when the Lord is pleased to favor the soul with His own gracious presence, and bring Himself near to the heart, His felt presence opens, enlarges, and expands the soul—so as to receive Him in all His love and grace. Our refuge!

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation—my stronghold." Psalms 18:2

On every side are hosts of enemies ever invading our souls—trampling down every good thing in our hearts—accompanied by a flying troop of temptations, doubts, fears, guilt and bondage sweeping over our soul. And we, as regards our own strength, are helpless against them.

But there is a refuge set before us in the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King in Zion, is there held up before our eyes as . . .

the Rock of our refuge,

our strong Tower,

our impregnable Fortress;

and we are encouraged by every precious promise and every gospel invitation when we are overrun and distressed by these wandering, ravaging, plundering tribes—to flee unto and find a safe refuge in Him.

"Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge." Psalms 16:1

"O Lord my God, I take refuge in You; save and deliver me from all who pursue me." Psalms 7:1

Supernatural light

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

Until, then, this supernatural light of God enters into the soul, a man has no saving knowledge of Jehovah. He may . . .

say his prayers,

read his Bible, attend preaching,

observe ordinances,

bestow all his goods to feed the poor,

or give his body to be burned;

but he is as ignorant of God as the cattle that graze in the fields!

He may—call himself a Christian, and be thought such by others—talk much about Jesus Christ, hold a sound creed—maintain a consistent profession—pray at a prayer meeting with fluency and apparent feeling, stand up in a pulpit and contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace—excel hundreds of God’s children in zeal, knowledge and conversation.

And yet, if this ray of supernatural light has never shone into his soul—he is only twofold more the child of hell than those who make no profession!

Little heathen?

(from Philpot’s biography, written by his son)

There was nothing my father mistrusted more than ’childhood piety.’ He insisted that children should never be taught or allowed to use the language of ’personal possession’ in reference to God. To sing, for instance, "Rock of Ages, cleft for ME" or, "MY Jesus".

Herein he was most logical. For by early influence and example you can train up a child to be . . .

a little patriot,

a little Catholic,

a little Calvinist, or

a little Bolshevist.

But no power on earth can make him a child of God.

He took great care that we, his children, attended the means of grace, and never missed chapel or family prayers. But he never expected us to be anything but little heathen. We had, it is true, to be well behaved little heathen. If not, we got "the stick", or its equivalent.

"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." John 1:13

My desire is . . .

to exalt the grace of God;

to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ alone;

to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and

hopelessness of man in a state of nature;

to describe the living experience of the children of God in their . . .

trials,

temptations,

sorrows,

consolations

and blessings.

And how is he lost?

"O visit me with Your salvation." Psalms 106:4

Salvation only suits the condemned—the lost. A man must be lost—utterly lost—before he can prize God's salvation.

And how is he lost? By . . .

losing all his religion,

losing all his righteousness,

losing all his strength,

losing all his confidence,

losing all his hopes,

losing all that is of the flesh;

losing it by its being taken from him,

and stripped away by the hand of God.

Wearied, torn, and half expiring

The poor sheep has gone astray; and having once left the fold, it is pretty sure to have gotten into some strange place or other. It has fallen down a rock—or has rolled into a ditch—or is hidden beneath a bush—or has crept into a cave—or is lying in some deep, distant ravine, where none but an experienced eye and hand can find it out.

Just so with the Lord's lost sheep. They get into strange places. They . . .

fall off rocks,

slip into holes,

hide among the bushes, and

sometimes creep off to die in caverns.

When the sheep has gone astray, the shepherd goes after it to find it. Here he sees a footprint; there a little lock of wool torn off by the thorns. Every nook he searches—into every corner he looks– until at last he finds the poor sheep wearied, torn, and half expiring, with scarcely strength enough to groan forth its misery. The shepherd does not beat it home, nor thrust the goad into its

back—but he gently takes it up, lays it upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing.

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin and compassed with infirmity. But I bless God that He has in some measure shown me the power of eternal things, and by free and sovereign grace stopped me in that career of vanity and sin in which, to all outward appearance, I was fast hurrying down to the chambers of death.

By the grace of God

"By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Corinthians 15:10

What but sovereign grace—rich, free and super-abounding grace—has made the difference between you and the world who cannot receive Him?

But for His divine operations upon your soul, you would still be of the world, hardening your heart against everything good and godlike, walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief and self-righteousness, until you sank down into the chambers of death! The outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God

"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6

What heart can conceive, what tongue express what the holy soul of Christ endured when "the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all?"

In the garden of Gethsemane . . .

what a load of guilt,

what a weight of sin,

what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God,

did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall

as sweat from His brow!

When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin offering) for us, He endured in His holy soul all the pangs of . . .

distress,

horror,

alarm,

misery, and

guilt that all the elect would have felt in hell forever as they would have experienced under the outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God . . .

the anguish,

the distress,

the darkness,

the condemnation,

the shame,

the guilt,

the unutterable horror.

What heart can conceive—what tongue express—the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Substitute under this agonizing experience?

Struggling against the power of sin?

How many poor souls are struggling against the power of sin, and yet never get any victory over it!

How many are daily led captive by . . .

the lusts of the flesh,

the love of the world,

and the pride of life,

and never get any victory over them!

How many fight and grapple with tears, vows, and strong resolutions against their besetting sins, who are still entangled and overcome by them again and again! Now, why is this?

Because they do not know the secret of spiritual strength against, and spiritual victory over them.

It is only by virtue of a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ—drinking into His sufferings and death—and receiving out of His fullness, that we can gain any victory over . . .

the world,

sin,

death,

or hell.

Sin is never really or effectually subdued in any other way.

It is not by legalistic strivings and earnest resolutions, vows, and tears—the vain struggle of 'religious flesh' to subdue 'sinful flesh'—that can overcome sin.

But it is by a believing acquaintance with, and a spiritual entrance into the sufferings and sorrows of the Son of God—having a living faith in Him, and receiving out of His fullness supplies of grace and strength. The anointing

"But the anointing which you have received fromHim abides in you." 1 John 2:27

All the powers of earth and hell are combined against this holy anointing, with which the children of God are so highly favored. But if God has locked up in the bosom of a saint one drop of this divine unction, that one drop is armor against . . .

all the assaults of sin,

all the attacks of Satan,

all the enmity of self, and

all the charms, pleasures, and amusements of the world.

Waves and billows of affliction may roll over the soul—but they cannot wash away this holy drop of anointing oil.

Satan may shoot a thousand fiery darts to inflame all the combustible material of our carnal mind—but all his fiery darts cannot burn up that one drop of oil which God has laid up in the depths of a broken spirit.

The world, with all its charms and pleasures, and its deadly opposition to the truth of God, may stir up waves of ungodliness against this holy anointing—but all the powers of earth combined can never extinguish that one drop which God has Himself lodged in the depths of a believer's heart.

And so it has been with all the dear saints of God. Not all their . . .

sorrows,

backslidings,

slips,

falls,

miseries, and

wretchedness,

have ever—all combined, drunk up the anointing that God has bestowed upon them. If sin could have done it—we would have sinned ourselves into hell long ago; and if the world or Satan could have destroyed it or us—they would long ago have destroyed both. If our carnal mind could have done it—it would have swept us away into floods of destruction.

But the anointing abides sure, and cannot be destroyed; and where once lodged in the soul, it is secure against all the assaults of earth, sin, and hell.

"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you." 1 John 2:27 Can I be a child of God, and be thus?

Perhaps you are a poor, tempted creature—and your daily sorrow, your continual trouble is that

you are so soon overcome—that . . .

your temper,

your lusts,

your pride,

your worldliness, and

your carnal, corrupt heart are perpetually getting the mastery.

And from this you sometimes draw bitter conclusions. You say, in the depth of your heart, "Can I be a child of God, and be thus? What mark have I of being in favor with God when I am so easily—so continually overcome?"

But the Spirit reveals Christ—taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us—applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul. It is only in this way that He overcomes all unbelief and infidelity, doubt and fear, and sweetly assures us that all is well between God and the soul.

Faith keeps eyeing the atonement—faith looks not so much to sin, as to salvation from sin—at the way

whereby sin is pardoned, overcome, and subdued. The truth shall make you free!

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!" John 8:32

To a spiritual mind, sweet and self-rewarding is the task, if task it can be called, of searching the Word as for hidden treasure. No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit of prayer and meditation, of separation from the world, of holy fear, of a desire to know the will of God and do it, of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity—to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which are stored up in the Scriptures—and this, not to furnish the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the bread of life.

Truth, received in the love and power of it . . .

informs and establishes the judgment,

softens and melts the heart,

warms and draws upward the affections,

makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender;

is the food of faith,

is the strength of hope,

is the main-spring of love.

To know the truth is to be made blessedly free . . .

free from error;

free from the vile heresies which everywhere abound;

free from presumption;

free from self-righteousness;

free from the curse and bondage of the law;

free from the condemnation of a guilty conscience;

free from a slavish fear of the opinion of men;

free from the contempt of the world;

free from the scorn of worldly professors;

free from following a multitude to do evil;

free from companionship with those who

have a name to live, but are dead.

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!" John 8:32

Sin cannot be subdued in any other way.

"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." Galatians 2:20

There is no way except by being spiritually immersed into Christ's death and life—that we can ever get a victory over our besetting sins. If, on the one hand, we have a view of a suffering Christ, and thus become immersed into His sufferings and death—the feeling, while it lasts, will subdue the power of sin.

Or, on the other hand, if we get a believing view of a risen Christ, and receive supplies of grace out of His fullness—that will lift us above sin's dominion.

If sin is powerfully working in us, we need one of these two things to subdue it.

When there is a view of the sufferings and sorrows, agonies and death of the Son of God—power comes down to the soul in its struggles against sin—and gives it a measure of holy resistance and subduing strength against it.

So, when there is a coming in of the grace and love of Christ—it lifts up the soul from the love and power of sin into a purer and holier atmosphere. Sin cannot be subdued in any other way. You must either be immersed into Christ's sufferings and death—or you must be immersed into Christ's resurrection and life. A sight of Him as a suffering God—or a view of Him as a risen Jesus—must be connected with every successful attempt to get the victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave.

You may strive, vow, and repent—and what does it all amount to? You sink deeper and deeper into sin than before. Pride, lust, and covetousness come in like a flood—and you are swamped and carried away almost before you are aware!

But if you get a view of a suffering Christ, or of a risen Christ—if you get a taste of His dying love—a drop of His atoning blood—or any manifestation of His beauty and blessedness—there comes from this spiritual immersion into His death or His life a subduing power—and this gives a victory over temptation and sin which nothing else can or will give.

Yet I believe we are often many years learning this divine secret—striving to repent and reform, and cannot; until at last by divine teaching we come to learn a little of what the Apostle meant when he said, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." And when we can get into this life of faith—this hidden life, then our affections are set on things above.

There is no use setting to work by 'legal strivings'—they only plunge you deeper in the ditch. You must get Christ into your soul by the power of God—and then He will subdue—by His smiles, blood, love, and presence—every internal foe.

Two kinds of repentance

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret—but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

There are two kinds of repentance which need to be carefully distinguished from each other, though they are often sadly confounded—evangelical repentance, and legal repentance.

Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented—but their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience—not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry judge—but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father. They neither hated their sins nor forsook them—they neither loved holiness nor sought it.

Cain went out from the presence of the Lord; Esau plotted Jacob's death; Saul consulted the witch of Endor; Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison; and Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God—that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit's gracious operations.

This repentance does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law—but from His mercy in a blessed gospel—from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross—from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence, with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it, with most hearty, sincere, and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil, and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God. Have we nothing to give to Christ?

Yes! Our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, our trials, and above all, the salvation and sanctification of our souls. And what has He to give us? What? Why . . .

everything worth having, everything worth a moment's anxious thought,

everything for time and eternity!

After you have suffered a while

"But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while—make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10

There is no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement—except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is . . .

to perfect,

to establish,

to strengthen,

and to settle it. By suffering, a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the character of Jehovah as revealed in the Scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose"—in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God’s eternal purpose—and are all tending to the good of the Church, and to God’s eternal glory.

His soul, too, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature; into the conviction that the world is but a shadow—and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped—that of all things sin is most to be dreaded—and the favor of God above all things most to be coveted—that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified—that all things are passing away—and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity.

Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home. In this scene of confusion and distraction

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for—but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Romans 8:26

"We do not know what we ought to pray for." How often do we find and feel this to be our case . . .

darkness covers our mind;

ignorance pervades our soul;

unbelief vexes our spirit;

guilt troubles our conscience;

a crowd of evil imaginations, or foolish or worse than foolish wanderings distract our thoughts;

Satan hurls in thick and fast his fiery darts;

a dense cloud is spread over the mercy-seat;

infidelity whispers its vile suggestions,

until, amid all this rabble throng, such confusion and bondage prevail that words seem idle breath, and prayer to the God of heaven but empty mockery.

In this scene of confusion and distraction, when all seems going to the wreck—how kind, how gracious is it in the blessed Spirit to come, as it were, to the rescue of the poor bewildered saint, and to teach him how to pray and what to pray for.

He is therefore said "to help our weaknesses," for these evils of which we have been speaking are not willful, deliberate sins, but wretched infirmities of the flesh. He helps, then, our infirmities—by subduing the power and prevalence of unbelief—by commanding in the mind a solemn calm—by rebuking and chasing away Satan and his fiery darts—by awing the soul with a reverential sense of the power and presence of God—by presenting Jesus before our eyes as the Mediator at the right hand of the Father—by raising up and drawing forth faith upon His Person and work, blood and righteousness—and, above all, by Himself interceding for us and in us "with groans that words cannot express." His own sore and his own afflictions

"When a prayer or plea is made by any of Your people Israel—each one aware of his own sore and his own afflictions, and spreading out his hands toward this Temple—then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." 2 Chronicles 6:29-30

The man for whom Solomon prays is he who knows and feels, painfully feels, his "own sore" and his "own afflictions"—whose heart is indeed a grief to him—whose sins do indeed trouble him.

How painful this sore often is! How it runs night and day! How full of ulcerous matter! How it shrinks from the probe!

Most of the Lord’s family have a "sore"—each some tender spot—something perhaps known to himself and to God alone—the cause of his greatest grief. It may be . . .

some secret slip he has made,

some sin he has committed,

some word he has spoken, or

some evil thing he has done.

He has been entangled, and entrapped, and cast down—and this is his grief and his sore which he feels—and that at times deeply before God.

For such Solomon prays, "then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." Yes—God alone knows the heart—He knows it completely—and sees to its very bottom.

What are we, when we have no trials?

The Lord has appointed the path of sorrow for the redeemed to walk in. Why? One purpose is to wean them from the world—another purpose is to show them the weakness of the creature—a third purpose is to make them feel the liberty and vitality of genuine godliness made manifest in their soul’s experience.

What are we, when we have no trials? Light, frothy, worldly-minded, carnal, frivolous.

We may talk of the things of God, but they are at a distance—there are . . .

no solemn feelings,

no melting sensations,

no real brokenness,

no genuine contrition,

no weeping at the divine feet,

no embracing of Christ in the arms of affection.

What can bring a man here? A few dry notions floating to and fro in his brain? That will never bring the life and power of vital godliness into a man’s heart. It must be by being ’experimentally acquainted with trouble’. When he is led into the path of tribulation, he then begins to long after, and, in God’s own time and way, he begins to drink into, the sweetness of vital godliness, made manifest in his heart by the power of God.

When affliction brings a man down, it empties him of all his high thoughts, and lays him low in his own eyes.

Spiritual poverty

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Matthew 5:5

Spiritual poverty is a miserable feeling of soul-emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the lowest hell.

To be poor in spirit, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God.

He who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings forth of heart as a needy, naked wretch—he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God—has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor.

09.02. PEARLS FROM PHILPOT cont'd

Satisfaction!

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

What a sweetness there is in the word "satisfy!"

The world cannot satisfy the child of God. Have we not tried, some of us perhaps for many years, to get some satisfaction from it?

But can wife or husband satisfy us? Can children or relatives satisfy us? Can all the world calls good or great satisfy us? Can the pleasures of sin satisfy us?

Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything that is of the creature, and of the flesh? Do we not find that there is little else but sorrow to be reaped from everything in this world? There is little else to be gathered from the world but . . .

disappointment,

dissatisfaction,

"vanity and vexation of spirit."

The poor soul looks round upon the world and the creature—upon all the occupations, amusements and relations of life—and finds all one melancholy harvest—so that all it reaps is sorrow, perplexity, and dissatisfaction.

Now when a man is brought here—to desire satisfaction, something to make him happy, something to fill up the aching void, something to bind up broken bones, bleeding wounds, and leprous sores—and after he has looked at everything—at doctrines, opinions, notions, speculations, forms, rites and ceremonies in religion—at the world with all its charms—and at self with all its varied workings, and found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch—why, then when the Lord opens up to him something of the bread of life, he finds a satisfaction in that which he never could gain from any other quarter.

And that is the reason why the Lord so afflicts his people; why some carry about with them such weak, suffering bodies; why some have so many family troubles; why others are so deeply steeped in poverty; why others have such rebellious children; and why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be the end.

It is all for one purpose—to make them miserable out of Christ—dissatisfied except with gospel food—to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy, and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds. The religion of a dead professor . . .

How different the religion of a child of God is, from the religion of a dead professor!

The religion of a dead professor . . .

begins in self, and ends in self;

begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly;

begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness;

begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation!

There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord.

But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens and sorrows—yet he never can be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory.

Everything short of that leaves him empty.

All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to . . .

feel His presence,

taste His love,

enjoy His favor,

see His glory;

nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges His people with. Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight and pierces your hand." Isaiah 36:6

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us . . .

our own strength and resolutions,

the world and the church,

sinners and saints,

friends and enemies,

have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds?

The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced

our souls.

The Lord Himself has to wean us . . .

from the world,

from friends,

from enemies,

from self,

in order to bring us to lean upon Himself; and every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon His Person, love, blood, and righteousness.

Poor, moping, dejected creatures

We are, most of us, so fettered down by . . .

the chains of time and sense,

the cares of life and daily business,

the weakness of our earthly frame,

the distracting claims of a family, and

the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature,

that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

Many of us are poor, moping, dejected creatures.

We have . . .

a variety of trials and afflictions,

a daily cross and

the continual plague of an evil heart.

We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart. As then . . .

the weary man seeks rest,

the hungry man seeks food,

the thirsty man seeks drink,

and the sick man seeks health,

so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with Him. He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side.

He makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God’s wrath, that we may hide ourselves under His justifying robe.

He puts gall and wormwood into the world’s choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from Him. No sight, short of this

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:24

We beg of the Lord, sometimes, to give us . . .

a broken heart,

a contrite spirit,

a tender conscience,

and a humble mind.

But it is only a view by faith of what the gracious Redeemer endured upon the cross, when He bore our sins in his own body with all their weight and pressure, and with all the anger of God due to them, that can really melt a hard, and break a stony heart.

No sight, short of this, can make sin felt to be hateful; bring tears of godly sorrow out of the eyes, sobs of true repentance out of the breast, and the deepest, humblest confessions before God as to what dreadful sinners and base backsliders we have been before the eyes of His infinite Purity, Majesty, and Holiness.

Oh, what hope is there for our guilty souls; what refuge from the wrath of God so justly our due; what shelter from the curse of a fiery law, except it be in the cross of Jesus?

O for a view of Him revealed to the eyes of our enlightened understanding, as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree! The penetrating light of the Spirit

"For God . . . made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." 1 John 2:20

The only saving light is the light of God shining into the soul—giving us to see and know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

A man may have the clearest light in his judgment, and yet never have the penetrating light of the Spirit producing conviction in his soul. He may have the soundest knowledge of the doctrines of grace, and see the harmonious scheme of salvation—and yet never have by divine teaching, seen a holy God, nor have ever felt the spirituality of God’s righteous law condemning him as a transgressor.

If we do not have this penetrating light of the Spirit, we shall be sure to go astray. We shall . . .

be entangled in some error,

plunge into some heresy,

imbibe some doctrine of devils,

drink into some dreadful delusion,

or fall into some dreadful sin, and

have our faith shipwrecked forever.

A false light can but wreck us on the rocks of presumption or despair. But the light of divine life in the soul is accompanied with all the graces of the Spirit. It is . . .

the light of the glory of God,

the light of Jesus' countenance,

and the light of the Spirit's teaching,

and therefore an infallible guide and guard.

And this infallible pilot will guide the soul to whom it is given safe into the harbor of endless rest and peace.

All true religion

Jesus is . . .

our sun, and without Him all is darkness;

our life, and without Him all is death;

the beginner and finisher of our faith;

the substance of our hope;

the object of our love.

It is the Spirit who quickens us . . .

to feel our need of Christ;

to seek all our supplies in Him and from Him;

to believe in Him unto everlasting life,

and thus live a life of faith upon Him.

By His . . .

secret teachings,

inward touches,

gracious smiles,

soft whispers,

sweet promises,

manifestations of Christ's glorious Person and work,

Christ's agonizing sufferings and dying love,

the Holy Spirit draws the heart up to Christ.

He thus wins our affections, and setting Christ before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One," draws out that love and affection towards Jesus which puts the world under our feet.

All true religion flows from the Spirit’s grace, presence and power. The regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit

From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible for a dead soul to . . .

believe in God,

know God,

or love God.

It must be quickened into spiritual life before it can savingly know the only true God. And thus there lies at the very threshold—in the very heart and core of the case—the absolute necessity of the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit upon the soul.

The very completeness and depth of the fall render the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as necessary, as indispensable as the redeeming work of the Son of God. This hard school of painful experience

In times of trial and darkness, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God—they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie—they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing—that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God—and that all they are and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace—the rich, free, undeserved, yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God.

They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness—and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility, that lovely, becoming garb—cease from their own strength and wisdom—and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

Many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances

"Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know Him!" Hosea 6:3

The expression, "press on," implies that there are many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances in a man’s way, which keep him back from "knowing the Lord." Now the work of the Spirit in his soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles—to lead him forward—to keep alive in him the fear of God—to strengthen him in his inner man—to drop in those hopes—to communicate that inward grace—so that he is compelled to press on.

Sometimes he seems driven, sometimes drawn, sometimes led, and sometimes carried, but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarcely knows how—he still "presses on."

His very burdens make him groan for deliverance—his very temptations cause him to cry for help—the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step—the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide—so that the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on—and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, until He sets him in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. The Christian is a marvel to himself. Carried on, and yet so secretly—worked upon, and yet so mysteriously; and yet led on, guided, and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles—that he is a miracle of mercy as he is carried on amid all . . .

difficulties,

obstacles,

trials, and

temptations. The poison fang of sin!

We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are, and what they are capable of—we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind—before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it—but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores—they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Isaiah 1:6

When the Church of God fell in Adam, she fell with a crash which broke every bone and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from head to toe.

Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed . . .

her understanding was blinded;

her conscience stupefied;

her affections alienated.

Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted.

When Adam fell into sin and temptation—sin rushed into every faculty of body and soul—and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being.

As when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent, the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot; so did the poison fang of sin penetrate into Adam’s inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown.

But it is only as sin’s desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality.

"The whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint."

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved . . .

the will chooses evil;

the affections cleave to earthly things;

the memory, like a broken sieve,

retains the bad and lets fall the good;

the judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces heedless or wrong decisions;

the conscience, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence. A penitent backslider and a forgiving God!

"And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." Luke 15:20

After a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of His dear Son, he may wander from his mercies—stray away from these choice gospel pastures—and get into a waste howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water—and yet, though half starved for poverty, has in himself no power to return.

But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place he brings him to is the mercy seat—confessing his sins and seeking mercy.

O what a meeting!

A penitent backslider and a forgiving God!

O what a meeting!

A guilty wretch drowned in tears—and a loving Father falling upon his neck and kissing him!

O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace super-abounding over all his abounding sins—and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day—and melting his heart into contrition and love!

Salvation!

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now has come the salvation." Revelation 12:10

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is "salvation."

To be saved from . . .

death and hell;

the worm which dies not;

the fire which is not quenched;

the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit;

the companionship of tormenting fiends;

all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned;

blaspheming God in unutterable woe;

an eternity of misery without hope;

and saved into . . .

heaven;

the sight of Jesus as He is;

perfect holiness and happiness;

the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints! And all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity!

What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word salvation! A peculiar people

"But you are . . .

a chosen generation,

a royal priesthood,

a holy nation,

a peculiar people." 1 Peter 2:9

May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave Himself to purify unto Himself a peculiar people . . .

a people whose thoughts are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ;

a people whose affections are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above;

a people whose prayers are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication;

a people whose sorrows are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source;

a people whose joys are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger cannot understand;

a people whose hopes are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil;

a people whose expectations are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world—but are looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God.

They make it manifest that they are a peculiar people by . . .

walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb,

taking up the cross,

denying themselves, and

living to the honor, praise, and glory of God.

Softened, broke, and melted your heart

"I drew them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love." Hosea 11:4

When God draws His people near unto Himself, it is not done in a mechanical way. They are drawn, not with cords of iron, but with the cords of kindness; not as if God laid an iron arm upon His people to drag them to Himself—whether they wished to come or not. God does not so act in a way of mechanical force.

We therefore read, "Your people shall be made willing in the day of Your power." He touches their heart with His gracious finger, and he communicates to their soul both faith and feeling. He melts, softens, and humbles their heart by a sense of His goodness and mercy—for it is His goodness, as experimentally felt and realized, which leads to repentance.

If you have ever felt any secret and sacred drawing of your soul upward to heaven—it was not compulsion, not violence, not a mechanical constraint—but an arm of pity and compassion let down into your very heart, which, touching your inmost spirit, drew it up into the bosom of God.

It was some view of His goodness, mercy, and love, with some dropping into your spirit of His pity and compassion towards you, which softened, broke, and melted your heart. You were not driven onward by being flogged and scourged, but blessedly drawn with the cords of kindness, which seemed to touch every tender feeling and enter into the very depths of your soul.

Fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand.

Truth, as it stands in the naked word of God, is lifeless and dead—and as such, has no power to communicate what it has not in itself—that is, life and power to the hearts of God’s people. It stands there in so many letters and syllables, as lifeless as the types by which they were printed.

But when the incarnate Word takes of the written word, and speaks it home into the heart and conscience of a vessel of mercy, whether in letter or substance—then He endues it with divine life—and it enters into the soul, communicating to it a life that can never die.

Eternal realities are then brought into the soul, fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand. The conscience is made alive in the fear of God; and the soul is raised up from a death in sin, to a heavenly, new, and supernatural life. When we are reduced to poverty and beggary

How often we seem not to have any real religion, or enjoy any solid comfort! How often are our minds covered with deep darkness! How often does the Lord hide Himself, so that we cannot behold Him, nor get near to Him! What a painful path is this to walk in, but how profitable!

When we are reduced to poverty and beggary, we learn to value Christ’s glorious riches.

The worse opinion we have of our own heart, and the more deceitful and desperately wicked that we find it—the more we put our trust in His faithfulness.

The more black we are in our own esteem—the more beautiful and lovely does He appear in our eyes.

As we sink—Jesus rises.

As we become feeble—He puts forth his strength.

As we come into danger—He brings deliverance.

As we get into temptation—He breaks the snare.

As we are shut up in darkness and obscurity; He causes the light of His countenance to shine.

Now it is by being led in this way, and walking in these paths, that we come rightly to know who Jesus is; and to see and feel how suitable and precious such a Savior is to our undone souls! We are needy, He has in Himself all riches.

We are hungry—He is the bread of life.

We are thirsty—He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

We are naked—and He has clothing to bestow.

We are fools—and He has wisdom to grant.

We are lost, and He speaks— "Look unto Me, and be saved."

Thus, so far from our misery shutting us out from God’s mercy—it is the only requisite for it.

So far from our guilt excluding His pardon, it is the only thing needful for it.

So far from our helplessness ruining our souls, it is the needful preparation for the manifestation of His power in our weakness.

We cannot heal our own wounds and sores. That is the very reason why He should stretch forth His arm.

It is because there is no salvation in ourselves, or in any other creature, that He says, "Look unto Me, for I am God, and there is no other." Not a grain! Not an atom!

What am I?

What are you?

Are we not filthy, polluted, and defiled?

Do not we, more or less, daily feel altogether as an unclean thing? Is not every thought of our heart altogether vile?

Does any holiness, any spirituality, any heavenly-mindedness, any purity, any resemblance to the divine image dwell in our hearts by nature?

Not a grain! Not an atom!

How then can I, a polluted sinner, ever see the face of a holy God?

How can I, a worm of earth, corrupted within and without by indwelling and committed sin, ever hope to see a holy God without shrinking into destruction?

When we view the pure and spotless holiness of Jesus imputed to His people, and view them . . .

holy in Him,

pure in Him,

without spot in Him,

how it does away with all the wrinkles of the creature, and makes them stand holy and spotless before God.

They will come with weeping

"They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back." Jeremiah 31:9

As they come, they weep. They mourn . . .

over their base backslidings,

over the many evils they have committed,

over the levity of mind which they have indulged,

over the worldliness of spirit,

over the—

pride,

presumption,

hypocrisy,

carnality,

carelessness, and

obstinacy of their heart.

They go and weep with a broken heart and softened spirit—seeking the Lord their God—seeking the secret manifestations of His mercy, the visitations of His favor, the "lifting up of the light of His countenance"— seeking after a revelation of the love of Jesus—to know Him by a spiritual discovery of Himself.

Being thus minded . . .

they seek not to establish their own righteousness;

they seek not the applause of the world;

they seek not the good opinion of professors;

they seek not the smiles of saints. But they . . .

seek the Lord their God,

seek His face day and night,

seek His favor,

seek His mercy,

seek His grace,

seek His love,

seek His glory,

seek the sweet visitations of His presence and power,

seek Him until they find Him to be their covenant God,

who heals all their backslidings. This is the saint’s inheritance!

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory." Romans 8:17

This is the especial blessedness of being a child of God: that death, which puts a final extinguisher on all the hopes and happiness of all the unregenerate—gives him the fulfillment of all his hopes and the consummation of all his happiness—for it places him in possession of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven."

In this present earthly life, we have sometimes sips and tastes of sonship, feeble indeed and interrupted; yet are they so far pledges of an inheritance to come.

But this life is only an introduction to a better. In this life we are but children—but in the life to come, we shall be put into full possession of the eternal inheritance.

And what is this? Nothing less than God Himself. "Heirs of God!" says the Apostle. God Himself is the inheritance of His people—yes, He Himself in all His glorious perfections . . .

all the love of God,

all the goodness of God,

all the holiness of God,

all His happiness, bliss, and blessedness,

all His might, majesty, and glory, in

all the blaze of one eternal, unclouded day!

This is the saint’s inheritance!

Let us press on by faith and prayer to win this eternal and glorious crown!

Savory food such as their soul loves

"For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink." John 6:55

This food is specially for the elect . . .

blood shed for their sins, and for their sins only;

righteousness brought in for them, and for them only;

love bestowed upon them, and upon them only;

promises revealed for their comfort, and for their comfort only;

an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for them, and for them only.

The elect are the only people . . .

who hunger after it,

who have an appetite for it,

who have a mouth to feed upon it,

who have a stomach to digest it.

They are the only people whose eyes

are really open to see what "food" is.

All others feed upon shadows—they know nothing of the savory food of the gospel. "I have food to eat

which you know not of." Jesus' food was . . .

the hidden communications of God's love,

the visitations of His Father's presence,

the divine communion that He enjoyed with His Father.

So, for the children of God, there is food in Christ; and this food the Lord gives them a hunger after. He not only sets before their eyes what the food is, but He kindles inexpressible longings in their soul to be fed with it.

God's people cannot feed . . .

upon husks,

nor upon ashes,

nor upon chaff,

nor upon the wind,

nor upon grapes of gall and the bitter clusters of Gomorrah.

They must have real food, "savory food such as their soul loves," that which God Himself communicates, and which His hand alone can bring down, and give unto them, so that they may receive it from Him as their soul-satisfying portion.

"For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink." A smoother way to glory?

"They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that they MUST enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations." Acts 14:22

The Lord has chosen that His people should pass through deep and cutting afflictions, for it is "through many tribulations" they are to enter the Kingdom of God above, and into the sweetness and power of the Kingdom of God below.

But every man will resent this doctrine, except God has led him experimentally into it. It is such a rough and rugged path—it is so contrary to flesh and blood—it is so inexplicable to nature and reason—that man, proud, rebellious man, will never believe that he must "enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations."

And this is the reason why so many find, or seek to find, a smoother way to glory than the Lord has appointed His saints to walk in. But shall the Head travel in one path—and the members in another? Shall the Bridegroom walk and wade through seas of sorrow—and the bride never so much as wet her feet with the water? Shall the Bridegroom be crucified in weakness and suffering—and there be no inward crucifixion for the dearly beloved of His heart?

Shall the Head . . .

suffer,

grieve,

agonize,

groan,

and die—

and the members dance down a flowery road,

without inward sorrow or outward suffering?

But, perhaps, there are some who say in their heart, "I am well convinced of this—but my coward flesh shrinks from it. I know if I am to reach the Canaan above, I must pass through the appointed portion of tribulation. But my coward flesh shrinks back!"

It does! it does! Who would willingly bring trials upon himself? Therefore the Lord does not leave these trials in our hands—but He Himself appoints a certain measure of tribulation for each of His people to pass through. They will come soon enough; you need not anticipate them; you need not wish for them. God will bring them—in His own time and in His own way.

And what is more, God will not merely bring you into them, but God will bring you through them, and God will bring you out of them! It will be our mercy if enabled to ask the Lord . . .

to bless us with faith and patience under tribulation;

to give us strength to bear the storm;

to lie as clay in His hands;

to conform us to the image of His Son;

to guide us through this valley of tears below;

and eventually to take us to be with Him above! Should you then seek great things for yourself?

"Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers often seek . . .

great gifts,

great eloquence,

great congregations,

great popularity.

They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things. Let them rather seek real things, gracious things, things that will make their souls blessed here and hereafter.

We stand upon slippery places!

"The Lord keep you." Numbers 6:24

How we need the Lord to keep us!

We stand upon slippery places!

Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction.

Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest—has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds. Nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him—and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God does not keep him.

Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul, "The Lord keep me" . . .

keep me in His providence, keep me by His grace;

keep me by planting His fear deep in my soul, and

maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart;

keep me waking, keep me sleeping;

keep me by night, keep me by day;

keep me at home, keep me abroad;

keep me with my family, keep me with my friends;

keep me in the world, and keep me in the church.

May the Lord keep me, according to His promise, every moment—keep me by His Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in His words, "O keep me as the apple of Your eye!"

My friends, you can know . . .

little of your own heart,

little of Satan’s devices,

little of the snares spread for your feet,

unless you feel how deeply you need this blessing—"The Lord keep you."

And He will, for we read of the righteous, that they are kept "by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of His saints."

One grain of holiness?

Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one.

Can all the men in the world, by all their united exertions, raise up a grain of spiritual holiness in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts.

If all the preachers in the world were to unite together for the purpose of working a grain of holiness in one man’s soul, they might strive to all eternity—they could no more by their preaching create holiness, than by their preaching they could create a lump of gold.

But Jesus imparts a measure of His own holiness to His people. He sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires. He communicates a heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature—which bathes in eternal things as its element—and enjoys spiritual things as sweet and precious. It may indeed be small in measure; and he that has it is often troubled because he has so little of it—yet he has enough to know what it is.

Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind—has it not felt, does it not sometimes feel—a measure of holiness Godwards?

Do you ever feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God . . .

heavenly desires,

pure affections,

singleness of eye,

simplicity of purpose,

a heart that longs to have the mind, image,

and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it?

This is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of his fullness to His poor and needy family.

What is this hidden manna?

"To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat." Revelation 2:17

What is this hidden manna?

Is it not God’s Word applied with power to the heart?

What does the prophet Jeremiah say? "Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

When the Lord is pleased . . .

to drop a word into the heart from his own lips;

to apply some promise;

to open up some precious portion of his Word;

to whisper softly some blessed Scripture into the heart;

is not this manna?

Whence did the manna flow? Was it cultivated by the hand of man? No—it fell from heaven. And is not this true of the Word of the Lord applied with power to the heart? It is not our searching the Scriptures, though it is good to search the Scriptures—but it is the Lord Himself being pleased to apply some precious portion of truth to our hearts—and when this takes place, it is "manna;" it is . . .

sweet,

refreshing,

strengthening,

comforting,

encouraging;

yes, it is angels’ food—the very flesh and blood of the Lamb with which the Lord is pleased from time to time to feed and favor hungry souls.

But, in the text it is called "hidden." Why "hidden"? Because hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent. Hidden from the eyes of self-righteous pharisees; hidden from those who fight in their own strength, and seek to gain the victory by their own brawny arm; hidden from all but God’s tried and tempted family; hidden from all but those who know the plague of their own hearts; hidden from all but those who have learned the secret of overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of His testimony.

When the Lord leads us to sink down into weakness, and in weakness to find his strength made perfect—to fall down all guilty—and then to feel the application of atoning blood—this is manna.

The children of Israel had to endure hunger in the wilderness before manna fell—and thus the Lord's people learn the value of the hidden manna—the sweet communications from above—by hungering and thirsting in a waste-howling wilderness.

This is hidden from all eyes except those that are anointed by the Spirit to see it—and hidden from all hearts except those that are prepared to receive and feed upon it.

"I am the living bread who came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." John 6:51

Entangled, perplexed and distressed?

How many of the Lord's people are continually under bondage to evil! What power the lusts of the flesh have over some—how perpetually they are entangled with everything sensual and carnal! What power the pride of the heart has over another! And what strength covetousness exercises over a third! What power the love of the world and the things of time and sense exercise over a fourth!

How then are they to overcome sin?

By making resolutions? By endeavoring to overcome it in their own strength? No! Sin will always break through man's strength. It will always be stronger than any resolution we can make not to be overcome by it.

The Lord allows His people to be so long and often entangled, perplexed and distressed, that they may learn this secret—which is hidden from all but God's living family—that the strength of Christ is made perfect in their weakness.

Have not some of you had to learn this lesson very painfully? There was a time when you thought you would get better and better, holier and holier—that you would not only not walk in open sin as before, but would not be . . .

entangled by temptation,

overcome by besetting lusts,

or cast down by hidden snares.

There was a time when you thought you were going forward—attaining some more strength—some better wisdom than you believed you once possessed.

How has it been with you?

Have these expectations ever been realized?

Have you ever attained these fond hopes?

Has sin become weaker?

Has the world become less alluring?

Have your lusts become tamer?

Has your temper become milder?

Have the corruptions of your heart become feebler and feebler?

If I can read the heart of some poor tried, tempted soul here present, he would say, "No! To my shame and sorrow, be it spoken, I find on the contrary that sin is stronger and stronger—that the evils of my heart are more and more powerful than ever I knew them in my life—and as to my own endeavors to overcome them, I find indeed that they are fainter and fainter, and weaker and weaker. This it is that casts me down. If I could have more strength against sin—if I could stand more boldly against Satan—if I could overcome my besetting lusts—live more to God's glory—and be holier and holier—then, then, I could have some comfort. But to feel myself so continually baffled, so perpetually disconcerted, so incessantly cast down by the workings of my corrupt nature—it is this, it is this that cuts so keenly—it is this, it is this that tries me so deeply!"

My friend, you are on the high road to victory. This is the very way by which you are to overcome. When you feel . . .

weaker and weaker,

poorer and poorer,

guiltier and guiltier,

viler and viler,

so that really through painful experience you are compelled to call yourself, not in the language of mock humility, but in the language of self abhorrence—the chief of sinners—then you are on the high road to victory.

Then the blood of the Lamb is applied to the sinner's conscience, and the Word of God's testimony comes with power into his soul—it gives him the victory over those lusts with which he was before entangled—it brings him out of the world that had so allured him—and breaks to pieces the dominion of sin under which he had been so long laboring. A very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge

"We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true." 1 John 5:20

There is a difference between a gracious, enlightened understanding of the truth of God which springs out of the teaching of the Spirit—and what is commonly called "head knowledge." There is such a thing—and a most dangerous, delusive thing it is—as "mere head knowledge" and it is widely prevalent in the churches.

You may say, "How am I to distinguish between mere head knowledge and this spiritual understanding?"

I will tell you. When a special light is cast into your mind—when the Word is opened up in its spiritual, experimental meaning—when the Holy Spirit seals it with sweetness and power upon your heart—and you not only understand what you read but receive it in faith, feel its savor, and

enjoy its blessedness. Is not this a very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge?

Poor in spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

None are really poor in spirit, but those whom the hand of God has stripped—whom He has brought down—and made to abhor themselves in dust and ashes—and to see and feel themselves destitute of everything good, holy, heavenly, and pleasing in His pure and heart searching eyes.

The heart must be stripped and emptied, and laid bare effectually—by a work of grace that goes to the very bottom, and penetrates into the recesses of the soul—so as to detect all the corruption that lurks and festers within.

The really "poor" man is one who has had everything taken from him—who has had not merely his dim views of a merciful God (such as natural men have) taken from him—not merely his legal righteousness stripped away—but all that kind of notional, traditional religion, which is so rife in the present day, taken from him also—and who has been brought in guilty before God, naked, in the dust, having nothing whereby to conciliate Him, or gain His favor.

God’s purpose

"That no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Corinthians 1:29

Man may glory in himself—but God has forever trampled man’s glory under foot. God’s purpose is to stain the pride of human glory.

Utter fools!

"Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead." Romans 1:22

What am I by nature? A fool! All my wisdom, outside of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness—and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance!

Left to ourselves we are utter fools! We have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet. We are . . .

blind,

ignorant,

weak,

helpless, and

utterly unable to find our way to God.

All wisdom which does not come down from the Father is folly. All strength not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness. All knowledge that does not spring from the Lord’s own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance.

We must know the value of the gem before we can really prize it. When diamonds were first discovered in Brazil, nobody knew that they were diamonds. They were handed about as pretty,

shining pebbles. But as soon it was discovered they were diamonds, they were eagerly sought, and their value rose a thousandfold.

So spiritually. Until we can distinguish between the "pebble of man’s teaching" and the "diamond of divine illumination" we shall neglect, we shall despise, we shall not value divine wisdom. The heart of God’s child

There is much . . .

presumption, pride,

hypocrisy,

deceit,

delusion,

formality,

superstition,

will-worship and self-righteousness to be purged out of the heart of God’s child.

But all these things . . .

keep him low,

mar his pride,

crush his self righteousness,

cut the locks of his presumption,

stain his self-conceit,

stop his boasting,

preserve him from despising others,

make him take the lowest room,

teach him to esteem others better than himself,

drive him to earnest prayer,

fit him as an object of mercy,

break to pieces his free-will, and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone! A spirit of delusion

A spirit of delusion seems to us widely prevalent . . .

a carnal confidence,

a dead assurance,

a presumptuous claim,

a daring mimicry of the spirit of adoption.

Who that has eyes or heart does not see and feel the wide spread of this gigantic evil?

No brokenness of heart, no tenderness of conscience, no spirituality of mind, no heavenly affections, no prayerfulness and watchfulness, no godly devotedness of life, no self denial and crucifixion, no humility or contrition, no separation from the world, no communion with the Lord of life and glory.

In a word, none of the blessed graces and fruits of the Spirit attend this carnal confidence.

On the contrary . . .

levity,

jesting,

pride,

covetousness,

self-exaltation, and

often gross self-indulgence are evidently stamped upon many, if not most, of these hardened professors.

The husks which the swine eat

All forms, opinions, rites, ceremonies and notions to me are nothing—and worse than nothing. They are the husks which the swine eat—not the food of the living soul.

To have the heart deeply penetrated with the fear of Jehovah—to be melted and filled with a sweet sense of Jesus' dying love—to have the affections warmed and drawn forth under the anointings of the Eternal Comforter—this is the only religion that can suit and satisfy a regenerate soul!

Then they cried

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Psalms 107:4-6

Until they wandered in the wilderness; until they felt it to be a solitary way; until they found no city to dwell in; until hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them; there was no cry.

There might have been a prayer, a desire, a feeble wish, and now and then a sigh or a groan.

But this was not enough. Something more was needed to draw forth loving-kindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the Church.

A cry was needed—a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. A cry implies urgent need—a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is this solemn feeling in the heart that there is no other refuge but God.

The Lord brings all His people here—to have no other refuge but Himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintance—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is . . .

no refuge,

nor shelter,

nor harbor,

nor home

into which they can fly, except the Lord.

Thus troubles force us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much; and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists; and they bring a man to this solemn spot—that he must have God to support him—and bring him out of his trouble.

But what a mercy it is when there is a cry!

And when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble, He is sure in his own time and way to send deliverance out of it.

O what painful work it is!

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house." 1 Peter 2:5

God’s people require . . .

many severe afflictions,

many harassing temptations,

and many powerful trials to hew them into any good shape, to chisel them into any conformity to Christ’s image.

For they are not like the passive marble under the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and indeed without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that jutting angle rounded by the chisel.

But God’s people are living stones, and therefore, they feel every stroke. We are so tender skinned that we cannot bear a ’thread of trouble’ to lie upon us—we shrink from even the touch of the chisel.

To be hewed, then, and squared, and chiseled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please Him—O what painful work it is!

If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls . . .

we have not had,

we are not now having,

we shall never have . . .

one stroke too much,

one stroke too little,

one stroke in the wrong direction.

But there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God’s sight—and to make us that which He would have us to be.

What a great deal of trouble would we be spared if we could only patiently submit to the Lord’s afflicting stroke—and know no will but His.

We get no better, but rather worse

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

We are ever looking for something in SELF to make ourselves acceptable to God—and are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find . . .

that holiness,

that obedience,

that calm submission to the will of God,

that serenity of soul,

that spirituality and heavenly mindedness,

which we believe to be acceptable in His sight.

Our crooked tempers, our fretful peevish minds, our rebellious thoughts, our coldness, our barrenness, our alienation from good, our headlong proneness to evil, with the daily feeling that we get no better, but rather worse—make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves. We seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ, and get into the miserable dregs of SELF. We are so vile, and only get worse as we get older.

Now the more we get into these dregs of SELF, and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view—the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel—and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God.

It is "in the Beloved" alone, that we are accepted—and not for any . . .

good words,

good works,

good thoughts,

good hearts, or

good intentions

of our own.

And a saving knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved," independent of everything in us either good or bad, is a firm foundation for our faith and hope—and will keep us from sinking altogether into despair.

Blundering and stumbling on in darkness

After the Lord has quickened our souls, for a time we often go blundering on, not knowing there is a Jesus.

We think that the way of life is to . . .

keep God’s commandments,

obey the law,

cleanse ourselves from sin,

reform our lives,

cultivate universal holiness in thought, word, and action—and so we go—blundering and stumbling on in darkness—and all the while never get a single step forward. But when the Lord has allowed us to weary ourselves to find the door, and let us sink lower and lower into the pit of guilt and ruin, from feeling that all our attempts to extricate ourselves have only plunged us deeper and deeper—and when the Spirit of God opens up to the understanding and brings into the soul some spiritual discovery of Jesus, and thus makes known that there is a Savior, a Mediator, and a way of escape—this is the grand turning point in our lives, the first opening in the valley of Achor (trouble) of the door of hope.

When you are in the wilderness

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Hosea 2:14

When you are in the wilderness, you have . . .

no friend,

no creature help,

no worldly comfort—

these have all abandoned you.

God has led you into the wilderness to bereave you of these earthly ties, of these ’creature refuges and vain hopes’, that He may Himself speak to your soul.

If, then, you are separated from the world by being brought into the wilderness—if you are passing through trials and afflictions—if you are exercised with a variety of temptations—and are brought into that spot where the creature yields neither help nor hope—then you are made to see and feel that nothing but God’s voice speaking with power to your soul can give you any solid grounds of rest or peace.

But is not this profitable? It may be painful—it is painful—but it is profitable, because by it we learn to look to the Lord and the Lord alone—and this must ever be a blessed lesson to learn for every child of God.

O what crowds of pitiable objects

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

What heart can conceive or tongue recount the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ's all-conquering grace?

We see scarcely a millionth part of what He, as a King on his throne, is daily doing. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds His throne! What urgent needs and woes to answer; what cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage; what broken hearts to bind up; what wounded consciences to heal; what countless prayers to hear; what earnest petitions to grant; what stubborn foes to subdue; what guilty fears to quell!

What grace, what kindness, what patience, what compassion, what mercy, what love, what power, what authority, does this Almighty Sovereign display!

No circumstance is too trifling; no petitioner too insignificant; no case too hard; no difficulty too great; no seeker too importunate; no beggar too ragged; no bankrupt too penniless; no debtor too insolvent; for Him not to notice and not to relieve.

Sitting on His throne of grace . . .

His all-seeing eye views all,

His almighty hand grasps all,

and His loving heart embraces all whom the Father chose—whom He himself redeemed by His blood—and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by His invincible power.

The hopeless, the helpless; the outcasts whom no man cares for; the tossed with tempest and not comforted; the ready to perish; the mourners in Zion; the bereaved widow; the wailing orphan; the sick in body; and still more sick in heart; the racked with hourly pain; the fevered consumptive; the wrestler with death's last struggle.

O what crowds of pitiable objects surround His throne—and all needing . . .

a look from His eye,

a word from His lips,

a smile from His face,

a touch from His hand!

O could we but see what His grace is—what His grace has—what His grace does—and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we would have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high by Zion's enthroned King!

Trouble, sorrow, and affliction

"And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalms 107:7

Those very times when God's people think they are faring ill, may be the seasons when they are really faring well. For instance, when their souls are bowed down with trouble, it often seems to them that they are faring ill. God's hand appears to be gone out against them. Yet perhaps they never fare better than when under these circumstances of trouble, sorrow, and affliction. These things wean them from the world.

If their heart and affections were going out after idols—they instrumentally bring them back.

If they were hewing out broken cisterns—they dash them all to pieces.

If they were setting up, and bowing down to idols in the chambers of imagery, affliction and trouble smite them to pieces before their eyes—take away their gods—and leave them no refuge but the Lord God of hosts.

So that when a child of God thinks he is faring very ill, because burdened with sorrows, temptations,

and afflictions—he is never faring so well. The darkest clouds in due time will break, the most puzzling enigmas will sooner or later be unriddled by the blessed Spirit interpreting them—and the darkest providences cleared up—and we shall see that God is in them all—leading and guiding us by the right way, that we may go to a city of habitation.

If you are at home in the world

"We are here for only a moment, sojourners and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace." 1 Chronicles 29:15

If you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you, like them, confess that you are a stranger; and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a sincere experience.

You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world.

It is not your element.

It is not your home.

You are in it during God's appointed time, but you wander up and down this world . . .

a stranger to its company,

a stranger to its maxims,

a stranger to its fashions,

a stranger to its principles,

a stranger to its motives,

a stranger to its lusts,

a stranger to its inclinations—and all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God's sovereign power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it.

I can tell you plainly if you are at home in the world—if the things of time and sense are your element—if you feel one with . . .

the company of the world,

the maxims of the world,

the fashions of the world, and

the principles of the world,

grace has not reached your heart—the faith of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom.

The first effect of grace is to separate.

It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers, and go out into a land that God would show him. And so God's own word to His people is now, "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Separation, separation, separation from the world; is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness.

There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is . . .

separation of heart,

separation of principle,

separation of affection,

separation of spirit.

And if grace has touched your heart, and you are a partaker of the faith of God's elect—you are a stranger in the world—and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such. From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are—riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the eye has seen, or the ear heard, or has entered into the carnal heart of man—put side by side with being saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation?

For consider what we are saved FROM, as well as what we are saved UNTO.

From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

From endless wrath—to eternal glory!

From the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented—to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels—and, above all, to seeing the glorious Son of God as he is, in all the perfection of His beauty, and all the ravishments of His presence and love.

To be done forever with . . .

all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life;

all the pains and aches of the present clay tabernacle;

all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of sin and death.

To be perfectly holy in body and soul, being in both without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, and ever to enjoy uninterrupted communion with God! Our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength

"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise." 1 Corinthians 3:18

The fruit and effect of divine teaching is—to cut in pieces, and root up all our fleshly . . .

wisdom,

strength, and

righteousness.

God never means to patch a new piece upon an old garment. All our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness must be torn to pieces! It must all be plucked up by the roots—that a new wisdom, a new strength, and a new righteousness may arise upon its ruins.

But until the Lord is pleased to teach us—we never can part with our own righteousness, never give up our own wisdom, never abandon our own strength. These things are a part and parcel of ourselves—so ingrained within us—so innate in us—so growing with our growth—that we cannot willingly part with an atom of them until the Lord Himself breaks them up, and plucks them away.

Then, as He brings into our souls some spiritual knowledge of our own dreadful corruptions and horrible wickedness—our righteousness crumbles away at the divine touch.

As He leads us to see and feel our ignorance and folly in a thousand instances—and how unable we are to understand anything aright but by divine teaching—our wisdom fades away.

As He shows us our inability to resist temptation and overcome sin, by any exertion of our own—our strength gradually departs—and we become like Samson, when his locks were cut off.

Upon the ruins, then, of our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, does God build up Christ's wisdom, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's strength.

But only so far as we are favored with this special teaching are we brought to pass a solemn sentence

of condemnation upon our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness—and sincerely seek after the Lord's.

Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace!

"For it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:8

We are saved by grace . . .

free grace,

rich grace,

sovereign grace,

distinguishing grace—

without one atom of works,

without one grain of creature merit,

without anything of the flesh.

Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace!

Oh! what a help—what a strength—what a rest for a poor toiling, striving, laboring soul—to find that grace has done all the work—to feel that grace has triumphed in the cross of Christ—to find that . . .

nothing is required, nothing is needed,

nothing is to be done!

Dying?

"As dying, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

Though we die, and die daily—yet, behold, we live. And in a sense, the more we die, the more we live.

The more we die to self, the more we die to sin.

The more we die to pride and self-righteousness, the more we die to creature strength.

The more we die to sinful nature, the more we live to grace.

This runs all the way through the life and experience of a Christian.

Nature must die, that grace may live.

The weeds must be plucked up, that the crop may grow.

The flesh must be starved, that the spirit may be fed.

The old man must be put off, that the new man may be put on.

The deeds of the body must be mortified, that the soul may live unto God.

As then we die—we live.

The more we die to our own strength, the more we live to Christ's strength.

The more we die to creature hope, the more we live to a good hope through grace.

The more we die to our own righteousness, the more we live to Christ's righteousness.

The more we die to the world, the more we live to and for heaven.

This is the grand mystery—that the Christian is always dying, yet always living—and the more he dies, the more he lives.

The death of the flesh, is the life of the spirit.

The death of sin, is the life of righteousness.

The death of the creature, is the very life of God in the soul.

"As dying, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

You were bought with a price!

"You were bought with a price!" 1 Corinthians 6:20

How deep, how dreadful, of what alarming magnitude, of how black a dye, of how ingrained a stamp—must sin be, to need such an atonement, no less than the blood of the Son of God, to put it away!

What a slave to sin and Satan, what a captive to the power of lust, how deeply sunk, how awfully degraded, how utterly lost and undone, must guilty man be—to need a sacrifice like this!

Have you ever felt your bondage to sin, Satan, and the world? Have you ever—groaned, cried, grieved, sorrowed, and lamented under your miserable captivity to the power of sin?

Has the iron ever entered into your soul? Have you ever clanked your fetters, and as you did so, and tried to burst them—they seemed to bind round about you with a weight scarcely endurable?

You were slaves of sin and Satan. You were shut up in the dark cell, where all was gloom and despondency. There was little hope in your soul of ever being saved.

But there was an entrance of gospel light into your dungeon—there was a coming out of the house of

bondage! "You were bought with a price!" Which is better?

"You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Remember that you must belong to someone.

If God is not your master—the devil will be.

If grace does not rule—sin will reign.

If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be.

We must have a master of one kind or another.

Which is better . . .

a bounteous benevolent Benefactor;

a merciful, loving, and tender Parent;

a kind, forgiving Father and Friend;

a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?

or

a cruel devil,

a miserable world, and

a wicked, vile, abominable heart?

Which is better . . .

to live under the sweet constraints of the

dying love of a dear Redeemer—under . . .

gospel influences,

gospel principles,

gospel promises, and

gospel encouragements?

or

to live with sin in our heart, binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the 'present life'—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness . . .

in half an hour with God,

in reading his Word with a believing heart,

in finding access to His sacred presence,

in knowing something of His favor and mercy—

than in . . .

all the delights of sin,

all the lusts of the flesh,

all the pride of life, and

all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a deathbed repentance, at last to cheat the devil.

09.03. PEARLS FROM PHILPOT cont'd1

Conflicts, trials, painful exercises, sharp sorrows, and deep temptations

"The Lord tries the righteous." Psalms 11:5

To keep water fresh, it must be perpetually running. And to keep the life of God up in the soul, there must be continual trials.

This is the reason why the Lord’s people have so many . . .

conflicts,

trials,

painful exercises,

sharp sorrows,

and deep temptations—

to keep them alive unto God—to bring them out of, and to keep them out of that slothful, sluggish, wretched state of carnal security.

The Lord, therefore, "tries the righteous." He will not allow His people . . .

to be at ease in Zion;

to be settled on their lees, and

get into a wretched Moabitish state.

He therefore sends upon them afflictions, tribulations, and trials—and allows Satan to tempt and harass them.

Personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Jesus

It is our dim, scanty, and imperfect knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal love—and in His grace and glory—which leaves us so often cold, lifeless, and dead in our affections towards Him.

If there were more blessed revelations to our soul of the Person and work, grace and glory, beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ—it is impossible but that we would more and more warmly and tenderly fall in love with Him—for He is the most glorious object that the eyes of faith can see!

He fills heaven with the resplendent beams of His glorious majesty—and has ravished the hearts of thousands of His dear family upon earth by the manifestations of His bleeding, dying love. Just in proportion to our personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Him, will be our love to Him.

I have loved you with an everlasting love

The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3

There can be no new thought in the mind of GOD.

New thoughts, new feelings, new plans, new resolutions continually occur to OUR mind—for ours is but a . . .

poor,

fallen,

fickle,

changeable nature.

But God has no new—thoughts, feelings, plans or resolutions. For if He had, He would be a 'changeable' Being—not one great, eternal, unchangeable 'I Am'. All His thoughts, therefore, all His plans, all His ways are like Himself . . .

eternal,

infinite,

unchanging,

unchangeable.

The love of Christ to His Church is also—eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. And why? Because He loves as Deity.

O what a mercy it is for those who have any gracious, experimental knowledge of the love of Christ—to believe it is from everlasting to everlasting—that no incidents of time, no storms of sin or Satan, can ever change or alter that eternal love—but that it remains now and will remain the same to all eternity!

Help from the sanctuary

"May the Lord answer you when you are in distress—may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion." Psalms 20:1-2

When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it needs help from the sanctuary. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it.

Help is sent from the sanctuary because his name has been from all eternity . . .

registered in the Lamb's book of life,

engraved upon the palms of His hands,

borne on His shoulder,

and worn on His heart.

Communications of life and grace from the sanctuary produce spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. The breath of heaven in his soul . . .

draws his affections upward,

weans him from earth, and

makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below,

"looking for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Holy wrestling

Wherever the Lord brings trials upon the soul, He pours out upon it the spirit of grace and supplication.

If the child of God has a burden; if he is laboring under a strong temptation; if his soul is passing through some pressing trial; he is not satisfied with merely going through a 'form of prayer'. There is at such times and seasons, a holy wrestling . . .

there are fervent desires;

there are unceasing groans;

there is a laboring to enter into rest;

there is a struggling after deliverance;

there is a crying unto the Lord—until He appears and manifests Himself in the soul. A disciple of Jesus

A disciple of Jesus is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into His school—whom He Himself condescends personally to instruct—and who therefore learns of Him to be meek and lowly of heart.

A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet—receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from His lips.

But a true and sincere disciple not only listens to his Master's instructions, but acts as He bids. So a disciple of Jesus is one who copies his Master's example—and is conformed to his Master's image.

A disciple of Jesus is also characterized by the love which he bears to his Master—he is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart—ponders over His precious promises—and delights in His glorious Person, love, and blood.

A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection to the image of his heavenly Master—he carries it about with him wherever he goes—that men may take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus. The true disciple shines before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God.

To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip, and life—is to be a disciple of Jesus.

To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus—to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words—to lean upon Jesus' breast is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love—and to feel this pulsation, causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison—to look up to Jesus, is to see a face more marred than the sons of men; yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity, and glory.

To be a disciple of Jesus, is to copy His example—to do the things pleasing in His sight—and to avoid the things which He abhors.

To be a disciple of Jesus, is to be as . . .

meek as He was;

humble as He was;

lowly as He was;

self-denying as He was;

separate from the world as He was;

living a life of communion with God—

as He lived when He walked here below.

To take a worm of the earth and make him a disciple of Jesus is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man! To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus—is the highest favor God can bestow upon any child of the dust.

How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow His grace on an enemy—and to soften and meeken him by His Spirit—and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of His own dear Son. Compared with this high privilege—all earthly honors, titles and robes sink into utter insignificance.

Sovereign, supreme disposal

"And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything," Ephesians 1:22

How vast—how numerous—how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Christian here below, as he travels onward to his heavenly home!

But if all things are put under Jesus' feet—there cannot be a single circumstance over which He has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to His disposal. There is not . . .

a trial,

a temptation,

an affliction of body or soul,

a loss,

a cross,

a painful bereavement,

a vexation,

a grief,

a disappointment,

a case, state or condition,

which is not put under Jesus' feet.

He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite knowledge He sees them—as possessed of infinite wisdom He can manage them—and as possessed of infinite power He can dispose and direct them for our good and His own glory.

How much trouble and anxiety would we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this!

If we could see by the eye of faith that . . .

every foe and every fear,

every difficulty and perplexity,

every trying or painful circumstance,

every looked-for or unlooked-for event,

every source of care, whether at present or

in prospect—are all put under His feet—at His sovereign disposal—what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders!

You must not love one of these glittering baubles

"Do not love the world or anything in the world." 1 John 2:15

This is a very wide sentence. It stretches forth a hand of vast grasp. It places us, as it were, upon a high mountain, and it says to us, "Look around you—there is not one of these things which you must love."

It takes us, again, to the streets of a crowded city—it shows us shop windows filled with objects of beauty and ornament—it points us to all the wealth and grandeur of the rich and noble, and everything that the human heart admires and loves. And having thus set before us, it says, "None of these things are for you. You must not love one of these glittering baubles—you must not touch one of them, or scarcely look at them, lest, as with Achan, the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment should tempt you to take them and hide them in your tent."

The precept takes us through the world as a mother takes a child through a bazaar—with playthings and ornaments on every side—and says, "You must not touch one of these things."

In some such similar way the precept would, as it were, take us through the world—and when we had looked at all its playthings and its ornaments, it would sound in our ears—"Don’t touch any one of them; they are not yours—not for you to enjoy, not for you even to covet!"

Can anything less than this be intended by those words which should be ever sounding in the ears of the children of God—"Do not love the world or anything in the world"?

One unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure

"In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

O that we could lift our eyes to those blessed abodes—those mansions of heavenly bliss—where no sorrow intrudes, where sin is unknown, where tears are wiped from off all faces, where there is . . .

no languishing body,

no wasting sickness,

no pining soul,

no doubt,

no fear,

no darkness,

no distress—

but one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure—and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of the Lamb!

And what crowns the whole—there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God forevermore!

But how lost are we in the contemplation of these things—and though our imagination may seem to stretch itself beyond the utmost conception of the mind, into the countless ages of a never-ending eternity, yet are we baffled with the thought—though faith embraces the blessed truth.

But in that happy land, the immortal soul and the immortal body will combine their powers and faculties to enjoy to the uttermost all that God has prepared for those who love Him. The rod was dipped in love

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Micah 7:9

It is a view of our sins against God that enables us to bear the indignation of the Lord against us and them.

As long as we are left to a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, we murmur at the Lord’s dealings when His hand lies heavy upon us.

But let us only truly feel what we rightly deserve—that will silence at once all murmuring. You may murmur and rebel sometimes at your hard lot in providence. But if you feel what you deserve—it will make you water with ’tears of repentance’ the hardest cross.

So in grace, if you feel the weight of your sins, and mourn and sigh because you have sinned against God, you can lift up your hands sometimes with holy wonder at God’s patient mercy that He has borne with you so long—that He has not smitten you to the earth, or sent your guilty soul to hell.

You will see, also, that the heaviest strokes were but fatherly chastenings—that the rod was dipped in love—and that it was for your good and His glory that it was laid on you.

When this sense of merited indignation comes into the soul, then meekness and submission come with it, and it can say with the prophet—"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

You would not escape the rod if you might.

You can trust no minister really and fully.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17

The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Beg of Him to teach you Himself—for He is the best teacher. The words which He speaks, they "are spirit and life." What He writes upon our hearts is written in characters which will "stand every storm and live at last."

We forget what we learn from ’man’—but we never forget what we learn from Jesus.

’Men’ may deceive—Christ cannot.

You can trust no minister really and fully.

Though you may receive truth from his lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus—you get in all its purity and power.

It comes warm from Him—it comes cold from ’men’.

It drops like the rain and distills like the dew from His mouth—it comes only second-hand from men.

If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. But it is He who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good. Look then away from me—look beyond me—to Him who alone can teach us both.

By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of His bosom into your own—from His heart into your heart—and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of His own declaration—"I am the truth."

Buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1 How many there are even of those who desire to fear God who are kept down by the world, and to whom it has not lost its attractive power.

They are held fast, at least for a time, by worldly business—or entangled by worldly people or worldly engagements . . .

their partners in business or their partners in life;

their carnal relatives or their worldly children;

their numerous connections or their social habits;

their strong passions or their deep rooted prejudices;

all bind and fetter them down to earth.

There they grovel and lie amid "the smoke, and stir of this dim spot which men call earth;" and so bound are they with the cords of their sins, that they scarcely seek deliverance from them—or ever desire to rise beyond the mists and fogs of this dim spot into a purer air—so as to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and rise up with Jesus from the grave of their corruptions.

But they shall never be buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness. A solitary drop of this holy anointing oil

"As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit . . ." 1 John 2:27

Have you ever had a solitary drop of this holy anointing oil fall upon your heart?

One drop, if it be but a drop, will sanctify you forever to the service of God. There was not much of the holy anointing oil used for the service of the tabernacle, when we consider the size and quantity of what had to be consecrated. When he went through the sacred work, he touched one vessel after another with a drop of oil—for one drop sanctified the vessel to the service of the tabernacle.

There was no repetition of the consecration needed—it abode. So if you ever had a drop of God’s love shed abroad in your heart—a drop of the anointing to teach you the truth as it is in Jesus—a drop to penetrate, to soften, to heal, to feed—and give light, life, and power to your soul—you have the unction from the Holy One—you know all things which are for your salvation, and by that same holy oil you have been sanctified and made fit for an eternal inheritance.

’Practical atheists’, we daily prove ourselves to be.

We profess to believe in an All-mighty, All-present, All-seeing God. But we would be highly offended if a person said to us, "You do not really believe that God sees everything—that He is everywhere present—that He is an Almighty Jehovah." We would almost think that he was taking us for an atheist! And yet ’practical atheists’, we daily prove ourselves to be.

For instance, we profess to believe that God sees everything. And yet we are plotting and planning as though He saw nothing.

We profess to know that God can do everything. And yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though He were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice.

We profess to believe that God is everywhere present to relieve every difficulty and bring His people out of every trial. And yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial—we speak, think, and act, as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of our case, and can stretch forth His hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because we are such blind fools, that we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with—until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us.

This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges His people so deeply into a sense of sin. It is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin, there is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the same reason, too, they walk in such scenes of temptation. It is in order to show them what a wonder-working God He is, in bringing them out.

This too is the reason why many of them are so harassed and plagued. It is that they may not live and act as though there were . . .

no God to go to,

no Almighty friend to consult,

no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon.

It is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know until the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn—and actually forces them to believe what they profess to believe.

Such pains is he obliged to take with us—such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are. No child at a school ever gave his master a thousandth part of the trouble that we have given the Lord to teach us.

In order, then, to teach us what a merciful and compassionate God He is—in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of His love—He is compelled to treat, at times, His people very roughly—and handle them very sharply. He is obliged to make very great use of His rod, because He sees that "foolishness is so bound up in the hearts" of His children—that nothing but the repeated "rod of correction will ever drive it far from them."

Dead in sin

"As for you, you were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1

To be dead in sin is to have . . .

no present part or lot with God;

no knowledge of Him;

no faith, no trust, no hope in Him;

no sense of His presence;

no reverence of His awesome Majesty;

no desire after Him or inclination toward Him;

no trembling at His word;

no longing for His grace;

no care or concern for His glory.

To be dead in sin is to be as a beast before Him, intent like a brute on satisfying the cravings of lust, or the movements of mere animal passion—without any thought or concern what shall be the outcome, and to be bent upon carrying out into action every selfish purpose, as if we were . . .

self creators,

our own judge,

our own lord,

and our own God.

O what a terrible state is it to be thus dead in sin, and not to know it—not to feel it—to be in no way sensible of its present danger and certain end—unless delivered from it by a mighty act of sovereign power!

It is this lack of all sense and feeling which makes the death of the soul to be but the prelude to that second death which stretches through a boundless eternity.

Continual salvation?

"I cried unto You—Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146

If you know anything for yourself, inwardly and experimentally of . . .

the evils of your heart,

the power of sin,

the strength of temptation,

the subtlety of your unwearied foe,

and that daily conflict between nature and

grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven; you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. There is present salvation—an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen

Mediator.

You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the . . .

guilt,

filth,

power,

love, and

practice

of indwelling sin.

"I cried unto You—Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146 The fatal mistake of thousands

The fatal mistake of thousands is to offer unto God the fruits of the flesh—instead of the fruits of the Spirit.

Fleshly holiness, fleshly exertions, fleshly prayers, fleshly duties, fleshly religious forms, fleshly zeal—these are what men consider good works, and present them as such to God.

But well may He "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity", say to all such fleshly workers, "If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the crippled and the diseased, is it not evil?"

All that the flesh can do is evil, for "every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually;" and to present the fruits of this filthy heart to the Lord of hosts, is "to offer defiled food upon His altar."

A broken heart, a contrite spirit, a tender conscience, a filial fear of God, a desire to please Him, a dread to offend the great God of heaven, a sense of the evil of sin, a desire to be delivered from sin’s dominion, a mourning over our repeated backslidings, grief at being so often entangled in our lusts and passions, an acquaintance with our helplessness and weakness, simplicity and godly sincerity,

a hanging upon grace for daily supplies, watching the hand of Providence, a singleness of eye to the glory of God,—these are a few of the fruits of the Spirit. The great secret of vital godliness

The great secret of vital godliness is to be nothing—that Christ may be all in all.

Every stripping, sifting, and emptying—every trial, exercise and temptation that the soul passes through, has but one object—to beat out of man’s heart that cursed spirit of independence which the devil breathed into him when he said, "You shall be as gods".

A man must well near be bled to death before this venom can be drained out of his veins! The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels

In the first awakenings of the soul, we do not usually know much, nor feel much, of our fallen sinful nature. We feel more the guilt of sin ’committed’ than of sin ’indwelling’.

The way in which SIN sometimes seems to sleep, and at other times to awake up with renewed strength—its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature, the many shapes and colors it wears, the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels, the corners into which it creeps, its deceitfulness, its hypocrisy, its craft, its deceptive attraction, its intense selfishness, its utter recklessness, its desperate madness, and insatiable greediness—are secrets, painful secrets, only learned by bitter experience.

If the devil ever feels joy

If the devil ever feels joy—it is in making souls miserable.

The cries of the damned are his music.

Their curses and blasphemies are his songs of triumph. Their anguish and despair are his wretched feast. Do not fear.

Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4

"Do not fear." "Ah! but Lord," the soul says, "I do fear. I fear myself more than anybody. I fear . . .

my base, wicked heart,

my strong lusts and passions,

my numerous inward enemies,

the snares of Satan,

and the temptations of the world.

I do fear. I cannot help but fear."

Still the Lord says, "Do not fear."

Here is a child trembling before a large mastiff dog; but the father says, "Do not fear, he will not hurt you, only keep close to me."

Who is that dog but Satan, that huge mastiff, whose jaws are reeking with blood? If the Lord says, "Do not fear," why need we fear him? He is a chained enemy.

But how the timid soul needs the divine "Fear nots!" For without Him, it is all weakness—with Him, all strength; without Him, all trembling—with Him, all boldness.

Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4 The desire of our soul

"The desire of our soul is to Your Name, and to the remembrance of You." Isaiah 26:8

How sweet and expressive is the phrase, "The desire of our soul!" How it seems to carry our feelings with it! How it seems to describe the longings and utterings of a soul into which God has breathed the spirit of grace and mercy!

"The desire of our soul"—the breathing of our heart, the longing of our inmost being, the cry, the sigh, the panting of our new nature, the—heavings, gaspings, lookings, longings, pantings, hungerings, thirstings, and ventings forth of the new man of grace; all are expressed in those sweet and blessed

words—"The desire of our soul."

And what a mercy it is, that there should ever be in us "the desire" of a living soul—that though the righteous dealings of God are painful and severe, running contrary to everything nature loves—yet that with all these, there should be dropped into the heart that mercy, love, and grace—which draw forth the desire of the soul toward the Name of God.

This is expressed in the words that follow, "My soul yearns for You in the night—in the morning my spirit longs for You!" Isaiah 26:9.

Is your soul longing after the Lord Jesus Christ?

Is it ever, in the night season, panting after the manifestation of His presence? hungering and thirsting after the dropping of some word from His lips—some sweet whisper of His love to your soul?

These are marks of saving grace. The carnal, the unregenerate, the ungodly, have no such desires and feelings as these!

O self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself—my . . .

vile,

proud,

lustful,

hypocritical,

worldly,

covetous,

presumptuous,

obscene self.

O self! Self! Your desperate wickedness, your depravity, your love of sin, your abominable pollutions, your monstrous heart wickedness, your wretched deadness, hardness, blindness, and indifference.

You are a treacherous villain, and, I fear, always will be such!

What are all the gilded toys of time?

What are all the gilded toys of time compared with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity!

But, alas! what wretches are we when left to . . .

sin,

self, and

Satan!

How unable to withstand the faintest breath of temptation!

How bent upon backsliding!

Who can fathom the depths of the human heart?

Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace, can either suit or save such wretches?

That dear, idolized creature

"I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live." Galatians 2:20

The crucifixion of self is indispensable to following Christ.

What is so dear to a man as himself?

Yet this beloved self is to be crucified.

Whether it be . . .

proud self,

or ambitious self,

or selfish self,

or covetous self,

or, what is harder still, religious self;

that dear, idolized creature, which has been the subject of so much . . .

fondling,

petting,

pampering,

nursing– this fondly loved self has to be taken out of our bosom by the hand of God, and nailed to Christ's cross! The same grace which pardons sin also subdues it!

To be crucified with Christ! To have everything that the flesh loves and idolizes put to death! How can a man survive such a process?

"Nevertheless I live!"

As the world, sin, and self are crucified, subdued, and subjugated by the power of the cross, the life of God springs up with new vigor in the soul.

Here, then, is the great secret of vital godliness: that the more that sin and self, and the world are mortified, the more do holiness and spirituality of mind, heavenly affections and gracious desires spring up and flourish in the soul.

O! blessed death! O! still more blessed life!

"I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live." Galatians 2:20

Unquenched, unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love; neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7

The bride uses a figure which shall express the insuperable strength of divine love against all opposition; and she therefore compares it to a fire which burns and burns unquenched and unquenchable, whatever be the amount of water poured upon it. Thus the figure expresses the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of the Redeemer as unquenchable by any opposition made to it.

How soon is earthly love cooled by opposition! A little ingratitude, a few hard speeches, cold words or even cold looks, seem often almost sufficient to quench love that once shone warm and bright. And how often, too, even without these cold waters thrown upon it, does it appear as if ready to die out by itself.

But the love of Christ was unquenchable by all those waters. Not all the ingratitude, unbelief, or coldness of His people could quench His eternal love to them!

He knew what the Church was in herself, and ever would be . . .

how cold and wandering her affections,

how roving her desires,

how backsliding her heart!

But all these waters could not extinguish His love!

It still burnt as a holy flame in His bosom, unquenched, unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love; neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7

He can crawl like a serpent, and he can roar like a lion!

"So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan well knows both how to allure and how to attack; for he can crawl like a serpent, and he can roar like a lion! He has snares whereby he entangles, and fiery darts whereby he impales.

Most men are easily led captive by him at his will, ensnared without the least difficulty in the traps that he lays for their feet; for they are as ready to be caught as he is to catch them! Why would Satan need to roar against them as a lion, if he can wind himself around them and bite them as a serpent?

If you want to see what sin really is

To cast the sinning angels out of heaven; to banish Adam from Paradise; to destroy the old world by a flood; to burn Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven–these examples of God's displeasure against sin were not sufficient to express His condemnation of it. He would therefore take another way of making it manifest.

And what was this?

By sending His own Son out of His bosom, and offering Him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, He would make it manifest how He abhorred sin, and how His righteous character must forever condemn it.

See here the love of God to poor guilty man in not sparing His own Son; and yet the hatred of God against sin, in condemning it in the death of Jesus.

It is almost as if God said, "If you want to see what sin really is, you cannot see it in the depths of hell. I will show you sin in blacker colors still– you shall see it in the sufferings of My dear Son; in His agonies of body and soul; and in what He as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under My wrath, when He consented to take the sinner's place."

What wondrous wisdom, what depths of love, what treasures of mercy, what heights of grace were thus revealed and brought to light in God's unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in His full and free pardon of the sinner!

If you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross; if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you, falling upon the head of the God-Man; and viewed a bleeding, agonizing Immanuel; then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience what a dreadful thing sin is. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto Him whom he has pierced, and mourns and grieves bitterly for Him, as for a firstborn son who has died.

Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is.

"Oh," he says, "did God afflict His dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save my soul from the bottomless pit? O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies, and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?"

Christians hate their sins. They hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often, which has so continually, betrayed them into sin. And thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh; upon all its actings and workings; upon all its thoughts and words and deeds; and hate it as the prolific parent of that sin which crucified Christ, and torments and plagues them.

The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor

We are surrounded with snares.

Temptations lie spread every moment in our path.

These snares and these temptations are so suitable to the lusts of our flesh, that we would certainly fall into them, and be overcome by them, but for the restraining providence or the preserving grace of God. The Christian sees this; the Christian feels this.

The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor sees no snares. He is entangled in them, he falls by them, and not repenting of his sins or forsaking them, he makes utter shipwreck concerning the faith.

The child of God . . .

sees the snare,

feels the temptation,

knows the evil of his heart,

and is conscious that if God does not hold him up, he shall stumble and fall.

As then a burnt child dreads the fire, so he dreads the consequence of being left for a moment to himself; and the more is he afraid that he shall fall.

If his eyes are more widely opened to see . . .

the purity of God,

the blessedness of Christ,

the efficacy of atoning blood,

and the beauties of holiness,

the more also does he see the evil of sin, the dreadful consequences of being entangled therein. And not only so, but his own helplessness and weakness and inability to stand against temptation in his own strength.

And all these feelings combine to raise up a more earnest cry, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" A stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they have gone." Ezekiel 11:16

Every place in which the Lord manifests Himself, is a sanctuary to a child of God.

Jesus is now our sanctuary, for He is "the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands." We see the power and glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Every place is a sanctuary, where God manifests Himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb; it was but a common thorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the thicket. But on one solemn occasion it was all "in a flame of fire," for "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire" out of the midst; and though it burned with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to take off his shoes from his feet. Was not this a

sanctuary to Moses? It was, for a holy God was there! Thus wherever God manifests Himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul.

We don't need places made holy by the ceremonies of man; but places made holy by the presence of God!

Then a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with His sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul.

Poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm!

"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away." Isaiah 64:6

We once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favor of God, and induce Him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey His commandments.

And by these religious performances we thought we would surely be able to make a ladder whereby we could climb up to heaven. This was our tower of Babel, whose top was to reach unto heaven, and by mounting which, we thought to scale the stars.

But the same Lord who stopped the further building of the tower of Babel, by confounding their speech and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth; began to confound our speech, so that we could not pray, or talk, or boast as before; and to scatter all our religion like the chaff of the threshing floor. Our mouths were stopped; we became guilty before God; and our bricks and mortar became a pile of confusion!

When, then, the Lord was pleased to discover to our souls by faith, His being, majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity; and thus gave us a corresponding sense of our filthiness and folly; then all our creature religion and natural piety which we once counted as gain, we began to see was but loss; that our very religious duties and observances, so far from being for us, were actually against us; and instead of pleading for us before God as so many deeds of righteousness, were so polluted and defiled by sin perpetually mixed with them, that our very prayers were enough to sink us into hell, had we no other iniquities to answer for in heart, lip or life.

But when we had a view by faith of the Person, work, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we began more plainly and clearly to see, with what religious toys we had been so long amusing ourselves, and what is far worse, mocking God by them.

We had been secretly despising . . .

Jesus and His sufferings,

Jesus and His death,

Jesus and His righteousness,

and setting up the poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm in the place of the finished work of the Son of God.

Mere toys and baubles

True religion must be everything or nothing with us. In religion, indifference is ruin; neglect is destruction.

Of all losses, the loss of the soul is the only one that is utterly irreparable and irremediable. You may lose property, but you may recover the whole or a portion of it; you may lose health, but you may be restored to a larger measure of bodily strength than before your illness; you may lose friends, but you may obtain new ones, and those more sincere and valuable than any whom you have lost. But if you lose your soul, what is to make up for that loss?

Do you ever feel what a tremendous stake heaven or hell is? Have you ever felt that to gain heaven is to gain everything that can make the soul eternally happy; and to lose heaven is not only to lose eternal bliss, but to sink down into . . .

unfathomable,

everlasting,

unutterable woe?

It is this believing sight and pressing sense of eternal things; it is this weighty, at times overpowering, feeling that they carry in their bosom an immortal soul, which often makes the children of God view the things of time and sense as . . .

mere toys and baubles,

trifles lighter than vanity,

and pursuits empty as air,

and gives them to feel that the things of eternity are the only solid, enduring realities.

Heavenly dew

"My words descend like dew." Deuteronomy 32:2

The dew falls imperceptibly. No man can see it fall. Yet its effects are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon His Word. It penetrates the heart without noise; it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on. And as the dew opens the pores of the earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul.

Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its effects, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head.

Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects? Silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet

producing an evident impression . . .

softening the heart when hard,

refreshing it when dry,

melting it when obdurate,

secretly keeping the soul alive, so that it is neither withers up by the burning sun of temptation, nor dies for lack of grace.

"May God give you the dew of heaven." Genesis 27:28

Coming up from the wilderness

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

To come up from the wilderness, is to come up out of OURSELVES; for we are ourselves the wilderness. It is our wilderness heart that makes the world what it is to us . . .

our own barren frames;

our own bewildered minds;

our own worthlessness and inability;

our own lack of spiritual fruitfulness;

our own trials, temptations, and exercises;

our own hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

In a word, it is what passes in our own bosom that makes the world to us a dreary desert.

Carnal people find the world no wilderness. It is an Eden to them! Or at least they try hard to make it so. They seek all their pleasure from, and build all their happiness upon it. Nor do they dream of any other harvest of joy and delight, but what may be repaid in this 'happy valley', where youth, health, and good spirits are ever imagining new scenes of gratification.

But the child of grace, exercised with a thousand difficulties, passing through many temporal and spiritual sorrows, and inwardly grieved with his own lack of heavenly fruitfulness, finds the wilderness within.

But he still comes up out of it, and this he does by looking upward with believing eyes to Him who alone can bring him out.

He comes up out of his own righteousness, and shelters himself under Christ's righteousness.

He comes up out of his own strength, and trusts to Christ's strength.

He comes up out of his own wisdom, and hangs upon Jesus' wisdom.

He comes up out of his own tempted, tried, bewildered, and perplexed condition, to find rest and peace in the finished work of the Son of God.

And thus he comes up out of the wilderness of self, not actually, but experimentally. Every desire of his soul to be delivered from his 'wilderness sickening sight' that he has of sin and of himself as a sinner. Every aspiration after Jesus, every longing look, earnest sigh, piteous cry, or laboring groan, all are a coming up from the wilderness.

His turning his back upon an ungodly world; renouncing its pleasures, its honors, its pride, and its ambition; seeking communion with Jesus as his chief delight; and accounting all things but loss and rubbish for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus his Lord as revealed to his soul by the power of God; this, also, is coming up from the wilderness.

When we gaze upon the lifeless corpse

From the cradle to the coffin, affliction and sorrow are the appointed lot of man. He comes into the world with a wailing cry, and he often leaves it with an agonizing groan! Rightly is this earth called "a valley of tears," for it is wet with them in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. In every land, in every climate, scenes of misery and wretchedness everywhere meet the eye, besides those deeper griefs and heart-rending sorrows which lie concealed from all observation. So that we may well say of the life of man that, like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written with lamentations, and mourning and woe."

But this is not all. The scene does not end here!

We see up to death, but we do not see beyond death.

To see a man die without Christ is like standing at a distance, and seeing a man fall from a lofty cliff—we see him fall, but we do not see the crash on the rocks below.

So we see an unsaved man die, but when we gaze upon the lifeless corpse, we do not see how his soul falls with a mighty crash upon the rock of God's eternal justice! When his temporal trials come to a close, his eternal sorrows only begin! After weeks or months of sickness and pain, the pale, cold face may lie in calm repose under the coffin lid; when the soul is only just entering upon an eternity of woe!

But is it all thus dark and gloomy both in life and death? Is heaven always hung with a canopy of black? Are there no beams of light, no rays of gladness, that shine through these dark clouds of affliction, misery, and woe that are spread over the human race?

Yes! there is one point in this dark scene out of which beams of light and rays of glory shine! "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:9

There, on the other side, is my solitary soul

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

Here is my scale of profit and loss.

I have a soul to be saved or lost.

What then shall I give in exchange for my soul?

What am I profited if I gain the whole world and lose my soul?

This deep conviction of a soul to be saved or lost lies at the root of all our religion.

Here, on one side, is the WORLD and all . . .

its profits

its pleasures,

its charms,

its smiles,

its winning ways,

its comforts,

its luxuries,

its honors,

to gain which is the grand struggle of human life.

There, on the other side, is my solitary SOUL, to live after death, forever and ever, when the world and all its pleasures and profits will sink under the wrath of the Almighty.

And this dear soul of mine, my very self, my only self, my all, must be lost or saved.

Even your own relatives think you are almost insane

"The Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him." John 14:17

The world—that is, the world dead in sin, and the world dead in profession—men destitute of the life and power of God—must have something that it can see. And, as heavenly things can only be seen by heavenly eyes, they cannot receive the things which are invisible.

Now this explains why a religion that presents itself with a degree of beauty and grandeur to the natural eye will always be received by the world; while a . . .

spiritual,

internal,

heartfelt and experimental religion will always be rejected.

The world can receive a religion that consists of . . .

forms,

rites, and

ceremonies.

These are things seen.

Beautiful buildings, painted windows, pealing organs, melodious choirs, the pomp and parade of an earthly priesthood, and a whole apparatus of 'religious ceremony', carry with them something that the natural eye can see and admire. The world receives all this 'external religion' because it is suitable to the natural mind and intelligible to the reasoning faculties.

But the . . .

quiet,

inward,

experimental,

divine religion,

which presents no attractions to the outward eye, but is wrought in the heart by a divine operation—the world cannot receive this—because it presents nothing that the natural eye can rest upon with pleasure, or is adapted to gratify their general idea of what religion is or should be.

Do not marvel, then, that worldly professors despise a religion wrought in the soul by the power of God. Do not be surprised if even your own relatives think you are almost insane, when you speak of the consolations of the Spirit, or of the teachings of God in your soul. They cannot receive these things, for they have no experience of them; and being such as are altogether opposed to the carnal mind, they reject them with enmity and scorn.

Make straight paths for your feet.

"Make straight paths for your feet." Hebrews 12:13

Surrounded as we are with a crooked generation, professing and profane, whose ways we are but too apt to learn; beset on every hand by temptations . . .

to turn aside into some crooked path,

to feed our pride,

to indulge our lusts,

to gratify our covetousness;

blinded and seduced sometimes by the god of this world; hardened at other times by the deceitfulness of sin; here misled by the example, and there bewitched by the flattery of some friend or companion; at one time confused and bewildered in our judgment of right and wrong; at another time entangled, half resisting, half complying, in some snare of the wicked one; what a struggle have some of us had to make straight paths for our feet; and what pain and grief that we should ever have made crooked ones.

"But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold." Psalms 73:2

When I said, "My foot is slipping," Your love, O Lord, supported me. Psalms 94:18

"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." Psalms 40:2

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

"I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths." Proverbs 4:11

Have nothing to do with them.

"They mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs. They worshiped their idols, and this led to their downfall." Psalms 106:35-36

The ’carnal professors’ of the day see nothing wrong, nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent in their conduct or spirit, though they are sunk in . . .

worldliness,

carnality, or

covetousness.

But where there is divine life, where the blessed Spirit moves upon the heart with His sacred operations and secret influences, there will be light to see, and a conscience to feel, what is . . .

wrong,

sinful,

inconsistent,

and improper.

It its but too evident that we cannot be mixed up with the professors of the day without drinking, in some measure, into their spirit and being more or less influenced by their example.

We can scarcely escape the influence of those with whom we come much and frequently into contact. If they are dead, they will often benumb us with their corpse-like coldness. If they are light and trifling, they will often entangle us in their carnal levity. If they are worldly and covetous, they may afford us a shelter and an excuse for our own worldliness and covetousness.

Abhor that loose profession, that ready compliance with everything which feeds the . . .

pride,

worldliness,

covetousness,

and lusts of our depraved nature,

which so stamps the present day with some of its most perilous and dreadful characters.

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them." 2 Timothy 3:5

The foulest filth under the cleanest cloak

"Take heed unto yourselves!" Acts 20:28

There are few Christians who have not ever found SELF to be their greatest enemy. The pride, unbelief, hardness, and impenitence of a man's own heart; the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature; the lusts and passions, filth and folly of his own carnal mind; will not only ever be his greatest burden, but will ever prove his most dreaded foe!

Enemies we shall have from outside, and we may at times keenly feel their bitter speeches and cruel words and actions. But no enemy can injure us like ourselves! In five minutes a man may do himself more real harm, than all his enemies united could do to injure him in fifty years!

To yourself you can be the most insidious enemy and the greatest foe!

In all its forms, SELF in its inmost spirit is still a . . .

deceitful,

subtle,

restless,

proud, and

impatient

creature; masking its real character in a thousand ways, and concealing its destructive designs by countless devices.

We have but to look on the professing church to find . . .

the highest pride under the lowest humility,

the greatest ignorance under the vainest self-conceit,

the basest treachery under the warmest profession,

the vilest sensuality under the most heavenly piety,

and the foulest filth under the cleanest cloak.

"Take heed unto yourselves!" Acts 20:28

Familiarity with sacred things

"Take heed unto yourselves!" Acts 20:28

This was Paul's public warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus. It was Paul's private warning to his friend and disciple, his beloved son, Timothy. And do not all who write or speak in the name of the Lord need the same warning?

Familiarity with sacred things has a natural tendency to harden the conscience, where grace does not soften and make it tender.

Men may preach and pray until both become a mere mechanical habit; and they may talk about Christ and His sufferings until they feel as little touched by them as a 'tragic actor' on the stage, of the sorrows which he impersonates.

Well, then, may the Holy Spirit sound this note of warning, as with trumpet voice, in the ears of the servants of Christ. "Take heed unto yourselves!"

Pride, self-conceit, and self-exaltation

Pride, self-conceit, and self-exaltation, are both the chief temptations, and the main besetting sins,

of those who occupy any public position in the church.

Therefore, where these sins are not mortified by the Spirit, and subdued by His grace; instead of being, as they should be, the humblest of men; they are, with rare exceptions, the proudest.

Did we bear in constant remembrance our slips, falls, and grievous backslidings; and had we, with all this, a believing sight of the holiness and purity of God, of the sufferings and sorrows of His dear Son, and what it cost Him to redeem us from the lowest hell; we would be, we must be clothed with humility; and would, under feelings of the deepest self-abasement, take the lowest place among the family of God, as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all the saints.

This should be the feeling of every child of God.

Until this pride is in some measure crucified, until we hate it, and hate ourselves for it, the glory of God will not be our main object.

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

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

1 John 1:9

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

Every sin that we have committed?

Do we not sin with every breath that we draw?

Is not every lustful desire sin? And is not every proud thought sin? And is not every wicked imagination sin? And is not every unkind suspicion sin? Every act of unbelief sin? And every working of a depraved nature sin?

We committed sin when we sucked our mother’s breast! We committed sin as soon as we were able to stammer out a word. And as we grew in body, we grew in sinfulness.

Will He forgive . . .

sins of thought,

sins of look,

sins of action,

sins of omission,

sins of commission,

sins in infancy,

sins in childhood,

sins in youth,

sins in old age?

Will He forgive . . .

all the base lusts,

all the filthy workings,

all the vile actions,

all the pride,

all the hypocrisy,

all the covetousness,

all the envy, hatred, and malice,

all the aboundings of inward iniquity?

"The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

This sacred anointing

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One." 1 John 2:20

Wherever the anointing of the Holy One touches a man’s heart it spreads itself, widening and extending its operations. It thus communicates divine gifts and graces wherever it comes. It . . .

bestows and draws out faith,

gives repentance and godly sorrow,

causes secret self-loathing, and

separation from the world,

draws the affections upwards,

makes sin hated, and

Jesus and His salvation loved.

Wherever the anointing of the Holy Spirit touches a man’s heart it diffuses itself through his whole soul, and makes him wholly a new creature. It . . .

gives new motives,

communicates new feelings,

enlarges and melts the heart, and

spiritualizes and draws the affections upwards.

Without this sacred anointing . . .

all our religion is a bubble,

all our profession a lie, and

all our hopes will end in despair.

O what a mercy to have one drop of this heavenly anointing! To enjoy one heavenly feeling! To taste the least measure of Christ's love shed abroad in the heart! What an unspeakable mercy to have one touch, one glimpse, one glance, one communication out of the fullness of Him who fills all in all!

By this anointing from the Holy One, the children of God are supported under . . .

afflictions,

perplexities,

and sorrows.

By this anointing from the Holy One, they see the hand of God . . .

in every chastisement,

in every providence,

in every trial,

in every grief, and

in every burden.

By this anointing from the Holy One they can bear chastisement with meekness; and put their mouth in the dust, humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God.

Every good word, every good work, every gracious thought, every holy desire, every spiritual feeling do we owe to this one thing: the anointing of the Holy One.

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One." 1 John 2:20

What makes the children of God so strange?

"To God's elect, strangers in the world." 1 Peter 1:1

Strangers!

What makes the children of God so strange?

The grace of God which calls them out of this wretched world. Every man who carries the grace of God in his bosom is necessarily, as regards the world, a stranger in heart, as well as in profession, and life.

As Abraham was a stranger in the land of Canaan; as Joseph was a stranger in the palace of Pharaoh; as Moses was a stranger in the land of Egypt; as Daniel was a stranger in the court of

Babylon; so every child of God is separated by grace, to be a stranger in this ungodly world.

And if indeed we are to come out from it and to be separate, the world must be as much a strange place to us; for we are strangers to . . .

its views,

its thoughts,

its desires,

its prospects,

its anticipations,

in our daily walk,

in our speech,

in our mind,

in our spirit,

in our judgment,

in our affections.

We will be strangers from . . .

the world’s company,

the world’s maxims,

the world’s fashions,

the world’s spirit.

"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13 By His wounds we are healed

Sin has thoroughly diseased us, and poisoned our very blood.

Sin has diseased our understanding, so as to disable it from receiving the truth.

Sin has diseased our conscience, so as to make it dull and heavy, and undiscerning of right and wrong.

Sin has diseased our imagination, polluting it with every idle, foolish, and licentious fancy.

Sin has diseased our memory, making it swift to retain what is evil, slow to retain what is good.

Sin has diseased our affections, perverting them from all that is heavenly and holy, and fixing them on all that is earthly and vile.

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Strangle and suffocate it!

"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself! But in Me is your help." Hosea 13:9

Is not this a true charge? Does not your conscience agree with it, as a well founded accusation? Have you not willingly with your eyes open, run into some sin, which, but for God's mercy and upholding hand, would have proved your certain destruction? Have you not stood upon the very brink of some deep pit, down into which one more step would have plunged you?

As you realize the evils of your heart, you see what a marvel it is, that grace is kept alive in your bosom! You see yourself surrounded on every side with that which would inevitably destroy it--but for the mighty power of God!

You look back and wonder how the life of God in your soul has been preserved so many years. Sometimes you have been sunk into such carnality. You have felt such emptiness of all good, and such proneness to all evil, that you wonder how you have not been swallowed up, overcome, and carried away into the pit of destruction!

David said, "I am as a wonder to many." But you can say, "I am a wonder to myself!" The world, the devil, and your own evil heart, have been for years all aiming to destroy the precious life of God in your soul--all stretching out their hands to strangle and suffocate it!

And yet, in His mysterious wisdom, unspeakable grace, and tender compassion, He has kept the holy principle alive in your soul.

O, the mystery of redeeming love!

O, the blessedness of preserving grace! We have been preserved, upheld, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

"O Lord, You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit!" Psalms 30:3

"He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping!" Psalms 66:9

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

They will never perish!

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay! And God, in His mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation." 1 Peter 1:4-5

The elect are preserved in Christ, BEFORE they are called by grace. They are kept by the power of God from perishing in their unregeneracy.

Have not you been almost miraculously preserved in the midst of dangers, and escaped when others perished by your side--or been raised up as it were, from the very brink of destruction and the very borders of the grave?

Besides some striking escapes from what are called 'accidents', three times in my life--once in infancy, once in boyhood, and once in manhood, I have been raised up from the borders of the grave, when almost everyone who surrounded my bed thought I would not survive the violence of

the attack.

Were not these instances of being kept by the power of God? I could not die until God had manifested His purposes of electing grace and mercy to my soul.

But the elect are also kept by the mighty power of God AFTER they are called by grace; for they are in the hollow of His hand, and are kept as the apple of His eye.

I will not say they are kept from all sins. Yet I will say that they are kept from damning sins. They are kept especially from three things . . .

from the dominion of sin,

from daring and final presumption,

from lasting and damnable error.

They are never drowned in the sins and evils of the present life so as to be swallowed up in them--for it is impossible that they can ever be lost!

They are therefore preserved in hours of temptation, for they are guarded by all the power of Omnipotence, shielded by the unceasing care and watchfulness of Him who can neither slumber nor sleep.

Looking back through a long vista of years, can you not see how the hand of God has been with you--how He has held you up, and brought you through many a storm, and preserved you under powerful temptations? How gently He sometimes drew you on, or sometimes kept you back?

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish! No one can snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28

Having chosen us, God begets us with His word, regenerates us by a divine influence, and makes us new creatures by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

09.04 PEARLS FROM PHILPOT cont'd2

con’td

All things!

"You crowned Him with glory and honor and put all things under His feet. In putting all things under Him, God left nothing that is not subject to Him." Hebrews 2:7-8

See the sovereign supremacy of Jesus!

There may be circumstances in your earthly lot which at this moment are peculiarly trying. You look around and wonder how this or that circumstance will terminate. At present it looks very dark--clouds and mists hang over it, and you fear lest these clouds may break, not in showers upon your head, but burst forth in the lightning flash and the thunder stroke!

But all things are put in subjection under Christ’s feet! That which you dread cannot take place except by His sovereign will--nor can it move any further except by His supreme disposal. Then make yourself quiet. He will not allow you to be harmed. That frowning providence shall only execute His sovereign purposes, and it shall be among those all things which, according to His promise, shall work together for your good.

None of our trials come upon us by chance! They are all appointed in weight and measure--are all designed to fulfill a certain end. And however painful they may at present be, yet they are intended for your good.

When the trial comes upon you, what a help it would be for you if you could view it thus, "This trial is sent for my good. It does not spring out of the dust. The Lord Himself is the supreme disposer of it. It is very painful to bear; but let me believe that He has appointed me this peculiar trial, along with every other circumstance. He will bring about His own will therein, and either remove the trial, or give me patience under it, and submission to it."

You may be afflicted by sickness. It is not by chance that such or such sickness visits your body--that the Lord sees fit to afflict head, heart, chest, liver, hand, foot, or any other part of your body. All things are put in subjection under Him, and He has not exempted sickness and disease! Whatever you suffer in bodily disease, He appoints and arranges it for your good. Be resigned to His holy and almighty will.

All your afflictions are put under the feet of Jesus! You may think at times how harshly you are dealt with--mourning, it may be, under family bereavements, sorrowing after the loss of your ’household treasures’--a beloved husband, wife, or child. But O that you could bear in mind that all your afflictions, be they what they may, are put under the feet of Jesus, so that, so to speak, not one can crawl from under His feet but by His permission--and, like scolded hounds, they crawl again beneath them at a word of command from His lips!

Let us then hold fast this truth, for on it depends so much of our comfort.

Without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish!

"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish! Instead, she will be holy and without fault." Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:27

What are we ourselves as viewed by our own eyes? Full of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes! And What do we see in ourselves every day, but sin and filth and folly? What evil is there in the world that is not in us, and in our hearts? It is true others cannot read our hearts. But we read them; yes, are every day, and sometimes all the day reading them. And what do we read there? Like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written within and without;" and we may well add, if we rightly read what is there written, we have every reason to say it is "full of lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Ezekiel 2:10

For I am sure that there is nothing that we see there every day and every hour, but would cover us with shame and confusion of face, and make us blush to lift up our eyes before God, or almost to appear in the presence of our fellow man!

But neither others, nor we ourselves, now see what the church one day will be, and what she ever was in the eyes of Jesus! He could look through all the sins and sorrows of this intermediate period, and fix His eye upon the bridal day--the day when before assembled angels, in the courts of heaven, in the

realms of eternal bliss, He would present her to Himself a glorious church, without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy, and without fault.

O what a day will that be, when the Son of God shall openly wed His espoused bride; when there shall be heard in heaven, "what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting--Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns! Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready." Revelation 19:6-7

Bitten by this serpent's tooth

No man has ever sounded the depths of the fall.

The children of God have indeed discoveries of the evil of sin. And they have such views at times of the desperate wickedness and awful depravity of human nature, that they seem as if filled with unspeakable horror at the hideous enormity of the corruption that works in their carnal mind.

But no man has ever seen, as no man ever can see, in this time-state, what sin is to its full extent, and as it will be hereafter developed in the depths of hell.

We may indeed in our own experience see something of its commencement; but we can form little idea of its progress, and still less of its termination. For sin has this peculiar feature attending it, that it ever spreads and spreads until it involves everything that it touches in utter ruin.

We may compare it in this point of view to the venom-fang of a serpent. There are serpents of so venomous a kind, as for instance the Cobra de Capello, or hooded snake, that the introduction of the minutest portion of venom from their poison tooth will in a few hours convert all the fluids of the

body into a mass of putrefaction. A man shall be in perfect health one hour, and bitten by this serpent's tooth shall in the next, be a loathsome mass of rottenness and corruption. Such is sin.

The introduction of sin into the nature of Adam at the fall was like the introduction of poison from the fang of a deadly serpent into the human body. It at once penetrated into his soul and body, and filled both with death and corruption.

Or, to use a more scriptural figure, sin may be compared to the disease of leprosy, which usually began with a "bright spot," or "rising in the skin", scarcely perceptible, and yet spread and spread until it enveloped every member, and the whole body becoming a mass of putrefying hideous corruption.

Or sin may be compared to a cancer, which begins perhaps with a little lump causing a slight itching, but goes on feeding upon the part which it attacks, until the patient dies worn out with pain and suffering.

Now if sin be . . .

this venom fang,

this spreading leprosy,

this loathsome cancer;

if its destructive power be so great that, unless arrested and healed, it will destroy body and soul alike in hell, the remedy for it, if remedy there be, must be as great as the malady. Thus if there be . . .

a cure for sin,

a remedy for the fall,

a deliverance from the wrath to come,

it must be at least as full and as complete as the ruin which sin has entailed upon us.

The man who has slight, superficial views and feelings of sin will have equally slight and superficial views of the atonement made for sin. The groans of Christ will never sound in his ears as the dolorous groans of an agonizing Lord; the sufferings of Christ will never be opened up to his soul as the sorrows of Immanuel, God with us; the death of Christ will never be viewed by him, as the blood shedding of the darling Son of God. While he has such slight, superficial views of the malady, his views of the remedy will be equally slight and superficial.

As we are led down into a spiritual knowledge of self and sin, so we are led up into a gracious knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By suffering all the penalties of our sin, Jesus redeems us from the lowest hell and raises us up to the highest heaven--empowering poor worms of earth to soar above the skies and live forever in the presence of Him who is a consuming fire!

"And she will have a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Like a weed upon a dung-heap!

"I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13

Our hearts are desperately proud.

If there is one sin which God hates more than another, and more sets Himself against, it is the sin of pride.

Like a weed upon a dung-heap, pride grows more profusely in some soils, especially when well fertilized by . . .

rank,

riches,

praise,

flattery,

our own ignorance,

and the ignorance of others.

We all inherit pride from our fallen ancestor Adam, who got it from Satan, that "king over all the children of pride."

Those, perhaps, who think they possess the least pride, and view themselves with wonderful self-admiration as the humblest of mortals, may have more pride than those who feel and confess it. It may only be more deeply hidden in the dark recesses of their carnal mind.

As God then sees all hearts, and knows every movement of pride, whether we see it or not, His purpose is to humble us!

When I look back upon my life, and see . . .

all my sins,

all my follies,

all my slips,

all my falls,

my conscience testifies of the many things I have thought, said, and done, which . . .

grieve my soul,

make me hang my head before God,

put my mouth in the dust, and

confess my sins unto Him.

When I contrast my own exceeding sinfulness with . . .

God’s greatness,

God’s majesty,

God’s holiness, and

God’s purity . . .

I fall down, humbly and meekly before Him,

I put my mouth in the dust,

I acknowledge I am vile.

"I am nothing but dust and ashes." (Abraham)

"Behold, I am vile!" (Job)

"Woe to me! I am ruined!" (Isaiah)

"I am a sinful man!" (Peter)

He alone can rescue me

"My eyes are always looking to the Lord for help, for He alone can rescue me from the traps of my enemies." Psalms 25:15

"Oh, please help us against our enemies, for all human help is useless." Psalms 60:11

What a mighty God we have to deal with!

And what would suit our case but a mighty God?

Have we not mighty sins?

Have we not mighty trials?

Have we not mighty temptations?

Have we not mighty foes and mighty fears?

And who is to deliver us from all this mighty army, except the mighty God? It is not a ’little God’ (if I may use the expression) that will do for God’s people. They need a ’mighty God’, because they are in circumstances where none but a mighty God can intervene in their behalf.

And it is well worth our notice that the Lord puts His people purposely into circumstances where they may avail themselves, so to speak, of His omnipotent power, and thus know from living personal experience, that He is a mighty God, not in mere doctrine and theory, but a mighty God in their special and particular behalf.

Why, if you did not feelingly and experimentally know . . .

your mighty sins,

your mighty trials,

your mighty temptations,

your mighty fears,

you would not need a mighty God.

O how this brings together the strength of God and the weakness of man! How it unites poor helpless creatures with the Majesty of heaven! How it conveys to feeble, worthless worms the very might of the Omnipotent Jehovah!

This sense of . . .

our weakness and His power,

our misery and His mercy,

our ruin and His recovery,

the aboundings of our sin and

the super-aboundings of His grace;

a feeling sense of these opposite yet harmonious things, brings us to have personal, experimental dealings with God. And it is in these personal dealings with God that the life of all religion consists.

"The Lord hears His people when they call to Him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles." Psalms 34:17

The Lord sometimes flogs His children home!

"As chastened, yet not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9

The Lord does not see fit to lay the same chastisements upon all His people. He has rods of different sizes and different descriptions; though all are felt to be rods when God brings them upon the back.

The Lord chastises with one hand, and upholds with the other. In your spiritual experience, you may have passed under many chastising strokes. And when they fell upon you, they seemed to come as a killing sentence from God’s lips. You feared your illness might end in death. Under your bereavement, you felt as if you could never hold up your head again. You thought your providential losses might prove to be your earthly ruin. Your family afflictions seemed to be so heavy, as to be radically incurable.

All these were killing strokes. But though chastened, you were not killed. You lost no divine life thereby; but you lost much that pleased the flesh; much that gratified the creature; much that looked well for days of prosperity, but would not abide the storm.

But you lost nothing that was for your real good.

If you lost bodily health; you gained spiritual health.

If you lost a dear husband or child; God filled up the void in your heart by making Christ more precious.

If you had troubles in your family; the Lord made it up by giving more manifestations of His love and grace.

Your very losses in providence were for your good; for God either made them up, or what you lost in providence He doubled in grace.

So that though chastened; you are not killed!

Has anything that has happened to you quenched or extinguished the life of God in your soul?

As the dross and tin were more separated; has not the gold shone more brightly? Have you not held spiritual things with a tighter grasp? When God chastens His people, it is not to kill them; it is . . .

to make them partakers of His holiness,

to revive their drooping graces,

to make them more sincere, upright and tender in conscience,

to make them more separate from the world,

to make them seek more His glory,

to make them have a more single eye to His praise,

to make them live more a life of faith.

Here is the blessedness--that when God chastises His people, it is not for their injury, but for their profit; not for their destruction, but for their salvation; not to treat them with the unkindness of an enemy, but with the love of a friend!

Look at the afflictions, chastenings and grievous sorrows that you have passed through. Have they been . . .

friends to you, or enemies?

instruments of helping you, or hindrances?

ladders whereby you have climbed up to heaven,

or steps whereby you have descended into hell?

means of taking you nearer to Christ, or means of carrying you more into the world?

If you know anything of God’s chastening, you will say, "Every stroke has brought me nearer to God! He has flogged me home!" As a father will seize his truant boy out of a horde of other children and flog him home, so the Lord sometimes flogs His children home! Every stroke laid upon their back brings them a step nearer to their home in the mansions above!

In your own experience, you know that God’s chastenings have not killed you. But rather they have been the means of reviving and keeping alive the work of grace upon your heart!

"As chastened, yet not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9

He may talk like an angel, and live like a devil.

There is "a knowledge of the things of God" which a man may possess without a personal experience of the new birth--without any divine operation upon his soul whatever, or any participation of the grace of God.

From reading the scriptures and hearing the Gospel preached, many attain to a carnal, intellectual, barren head knowledge of the truth; who, as to any experimental, vital, saving acquaintance with it, are still in the very gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

A man may have the ’knowledge of an apostle’ and the ’worldliness of a Demas’.

He may be clear in head, and rotten in heart.

He may talk like an angel, and live like a devil.

He may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and be nothing but a hypocrite and an impostor.

In our day such characters abound in the churches.

But distinct from this "head knowledge", as distinct from it as heaven from hell, there is a most blessed "spiritual knowledge" of the things of God, with which the people of God are favored.

"Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45 This idol-making, idol-loving world

’You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I brought you to Myself and carried you on eagle’s wings." Exodus 19:4

The idea here, is of snatching His people out of Egypt as an eagle would snatch her young away from the hands of the spoiler of her nest, and bear them away and aloft on her outstretched wings.

Deliverance . . .

from idolatry,

from bondage,

from a state of degradation and abject slavery,

is the leading idea of bringing His people out of Egypt.

So, spiritually, the Lord bears us out of a worse Egypt, by His Almighty power. Has He given you some deliverance from the world and the spirit of it, and brought you to Himself by the power of His grace? Has He carried you up out of sin . . .

its open commission,

its secret practice,

its inward indulgence,

and broken in some measure the love and the power of it?

Has He carried you not only out of the grosser iniquities of Egypt, but its more ’refined and acceptable sins’, such as . . .

creature idolatry,

religious lip-service,

self-righteousness, and

mocking God by superstition, tradition, and vain ceremony?

Has He carried you, as on eagles’ wings, out of all the idols of Egypt? For Egypt was a land teeming with idolatry, and therefore an apt emblem of this idol-making, idol-loving world.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians." Leviticus 26:13

"Praise be to the Lord, for He has saved you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has rescued His people from the power of Egypt!" Exodus 18:10

Accomplished actors

"The pulpit has its accomplished actors, as well as the playhouse!"

He has given me a cup of deep sorrow to drink

"He has filled me with bitterness. He has given me a cup of deep sorrow to drink." Lamentations 3:15

The Lord’s people have many hard lessons which they have to learn in the ’school of Christ’. Each one has to carry a daily cross, and are burdened and pressed down under its weight. This daily cross may and does differ in individuals. But every child of God has his own cross, which laid upon his shoulders by an invincible hand, he has, for the most part, to carry down to the very grave.

Thus, some of God’s people are afflicted in body from the very time the Lord begins His work of grace upon their heart. Or if exempt from disease, are shattered in nerve, depressed in spirits, and weighed down by lassitude and languor, often harder to bear than disease itself.

Some are tied to ungodly partners, meeting with opposition and persecution at every step.

Others have nothing but trouble in their family, either from the invasion of death into their circle, or what sometimes is worse than death--disgrace, shame, and ungodliness.

Others have little else but one continual series of losses and crosses in their circumstances, wave after wave rolling over their heads.

O, view the family of God toiling homeward . . .

some dragging along an afflicted body;

others a wounded spirit;

others carrying upon their shoulders dying children;

others with scarcely a rag to their back or a crust in their hand;

footsore,

fearful in heart,

trembling at a rustling leaf,

a deep river to pass, and

a furious enemy in sight.

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength!" Habakkuk 3:17-19

Were we left wholly in its hands!

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man." 1 Corinthians 10:13

There is not a single sin ever perpetrated by man which does not lie deeply hidden in the recesses of our fallen nature! But these sins do not stir into activity until temptation draws them forth.

Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart, what fire is to stubble. Sin lies quiet in our carnal mind until temptation comes to set it on fire.

Temptation is to our corrupt nature, what the spark is to gunpowder. Have you not found this sad truth: how easily by temptation are the corruptions of our wretched heart set on fire, and burst into every kind of daring and dreadful iniquity?

In temptation, we learn what sin is . . .

its dreadful nature,

its aggravated character,

its fearful workings,

its mad, its desperate upheavings against God,

and what we are or would be,

were we left wholly in its hands!

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." Matthew 26:41

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

Romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy?

"The things on earth will be shaken, so that only eternal things will be left." Hebrews 12:27

Man is always seeking happiness in some shape or other, in the things of this world. He does not see or feel that outside of God, happiness is impossible; and that to seek it in 'the creature' is to

add sin to sin. But look at this vain attempt in a variety of instances.

Look at people young in life. What romantic prospects dance before their eyes! "What dreams of love and home by flowery streams!" But what a rude shock do these 'dreams of earthly happiness' usually experience! This is true of most, if not all, who build their hopes of happiness on 'the creature'. But particularly so in the case of the family of God. How jealous is He of all such schemes of earthly bliss--and how, sooner or later, He shatters them all by His mighty hand!

Look, for instance, at health, that indispensable element of all earthly happiness! What a rude shock many of the dear family of God have experienced in their earthly tabernacle, even in their youthful days, by accident or disease, so as to mar all earthly happiness almost before the race of life was begun!

Look again at wedded happiness--that "perpetual fountain of domestic sweets"--how bitter a drop often falls from the hands of God into that honeyed cup! Why does that mourning widow sigh? Why does her heart swell, and her eye run over? What does that scalding drop on her cheek mean?

How many a blooming daughter has faded away in consumption before a mother's eye! How many a fine strong son has been cut down by an accident--or sudden illness has borne him away to the cold grave, in the very pride and prospect of life!

But apart from these elements of shattered and broken creature happiness, what disappointment, what vexation, what sorrow and care we find in everything we put our hands to! Even with health and home unbroken, wife and child untouched by death's cold hand, there is sin and misery enough in a man's own bosom to fill his heart with continual sorrow!

Thus wisely and mercifully, all our attempts to grasp earthly happiness fail and come to nothing.

Child of grace, do not murmur at the hand of the Lord which has broken your 'dreams of creature happiness'. God does not intend that you should have your heaven here on earth, nor live after the fashion of this world. It is a kind hand, though a rough one, which blasts all your schemes of creature happiness, which breaks your body into pieces with sickness, blights all your prospects of wealth, and fame, and reputation, and ambition, and pours bitter gall into each honeyed cup.

Why does the Lord brake all your earthly schemes of human happiness? Why does He blight all . . .

your prospects,

your plans of ambition and of success in life,

your romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy?

That they may all be removed out of your hearts' affections; and give you happiness which shall endure forever and ever!

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." Hebrews 12:28

The love of the truth

"They perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thessalonians 2:10

There is a receiving of 'the truth', and a receiving of 'the love of the truth'. These two things widely differ.

To receive the truth will not necessarily save; for many who receive the truth, never receive 'the love of the truth'.

Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed; but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive 'the love of the truth' by Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself.

"Yes, He is very precious to you who believe." 1 Peter 2:7

These "lovers" of ours

"I will run after my lovers and sell myself to them for food and drink, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil." Hosea 2:5

Here is the opening up of what we are by nature, what our carnal mind is ever bent upon, what we do or are capable of doing, except as held back by the watchful providence and unceasing grace and goodness of the Lord.

These "lovers" of ours are our old sins and former lusts which still crave for gratification. To these sometimes the carnal mind looks back and says, "Where are my lovers that gave me my food and drink? Where are those former delights that so pleased my vile passions, and so gratified my base desires?"

These lovers, then, are . . .

the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eyes,

and the pride of life;

all which, unless subdued by sovereign grace,

still work in our depraved nature, and seek to regain their former sway.

But the Lord, for the most part, mercifully interposes, nor will He usually let His children do what they gladly would do; or be what they gladly would be. He says, "therefore I will block your path with thornbushes; I will wall you in so that your cannot find your way." (Hosea 2:6)

The Lord, in His providence or in His grace, prevents our carnal mind from carrying out its base desires; hedges up our way with thorns--by which we may spiritually understand prickings of conscience, stings of remorse, pangs of penitence--which are so many thorny and briery hedges that fence up the way of transgression, and thus prevent our carnal mind from breaking forth into its old paths, and going after these former lovers to renew its ungodly alliance with them.

A hedge of thorns being set up by the grace of God, our soul is unable to break through this strong fence, because the moment that it seeks to get through it, or over it, every part of it presents a pricking brier or a sharp and strong thorn, which wounds and pierces our conscience.

What infinite mercy, what surpassing grace, are hereby manifested! Were our conscience not made thus tender so as to feel the pricking brier, we can hardly tell what might be the fearful consequence, or into what a miserable abyss of sin and transgression our soul would fall.

But these lacerating briers produce remorse of soul before God; for finding, as the Lord speaks, "that when she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them but not find them," there comes a longing in her mind for purer pleasures and holier delights than her adulterous lovers could give her. And thus a change in her feelings is produced, a revolution in her desires. "Then she will say, I will go back to my Husband as at first, for then I was better off than now." The idea is of an adulterous wife contrasting the innocent enjoyments of her first wedded love--with the state of misery into which she had been betrayed by base seducers.

And thus the soul spiritually contrasts its former enjoyment of the Lord's presence and power--with its present state of darkness and desertion. "Where," she would say, "are my former delights, my first joys, and the sweetness I had in days now passed, in knowing, serving, and worshiping the Lord? Ah! He was a kind and loving husband to me in those days. I will return to Him if He will graciously permit me, for it was better with me when I could walk in the light of His countenance, than since I have been seeking for my lovers, and reaping nothing but guilt, death, and condemnation."

It is in these storms

"When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone; but the righteous stand firm forever." Proverbs 10:25

The very storms through which the believer passes, will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ.

As the same wind that blows down the shallow-rooted tree, only establishes the deep-rooted tree--so the same storms which uproot the 'shallow professor', only establish the 'true believer' more firmly in Christ.

Though these storms may shake off some of his 'leaves', or break off some of the 'rotten boughs' at the end of the branch, they do not uproot the believer's faith, but rather strengthen it.

It is in these storms that he learns . . .

more of his own weakness, and of Christ's strength;

more of his own misery, and of Christ's mercy;

more of his own sinfulness, and of superabounding grace;

more of his own poverty, and of Christ's riches;

more of his own desert of hell, and of his own title to heaven.

It is in these storms that the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on; and goes on to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart; and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus.

"Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to You for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of Your wings until this violent storm is past." Psalms 57:1

His secret power and influence

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44

"I have loved you, My people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to Myself." Jeremiah 31:3

None can really come to Jesus by faith, unless this drawing power is put forth.

The Holy Spirit--that gracious and blessed Teacher, acts upon the soul by His secret power and influence, puts 'cords of love' and 'bands of mercy' around the heart, and by the attractive influence that He puts forth, draws the soul to Jesus' feet; and in due time reveals Him as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one.

As the Spirit reveals and manifests these precious things of Christ to the soul, He raises up a living faith whereby Jesus is sought unto, looked unto, laid hold of, and is brought into the heart with a divine power, there to be enshrined in its warmest and tenderest affections.

All through its Christian pilgrimage, this blessed Spirit goes on to deepen His work in the soul, and to discover more and more of the suitability, beauty, and blessedness of the Lord Jesus, as He draws the soul more and more unto Him. There is no maintaining of the light, life, and power of God in our souls, except as we are daily coming unto Jesus as the living stone, and continually living upon Him as the bread of life.

Every kind of sin

"He gave Himself to redeem us from every kind of sin." Titus 2:14

Sins of heart.

Sins of lip.

Sins of life.

There are five things as regards sin, from which our blessed Lord came to redeem us . . .

its guilt,

its filth,

its power,

its love,

its practice.

By His death, He redeemed us from sin's guilt.

By the washing of regeneration, He delivers us from sin’s filth.

By the power of His resurrection, He liberates us from sin’s dominion.

By revealing His beauty, He frees us from sin’s love.

By making the conscience tender in His fear, He preserves us from sin’s practice.

"The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

If your flesh had its full swing?

"The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit desires. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so that you cannot do the things that you would do." Galatians 5:17

At times, we can hardly tell how we are kept from evil.

There is in those who fear God, a spiritual principle which holds them up, and keeps them back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. This inner principle of grace and godly fear has, in thousands of instances, preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have . . .

ruined their reputation,

blighted their character,

brought reproach upon the cause of God, and

the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

They cannot do the EVIL things that they would do.

The flesh is always lusting towards evil, but grace is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. Grace does not wholly overcome the evil lustings of the flesh, but it can prevent those lustings from being carried out into open action. For the Spirit fights against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have its own will and way unchecked.

What a mercy lies couched here! For what would you be, if your flesh had its full swing?

What evil is there which you would not do?

What crime which you would not commit?

What slip which you would not make?

What open and horrid fall which you would not be guilty of--unless you were upheld by Almighty power--and the flesh curbed and checked from running its destructive course?

We can never praise God sufficiently for His restraining grace--for what would we be without it?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117 A coward’s castle

A pastor has no right to turn the pulpit into a coward's castle, and from there attack those in the congregation, whom he is afraid to meet face to face privately.

It is cruelly unfair to attack an individual who cannot defend himself—to hold him up, as if on the horns of the pulpit, before the congregation, (who generally know pretty well who is meant), and to condemn him without hearing his side, with the pastor being the only judge and jury.

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Man’s religion & God’s religion "That no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Corinthians 1:29

Man’s religion is to build up the creature. God’s religion is to throw the creature down in the dust of self-abasement, and to glorify Christ. A mystery to yourself "I find then, the law that, to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present." Romans 7:21 Are you not often a mystery to yourself? Warm one moment—cold the next! Abasing yourself one hour—exalting yourself the following! Loving the world, full of it, steeped up to your head in it today—crying, groaning, and sighing for a sweet manifestation of the love of God tomorrow! Brought down to nothingness, covered with shame and confusion, on your knees before you leave your room—filled with pride and self-importance before you have got down stairs! Despising the world, and willing to give it all up for one taste of the love of Jesus when in solitude—trying to grasp it with both hands when in business!

What a mystery are you! Touched by love—and stung with hatred! Possessing a little wisdom—and a great deal of folly! Earthly-minded—and yet having the affections in heaven! Pressing forward—and lagging behind! Full of sloth—and yet taking the kingdom with violence! And thus the Spirit, by a process which we may feel but cannot adequately describe—leads us into the mystery of the two natures perpetually struggling and striving against each other in the same bosom—so that one man cannot more differ from another, than the same man differs from himself. But the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is this—that our carnal mind undergoes no alteration, but maintains a perpetual war with grace. And thus, the deeper we sink in self-abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ, and the blacker we are in our own view—the more lovely does Jesus appear.

O, what slow learners!

"So Jesus said, Do you also still not understand?" Matthew 15:16

What lessons we need day by day to teach us anything aright, and how it is for the most part, "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." O, what slow learners!—what dull, forgetful scholars!—what ignoramuses!—what stupid blockheads!—what stubborn pupils! Surely no scholar at a school, old or young, could learn so little of natural things as we seem to have learned of spiritual things after so many years instruction—so many chapters read—so many sermons heard—so many prayers put up—so much talking about religion. How small, how weak is the amount of growth, compared with all we have read and heard and talked about! But it is a mercy that the Lord saves whom He will save—and that we are saved by free grace—and free grace alone!

Take me as I am "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." Jeremiah 17:14

Here is this sin—Save me from it! Here is this snare—Break it to pieces! Here is this lust—Lord, subdue it! Here is this temptation—Deliver me out of it! Here is my proud heart—Lord, humble it!

Here is my unbelieving heart—Take it away, and give me faith—give me submission to Your mind and will. Take me as I am with all my sin and shame and work in me everything well pleasing in Your sight!

Nothing but a huge clod of dust "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Everything upon earth, as viewed by the eyes of the Majesty of heaven—is base and paltry. Earth is after all, nothing but a huge clod of dust, and as such, as insignificant in the eyes of its Maker as the small dust of the balance, or the drop of the bucket. What, then, are its highest objects—its loftiest aims—its grandest pursuits—its noblest employments—in the sight of Him who inhabits eternity, but base and worthless? Vanity is stamped on all earth's attainments. All earthly pursuits and high accomplishments—wealth, rank, learning, power, or pleasure—end in death! The breath of God's displeasure soon lays low in the grave all that is rich and mighty, high and proud. But that effectual work of grace on the heart, whereby the chosen vessels of mercy are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, calls them out of those low, groveling pursuits—those earthly toys—those base and sensual lusts—in which other men seek at once their happiness and their ruin.

How can they escape?

"He will keep the feet of His saints." 1 Samuel 2:9 The Lord sees His poor scattered pilgrims traveling through a valley of tears, journeying through a waste-howling wilderness—a path beset with baits, traps, and snares in every direction. How can they escape? Why, the Lord 'keeps their feet.' He carries them through every rough place—as a tender parent carries a little child. When about to fall—He graciously lays His everlasting arms underneath them. And when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip—He mercifully upholds them from falling altogether. But do you think that He has not different ways for different feet? The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike—and will He cause all His people to walk in precisely the same path? No. We have each our path—each our troubles—each our trials—each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet. And the wisdom of the all-wise God is shown by His eyes being in every place—marking the footsteps of every pilgrim—suiting His remedies to meet their individual case and necessity—appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good—watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of His affection were bent on one individual—and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm!

God shall supply "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Php 4:19

Until we are brought into the depths of poverty, we shall never know nor value Christ's riches. If, then, you are a child of God, a poor and needy soul, a tempted and tried believer in Christ—God shall supply all your needs! They may be very great. It may seem to you, sometimes, as though there were not upon all the face of the earth such a wretch as you—as though there never could be a child of God in your state—so dark, so stupid, so blind and ignorant, so proud and worldly, so presumptuous and hypocritical, so continually backsliding after idols, so continually doing things that you know are hateful in God's sight. But whatever your need be—it is not beyond the reach of

divine supply! And the deeper your need, the more is Jesus glorified in supplying it. Do not say then, that your case is too bad—your needs are too many—your perplexities too great—your temptations too powerful. No case can be too bad! No temptations can be too powerful! No sin can be too black! No perplexity can be too hard! No state in which the soul can get, is beyond the reach of the almighty and compassionate love, that burns in the bosom of the Redeemer! Our infirmities

"For we don’t have a high priest who can’t be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15 The child of God, spiritually taught and convinced, is deeply sensible of his infirmities. Yes, that he is encompassed with infirmities—that he is nothing else but infirmities. And therefore the great High Priest to whom he comes as a burdened sinner—to whom he has recourse in the depth of his extremity—and at whose feet he falls overwhelmed with a sense of his helplessness, sin, misery, and guilt—is so suitable to him as one able to sympathize with his infirmities.

We would, if left to our own conceptions, naturally imagine that Jesus is too holy to look down in compassion on a filthy, guilty wretch like ourselves. Surely, surely, He will spurn us from His feet. Surely, surely, His holy eyes cannot look upon us in our blood, guilt, filth, wretchedness, misery and shame. Surely, surely, He cannot bestow one heart’s thought—one moment’s sympathy—or feel one spark of love towards those who are so unlike Him. Nature, sense, and reason would thus argue, "I must be holy, perfectly holy—for Jesus to love—I must be pure, perfectly pure—spotless and sinless, for Jesus to think of. But that I, a sinful, guilty, defiled wretch—that I, encompassed with infirmities—that I, whose heart is a cage of unclean birds—that I, stained and polluted with a thousand iniquities—that I can have any inheritance in Him—or that He can have any love or compassion towards me—nature, sense, reason, and human religion in all its shapes and forms, revolts from the idea."

It is as though Jesus specially address Himself to the poor, burdened child of God who feels his infirmities, who cannot boast of his own wisdom, strength, righteousness, and consistency—but is all weakness and helplessness. It seems as if He would address Himself to the case of such a helpless wretch—and pour a sweet cordial into his bleeding conscience. We, the children of God—we, who each know our own plague and our own sore—we, who carry about with us day by day a body of sin and death, that makes us lament, sigh, and groan—we, who know painfully what it is to be encompassed with infirmities—we, who come to His feet as being nothing and having nothing but sin and woe—we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities, but One who carries in His bosom that sympathizing, merciful, feeling, tender, and compassionate heart!

Why are you in despair?

"Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him, the saving help of my countenance, and my God." Psalms 42:11 Do you forget, O soul, that the way to heaven is a very strait and narrow path—too narrow for you to carry your sins in it with you? God sees it good that you should be cast down. You were getting very proud, O soul. The world had gotten hold of your heart. You were seeking great things for yourself. You were secretly roving away from the Lord. You were too much lifted up in SELF. The Lord has sent you these trials and difficulties and allowed these temptations to fall upon you, to bring you down from your state of false security.

There is reason therefore, even to praise God for being cast down, and for being so disturbed. How this opens up parts of God’s Word which you never read before with any feeling. How it gives you sympathy and communion with the tried and troubled children of God. How it weans and separates you from dead professors. How it brings you in heart and affection, out of the world that lies in wickedness. And how it engages your thoughts, time after time, upon the solemn matters of eternity—instead of being a prey to every idle thought and imagination, and tossed up and down upon a sea of vanity and folly. But, above all, when there is a sweet response from the Lord, and the power of divine things is inwardly felt, in enabling us to hope in God, and to praise His blessed name—then we see the benefit of being cast down and so repeatedly and continually disturbed.

Treasure in earthen vessels "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7 Do not be surprised if you feel that in yourself you are but an earthen vessel—if you are made deeply and daily sensible of your frail body. Do not be surprised if your clay house is often tottering—if sickness sometimes assails your mortal tabernacle—if in your flesh there dwells no good thing; if your soul often cleaves to the dust—and if you are unable to retain a sweet sense of God’s goodness and love. Do not be surprised nor startled at the corruptions of your depraved nature—at the depth of sin in your carnal mind—at the vile abominations which lurk and work in your deceitful and desperately wicked heart. Bear in mind that it is the will of God that this heavenly treasure which makes you rich for eternity, should be lodged in an earthen vessel.

We have ever to feel our native weakness—and that without Christ we can do nothing—that we may be clothed with humility, and feel ourselves the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. We thus learn to prize the heights, breadths, lengths, and depths of the love of Christ, who stooped so low to raise us up so high!

Trials, temptations, strippings, emptyings The very trials and afflictions, and the sore temptations through which God’s family pass, all eventually endear Christ to them. And depend upon it, if you are a child of God, you will sooner or later, in your travels through this wilderness, find your need of Jesus as "able to save to the uttermost." There will be such things in your heart, and such feelings in your mind—the temptations you will meet with will be such—that nothing short of a Savior that is able to save to the uttermost can save you out of your desperate case and felt circumstances as utterly lost and helpless. This a great point to come to. All trials, all temptations, all strippings, all emptyings that do not end here are valueless—because they lead the soul away from God. But the convictions, the trials, the temptations, the strippings, the emptyings, that bring us to this spot—that we have nothing, and can do nothing, but the Lord alone must do it all—these have a blessed effect, because they eventually make Jesus very near and dear unto us. No fear!

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:18

Those who have every reason to fear as to their eternal state before God, have for the most part, no fear at all. They are secure, and free from doubt and fear. The depths of human hypocrisy—the dreadful lengths to which profession may go—the deceit of the carnal heart—the snares spread for the unwary feet—the fearful danger of being deceived at the last—these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin. As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction—they are glad to be deceived! God does not see fit to disturb their quiet. He has no purpose of mercy towards them—they are not subjects of His kingdom—they are not objects of His love. He therefore leaves them carnally secure, as in a

dream—from which they will not awake until the day of judgment.

These difficulties!

"From all your idols will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25 When there are no crosses, temptations, or trials, a man is sure to go out after and cleave to idols. It matters not what experience he has had. If once he ceases to be plagued and tried, he will be setting up his household gods in the secret chambers of his heart. Profit or pleasure, self-indulgence or self-gratification, will surely, in one form or another, engross his thoughts, and steal away his heart. Nor is there anything too trifling or insignificant to become an idol. Whatever is meditated on preferably to God—whatever is desired more than He—whatever more interests us, pleases us, occupies our waking hours, or is more constantly in our mind—becomes an idol, and a source of sin. It is not the magnitude of the idol, but its existence as an object of worship—that constitutes idolatry. I have seen some 'Burmese idols' not much larger than my hand—and I have seen some 'Egyptian idols' weighing many tons. But both were equally idols—and the comparative size had nothing to do with the question. So spiritually, an idol is not to be measured by its size, or its relative importance or non-importance. A flower may be as much an idol to one man, as a chest full of gold to another. If you watch your heart, you will see idols rising and setting all day long, nearly as thickly as the stars by night. But God sends trials, difficulties, temptations, besetments, losses, afflictions, to pull down these idols—or rather to pull away our hearts from them. These difficulties pull us out of fleshly ease—make us cry for mercy—pull down all rotten props—hunt us out of false refuges—and strip us of vain hopes and delusive expectations.

Idolatry!

"You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Nothing is too small or too insignificant which, at times, may not be an idol. What is an idol? Something my carnal mind loves. How may I know whether my carnal mind loves it? When we think of it, and are very much pleased with it. We pet it, love and fondle it, dallying and playing with it, like a mother with her babe. See how she takes the little thing and gazes at it. Her eyes are fixed on it—she dotes upon it because she loves it. Thus we may know an idol if we examine our own hearts—by what our imagination, desires and secret thoughts are going out after. Instead of being spiritually-minded, having his heart and affections in heaven, he has something in his mind which it is going out after—something or other laying hold of the affections. The child of God has, more or less, all these evil propensities working within. There is idolatry in every man's heart. How deep this idolatry is rooted in a man's heart! How it steals upon his soul! Whatever is indulged in—how it creeps over him, until it gets such power that it becomes master. A man does not know himself if he does not know what power this idolatry has over him. None but God can make the man know it—and when the Lord delivers him, he then turns to God and says, "What a vile wretch I have been! What a monster to go after these idols, loving this thing, and that. A wretch—a monster of iniquity, the vilest wretch that ever crawled on the face of God's earth—for my wicked heart to go out after these idols!" When the soul is brought down to a sense of its vileness and loathsomeness—and God's patience and forbearance—it turns to God from idols, to serve the only living and true God, who pardons the idolater.

Inward conflicts

Through the inward conflicts, secret workings, mysterious changes, and ever-varying exercises of his soul, the true Christian becomes established in a deep experience of his own folly and God's wisdom—his own weakness and Christ's strength—his own sinfulness and the Lord's goodness—his own backslidings and the Spirit's recoveries—his own base ingratitude and Jehovah's patience—the aboundings of sin and the superaboundings of grace. He thus becomes daily more and more confirmed in the vanity of the creature—the utter helplessness of man—the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of the human heart—the sovereignty of distinguishing grace—the fewness of heaven-taught ministers—the scanty number of living souls—and the great rareness of true religion.

Wounds, bruises, putrefying sores

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither soothed with ointment." Isaiah 1:5-6

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin. Every mental faculty is depraved. The will chooses evil. The affections cleave to earthly things. The memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good. The judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces mindless or wrong decisions. The conscience, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence. When all these 'master faculties of the mind' are so drunken and disorderly—need we wonder that the bodily members are a godless, rebellious crew? Lusts call out for gratification. Unbelief and infidelity murmur. Tempers growl and mutter. Every bad passion strives hard for the mastery. O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose, have filled earth with misery, and hell with victims—which deluged the world with the flood—burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—and are ripening the world for the final conflagration! Every sin—which has made this fair earth a 'present hell' has filled the air with groans, and has drenched the ground with blood—dwells in your heart and mine!

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the Spirit of God, we feel indeed to be of all men most sinful and miserable—and of all most guilty, polluted, and vile. But it is this—and nothing but this—which cuts to pieces our 'fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and strength'—which slays our delusive hopes—and lays us low at the footstool of mercy—without one good thought, word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge. It is this which brings the soul to this point—that if saved, it can only be saved by the free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender compassion of Almighty God! The wilderness wanderer "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Psalms 107:4 The true Christian finds this world to be a wilderness. There is no change in the world itself. The change is in the man's heart. The wilderness wanderer thinks it altered—a different world from what he has hitherto known—his friends, his own family, the employment in which he is daily engaged, the general pursuits of men—their cares and anxieties, their hopes and prospects, their amusements and pleasures, and what I may call 'the general din and whirl of life'—all seem to him different to what they were—and for a time perhaps he can scarcely tell whether the change is in them, or in himself. This however is the prominent and uppermost feeling in his mind—that he finds himself, to his surprise—a wanderer in a world which has changed altogether its appearance to him. The fair, beautiful world, in which was all his happiness and all his home—has become to him a dreary wilderness. Sin has been fastened in its conviction on his

conscience. The Holy Spirit has taken the veil of unbelief and ignorance off his heart. He now sees the world in a wholly different light—and instead of a paradise it has become a wilderness—for sin, dreadful sin, has marred all its beauty and happiness.

It is not because the world itself has changed that the Christian feels it to be a wilderness—but because he himself has changed. There is nothing in this world which can really gratify or satisfy the true Christian. What once was to him a happy and joyous world has now become a barren wilderness. The scene of his former pursuits, pleasures, habits, delights, prospects, hopes, anticipations of profit or happiness—is now turned into a barren wasteland. He cannot perhaps tell how or why the change has taken place, but he feels it—deeply feels it. He may try to shake off his trouble and be a little cheerful and happy as he was before—but if he gets a little imaginary relief, all his guilty pangs come back upon him with renewed strength and increased violence. God means to make the world a wilderness to every child of His, that he may not find his happiness in it, but be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth.

Temptation "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation." 2 Peter 2:9

Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to be delivered from the power of a temptation—until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it. But when we really feel the burden of a temptation—when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it—when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it—when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart, beseeching Him to deliver us from it—I believe, that the Lord will, sooner or later, either remove that temptation entirely in His providence or by His grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil. As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "Their heart is divided—now shall they be found faulty" (Hosea 10:2)—as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes—"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways"—as long as we are hankering after the temptation—casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue—and though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away, there is no hearty cry—nor sigh—nor spiritual breathing of our soul—that God would remove it from us. But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted—and cry to Him that He would—for His honor and for our soul’s good—take the temptation away, or dull and deaden its power—sooner or later the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those temptations, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

Idling life away like an idiot or a madman When one is spiritually reborn, he sees at one and the same moment God and self—justice and guilt—power and helplessness—a holy law and a broken commandment—eternity and time—the purity of the Creator, and the filthiness of the creature. And these things he sees—not merely as declared in the Bible—but as revealed in himself as personal realities, involving all his happiness or all his misery in time and in eternity.

Thus it is with him as though a new existence had been communicated, and as if for the first time he had found there was a God! It is as though all his days he had been asleep, and were now awakened—asleep upon the top of a mast, with the raging waves beneath—as if all his past life

were a dream, and the dream were now at an end. He has been hunting butterflies—blowing soap bubbles—fishing for minnows—picking daisies—building houses of cards—and idling life away like an idiot or a madman. He had been perhaps wrapped up in a religious profession—advanced even to the office of a deacon, or mounted in a pulpit. He had learned to talk about Christ, and election, and grace, and fill his mouth with the language of Zion. But what did he experimentally know of these things? Nothing, absolutely nothing! Ignorant of his own ignorance (of all kinds of ignorance the worst)—he thought himself rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing—and knew not that he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. This wily devil!

What a foe to one's peace is one's own spirit! What shall I call it? It is often an infernal spirit. Why? Because it bears the mark of Satan upon it. The pride of our spirit, the presumption of our spirit, the hypocrisy of our spirit, the intense selfishness of our spirit, are often hidden from us. This wily devil, SELF, can wear such masks and assume such forms! This serpent, SELF, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances—that it is often hidden from ourselves. Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear? We all have our enemies. But who is our greatest enemy? He whom you carry in your own bosom—your daily, hourly, and unmovable companion, who entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart—who sometimes puffs up with pride, sometimes inflames with lust, sometimes inflates with presumption, and sometimes works under pretended humility and fleshly holiness. God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let SELF, (which is but another word for the creature,) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified! To bathe in the ocean of endless bliss!

"Passing through the Valley of Weeping." Psalms 84:6

Every living soul that has been experimentally taught his lost condition—that has known something of a resting place in Christ—that has turned his back upon both the world and the professing church—and gone weeping Zionward, that he may live in Jesus, feel His power, taste His love, know His blood, rejoice in His grace—every such soul shall, like Israel of old, be borne safely through this waste-howling wilderness—shall be carried through this valley of tears—and taken to enjoy eternal bliss and glory in the presence of Jesus—to bathe in the ocean of endless bliss! The King in His beauty "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." Isaiah 33:17 Where in heaven or on earth can there be found such a lovely Object as the Son of God? If you have never seen any beauty in Jesus you have never seen Jesus—He has never revealed Himself to you—you never had a glimpse of His lovely face—nor a sense of His presence—nor a word from His lips—nor a touch from His hand. But if you have seen Him by the eye of faith—and He has revealed Himself to you even in a small measure—you have seen a beauty in Him beyond all other beauties, for it is a holy beauty, a divine beauty, the beauty of His heavenly grace, the beauty of His uncreated and eternal glory.

How beautiful and glorious does He show Himself to be in His atoning blood and dying love. Even as sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and as hanging in torture and agony upon Calvary's cross—faith can see a beauty in the glorious Redeemer, even in the lowest depths of ignominy and shame! How is your Beloved better than others? My Beloved is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others! Can the Ethiopian change his skin?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 13:23

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin—and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin. The soul is proud—and needs to be humbled. The soul is careless—and needs to be awakened. The soul is alive—and needs to be killed. The soul is full—and requires to be emptied. The soul is whole—and needs to be wounded. The soul is clothed—and requires to be stripped. The soul is, by nature, self-righteous, self-seeking, buried deep in worldliness and carnality, utterly blind and ignorant—filled with presumption, arrogance, conceit, and enmity. It hates all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element. To make man the direct opposite of what he originally is—to make him love God instead of hating Him—to make him fear God instead of mocking Him—to make him obey God instead of rebelling against Him—to make him to tremble at His dreadful majesty instead of defiantly charging against Him—to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change requires the implantation of a new nature by the immediate hand of God Himself! Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to doing evil. That heavenly Teacher

We do not learn that we are sinners merely by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought—I might say, burnt into us. Nor will anyone sincerely and spiritually cry for mercy—until sin is spiritually felt and known—in its misery, in its dominion, in its guilt, in its entanglements, in its wiles and allurements, in its filth and pollution, and in its condemnation. Where the Holy Spirit works, He kindles sighs, groans, supplications, wrestlings, and pleadings to know Christ—feel His love—taste the efficacy of His atoning blood—and embrace Him as all our salvation and all our desire. And though there may, and doubtless will be, much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and apparent carelessness often felt—still that heavenly Teacher will revive His work, though often by painful methods—nor will He let the quickened soul rest short of a personal and experimental enjoyment of Christ and His glorious salvation.

Preserving grace before regeneration "To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." Jude 1:1

What a mercy it is for God’s people that before they have a ’vital union’ with Christ—before they are grafted into Him experimentally—they have an ’eternal, immanent union’ with Him before all worlds. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world—at such a time, at such a place, from such parents, under such circumstances—as God has appointed.

It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their lives are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are effectually called. They cannot die until God has brought about a vital union with Christ! Whatever sickness they may pass through—whatever injuries they may be exposed to—whatever perils assault them on sea or land—die they will not, die they cannot—until God’s purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of His love.

Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth—watched over their childhood—watched over their manhood—watched over them until the appointed time and spot, when "the God of all grace," according to His eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls,

and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

Free!

"If therefore the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:36 To be made free implies a liberty from the WORLD and the spirit of covetousness in the heart. If we were to follow into their shops some who talk much of 'gospel liberty,' we might find that the world's fetter had not been struck off their heart—that they had a 'golden' chain, though invisible to their own eyes, very closely wrapped round their heart. And there is a being made free from the power of SIN. I greatly fear, if we could follow into their holes and corners, and secret chambers, many who prattle about gospel liberty, we would find that sin had not yet lost its hold upon them, that there was some secret or open sin that entangled them, that there was some lust—some passion—some evil temper—some wretched pride or other—that wound its fetters very close round their heart. And also there is a being made free from SELF—proud self, presumptuous self, self-exalting self, flesh-pleasing self, hypocritical self—self in all its various shapes and turns—self in all its crooked hypocrisy and windings. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!

These fugitive, transitory things "The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does God's will remains forever." 1 John 2:17

There is a reality in true religion, and indeed, rightly viewed, a reality in nothing else. For every other thing passes away like a dream of the night, and comes to an end like a tale that is told. Now you cannot say of a thing that passes away and comes to an end that it is real. It may have the appearance of reality—when in fact it is but a shadow. Money, jewels, pictures, books, furniture, securities—are transitory. Money may be spent, jewels be lost, books be burnt, furniture decay, pictures vanish by time and age, securities be stolen. Nothing is real but that which has an abiding substance. Health decays, strength diminishes, beauty flees the cheek, sight and hearing grow dim, the mind itself gets feeble, riches make to themselves wings and flee away, children die, friends depart, old age creeps on—and life itself comes to a close.

These fugitive, transitory things are then mere shadows. There is no substance, no enduring substance in them. They are for time, and are useful for a time. Like our daily food and clothing, house and home—they support and solace us in our journey through life. But there they stop—when life ends they end with it. But real religion—and by this I understand the work of God upon the soul—abides in death and after death, goes with us through the dark valley, and lands us safe in a blessed eternity. It is, therefore, the only thing in this world of which we can say that it is real! "The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does the will of God will remain forever." A sad motley mixture (The following is an excerpt from Philpot's letter to a church which desired him to come as their pastor) "To me, the very least of all saints." Ephesians 3:8 "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy 1:15

Many are foolishly apt to think that a minister is more spiritual than anyone else. But I am daily more and more sensible of the desperate wickedness of my deceitful heart, and my miserable ruined state as a sinner by nature and by practice. I feel utterly unworthy of the name of a Christian, and to be ranked among the followers of the Lamb. I have no desire to palm myself off on any church, as though I were anything. I am willing to take a low place. The more you see of me, you will be sure to find out more of my infirmities, failings, waywardness, selfishness,

obstinacy, and evil temper. I am carnal, very proud, very foolish in imagination, very slothful, very worldly, dark, stupid, blind, unbelieving and ignorant. I cannot but confess that I am a strange compound—a sad motley mixture of all the most hateful and abominable vices that rise up within me, and face me at every turn.

Enlarge my heart "I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart." Psalms 119:32 The Word of God is full of precepts—but we are totally unable to perform them in our own strength. We cannot, without divine assistance, perform the precept with a single eye to the glory of God—from heavenly motives—and in a way acceptable to the Lord, without special power from on high. We need an extraordinary power to be put forth in our hearts—a special work of the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to spiritually fulfill in the slightest degree, the least of God's commandments.

None but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people. None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godwards, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things which is the plague and burden of a God-fearing soul. When the Lord is absent—when He hides His lovely face—when He does not draw near to visit and bless—the heart contracts in its own narrow compass. But when the Lord is pleased to favor the soul with His own gracious presence, and bring Himself near to the heart, His felt presence opens, enlarges, and expands the soul—so as to receive Him in all His love and grace. Our refuge!

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation—my stronghold." Psalms 18:2 On every side are hosts of enemies ever invading our souls—trampling down every good thing in our hearts—accompanied by a flying troop of temptations, doubts, fears, guilt and bondage sweeping over our soul. And we, as regards our own strength, are helpless against them. But there is a refuge set before us in the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King in Zion, is there held up before our eyes—as the Rock of our refuge—our strong Tower—our impregnable Fortress—and we are encouraged by every precious promise and every gospel invitation when we are overrun and distressed by these wandering, ravaging, plundering tribes—to flee unto and find a safe refuge in Him.

Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge. O Lord my God, I take refuge in You—save and deliver me from all who pursue me.

Supernatural light

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

Until, then, this supernatural light of God enters into the soul, a man has no saving knowledge of Jehovah. He may say his prayers—read his Bible—attend preaching—observe ordinances—bestow all his goods to feed the poor—or give his body to be burned—but he is as ignorant of God as the cattle that graze in the fields! He may call himself a Christian, and be thought such by others—talk much about Jesus Christ—hold a sound creed—maintain a consistent profession—pray at a prayer meeting with fluency and apparent feeling—stand up in a pulpit and contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace—excel hundreds of God's children in zeal, knowledge and conversation. And yet, if this ray of supernatural light has never shone into his

soul—he is only twofold more the child of hell than those who make no profession!

Little heathen (from Philpot’s biography, written by his son)

There was nothing my father mistrusted more than ’childhood piety.’ He insisted that children should never be taught or allowed to use the language of ’personal possession’ in reference to God. To sing, for instance, "Rock of Ages, cleft for ME" or, "MY Jesus." Herein he was most logical. For by early influence and example you can train up a child to be a little patriot—a little Catholic—a little Calvinist—or a little Bolshevist. But no power on earth can make him a child of God. He took great care that we, his children, attended the means of grace, and never missed chapel or family prayers. But he never expected us to be anything but little heathen. We had, it is true, to be well behaved little heathen. If not, we got "the stick," or its equivalent.

Wearied, torn & half expiring The poor sheep has gone astray—and having once left the fold, it is pretty sure to have gotten into some strange place or other. It has fallen down a rock—or has rolled into a ditch—or is hidden beneath a bush—or has crept into a cave—or is lying in some deep, distant ravine, where none but an experienced eye and hand can find it out.

Just so with the Lord’s lost sheep. They get into strange places. They fall off rocks—slip into holes—hide among the bushes—and sometimes creep off to die in caverns. When the sheep has gone astray, the shepherd goes after it to find it. Here he sees a footprint—there a little lock of wool torn off by the thorns. Every nook he searches—into every corner he looks—until at last he finds the poor sheep wearied, torn and half expiring, with scarcely strength enough to groan forth its misery. The shepherd does not beat it home, nor thrust the goad into its back—but he gently takes it up, lays it upon his shoulder, and brings it home rejoicing.

I am weak & ignorant, full of sin

I am weak and ignorant, full of sin and compassed with infirmity. But I bless God that He has in some measure shown me the power of eternal things, and by free and sovereign grace stopped me in that career of vanity and sin in which, to all outward appearance, I was fast hurrying down to the chambers of death. By the grace of God "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Corinthians 15:10

What but sovereign grace—rich, free and superabounding grace—has made the difference between you and the world who cannot receive Him? But for His divine operations upon your soul, you would still be of the world, hardening your heart against everything good and godlike, walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief and self-righteousness, until you sank down into the chambers of death! The anointing "But the anointing which you have received from Him remains in you." 1 John 2:27

All the powers of earth and hell are combined against this holy anointing, with which the children of God are so highly favored. But if God has locked up in the bosom of a saint one drop of this divine unction, that one drop is armor against all the assaults of sin—all the attacks of Satan—all the enmity of self—and all the charms, pleasures, and amusements of the world. Waves and billows of affliction may roll over the soul—but they cannot wash away this holy drop of anointing oil. Satan may shoot a thousand fiery darts to inflame all the combustible material of our carnal mind—but all his fiery darts cannot burn up that one drop of oil which God has laid up in the depths of a broken

spirit. The world, with all its charms and pleasures, and its deadly opposition to the truth of God, may stir up waves of ungodliness against this holy anointing—but all the powers of earth combined can never extinguish that one drop which God has Himself lodged in the depths of a believer's heart. And so it has been with all the dear saints of God. Not all their sorrows, backslidings, slips, falls, miseries, and wretchedness, have ever—all combined—drunk up the anointing that God has bestowed upon them. If sin could have done it—we would have sinned ourselves into hell long ago—and if the world or Satan could have destroyed it or us—they would long ago have destroyed both. If our carnal mind could have done it—it would have swept us away into floods of destruction. But the anointing abides sure, and cannot be destroyed—and where once lodged in the soul, it is secure against all the assaults of earth, sin, and hell. But the anointing which you have received from Him remains in you. Can I be a child of God, and be thus?

Perhaps you are a poor, tempted creature—and your daily sorrow, your continual trouble is that you are so soon overcome—that your temper, your lusts, your pride, your worldliness, and your carnal, corrupt heart are perpetually getting the mastery. And from this you sometimes draw bitter conclusions. You say, in the depth of your heart, "Can I be a child of God, and be thus? What mark have I of being in favor with God when I am so easily—so continually overcome?" But the Spirit reveals Christ—taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us—applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul. It is only in this way that He overcomes all unbelief and infidelity, doubt and fear, and sweetly assures us that all is well between God and the soul. Faith keeps eyeing the atonement—faith looks not so much to sin, as to salvation from sin—at the way whereby sin is pardoned, overcome, and subdued. The truth shall make you free!

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 To a spiritual mind, sweet and self-rewarding is the task, if task it can be called, of searching the Word as for hidden treasure. No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit of prayer and meditation—of separation from the world—of holy fear—of a desire to know the will of God and do it—of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity—to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which are stored up in the Scriptures—and this, not to furnish the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the bread of life.

Truth—received in the love and power of it, informs and establishes the judgment, softens and melts the heart, warms and draws upward the affections, makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender—is the food of faith—is the strength of hope—is the main-spring of love. To know the truth is to be made blessedly free—free from error—free from the vile heresies which everywhere abound—free from presumption—free from self-righteousness—free from the curse and bondage of the law—free from the condemnation of a guilty conscience—free from a slavish fear of the opinion of men—free from the contempt of the world—free from the scorn of worldly professors—free from following a multitude to do evil—free from companionship with those who have a name to live, but are dead. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!

Sin cannot be subdued in any other way "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Galatians 2:20

There is no way except by being spiritually immersed into Christ's death and life—that we can ever get a victory over our besetting sins. If, on the one hand, we have a view of a suffering Christ, and

thus become immersed into His sufferings and death—the feeling, while it lasts, will subdue the power of sin. Or, on the other hand, if we get a believing view of a risen Christ, and receive supplies of grace out of His fullness—that will lift us above sin's dominion.

If sin is powerfully working in us, we need one of these two things to subdue it. When there is a view of the sufferings and sorrows, agonies and death of the Son of God, power comes down to the soul in its struggles against sin and gives it a measure of holy resistance and subduing strength against it. So, when there is a coming in of the grace and love of Christ—it lifts up the soul from the love and power of sin into a purer and holier atmosphere.

Sin cannot be subdued in any other way. You must either be immersed into Christ's sufferings and death—or you must be immersed into Christ's resurrection and life. A sight of Him as a suffering God—or a view of Him as a risen Jesus—must be connected with every successful attempt to get the victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. You may strive, vow, and repent—and what does it all amount to? You sink deeper and deeper into sin than before. Pride, lust, and covetousness come in like a flood—and you are swamped and carried away almost before you are aware! But if you get a view of a suffering Christ, or of a risen Christ—if you get a taste of His dying love—a drop of His atoning blood—or any manifestation of His beauty and blessedness—there comes from this spiritual immersion into His death or His life a subduing power—and this gives a victory over temptation and sin which nothing else can or will give.

Yet I believe we are often many years learning this divine secret—striving to repent and reform, and cannot—until at last by divine teaching we come to learn a little of what the Apostle meant when he said, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." And when we can get into this life of faith—this hidden life, then our affections are set on things above. There is no use setting to work by 'legal strivings'—they only plunge you deeper in the ditch. You must get Christ into your soul by the power of God—and then He will subdue—by His smiles, blood, love, and presence—every internal foe.

Two kinds of repentance

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret—but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

There are two kinds of repentance which need to be carefully distinguished from each other, though they are often sadly confounded—evangelical repentance, and legal repentance. Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented—but their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience—not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry judge—but were not melted into contrition before Him as a forgiving Father. They neither hated their sins nor forsook them—they neither loved holiness nor sought it. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord—Esau plotted Jacob's death—Saul consulted the witch of Endor—Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison—and Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate, is the repentance of a child of God—that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the Spirit's gracious operations. This repentance does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law—but from His mercy in a blessed gospel—from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross—from a manifestation of pardoning love—and is always

attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence, with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it, with most hearty, sincere, and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil, and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God. Have we nothing to give to Christ? Have we nothing to give to Christ? Yes! Our sins—our sorrows—our burdens—our trials—and above all, the salvation and sanctification of our souls. And what has He to give us? What? Why—everything worth having—everything worth a moment's anxious thought—everything for time and eternity!

Suffering

"But the God of all grace, who has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while—make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10

There is no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement—except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is to perfect—to establish—to strengthen—and to settle it. By suffering, a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the character of Jehovah as revealed in the Scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose"—in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God's eternal purpose—and are all tending to the good of the Church, and to God's eternal glory. His soul, too, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature—into the conviction that the world is but a shadow—and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped—that of all things sin is most to be dreaded—and the favor of God above all things most to be coveted—that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified—that all things are passing away—and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity. Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home. In this scene of confusion & distraction

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for—but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Romans 8:26

We don't know what we ought to pray for. How often do we find and feel this to be our case—darkness covers our mind—ignorance pervades our soul—unbelief vexes our spirit—guilt troubles our conscience—a crowd of evil imaginations, or foolish or worse than foolish wanderings distract our thoughts—Satan hurls in thick and fast his fiery darts—a dense cloud is spread over the mercy-seat—infidelity whispers its vile suggestions—until, amid all this rabble throng, such confusion and bondage prevail that words seem idle breath, and prayer to the God of heaven but empty mockery. In this scene of confusion and distraction, when all seems going to the wreck—how kind, how gracious is it in the blessed Spirit to come, as it were, to the rescue of the poor bewildered saint, and to teach him how to pray and what to pray for. He is therefore said to help our weaknesses, for these evils of which we have been speaking are not willful, deliberate sins, but wretched infirmities of the flesh. He helps, then, our infirmities—by subduing the power and prevalence of unbelief—by commanding in the mind a solemn calm—by rebuking and chasing away Satan and his fiery darts—by awing the soul with a reverential sense of the power and presence of God—by presenting Jesus before our eyes as the Mediator at the right hand of the

Father—by raising up and drawing forth faith upon His Person and work, blood and righteousness—and, above all, by Himself interceding for us and in us with groans that words cannot express. His own sore

"When a prayer or plea is made by any of Your people Israel—each one aware of his own sore and his own afflictions, and spreading out his hands toward this Temple—then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men." 2 Chronicles 6:29-30 The man for whom Solomon prays is he who knows and feels, painfully feels, his "own sore" and his "own afflictions"—whose heart is indeed a grief to him—whose sins do indeed trouble him. How painful this sore often is! How it runs night and day! How full of ulcerous matter! How it shrinks from the probe! Most of the Lord's family have a "sore"—each some tender spot—something perhaps known to himself and to God alone—the cause of his greatest grief. It may be some secret slip he has made—some sin he has committed—some word he has spoken—or some evil thing he has done. He has been entangled, and entrapped, and cast down—and this is his grief and his sore which he feels—and that at times deeply before God. For such Solomon prays, Then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart, for You alone know the hearts of men. Yes—God alone knows the heart—He knows it completely—and sees to its very bottom!

What are we, when we have no trials? The Lord has appointed the path of sorrow for the redeemed to walk in. Why? One purpose is to wean them from the world—another purpose is to show them the weakness of the creature—a third purpose is to make them feel the liberty and vitality of genuine godliness made manifest in their soul's experience.

What are we, when we have no trials? Light, frothy, worldly-minded, carnal, frivolous. We may talk of the things of God, but they are at a distance—there are no solemn feelings—no melting sensations—no real brokenness—no genuine contrition—no weeping at the divine feet—no embracing of Christ in the arms of affection. What can bring a man here? A few dry notions floating to and fro in his brain? That will never bring the life and power of vital godliness into a man's heart. It must be by being 'experimentally acquainted with trouble.' When he is led into the path of tribulation, he then begins to long after, and, in God's own time and way, he begins to drink into, the sweetness of vital godliness, made manifest in his heart by the power of God. When affliction brings a man down, it empties him of all his high thoughts, and lays him low in his own eyes.

Spiritual poverty "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Matthew 5:3

Spiritual poverty is a miserable feeling of soul-emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the lowest hell. To be poor in spirit, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God. He who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings forth of heart as a needy, naked wretch—he who has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God—has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor. The religion of a dead professor

How different the religion of a child of God is, from the religion of a dead professor! The religion of a dead professor—begins in self, and ends in self—begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly—begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness—begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation! There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord. But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens and sorrows—yet he never can be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory. Everything short of that leaves him empty. All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to feel His presence, taste His love, enjoy His favor, see His glory—nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges His people with. Have we not leaned upon a thousand things?

"Behold, you trust on the staff of this bruised reed, even on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it." Isaiah 36:6 Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us. Our own strength and resolutions—the world and the church—sinners and saints—friends and enemies—have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls. The Lord Himself has to wean us—from the world—from friends—from enemies—from self—in order to bring us to lean upon Himself—and every prop He will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon His Person, love, blood, and righteousness. No sight, short of this "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:24

We beg of the Lord, sometimes, to give us a broken heart—a contrite spirit—a tender conscience—and a humble mind. But it is only a view by faith of what the gracious Redeemer endured upon the cross, when He bore our sins in his own body with all their weight and pressure, and with all the anger of God due to them, that can really melt a hard, and break a stony heart. No sight, short of this, can make sin felt to be hateful—bring tears of godly sorrow out of the eyes, sobs of true repentance out of the bosom, and the deepest, humblest confessions before God as to what dreadful sinners and base backsliders we have been before the eyes of His infinite Purity, Majesty, and Holiness.

Oh, what hope is there for our guilty souls—what refuge from the wrath of God so justly our due—what shelter from the curse of a fiery law, except it be in the cross of Jesus? O for a view of Him revealed to the eyes of our enlightened understanding, as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree! The penetrating light of the spirit

"For God . . . . has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6 "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things." 1 John 2:20 The only saving light is the light of God shining into the soul—giving us to see and know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." A man may have the clearest light in his judgment, and yet never have the penetrating light of the Spirit producing conviction in his soul. He may have the soundest knowledge of the doctrines of grace, and see the harmonious scheme of salvation—and yet never have by divine teaching, seen a holy God, nor have ever felt the spirituality of God’s righteous law condemning him as a transgressor. If we do not have this penetrating light of the Spirit, we shall be sure to go astray. We shall be entangled in

some error—plunge into some heresy—imbibe some doctrine of devils—drink into some dreadful delusion—or fall into some dreadful sin—and have our faith shipwrecked forever. A false light can but wreck us on the rocks of presumption or despair. But the light of divine life in the soul is accompanied with all the graces of the Spirit. It is the light of the glory of God—the light of Jesus' countenance—and the light of the Spirit's teaching—and therefore an infallible guide and guard. And this infallible pilot will guide the soul to whom it is given safe into the harbor of endless rest and peace.

All true religion

Jesus is our sun, and without Him all is darkness—our life, and without Him all is death—the beginner and finisher of our faith—the substance of our hope—the object of our love. It is the Spirit who quickens us to feel our need of Christ—to seek all our supplies in Him and from Him—to believe in Him unto everlasting life, and thus live a life of faith upon Him. By His secret teachings, inward touches, gracious smiles, soft whispers, sweet promises, manifestations of Christ's glorious Person and work, Christ's agonizing sufferings and dying love—the Holy Spirit draws the heart up to Christ. He thus wins our affections, and setting Christ before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One," draws out that love and affection towards Jesus which puts the world under our feet.

All true religion flows from the Spirit's grace, presence and power. The regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible for a dead soul to believe in God—know God—or love God. It must be quickened into spiritual life before it can savingly know the only true God. And thus there lies at the very threshold—in the very heart and core of the case—the absolute necessity of the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit upon the soul. The very completeness and depth of the fall render the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as necessary, as indispensable as the redeeming work of the Son of God. This hard school of painful experience In times of trial and darkness, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God—they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie—they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing—that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God—and that all they are and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy—with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace—the rich, free, undeserved, yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God. They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness—and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility, that lovely, becoming garb—cease from their own strength and wisdom—and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

10.01. Volume 1 cont'd

Difficulties, obstacles & hindrances "Then shall we know, if we press on to know the Lord." Hosea 6:3 The expression, "press on," implies that there are many difficulties, obstacles and hindrances in a man's way, which keep him back from "knowing the Lord." Now the work of the Spirit in his soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles—to lead him forward—to keep alive in him the fear of God—to strengthen him in his inner man—to drop in those hopes—to communicate that inward grace—so that he is compelled to press on. Sometimes he seems driven, sometimes drawn, sometimes led, and sometimes carried, but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarcely knows how—he still "presses on." His very burdens make him groan for deliverance—his very temptations cause him to cry for help—the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step—the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide—so that the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on—and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, until He sets him in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. The Christian is a marvel to himself. Carried on, and yet so secretly—worked upon, and yet so mysteriously—and yet led on, guided, and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles—that he is a miracle of mercy as he is carried on amid all difficulties, obstacles, trials, and temptations. The poison fang of sin!

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither soothed with ointment." Isaiah 1:6

We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are, and what they are capable of—we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind, before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace. When the Church of God fell in Adam, she fell with a crash which broke every bone and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from head to toe. Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed—her understanding was blinded, her conscience stupefied, her affections alienated. Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted. When Adam fell into sin and temptation, sin rushed into every faculty of body and soul and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being. As when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent, the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot—so did the poison fang of sin penetrate into Adam's inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown. But it is only as sin's desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality. The whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint! Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin. Every mental faculty is depraved. The will chooses evil—the affections cleave to earthly things—the memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good—the

judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces heedless or wrong decisions—the conscience, like an opium eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupefied silence. A penitent backslider & a forgiving God!

"And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." Luke 15:20

After a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of His dear Son, he may wander from his mercies—stray away from these choice gospel pastures—and get into a waste-howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water—and yet, though half starved for poverty, has in himself no power to return. But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place He brings him to is the mercy seat, confessing his sins and seeking mercy.

O what a meeting! A penitent backslider and a forgiving God! O what a meeting! A guilty wretch drowned in tears—and a loving Father falling upon his neck and kissing him! O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace superabounding over all his abounding sins—and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day—and melting his heart into contrition and love!

Salvation!

"I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation." Revelation 12:10 The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is "salvation." To be saved from—death and hell—the worm which dies not—the fire which is not quenched—the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit—the companionship of tormenting fiends—all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned—blaspheming God in unutterable woe—an eternity of misery without hope—and saved into—heaven—the sight of Jesus as He is—perfect holiness and happiness—the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints! And all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity! What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word salvation! A peculiar people "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Peter 2:9 May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave Himself to purify unto Himself a peculiar people—a people whose thoughts are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ—a people whose affections are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above—a people whose prayers are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication—a people whose sorrows are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source—a people whose joys are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger cannot understand—a people whose hopes are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil—a people whose expectations are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world—but are looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God. They make it manifest that they are a peculiar people by walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb—taking up the cross—denying themselves—and living to the honor, praise, and glory of God.

Softened, broke & melted your heart "I drew them with cords of a man, with ties of love." Hosea 11:4 When God draws His people near unto Himself, it is not done in a mechanical way. They are drawn, not with cords of iron, but with the cords of kindness—not as if God laid an iron arm upon

His people to drag them to Himself, whether they wished to come or not. God does not so act in a way of mechanical force. We therefore read, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." He touches their heart with His gracious finger, and He communicates to their soul both faith and feeling. He melts, softens, and humbles their heart by a sense of His goodness and mercy—for it is His goodness, as experimentally felt and realized, which leads to repentance.

If you have ever felt any secret and sacred drawing of your soul upward to heaven, it was not compulsion—not violence—not a mechanical constraint—but an arm of pity and compassion let down into your very heart, which, touching your inmost spirit, drew it up into the bosom of God. It was some view of His goodness, mercy, and love, with some dropping into your spirit of His pity and compassion towards you, which softened, broke and melted your heart. You were not driven onward by being flogged and scourged, but blessedly drawn with the cords of kindness, which seemed to touch every tender feeling and enter into the very depths of your soul.

Fixed & fastened by an Almighty hand

Truth, as it stands in the naked word of God, is lifeless and dead—and as such, has no power to communicate what it has not in itself—that is, life and power to the hearts of God's people. It stands there in so many letters and syllables, as lifeless as the types by which they were printed. But when the incarnate Word takes of the written word, and speaks it home into the heart and conscience of a vessel of mercy, whether in letter or substance, then He endues it with divine life—and it enters into the soul, communicating to it a life that can never die. Eternal realities are then brought into the soul, fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand. The conscience is made alive in the fear of God—and the soul is raised up from a death in sin, to a heavenly, new, and supernatural life. When we are reduced to poverty & beggary

How often we seem not to have any real religion, or enjoy any solid comfort! How often are our minds covered with deep darkness! How often does the Lord hide Himself, so that we cannot behold Him, nor get near to Him! What a painful path is this to walk in, but how profitable! When we are reduced to poverty and beggary, we learn to value Christ's glorious riches. The worse opinion we have of our own heart, and the more deceitful and desperately wicked that we find it—the more we put our trust in His faithfulness. The more black we are in our own esteem—the more beautiful and lovely does He appear in our eyes. As we sink—Jesus rises. As we become feeble—He puts forth His strength. As we come into danger—He brings deliverance. As we get into temptation—He breaks the snare. As we are shut up in darkness and obscurity—He causes the light of His countenance to shine.

Now it is by being led in this way, and walking in these paths, that we come rightly to know who Jesus is, and to see and feel how suitable and precious such a Savior is to our undone souls! We are needy—He has in Himself all riches. We are hungry—He is the bread of life. We are thirsty—He says, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink.' We are naked—and He has clothing to bestow. We are fools—and He has wisdom to grant. We are lost, and He speaks—'Look to me, and be saved!'

Thus, so far from our misery shutting us out from God's mercy—it is the only requisite for it. So far from our guilt excluding His pardon—it is the only thing needful for it. So far from our helplessness ruining our souls—it is the needful preparation for the manifestation of His power in our weakness.

We cannot heal our own wounds and sores. That is the very reason why He should stretch forth His arm. It is because there is no salvation in ourselves, or in any other creature, that He says, "Look unto Me, for I am God, and there is no other." As they come, they weep "They shall come with weeping, and with petitions will I lead them." Jeremiah 31:9 As they come, they weep. They mourn over their base backslidings—over the many evils they have committed—over the levity of mind which they have indulged—over the worldliness of spirit—over the pride, presumption, hypocrisy, carnality, carelessness, and obstinacy of their heart. They go and weep with a broken heart and softened spirit—seeking the Lord their God—seeking the secret manifestations of His mercy, the visitations of His favor, the "lifting up of the light of His countenance"—seeking after a revelation of the love of Jesus—to know Him by a spiritual discovery of Himself. Being thus minded they seek not to establish their own righteousness—they seek not the applause of the world—they seek not the good opinion of professors—they seek not the smiles of saints. But they seek the Lord their God—seek His face day and night—seek His favor—seek His mercy—seek His grace—seek His love—seek His glory—seek the sweet visitations of His presence and power—seek Him until they find Him to be their covenant God, who heals all their backslidings. This is the saint's inheritance!

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him." Romans 8:17 This is the especial blessedness of being a child of God—that death, which puts a final extinguisher on all the hopes and happiness of all the unregenerate—gives him the fulfillment of all his hopes and the consummation of all his happiness—for it places him in possession of the priceless inheritance God has reserved for His children—which is kept in heaven for them—pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay! In this present earthly life, we have sometimes sips and tastes of sonship, feeble indeed and interrupted—yet are they so far pledges of an inheritance to come. But this life is only an introduction to a better. In this life we are but children—but in the life to come, we shall be put into full possession of the eternal inheritance. And what is this? Nothing less than God Himself. "Heirs of God!" says the Apostle. God Himself is the inheritance of His people—yes, He Himself in all His glorious perfections—all the love of God—all the goodness of God—all the holiness of God—all His happiness, bliss, and blessedness—all His might, majesty, and glory—in all the blaze of one eternal, unclouded day! This is the saint's inheritance! Let us press on by faith and prayer to win this eternal and glorious crown!

Savory food such as their soul loves "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." John 6:55 This food is specially for the elect—blood shed for their sins, and for their sins only—righteousness brought in for them, and for them only—love bestowed upon them, and upon them only—promises revealed for their comfort, and for their comfort only—an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for them, and for them only. The elect are the only people who hunger after it—who have an appetite for it—who have a mouth to feed upon it—who have a stomach to digest it. They are the only people whose eyes are really open to see what "food" is. All others feed upon shadows—they know nothing of the savory food of the gospel.

"I have food to eat that you don't know about." Jesus' food was—the hidden communications of God's love—the visitations of His Father's presence—the divine communion that He enjoyed with His Father. So, for the children of God, there is food in Christ—and this food the Lord gives them a hunger after. He not only sets before their eyes what the food is, but He kindles inexpressible

longings in their soul to be fed with it. God's people cannot feed upon husks—nor upon ashes—nor upon chaff—nor upon the wind—nor upon grapes of gall and the bitter clusters of Gomorrah. They must have real food—savory food such as their soul loves—that which God Himself communicates, and which His hand alone can bring down and give unto them—so that they may receive it from Him as their soul-satisfying portion. A smoother way to glory?

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22 The Lord has chosen that His people should pass through deep and cutting afflictions, for it is "through many afflictions" they are to enter the Kingdom of God above, and into the sweetness and power of the Kingdom of God below. But every man will resent this doctrine, except God has led him experimentally into it. It is such a rough and rugged path—it is so contrary to flesh and blood—it is so inexplicable to nature and reason—that man, proud, rebellious man, will never believe that he must enter into the Kingdom of God through many afflictions. And this is the reason why so many find, or seek to find, a smoother way to glory than the Lord has appointed His saints to walk in. But shall the Head travel in one path—and the members in another? Shall the Bridegroom walk and wade through seas of sorrow—and the bride never so much as wet her feet with the water? Shall the Bridegroom be crucified in weakness and suffering—and there be no inward crucifixion for the dearly beloved of His heart? Shall the Head suffer, grieve, agonize, groan, and die—and the members dance down a flowery road, without inward sorrow or outward suffering?

But, perhaps, there are some who say in their heart, "I am well convinced of this—but my coward flesh shrinks from it. I know if I am to reach the Canaan above, I must pass through the appointed portion of tribulation. But my coward flesh shrinks back!" It does! it does! Who would willingly bring trials upon himself? Therefore the Lord does not leave these trials in our hands—but He Himself appoints a certain measure of tribulation for each of His people to pass through. They will come soon enough—you need not anticipate them—you need not wish for them. God will bring them—in His own time and in His own way. And what is more, God will not merely bring you into them, but God will bring you through them, and God will bring you out of them! It will be our mercy if enabled to ask the Lord to bless us with faith and patience under tribulation—to give us strength to bear the storm—to lie as clay in His hands—to conform us to the image of His Son—to guide us through this valley of tears below—and eventually to take us to be with Him above!

Seek real things "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers often seek great gifts—great eloquence—great congregations—great popularity. They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things. Let them rather seek real things, gracious things, things that will make their souls blessed here and hereafter.

We stand upon slippery places!

"The Lord bless you and keep you." Numbers 6:24

How we need the Lord to keep us! We stand upon slippery places! Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction. Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest—has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds. Nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him—and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God does not keep him.

Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul—"Lord, keep me! Keep me in Your providence, keep me by Your grace—keep me by planting Your fear deep in my soul, and maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart. Keep me waking, keep me sleeping—keep me by night, keep me by day—keep me at home, keep me abroad—keep me with my family, keep me with my friends—keep me in the world, and keep me in the church. Lord, keep me every moment—keep me by Your Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in Your promise—"Keep me as the apple of the eye!" My friends, you can know little of your own heart—little of Satan's devices—little of the snares spread for your feet—unless you feel how deeply you need the Lord's keeping. And He will keep all His people, for we read of the righteous, that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. He will keep the feet of His saints.

One grain of holiness Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one. Can all the men in the world, by all their united exertions, raise up a grain of spiritual holiness in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts. If all the preachers in the world were to unite together for the purpose of working a grain of holiness in one man's soul, they might strive to all eternity—they could no more by their preaching create holiness, than by their preaching they could create a lump of gold. But Jesus imparts a measure of His own holiness to His people. He sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires. He communicates a heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature which bathes in eternal things as its element, and enjoys spiritual things as sweet and precious. It may indeed be small in measure—and he that has it is often troubled because he has so little of it—yet he has enough to know what it is. Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind—has it not felt, does it not sometimes feel—a measure of holiness Godwards? Do you ever feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God—heavenly desires, pure affections, singleness of eye, simplicity of purpose—a heart that longs to have the mind, image, and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it? This is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of His fullness to His poor and needy family.

Hidden manna "To him who overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna." Revelation 2:17

What is this hidden manna? Is it not God's Word applied with power to the heart? What does the prophet Jeremiah say? "Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." When the Lord is pleased to drop a word into the heart from his own lips—to apply some promise—to open up some precious portion of his Word—to whisper softly some blessed Scripture into the heart—is not this manna?

Whence did the manna flow? Was it cultivated by the hand of man? No—it fell from heaven. And is not this true of the Word of the Lord applied with power to the heart? It is not our searching the Scriptures, though it is good to search the Scriptures—but it is the Lord Himself being pleased to apply some precious portion of truth to our hearts—and when this takes place, it is "manna"—it is sweet, refreshing, strengthening, comforting, encouraging—yes, it is angels' food—the very flesh and blood of the Lamb with which the Lord is pleased from time to time to feed and favor hungry souls.

But, in the text it is called "hidden." Why "hidden"? Because hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent. Hidden from the eyes of self-righteous pharisees—hidden from those who fight in their own strength, and seek to gain the victory by their own brawny arm—hidden from all but God's

tried and tempted family—hidden from all but those who know the plague of their own hearts—hidden from all but those who have learned the secret of overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of His testimony. When the Lord leads us to sink down into weakness, and in weakness to find his strength made perfect—to fall down all guilty—and then to feel the application of atoning blood—this is manna. The children of Israel had to endure hunger in the wilderness before manna fell—and thus the Lord's people learn the value of the hidden manna—the sweet communications from above—by hungering and thirsting in a waste-howling wilderness. This is hidden from all eyes except those that are anointed by the Spirit to see it—and hidden from all hearts except those that are prepared to receive and feed upon it. "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." John 6:51 Entangled, perplexed & distressed

How many of the Lord's people are continually under bondage to evil! What power the lusts of the flesh have over some—how perpetually they are entangled with everything sensual and carnal! What power the pride of the heart has over another! And what strength covetousness exercises over a third! What power the love of the world and the things of time and sense exercise over a fourth!

How then are they to overcome sin? By making resolutions? By endeavoring to overcome it in their own strength? No! Sin will always break through man's strength. It will always be stronger than any resolution we can make not to be overcome by it. The Lord allows His people to be so long and often entangled, perplexed and distressed, that they may learn this secret—which is hidden from all but God's living family—that the strength of Christ is made perfect in their weakness. Have not some of you had to learn this lesson very painfully? There was a time when you thought you would get better and better, holier and holier—that you would not only not walk in open sin as before, but would not be entangled by temptation—overcome by besetting lusts—or cast down by hidden snares. There was a time when you thought you were going forward—attaining some more strength—some better wisdom than you believed you once possessed. How has it been with you? Have these expectations ever been realized? Have you ever attained these fond hopes? Has sin become weaker? Has the world become less alluring? Have your lusts become tamer? Has your temper become milder? Have the corruptions of your heart become feebler and feebler?

If I can read the heart of some poor tried, tempted soul here present, he would say, "No! To my shame and sorrow, be it spoken, I find on the contrary that sin is stronger and stronger—that the evils of my heart are more and more powerful than ever I knew them in my life—and as to my own endeavors to overcome them, I find indeed that they are fainter and fainter, and weaker and weaker. This it is that casts me down. If I could have more strength against sin—if I could stand more boldly against Satan—if I could overcome my besetting lusts—live more to God's glory—and be holier and holier—then, then, I could have some comfort. But to feel myself so continually baffled, so perpetually disconcerted, so incessantly cast down by the workings of my corrupt nature—it is this, it is this that cuts so keenly—it is this, it is this that tries me so deeply!" My friend, you are on the high road to victory. This is the very way by which you are to overcome. When you feel weaker and weaker—poorer and poorer—guiltier and guiltier—viler and viler—so that really through painful experience you are compelled to call yourself, not in the language of mock humility, but in the language of self abhorrence—the chief of sinners—then you are on the high

road to victory. Then the blood of the Lamb is applied to the sinner’s conscience, and the Word of God’s testimony comes with power into his soul—it gives him the victory over those lusts with which he was before entangled—it brings him out of the world that had so allured him—and breaks to pieces the dominion of sin under which he had been so long laboring.

Lifeless, barren head knowledge

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true." 1 John 5:20

There is a difference between a gracious, enlightened understanding of the truth of God which springs out of the teaching of the Spirit, and what is commonly called "head knowledge." There is such a thing—and a most dangerous, delusive thing it is—as "mere head knowledge"—and it is widely prevalent in the churches.

You may say, "How am I to distinguish between mere head knowledge and this spiritual understanding?" I will tell you. When a special light is cast into your mind—when the Word is opened up in its spiritual, experimental meaning—when the Holy Spirit seals it with sweetness and power upon your heart—and you not only understand what you read but receive it in faith, feel its savor, and enjoy its blessedness. Is not this a very different thing from lifeless, barren head knowledge?

Poor in spirit "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

None are really poor in spirit, but those whom the hand of God has stripped—whom He has brought down—and made to abhor themselves in dust and ashes—and to see and feel themselves destitute of everything good, holy, heavenly, and pleasing in His pure and heart-searching eyes. The heart must be stripped and emptied, and laid bare effectually—by a work of grace that goes to the very bottom, and penetrates into the recesses of the soul, so as to detect all the corruption that lurks and festers within. The really "poor" man is one who has had everything taken from him—who has had not merely his dim views of a merciful God (such as natural men have) taken from him—not merely his legal righteousness stripped away—but all that kind of notional, traditional religion, which is so rife in the present day, taken from him also—and who has been brought in guilty before God, naked, in the dust, having nothing whereby to conciliate Him, or gain His favor.

Utter fools!

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Romans 1:22

What am I by nature? A fool! All my wisdom, outside of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness—and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance! Left to ourselves we are utter fools! We have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet. We are blind—ignorant—weak—helpless—and utterly unable to find our way to God.

All wisdom which does not come down from the Father is folly. All strength not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness. All knowledge that does not spring from the Lord’s own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance.

We must know the value of the gem before we can really prize it. When diamonds were first discovered in Brazil, nobody knew that they were diamonds. They were handed about as pretty, shining pebbles. But as soon it was discovered they were diamonds, they were eagerly sought, and their value rose a thousandfold. So spiritually. Until we can distinguish between the "pebble of man's teaching" and the "diamond of divine illumination" we shall neglect, we shall despise, we shall not value divine wisdom. The heart of God's child

There is much presumption, pride, hypocrisy, deceit, delusion, formality, superstition, will-worship, and self-righteousness to be purged out of the heart of God's child. But all these things keep him low—mar his pride—crush his self-righteousness—cut the locks of his presumption—stain his self-conceit—stop his boasting—preserve him from despising others—make him take the lowest room—teach him to esteem others better than himself—drive him to earnest prayer—fit him as an object of mercy—break to pieces his free-will—and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone! A spirit of delusion A spirit of delusion seems to us widely prevalent—a carnal confidence—a dead assurance—a presumptuous claim—a daring mimicry of the spirit of adoption. Who that has eyes or heart does not see and feel the wide spread of this gigantic evil? No brokenness of heart—no tenderness of conscience—no spirituality of mind—no heavenly affections—no prayerfulness and watchfulness—no godly devotedness of life—no self denial and crucifixion—no humility or contrition—no separation from the world—no communion with the Lord of life and glory. In a word, none of the blessed graces and fruits of the Spirit attend this carnal confidence. On the contrary—levity, jesting, pride, covetousness, self-exaltation, and often gross self-indulgence—are evidently stamped upon many, if not most, of these hardened professors.

Husks which the swine eat

All forms, opinions, rites, ceremonies and notions to me are nothing—and worse than nothing. They are the husks which the swine eat—not the food of the living soul. To have the heart deeply penetrated with the fear of Jehovah—to be melted and filled with a sweet sense of Jesus' dying love—to have the affections warmed and drawn forth under the anointings of the Eternal Comforter—this is the only religion that can suit and satisfy a regenerate soul!

Then they cried

"They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way; they found no city to live in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Psalms 107:4-6

Until they wandered in the wilderness—until they felt it to be a solitary way—until they found no city to dwell in—until hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them—there was no cry. There might have been a prayer, a desire, a feeble wish, and now and then a sigh or a groan. But this was not enough. Something more was needed to draw forth loving-kindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the Church. A cry was needed—a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. A cry implies urgent need—a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is this solemn feeling in the heart that there is no other refuge but God. The Lord brings all His people here—to have no other refuge but Himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintance—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is no refuge—nor

shelter—nor harbor—nor home into which they can fly—except the Lord.

Thus troubles force us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much—and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists, and they bring a man to this solemn spot—that he must have God to support him, and bring him out of his trouble. But what a mercy it is when there is a cry! And when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble, He is sure in his own time and way to send deliverance out of it.

O what painful work it is!

"You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house." 1 Peter 2:5

God’s people require many severe afflictions—many harassing temptations—and many powerful trials to hew them into any good shape, to chisel them into any conformity to Christ’s image. For they are not like the passive marble under the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and indeed without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that jutting angle rounded by the chisel. But God’s people are living stones, and therefore, they feel every stroke. We are so tender skinned that we cannot bear a ’thread of trouble’ to lie upon us—we shrink from even the touch of the chisel. To be hewed, then, and squared, and chiseled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please Him—O what painful work it is!

If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls—we have not had—we are not now having—we shall never have—one stroke too much, one stroke too little, one stroke in the wrong direction. But there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God’s sight—and to make us that which He would have us to be. What a great deal of trouble would we be spared if we could only patiently submit to the Lord’s afflicting stroke—and know no will but His.

10.02. Volume 2

Accepted!

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

We are ever looking for something in SELF to make ourselves acceptable to God. We are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find in ourselves—that holiness—that obedience—that calm submission to the will of God—that serenity of soul—that spirituality—that heavenly-mindedness—which we believe to be acceptable in His sight!

Our crooked tempers—our fretful, peevish minds—our rebellious thoughts—our coldness and barrenness—our alienation from good—our headlong proneness to evil—with the daily feeling that we get no better, but rather worse—make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves! And this brings on great darkness of mind and bondage of spirit—until we seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ—and get into the miserable dregs of self—almost ready to quarrel with God because we are so vile, and only get worse as we get older!

Now the more we get into these dregs of self—and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view—the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel—and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God. It is "in the Beloved" that we are accepted—and not for any good words—good works—good thoughts—good hearts—or good intentions of our own!

If our acceptance with God depended on anything in ourselves, we would have to believe we might be children of God today—and children of the devil tomorrow! What, then, is to keep us from sinking altogether into despair, without hope or help? Why, a knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved"—independent of everything in us—good or bad!

Blundering & stumbling on in darkness

After the Lord has quickened our souls, for a time we often go blundering on, not knowing there is a Jesus. We think that the way of life is to keep God’s commandments—obey the law—cleanse ourselves from sin—reform our lives—cultivate universal holiness in thought, word, and action—and so we go—blundering and stumbling on in darkness—and all the while never get a single step forward. But when the Lord has allowed us to weary ourselves to find the door, and let us sink lower and lower into the pit of guilt and ruin, from feeling that all our attempts to extricate ourselves have only plunged us deeper and deeper—and when the Spirit of God opens up to the understanding and brings into the soul some spiritual discovery of Jesus, and thus makes known that there is a Savior, a Mediator, and a way of escape—this is the grand turning point in our lives, the first opening in the valley of Achor (trouble), of the door of hope. When you are in the wilderness

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her." Hosea 2:14 When you are in the wilderness, you have no friend—no creature help—no worldly

comfort—these have all abandoned you. God has led you into the wilderness to bereave you of these earthly ties, of these 'creature refuges and vain hopes,' that He may Himself speak to your soul.

If, then, you are separated from the world by being brought into the wilderness—if you are passing through trials and afflictions—if you are exercised with a variety of temptations—and are brought into that spot where the creature yields neither help nor hope—then you are made to see and feel that nothing but God's voice speaking with power to your soul can give you any solid grounds of rest or peace. But is not this profitable? It may be painful—it is painful—but it is profitable, because by it we learn to look to the Lord and the Lord alone—and this must ever be a blessed lesson to learn for every child of God.

O what crowds of pitiable objects

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

What heart can conceive or tongue recount the daily, hourly triumphs of the Lord Jesus Christ's all-conquering grace? We see scarcely a millionth part of what He, as a King on his throne, is daily doing. What a crowd of needy petitioners every moment surrounds His throne! What urgent needs and woes to answer—what cutting griefs and sorrows to assuage—what broken hearts to bind up—what wounded consciences to heal—what countless prayers to hear—what earnest petitions to grant—what stubborn foes to subdue—what guilty fears to quell! What grace, what kindness, what patience, what compassion, what mercy, what love, what power, what authority, does this Almighty Sovereign display! No circumstance is too trifling—no petitioner too insignificant—no case too hard—no difficulty too great—no seeker too importunate—no beggar too ragged—no bankrupt too penniless—no debtor too insolvent—for Him not to notice and not to relieve.

Sitting on His throne of grace His all-seeing eye views all—His almighty hand grasps all—and His loving heart embraces all whom the Father chose—whom He Himself redeemed by His blood—and whom the blessed Spirit has quickened into life by His invincible power. The hopeless—the helpless—the outcasts whom no man cares for—the tossed with tempest and not comforted—the ready to perish—the mourners in Zion—the bereaved widow—the wailing orphan—the sick in body—and still more sick in heart—the racked with hourly pain—the fevered consumptive—the wrestler with death's last struggle.

O what crowds of pitiable objects surround His throne—and all needing a look from His eye—a word from His lips—a smile from His face—a touch from His hand! O could we but see what His grace is—what His grace has—what His grace does—and could we but feel more what it is doing in and for ourselves, we would have more exalted views of the reign of grace now exercised on high by Zion's enthroned King!

Trouble, sorrow & affliction "And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalms 107:7

Those very times when God's people think they are faring ill, may be the seasons when they are really faring well. For instance, when their souls are bowed down with trouble, it often seems to them that they are faring ill. God's hand appears to be gone out against them. Yet perhaps they

never fare better than when under these circumstances of trouble, sorrow and affliction. These things wean them from the world. If their heart and affections were going out after idols—they instrumentally bring them back. If they were hewing out broken cisterns—they dash them all to pieces. If they were setting up, and bowing down to idols in the chambers of imagery, affliction and trouble smite them to pieces before their eyes—take away their gods—and leave them no refuge but the Lord God of hosts. So that when a child of God thinks he is faring very ill, because burdened with sorrows, temptations, and afflictions—he is never faring so well. The darkest clouds in due time will break, the most puzzling enigmas will sooner or later be unriddled by the blessed Spirit interpreting them—and the darkest providences cleared up—and we shall see that God is in them all—leading and guiding us by the right way, that we may go to a city of habitation. From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven!

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us." Romans 8:18

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the eye has seen, or the ear heard, or has entered into the carnal heart of man—put side by side with being saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation? For consider what we are saved FROM, as well as what we are saved UNTO. From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven! From endless wrath—to eternal glory! From the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented—to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels—and, above all, to seeing the glorious Son of God as he is, in all the perfection of His beauty, and all the ravishments of His presence and love. To be done forever with all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life—all the pains and aches of the present clay tabernacle—all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of sin and death. To be perfectly holy in body and soul, being in both without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, and ever to enjoy uninterrupted communion with God! Our own wisdom, righteousness & strength

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." 1 Corinthians 3:18 The fruit and effect of divine teaching is to cut in pieces, and root up all our fleshly wisdom, strength, and righteousness. God never means to patch a new piece upon an old garment. All our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness must be torn to pieces! It must all be plucked up by the roots—that a new wisdom, a new strength, and a new righteousness may arise upon its ruins. But until the Lord is pleased to teach us, we never can part with our own righteousness—never give up our own wisdom—never abandon our own strength. These things are a part and parcel of ourselves—so ingrained within us—so innate in us—so growing with our growth—that we cannot willingly part with an atom of them until the Lord Himself breaks them up, and plucks them away. Then, as He brings into our souls some spiritual knowledge of our own dreadful corruptions and horrible wickedness—our righteousness crumbles away at the divine touch. As He leads us to see and feel our ignorance and folly in a thousand instances, and how unable we are to understand anything aright but by divine teaching—our wisdom fades away. As He shows us our inability to resist temptation and overcome sin, by any exertion of our own—our strength gradually departs, and we become like Samson, when his locks

were cut off.

Upon the ruins, then, of our own wisdom, righteousness and strength, does God build up Christ's wisdom, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's strength. But only so far as we are favored with this special teaching are we brought to pass a solemn sentence of condemnation upon our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness—and sincerely seek after the Lord's.

Oh! Sweet grace, blessed grace!

"For by grace are you saved." Ephesians 2:8

We are saved by grace—free grace, rich grace, sovereign grace, distinguishing grace—without one atom of works, without one grain of creature merit, without anything of the flesh. Oh! sweet grace, blessed grace! Oh! what a help—what a strength—what a rest for a poor toiling, striving, laboring soul—to find that grace has done all the work—to feel that grace has triumphed in the cross of Christ—to find that nothing is required, nothing is needed, nothing is to be done!

Dying "As dying, and, behold, we live." 2 Corinthians 6:9

Though we die, and die daily—yet, behold, we live. And in a sense, the more we die, the more we live. The more we die to self—the more we die to sin. The more we die to pride and self-righteousness—the more we die to creature strength. The more we die to sinful nature—the more we live to grace. This runs all the way through the life and experience of a Christian.

Nature must die, that grace may live. The weeds must be plucked up, that the crop may grow. The flesh must be starved, that the spirit may be fed. The old man must be put off, that the new man may be put on. The deeds of the body must be mortified, that the soul may live unto God. As then we die—we live. The more we die to our own strength, the more we live to Christ's strength. The more we die to creature hope, the more we live to a good hope through grace. The more we die to our own righteousness, the more we live to Christ's righteousness. The more we die to the world, the more we live to and for heaven. This is the grand mystery—that the Christian is always dying, yet always living—and the more he dies, the more he lives. The death of the flesh, is the life of the spirit. The death of sin, is the life of righteousness. The death of the creature, is the very life of God in the soul. "As dying, and, behold, we live." Which is better?

"You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Remember that you must belong to someone. If God is not your master—the devil will be. If grace does not rule—sin will reign. If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be. We must have a master of one kind or another. Which is better—a bounteous benevolent Benefactor—a merciful, loving, and tender Parent—a kind, forgiving Father and Friend—a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer? or a cruel devil, a miserable world, and a wicked, vile, abominable heart? Which is better—to live under the sweet constraints of the dying love of a dear Redeemer—under gospel influences—gospel principles—gospel promises—and gospel encouragements? or to live with sin in our heart, binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the 'present life'—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness in half an hour with God—in reading his Word with a believing heart, in finding access to His sacred presence, in knowing something of His favor and mercy—than in all the delights of sin, all the lusts

of the flesh, all the pride of life, and all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a deathbed repentance, at last to cheat the devil.

There must be continual trials "The Lord tries the righteous." Psalms 11:5 To keep water fresh, it must be perpetually running. And to keep the life of God up in the soul, there must be continual trials. This is the reason why the Lord's people have so many conflicts, trials, painful exercises, sharp sorrows, and deep temptations—to keep them alive unto God—to bring them out of, and to keep them out of that slothful, sluggish, wretched state of carnal security. The Lord, therefore, tries the righteous. He will not allow His people to be at ease in Zion—to be settled on their lees—and get into a wretched Moabitish state. He therefore sends upon them afflictions, tribulations, and trials—and allows Satan to tempt and harass them.

Personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge

It is our dim, scanty, and imperfect knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal love—and in His grace and glory—which leaves us so often cold, lifeless, and dead in our affections towards Him. If there were more blessed revelations to our soul of the Person and work, grace and glory, beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ—it is impossible but that we would more and more warmly and tenderly fall in love with Him—for He is the most glorious object that the eyes of faith can see! He fills heaven with the resplendent beams of His glorious majesty—and has ravished the hearts of thousands of His dear family upon earth by the manifestations of His bleeding, dying love. Just in proportion to our personal, spiritual, experimental knowledge of Him, will be our love to Him.

Help from the sanctuary

"May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob set you up on high, send you help from the sanctuary, grant you support from Zion." Psalms 20:1-2 When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it needs help from the sanctuary. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it. Help is sent from the sanctuary because his name has been from all eternity, registered in the Lamb's book of life—engraved upon the palms of His hands—borne on His shoulder—and worn on His heart. Communications of life and grace from the sanctuary produce spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. The breath of heaven in his soul draws his affections upward—weans him from earth—and makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below, looking for a city with eternal foundations—a city designed and built by God!

Holy wrestling

Wherever the Lord brings trials upon the soul, He pours out upon it the spirit of grace and supplication. If the child of God has a burden—if he is laboring under a strong temptation—if his soul is passing through some pressing trial—he is not satisfied with merely going through a 'form of prayer.' There is at such times and seasons, a holy wrestling—there are fervent desires—there are unceasing groans—there is a laboring to enter into rest—there is a struggling after deliverance—there is a crying unto the Lord—until He appears and manifests Himself in the soul. A disciple of Jesus A disciple of Jesus is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into His school—whom He Himself condescends personally to instruct—and who therefore learns of Him to be meek and lowly of heart. A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet—receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from His lips. But a true and sincere

disciple not only listens to his Master's instructions, but acts as He bids. So a disciple of Jesus is one who copies his Master's example—and is conformed to his Master's image. A disciple of Jesus is also characterized by the love which he bears to his Master. He is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart—ponders over His precious promises—and delights in His glorious Person, love, and blood. A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection to the image of his heavenly Master. He carries it about with him wherever he goes, that men may take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus. The true disciple shines before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God. To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip, and life is to be a disciple of Jesus. To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus—to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words—to lean upon Jesus' bosom is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love—and to feel this pulsation, causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison. To look up to Jesus, is to see a face more marred than the sons of men—yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity, and glory. To be a disciple of Jesus, is to copy His example—to do the things pleasing in His sight—and to avoid the things which He abhors. To be a disciple of Jesus, is to be as meek as He was—humble as He was—lowly as He was—self-denying as He was—separate from the world as He was—living a life of communion with God, as He lived when He walked here below. To take a worm of the earth and make him a disciple of Jesus is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man! To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus—is the highest favor God can bestow upon any child of the dust. How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow His grace on an enemy—and to soften and meeken him by His Spirit—and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of His own dear Son. Compared with this high privilege, all earthly honors, titles and robes sink into utter insignificance!

Sovereign, supreme disposal "He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things." Ephesians 1:22

God has put all things, events, and circumstances under the authority of Christ! How vast—how numerous—how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Christian here below, as he travels onward to his heavenly home! But if all things are put under Jesus' feet, there cannot be a single circumstance over which He has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to His disposal. There is not a trial—a temptation—an affliction of body or soul—a loss—a cross—a painful bereavement—a vexation—a grief—a disappointment—a case, state or condition—which is not put under Jesus' feet.

He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite knowledge He sees them—as possessed of infinite wisdom He can manage them—and as possessed of infinite power He can dispose and direct them for our good and His own glory. How much trouble and anxiety would we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this! If we could see by the eye of faith that every foe and every fear—every difficulty and perplexity—every trying or painful circumstance—every looked-for or unlooked-for event—every source of care, whether at present or in prospect—are all put under His feet at His sovereign disposal—what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders!

You must not love one of these glittering baubles "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." 1 John 2:15 This is a very wide sentence. It stretches forth a hand of vast grasp. It places us, as it were, upon a high mountain, and it says to us, "Look around you—there is not one of these things which you must love." It takes us, again, to the streets of a crowded city—it shows us shop windows filled with objects of beauty and ornament—it points us to all the wealth and grandeur of the rich and noble, and everything that the human heart admires and loves. And having thus set before us, it says, "None of these things are for you. You must not love one of these glittering baubles—you must not touch one of them, or scarcely look at them, lest, as with Achan, the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment should tempt you to take them and hide them in your tent." The precept takes us through the world as a mother takes a child through a bazaar with playthings and ornaments on every side, and says—"You must not touch one of these things." In some such similar way the precept would, as it were, take us through the world—and when we had looked at all its playthings and its ornaments, it would sound in our ears—"Don't touch any one of them—they are not yours—not for you to enjoy—not for you even to covet!" Can anything less than this be intended by those words which should be ever sounding in the ears of the children of God—Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world?

One unmingled scene of happiness & pleasure

"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

O that we could lift our eyes to those blessed abodes—those mansions of heavenly bliss where no sorrow intrudes, where sin is unknown, where tears are wiped from off all faces, where there is no languishing body, no wasting sickness, no pining soul, no doubt, no fear, no darkness, no distress—but one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure—and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of the Lamb! And what crowns the whole—there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God forevermore! But how lost are we in the contemplation of these things—and though our imagination may seem to stretch itself beyond the utmost conception of the mind, into the countless ages of a never-ending eternity, yet are we baffled with the thought—though faith embraces the blessed truth. But in that happy land, the immortal soul and the immortal body will combine their powers and faculties to enjoy to the uttermost all that God has prepared for those who love Him. The rod was dipped in love "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Micah 7:9

It is a view of our sins against God that enables us to bear the indignation of the Lord against us and them. As long as we are left to a spirit of pride and self-righteousness, we murmur at the Lord's dealings when His hand lies heavy upon us. But let us only truly feel what we rightly deserve—that will silence at once all murmuring. You may murmur and rebel sometimes at your hard lot in providence. But if you feel what you deserve—it will make you water with 'tears of repentance' the hardest cross. So in grace, if you feel the weight of your sins, and mourn and sigh because you have sinned against God, you can lift up your hands sometimes with holy wonder at God's patient mercy that He has borne with you so long—that He has not smitten you to the earth, or sent your guilty soul to hell. You will see, also, that the heaviest strokes were but fatherly chastenings—that the rod was dipped in love—and that it was for your good and His glory that it was laid on you. When this sense of merited indignation comes into the soul, then meekness and

submission come with it, and it can say with the prophet—"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." You would not escape the rod if you might. The best teacher "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17 The way to learn truth is to be much in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Beg of Him to teach you Himself—for He is the best teacher. The words which He speaks, they are spirit and life. What He writes upon our hearts is written in characters which will stand every storm and live at last. We forget what we learn from 'man'—but we never forget what we learn from Jesus. 'Men' may deceive—Christ cannot.

Though you may receive truth from a minister's lips, it is always mixed with human infirmity. But what you get from the lips of Jesus, you get in all its purity and power. It comes warm from Him—it comes cold from 'men.' It drops like the rain and distills like the dew from His mouth—it comes only second-hand from men. If I preach to you the truth, I preach indeed as the Lord enables me to speak. But it is He who must speak with power to your souls to do you any real good. Look then away from me—look beyond me—to Him who alone can teach us both. By looking to Jesus in the inmost feelings of your soul, you will draw living truth from out of His bosom into your own—from His heart into your heart—and thus will come feelingly and experimentally to know the blessedness of His own declaration—'I am the truth.'

Buried in the grave of carnality & worldliness

"If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1

How many there are even of those who desire to fear God who are kept down by the world, and to whom it has not lost its attractive power. They are held fast, at least for a time, by worldly business, or entangled by worldly people or worldly engagements—their partners in business or their partners in life—their carnal relatives or their worldly children—their numerous connections or their social habits—their strong passions or their deep-rooted prejudices—all bind and fetter them down to earth.

There they grovel and lie amid the smoke and stir of this dim spot which men call earth—and so bound are they with the cords of their sins, that they scarcely seek deliverance from them, or ever desire to rise beyond the mists and fogs of this dim spot into a purer air so as to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and rise up with Jesus from the grave of their corruptions. But they shall never be buried in the grave of carnality and worldliness. A solitary drop of this holy anointing oil

"The anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and you don't need for anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, you will remain in Him." 1 John 2:27 Have you ever had a solitary drop of this holy anointing oil fall upon your heart? One drop, if it be but a drop, will sanctify you forever to the service of God. There was not much of the holy anointing oil used for the service of the tabernacle, when we consider the size and quantity of what had to be consecrated. When he went through the sacred work, he touched one vessel after another with a drop of oil—for one drop sanctified the vessel to the service of the tabernacle. There was no repetition of the consecration needed—it abode. So if you ever had a drop of God's love shed abroad in your heart—a drop of the anointing to teach you the truth as it is in Jesus—a drop to penetrate, to soften, to heal, to feed, and give light, life, and power to your soul—you have the unction from the Holy One—you

know all things which are for your salvation, and by that same holy oil you have been sanctified and made fit for an eternal inheritance.

Practical atheists

We profess to believe in an All-mighty, All-present, All-seeing God. But we would be highly offended if a person said to us, "You do not really believe that God sees everything—that He is everywhere present—that He is an Almighty Jehovah." We would almost think that he was taking us for an atheist! And yet 'practical atheists,' we daily prove ourselves to be. For instance, we profess to believe that God sees everything. And yet we are plotting and planning as though He saw nothing. We profess to know that God can do everything. And yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though He were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice. We profess to believe that God is everywhere present to relieve every difficulty and bring His people out of every trial. And yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial—we speak, think, and act, as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of our case, and can stretch forth His hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because we are such blind fools, that we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with, until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us. This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges His people so deeply into a sense of sin. It is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin, there is in the Lord Jesus Christ. For the same reason, too, they walk in such scenes of temptation. It is in order to show them what a wonder-working God He is, in bringing them out. This too is the reason why many of them are so harassed and plagued. It is that they may not live and act as though there were no God to go to—no Almighty friend to consult—no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon.

It is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know until the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn—and actually forces them to believe what they profess to believe. Such pains is He obliged to take with us—such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are. No child at a school ever gave his master a thousandth part of the trouble that we have given the Lord to teach us. In order, then, to teach us what a merciful and compassionate God He is—in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of His love—He is compelled to treat, at times, His people very roughly—and handle them very sharply. He is obliged to make very great use of His rod, because He sees that foolishness is so bound up in the hearts of His children—that nothing but the repeated rod of correction will ever drive it far from them!

Dead in sin "You were made alive when you were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1 To be dead in sin is to have no present part or lot with God—no knowledge of Him—no faith, no trust, no hope in Him—no sense of His presence—no reverence of His awesome Majesty—no desire after Him or inclination toward Him—no trembling at His word—no longing for His grace—no care or concern for His glory. To be dead in sin is to be as a beast before Him, intent like a brute on satisfying the cravings of lust, or the movements of mere animal passion—without any thought or concern what shall be the outcome, and to be bent upon carrying out into action every selfish purpose, as if we were self creators—our own judge—our own lord—and our own god. O what a terrible state is it to be thus dead in sin, and not to know it—not to feel it—to be in no way sensible

of its present danger and certain end—unless delivered from it by a mighty act of sovereign power! It is this lack of all sense and feeling which makes the death of the soul to be but the prelude to that second death which stretches through a boundless eternity.

Continual salvation "I cried unto You; save me, and I will keep Your testimonies." Psalms 119:146

If you know anything for yourself, inwardly and experimentally of the evils of your heart—the power of sin—the strength of temptation—the subtlety of your unwearied foe—and that daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven—you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. There is present salvation—an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator. You need to be daily and almost hourly saved from the guilt, filth, power, love, and practice of indwelling sin. "I cried unto You; save me, and I will keep Your testimonies." The fatal mistake of thousands The fatal mistake of thousands is to offer unto God the fruits of the flesh—instead of the fruits of the Spirit. Fleshly holiness, fleshly exertions, fleshly prayers, fleshly duties, fleshly religious forms, fleshly zeal—these are what men consider good works, and present them as such to God. But well may He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, say to all such fleshly workers, ’And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?’ All that the flesh can do is evil, for every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually—and to present the fruits of this filthy heart to the Lord Almighty, is to offer defiled food upon His altar! A broken heart—a contrite spirit—a tender conscience—a filial fear of God—a desire to please Him—a dread to offend the great God of heaven—a sense of the evil of sin—a desire to be delivered from sin’s dominion—a mourning over our repeated backslidings—grief at being so often entangled in our lusts and passions—an acquaintance with our helplessness and weakness, simplicity and godly sincerity—a hanging upon grace for daily supplies—watching the hand of Providence—a singleness of eye to the glory of God—these are a few of the fruits of the Spirit. The great secret of vital godliness The great secret of vital godliness is to be nothing—that Christ may be all in all. Every stripping, sifting, and emptying—every trial, exercise and temptation that the soul passes through, has but one object—to beat out of man’s heart that cursed spirit of independence which the devil breathed into him when he said, "You shall be as gods." A man must well near be bled to death before this venom can be drained out of his veins!

If the devil ever feels joy

If the devil ever feels joy—it is in making souls miserable. The cries of the damned are his music. Their curses and blasphemies are his songs of triumph. Their anguish and despair are his wretched feast.

Fear not!

"Tell those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will. . . .come and save you." Isaiah 35:4

"Fear not!" "Ah! but Lord," the soul says, "I do fear. I fear myself more than anybody. I fear—my base, wicked heart—my strong lusts and passions—my numerous inward enemies—the snares of Satan—the temptations of the world. I do fear. I cannot help but fear." Still the Lord says, "Fear not!" Here is a child trembling before a large mastiff dog—but the father says, "Do not fear, he will

not hurt you, only keep close to me." Who is that dog but Satan, that huge mastiff, whose jaws are reeking with blood? If the Lord says, "Fear not!" why need we fear him? He is a chained enemy. But how the timid soul needs the divine "Fear nots!" For without Him, it is all weakness—with Him, all strength; without Him, all trembling—with Him, all boldness. The desire of our soul "The desire of our soul is to Your name, and to the remembrance of You." Isaiah 26:8

How sweet and expressive is the phrase, "The desire of our soul." How it seems to carry our feelings with it! How it seems to describe the longings and utterings of a soul into which God has breathed the spirit of grace and mercy! "The desire of our soul"—the breathing of our heart, the longing of our inmost being, the cry, the sigh, the panting of our new nature, the heavings, gaspings, lookings, longings, pantings, hungerings, thirstings, and ventings forth of the new man of grace—all are expressed in those sweet and blessed words—"The desire of our soul." And what a mercy it is, that there should ever be in us "the desire" of a living soul—that though the righteous dealings of God are painful and severe, running contrary to everything nature loves—yet that with all these, there should be dropped into the heart that mercy, love, and grace, which draw forth the desire of the soul toward the Name of God. This is expressed in the words that follow—"With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, with my spirit within me I will seek You early." Is your soul longing after the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it ever, in the night season, panting after the manifestation of His presence? hungering and thirsting after the dropping of some word from His lips—some sweet whisper of His love to your soul? These are marks of saving grace. The carnal, the unregenerate, the ungodly, have no such desires and feelings as these!

O Self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself—my vile, proud, lustful, hypocritical, worldly, covetous, presumptuous, obscene self. O Self! Self! Your desperate wickedness, your depravity, your love of sin, your abominable pollutions, your monstrous heart-wickedness, your wretched deadness, hardness, blindness, and indifference. You are a treacherous villain, and, I fear, always will be such! That dear, idolized creature "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Galatians 2:20 The crucifixion of self is indispensable to following Christ. What is so dear to a man as himself? Yet this beloved self is to be crucified. Whether it be proud self—or ambitious self—or selfish self—or covetous self—or, what is harder still—religious self—that dear, idolized creature, which has been the subject of so much fondling, petting, pampering, nursing—this fondly loved self has to be taken out of our bosom by the hand of God, and nailed to Christ’s cross! The same grace which pardons sin also subdues it! To be crucified with Christ! To have everything that the flesh loves and idolizes put to death! How can a man survive such a process? "Nevertheless I live!" As the world, sin, and self are crucified, subdued, and subjugated by the power of the cross, the life of God springs up with new vigor in the soul. Here, then, is the great secret of vital godliness—that the more that sin and self, and the world are mortified, the more do holiness and spirituality of mind, heavenly affections and gracious desires spring up and flourish in the soul. O! blessed death! O! still more blessed life! I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live.

Unquenched and unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7 The bride uses a figure which shall express the insuperable strength of divine love against all opposition—and she therefore compares it to a fire which burns and burns unquenched and

unquenchable, whatever be the amount of water poured upon it. Thus the figure expresses the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of the Redeemer as unquenchable by any opposition made to it.

How soon is earthly love cooled by opposition! A little ingratitude, a few hard speeches, cold words or even cold looks, seem often almost sufficient to quench love that once shone warm and bright. And how often, too, even without these cold waters thrown upon it, does it appear as if ready to die out by itself. But the love of Christ was unquenchable by all those waters. Not all the ingratitude, unbelief, or coldness of His people could quench His eternal love to them! He knew what the Church was in herself, and ever would be—how cold and wandering her affections—how roving her desires—how backsliding her heart! But all these waters could not extinguish His love! It still burnt as a holy flame in His bosom, unquenched, unquenchable! "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7 Crawl like a serpent, roar like a lion

"That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan well knows both how to allure and how to attack—for he can crawl like a serpent, and he can roar like a lion! He has snares whereby he entangles, and fiery darts whereby he impales. Most men are easily led captive by him at his will, ensnared without the least difficulty in the traps that he lays for their feet—for they are as ready to be caught as he is to catch them! Why would Satan need to roar against them as a lion, if he can wind himself around them and bite them as a serpent?

If you want to see what sin really is To cast the sinning angels out of heaven—to banish Adam from Paradise—to destroy the old world by a flood—to burn Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—these examples of God’s displeasure against sin were not sufficient to express His condemnation of it. He would therefore take another way of making it manifest. And what was this? By sending His own Son out of His bosom, and offering Him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, He would make it manifest how He abhorred sin, and how His righteous character must forever condemn it. See here the love of God to poor guilty man in not sparing His own Son—and yet the hatred of God against sin, in condemning it in the death of Jesus.

It is almost as if God said, "If you want to see what sin really is, you cannot see it in the depths of hell. I will show you sin in blacker colors still—you shall see it in the sufferings of My dear Son—in His agonies of body and soul—and in what He as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under My wrath, when He consented to take the sinner’s place." What wondrous wisdom—what depths of love—what treasures of mercy—what heights of grace—were thus revealed and brought to light in God’s unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in His full and free pardon of the sinner!

If you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross—if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you, falling upon the head of the God-Man—and viewed a bleeding, agonizing Immanuel—then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience what a dreadful thing sin is. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto Him whom he has pierced, and mourns and grieves bitterly for Him, as for a firstborn son who has died. Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is. "Oh," he says, "did God afflict His dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save my soul

from the bottomless pit? O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies, and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?"

Christians hate their sins. They hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often, which has so continually, betrayed them into sin. And thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh—upon all its actings and workings—upon all its thoughts and words and deeds—and hate it as the prolific parent of that sin which crucified Christ, and torments and plagues them.

Hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed

We are surrounded with snares. Temptations lie spread every moment in our path. These snares and these temptations are so suitable to the lusts of our flesh, that we would certainly fall into them, and be overcome by them, but for the restraining providence or the preserving grace of God. The Christian sees this—the Christian feels this. The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor sees no snares. He is entangled in them, he falls by them, and not repenting of his sins or forsaking them, he makes utter shipwreck concerning the faith. The child of God sees the snare—feels the temptation—knows the evil of his heart—and is conscious that if God does not hold him up, he shall stumble and fall. As then a burnt child dreads the fire, so he dreads the consequence of being left for a moment to himself—and the more is he afraid that he shall fall. If his eyes are more widely opened to see the purity of God—the blessedness of Christ—the efficacy of atoning blood—and the beauties of holiness—the more also does he see the evil of sin, the dreadful consequences of being entangled therein. And not only so, but his own helplessness and weakness and inability to stand against temptation in his own strength. And all these feelings combine to raise up a more earnest cry—Hold me up, and I shall be safe! Our sanctuary

"Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Ezekiel 11:16

Every place in which the Lord manifests Himself, is a sanctuary to a child of God. Jesus is now our sanctuary, for He is the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands. We see the power and glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Every place is a sanctuary, where God manifests Himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb—it was but a common thorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the thicket. But on one solemn occasion it was all in a flame of fire, for the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst—and though it burned with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to take off his shoes from his feet. Was not this a sanctuary to Moses? It was—for a holy God was there!

Thus wherever God manifests Himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul. We don’t need places made holy by the ceremonies of man—but places made holy by the presence of God! Then a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with His sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul.

Poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm!

"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah 64:6

We once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favor of God, and induce Him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey His commandments. And by these religious performances we thought we would surely be able to make a ladder whereby we could climb up to heaven. This was our tower of Babel, whose top was to reach unto heaven, and by mounting which, we thought to scale the stars. But the same Lord who stopped the further building of the tower of Babel, by confounding their speech and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth—began to confound our speech, so that we could not pray, or talk, or boast as before—and to scatter all our religion like the chaff of the threshing floor. Our mouths were stopped—we became guilty before God—and our bricks and mortar became a pile of confusion!

When, then, the Lord was pleased to discover to our souls by faith, His being, majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity—and thus gave us a corresponding sense of our filthiness and folly—then all our creature religion and natural piety which we once counted as gain, we began to see was but loss—that our very religious duties and observances, so far from being for us, were actually against us—and instead of pleading for us before God as so many deeds of righteousness, were so polluted and defiled by sin perpetually mixed with them, that our very prayers were enough to sink us into hell, had we no other iniquities to answer for in heart, lip or life. But when we had a view by faith of the Person, work, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ—then we began more plainly and clearly to see, with what religious toys we had been so long amusing ourselves—and what is far worse, mocking God by them! We had been secretly despising Jesus and His sufferings—Jesus and His death—Jesus and His righteousness—and setting up the poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm in the place of the finished work of the Son of God.

Mere toys & baubles

True religion must be everything or nothing with us. In religion, indifference is ruin—neglect is destruction. Of all losses, the loss of the soul is the only one that is utterly irreparable and irremediable. You may lose property, but you may recover the whole or a portion of it—you may lose health, but you may be restored to a larger measure of bodily strength than before your illness—you may lose friends, but you may obtain new ones, and those more sincere and valuable than any whom you have lost. But if you lose your soul, what is to make up for that loss? Do you ever feel what a tremendous stake heaven or hell is? Have you ever felt that to gain heaven is to gain everything that can make the soul eternally happy—and to lose heaven is not only to lose eternal bliss, but to sink down into unfathomable, everlasting, unutterable woe? It is this believing sight and pressing sense of eternal things—it is this weighty, at times overpowering, feeling that they carry in their bosom an immortal soul, which often makes the children of God view the things of time and sense as mere toys and baubles, trifles lighter than vanity, and pursuits empty as air, and gives them to feel that the things of eternity are the only solid, enduring realities.

Heavenly dew "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; My speech shall condense as the dew." Deuteronomy 32:2 The dew falls imperceptibly. No man can see it fall. Yet its effects are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon His Word. It penetrates the heart without noise—it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on. And as the dew opens the pores of the earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul.

Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its effects, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head. Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects? Silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet producing an evident impression—softening the heart when hard—refreshing it when dry—melting it when obdurate—secretly keeping the soul alive—so that it neither withers up by the burning sun of temptation, nor dies for lack of grace. May God give you the dew of heaven!

Coming up from the wilderness "Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5 To come up from the wilderness, is to come up out of OURSELVES—for we are ourselves the wilderness! It is our wilderness heart that makes the world what it is to us—our own barren frames—our own bewildered minds—our own worthlessness and inability—our own lack of spiritual fruitfulness—our own trials, temptations, and exercises—our own hungering and thirsting after righteousness. In a word, it is what passes in our own bosom that makes the world to us a dreary desert.

Carnal people find the world no wilderness. It is an Eden to them! Or at least they try hard to make it so. They seek all their pleasure from, and build all their happiness upon it. Nor do they dream of any other harvest of joy and delight, but what may be repaid in this 'happy valley,' where youth, health, and good spirits are ever imagining new scenes of gratification. But the child of grace, exercised with a thousand difficulties, passing through many temporal and spiritual sorrows, and inwardly grieved with his own lack of heavenly fruitfulness, finds the wilderness within. But he still comes up out of it, and this he does by looking upward with believing eyes to Him who alone can bring him out. He comes up out of his own righteousness, and shelters himself under Christ's righteousness. He comes up out of his own strength, and trusts to Christ's strength. He comes up out of his own wisdom, and hangs upon Jesus' wisdom. He comes up out of his own tempted, tried, bewildered, and perplexed condition, to find rest and peace in the finished work of the Son of God. And thus he comes up out of the wilderness of self, not actually, but experimentally. Every desire of his soul is to be delivered from his 'wilderness sickening sight' that he has of sin and of himself as a sinner. Every aspiration after Jesus, every longing look, earnest sigh, piteous cry, or laboring groan—all are a coming up from the wilderness. His turning his back upon an ungodly world—renouncing its pleasures, its honors, its pride, and its ambition—seeking communion with Jesus as his chief delight—and accounting all things but loss and rubbish for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus his Lord as revealed to his soul by the power of God—this, also, is coming up from the wilderness. When we gaze upon the lifeless corpse From the cradle to the coffin, affliction and sorrow are the appointed lot of man. He comes into the world with a wailing cry, and he often leaves it with an agonizing groan! Rightly is this earth called "a valley of tears," for it is wet with them in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. In every land, in every climate, scenes of misery and wretchedness everywhere meet the eye, besides those deeper griefs and heart-rending

sorrows which lie concealed from all observation. So that we may well say of the life of man that, like Ezekiel’s scroll, it is "written with lamentations, and mourning and woe." But this is not all. The scene does not end here! We see up to death, but we do not see beyond death. To see a man die without Christ is like standing at a distance, and seeing a man fall from a lofty cliff—we see him fall, but we do not see the crash on the rocks below. So we see an unsaved man die, but when we gaze upon the lifeless corpse, we do not see how his soul falls with a mighty crash upon the rock of God’s eternal justice! When his temporal trials come to a close—his eternal sorrows only begin! After weeks or months of sickness and pain, the pale, cold face may lie in calm repose under the coffin lid—when the soul is only just entering upon an eternity of woe! But is it all thus dark and gloomy both in life and death? Is heaven always hung with a canopy of black? Are there no beams of light, no rays of gladness, that shine through these dark clouds of affliction, misery, and woe that are spread over the human race? Yes! there is one point in this dark scene out of which beams of light and rays of glory shine! God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There, on the other side, is my solitary soul

"For what will it profit a man, if he will gain the whole world, and forfeit his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

Here is my scale of profit and loss. I have a soul to be saved or lost. What then shall I give in exchange for my soul? What am I profited if I gain the whole world and lose my soul? This deep conviction of a soul to be saved or lost lies at the root of all our religion. Here, on one side, is the WORLD and all its profits—its pleasures—its charms—its smiles—its winning ways—its comforts—its luxuries—its honors—to gain which is the grand struggle of human life. There, on the other side, is my solitary SOUL—to live after death, forever and ever, when the world and all its pleasures and profits will sink under the wrath of the Almighty. And this dear soul of mine—my very self, my only self, my all—must be lost or saved!

Even your own relatives think you are almost insane "The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him." John 14:17 The world—that is, the world dead in sin, and the world dead in profession—men destitute of the life and power of God—must have something that it can see. And, as heavenly things can only be seen by heavenly eyes, they cannot receive the things which are invisible.

Now this explains why a religion that presents itself with a degree of beauty and grandeur to the natural eye will always be received by the world—while a spiritual, internal, heartfelt and experimental religion will always be rejected. The world can receive a religion that consists of forms, rites, and ceremonies. These are things seen. Beautiful buildings, painted windows, pealing organs, melodious choirs, the pomp and parade of an earthly priesthood, and a whole apparatus of ’religious ceremony,’ carry with them something that the natural eye can see and admire. The world receives all this ’external religion’ because it is suitable to the natural mind and intelligible to the reasoning faculties. But the quiet—inward—experimental—divine religion—which presents no attractions to the outward eye, but is wrought in the heart by a divine operation—the world cannot receive this—because it presents nothing that the natural eye can rest upon with pleasure, or is adapted to gratify their general idea of what religion is or should be. Do not marvel, then, that worldly professors despise a religion wrought in the soul by the power of God. Do not be surprised

if even your own relatives think you are almost insane, when you speak of the consolations of the Spirit, or of the teachings of God in your soul. They cannot receive these things, for they have no experience of them—and being such as are altogether opposed to the carnal mind, they reject them with enmity and scorn.

Straight paths "Make straight paths for your feet." Hebrews 12:13

Surrounded as we are with a crooked generation, professing and profane, whose ways we are but too apt to learn—beset on every hand by temptations—to turn aside into some crooked path, to feed our pride, to indulge our lusts, to gratify our covetousness—blinded and seduced sometimes by the god of this world—hardened at other times by the deceitfulness of sin—here misled by the example, and there bewitched by the flattery of some friend or companion—at one time confused and bewildered in our judgment of right and wrong—at another time entangled, half resisting, half complying, in some snare of the wicked one—what a struggle have some of us had to make straight paths for our feet—and what pain and grief that we should ever have made crooked ones. "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had nearly slipped." "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet upon a rock, and gave me a firm place to stand." Have nothing to do with them

"But mixed themselves with the nations, and learned their works. They served their idols, which became a snare to them." Psalms 106:35-36 The ’carnal professors’ of the day see nothing wrong, nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent in their conduct or spirit—though they are sunk in worldliness, carnality or covetousness! But where there is divine life, where the blessed Spirit moves upon the heart with His sacred operations and secret influences, there will be light to see, and a conscience to feel, what is wrong, sinful, inconsistent, and improper.

It is but too evident that we cannot be mixed up with the professors of the day without drinking, in some measure, into their spirit and being more or less influenced by their example. We can scarcely escape the influence of those with whom we come much and frequently into contact. If they are dead, they will often benumb us with their corpse-like coldness. If they are light and trifling, they will often entangle us in their carnal levity. If they are worldly and covetous, they may afford us a shelter and an excuse for our own worldliness and covetousness.

Abhor that loose profession—that ready compliance with everything which feeds the pride, worldliness, covetousness, and lusts of our depraved nature—which so stamps the present day with some of its most perilous and dreadful characters. They have a mere form of godliness, but deny the power. Have nothing to do with them! The foulest filth under the cleanest cloak "Take heed therefore to yourselves!" Acts 20:28

There are few Christians who have not ever found SELF to be their greatest enemy. The pride, unbelief, hardness, and impenitence of a man’s own heart—the deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature—the lusts and passions, filth and folly of his own carnal mind—will not only ever be his greatest burden, but will ever prove his most dreaded foe!

Enemies we shall have from outside, and we may at times keenly feel their bitter speeches and cruel words and actions. But no enemy can injure us like ourselves! In five minutes a man may do himself more real harm, than all his enemies united could do to injure him in fifty years! To yourself you can be the most insidious enemy and the greatest foe! In all its forms, SELF in its inmost spirit

is still a deceitful—subtle—restless—proud—and impatient creature—masking its real character in a thousand ways, and concealing its destructive designs by countless devices. We have but to look on the professing church to find the highest pride under the lowest humility—the greatest ignorance under the vainest self-conceit—the basest treachery under the warmest profession—the vilest sensuality under the most heavenly piety—and the foulest filth under the cleanest cloak. Take heed unto yourselves!

Familiarity with sacred things "Take heed therefore to yourselves!" Acts 20:28 This was Paul's public warning to the elders of the church at Ephesus. It was Paul's private warning to his friend and disciple, his beloved son, Timothy. And do not all who write or speak in the name of the Lord need the same warning?

Familiarity with sacred things has a natural tendency to harden the conscience, where grace does not soften and make it tender. Men may preach and pray until both become a mere mechanical habit—and they may talk about Christ and His sufferings until they feel as little touched by them as a 'tragic actor' on the stage, of the sorrows which he impersonates. Well, then, may the Holy Spirit sound this note of warning, as with trumpet voice, in the ears of the servants of Christ. Take heed unto yourselves!

Pride, self-conceit & self-exaltation

Pride, self-conceit and self-exaltation, are both the chief temptations, and the main besetting sins, of those who occupy any public position in the church. Therefore, where these sins are not mortified by the Spirit, and subdued by His grace—instead of being, as they should be, the humblest of men—they are, with rare exceptions, the proudest. Did we bear in constant remembrance our slips, falls, and grievous backslidings—and had we, with all this, a believing sight of the holiness and purity of God, of the sufferings and sorrows of His dear Son, and what it cost Him to redeem us from the lowest hell, we would be—we must be—clothed with humility, and would, under feelings of the deepest self-abasement, take the lowest place among the family of God, as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all the saints. This should be the feeling of every child of God. Until this pride is in some measure crucified—until we hate it, and hate ourselves for it—the glory of God will not be our main object.

What? Will He forgive us all sins?

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

What? Will He forgive us all sins? Every sin that we have committed? Do we not sin with every breath that we draw? Is not every lustful desire sin? And is not every proud thought sin? And is not every wicked imagination sin? And is not every unkind suspicion sin? Every act of unbelief sin? And every working of a depraved nature sin? We committed sin when we sucked our mother's breast! We committed sin as soon as we were able to stammer out a word. And as we grew in body, we grew in sinfulness. Will He forgive sins of thought—sins of look—sins of action—sins of omission—sins of commission—sins in infancy—sins in childhood—sins in youth—sins in old age? Will He forgive all the base lusts—all the filthy workings—all the vile actions—all the pride—all the hypocrisy—all the covetousness—all the envy, hatred, and malice—all the aboundings of inward iniquity? The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

10.02. Volume 2 cont'd

This sacred anointing "You have an anointing from the Holy One." 1 John 2:20

Wherever the anointing of the Holy One touches a man’s heart it spreads itself, widening and extending its operations. It thus communicates divine gifts and graces wherever it comes. It bestows and draws out faith—gives repentance and godly sorrow—causes secret self-loathing and separation from the world—draws the affections upwards—makes sin hated—and Jesus and His salvation loved.

Wherever the anointing of the Holy Spirit touches a man’s heart it diffuses itself through his whole soul, and makes him wholly a new creature. It gives new motives—communicates new feelings—enlarges and melts the heart—and spiritualizes and draws the affections upwards. Without this sacred anointing all our religion is a bubble—all our profession a lie—and all our hopes will end in despair. O what a mercy to have one drop of this heavenly anointing! To enjoy one heavenly feeling! To taste the least measure of Christ’s love shed abroad in the heart! What an unspeakable mercy to have one touch—one glimpse—one glance—one communication out of the fullness of Him who fills all in all! By this anointing from the Holy One, the children of God are supported under afflictions, perplexities, and sorrows. By this anointing from the Holy One, they see the hand of God in every chastisement—in every providence—in every trial—in every grief—and in every burden. By this anointing from the Holy One they can bear chastisement with meekness, and put their mouth in the dust, humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God. Every good word, every good work, every gracious thought, every holy desire, every spiritual feeling do we owe to this one thing—the anointing of the Holy One. "You have an anointing from the Holy One."

What makes the children of God so strange?

"To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." 1 Peter 1:1-2

Strangers! What makes the children of God so strange? The grace of God which calls them out of this wretched world. Every man who carries the grace of God in his bosom is necessarily, as regards the world, a stranger in heart, as well as in profession, and life. As Abraham was a stranger in the land of Canaan—as Joseph was a stranger in the palace of Pharaoh—as Moses was a stranger in the land of Egypt—as Daniel was a stranger in the court of Babylon—so every child of God is separated by grace, to be a stranger in this ungodly world. And if indeed we are to come out from it and to be separate, the world must be as much a strange place to us—for we are strangers to its views, its thoughts, its desires, its prospects, its anticipations—in our daily walk, in our speech, in our mind, in our spirit, in our judgment, in our affections. We will be strangers from the world’s company—the world’s maxims—the world’s fashions—the world’s spirit. "They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13 With His stripes we are healed

Sin has thoroughly diseased us, and poisoned our very blood. Sin has diseased our understanding, so as to disable it from receiving the truth. Sin has diseased our conscience, so as to make it dull and heavy, and undiscerning of right and wrong. Sin has diseased our imagination, polluting it with every idle, foolish, and licentious fancy. Sin has diseased our memory, making it swift to retain what is evil, slow to retain what is good. Sin has diseased our affections, perverting them from all that is heavenly and holy, and fixing them on all that is earthly and vile. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5 Strangle & suffocate it!

"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help." Hosea 13:9 Is not this a true charge? Does not your conscience agree with it, as a well-founded accusation? Have you not willingly with your eyes open, run into some sin, which, but for God's mercy and upholding hand, would have proved your certain destruction? Have you not stood upon the very brink of some deep pit, down into which one more step would have plunged you? As you realize the evils of your heart, you see what a marvel it is, that grace is kept alive in your bosom! You see yourself surrounded on every side with that which would inevitably destroy it—but for the mighty power of God! You look back and wonder how the life of God in your soul has been preserved so many years. Sometimes you have been sunk into such carnality. You have felt such emptiness of all good, and such proneness to all evil, that you wonder how you have not been swallowed up, overcome, and carried away into the pit of destruction! David said, "I am as a wonder to many." But you can say, "I am a wonder to myself!" The world, the devil, and your own evil heart, have been for years all aiming to destroy the precious life of God in your soul—all stretching out their hands to strangle and suffocate it! And yet, in His mysterious wisdom, unspeakable grace, and tender compassion, He has kept the holy principle alive in your soul. O, the mystery of redeeming love! O, the blessedness of preserving grace! We have been preserved, upheld, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation! "O Lord, You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit!" Psalms 30:3 They shall never perish!

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in His mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation." 1 Peter 1:4-5 The elect are preserved in Christ, BEFORE they are called by grace. They are kept by the power of God from perishing in their unregeneracy. Have not you been almost miraculously preserved in the midst of dangers, and escaped when others perished by your side—or been raised up as it were, from the very brink of destruction and the very borders of the grave? Besides some striking escapes from what are called 'accidents,' three times in my life—once in infancy, once in boyhood, and once in manhood—I have been raised up from the borders of the grave, when almost everyone who surrounded my bed thought I would not survive the violence of the attack. Were not these instances of being kept by the power of God? I could not die until God had manifested His purposes of electing grace and mercy to my soul. But the elect are also kept by the mighty power of God AFTER they are called by grace—for they are in the hollow of His hand, and are kept as the apple of His eye. I will not say they are kept from all sins. Yet I will say that they are kept from damning sins. They are kept especially from three things—from the dominion of sin, from daring and final presumption, from lasting and damnable error. They are never drowned in the sins and evils of the present life so as to be swallowed up in them—for it is impossible that they can ever be lost! They are therefore preserved in hours of

temptation, for they are guarded by all the power of Omnipotence, shielded by the unceasing care and watchfulness of Him who can neither slumber nor sleep.

Looking back through a long vista of years, can you not see how the hand of God has been with you—how He has held you up, and brought you through many a storm, and preserved you under powerful temptations? How gently He sometimes drew you on, or sometimes kept you back? "I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand!" Having chosen us, God begets us with His word, regenerates us by a divine influence, and makes us new creatures by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

All things!

"You crowned Him with glory and honor, . . .You have put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He subjected all things to Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him." Hebrews 2:7-8

See the sovereign supremacy of Jesus! There may be circumstances in your earthly lot which at this moment are peculiarly trying. You look around and wonder how this or that circumstance will terminate. At present it looks very dark—clouds and mists hang over it, and you fear lest these clouds may break, not in showers upon your head, but burst forth in the lightning flash and the thunder stroke! But all things are put in subjection under Christ's feet! That which you dread cannot take place except by His sovereign will—nor can it move any further except by His supreme disposal. Then make yourself quiet. He will not allow you to be harmed. That frowning providence shall only execute His sovereign purposes, and it shall be among those all things which, according to His promise, shall work together for your good.

None of our trials come upon us by chance! They are all appointed in weight and measure—are all designed to fulfill a certain end. And however painful they may at present be, yet they are intended for your good. When the trial comes upon you, what a help it would be for you if you could view it thus—"This trial is sent for my good. It does not spring out of the dust. The Lord Himself is the supreme disposer of it. It is very painful to bear—but let me believe that He has appointed me this peculiar trial, along with every other circumstance. He will bring about His own will therein, and either remove the trial, or give me patience under it, and submission to it."

You may be afflicted by sickness. It is not by chance that such or such sickness visits your body—that the Lord sees fit to afflict head, heart, chest, liver, hand, foot, or any other part of your body. All things are put in subjection under Him, and He has not exempted sickness and disease! Whatever you suffer in bodily disease, He appoints and arranges it for your good. Be resigned to His holy and almighty will.

All your afflictions are put under the feet of Jesus! You may think at times how harshly you are dealt with—mourning, it may be, under family bereavements, sorrowing after the loss of your 'household treasures'—a beloved husband, wife, or child. But O that you could bear in mind that all your afflictions, be they what they may, are put under the feet of Jesus, so that, so to speak, not one can crawl from under His feet but by His permission—and, like scolded hounds, they crawl again beneath them at a word of command from His lips! Let us then hold fast this truth, for on it depends so much of our comfort.

Without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish!

"Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it; That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:27

What are we ourselves as viewed by our own eyes? Full of spots, wrinkles, and blemishes! And what do we see in ourselves every day, but sin and filth and folly? What evil is there in the world that is not in us, and in our hearts? It is true others cannot read our hearts. But we read them—yes, we are every day, and sometimes all the day reading them. And what do we read there? Like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written within and without"—and we may well add, if we rightly read what is there written, we have every reason to say it is "full of lamentations, and mourning, and woe." For I am sure that there is nothing that we see there every day and every hour, but would cover us with shame and confusion of face, and make us blush to lift up our eyes before God, or almost to appear in the presence of our fellow man! But neither others, nor we ourselves, now see what the church one day will be, and what she ever was in the eyes of Jesus! He could look through all the sins and sorrows of this intermediate period, and fix His eye upon the bridal day—the day when before assembled angels, in the courts of heaven, in the realms of eternal bliss, He would present her to Himself a glorious church, without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy, and without fault. O what a day will that be, when the Son of God shall openly wed His espoused bride—when there shall be heard in heaven, "as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." Revelation 19:6-7 Bitten by this serpent's tooth No man has ever sounded the depths of the fall. The children of God have indeed discoveries of the evil of sin. And they have such views at times of the desperate wickedness and awful depravity of human nature, that they seem as if filled with unspeakable horror at the hideous enormity of the corruption that works in their carnal mind. But no man has ever seen, as no man ever can see, in this time-state, what sin is to its full extent, and as it will be hereafter developed in the depths of hell. We may indeed in our own experience see something of its commencement—but we can form little idea of its progress, and still less of its termination. For sin has this peculiar feature attending it, that it ever spreads and spreads until it involves everything that it touches in utter ruin. We may compare it in this point of view to the venom-fang of a serpent. There are serpents of so venomous a kind, as for instance the Cobra de Capello, or hooded snake, that the introduction of the minutest portion of venom from their poison tooth will in a few hours convert all the fluids of the body into a mass of putrefaction. A man shall be in perfect health one hour, and, bitten by this serpent's tooth, shall in the next, be a loathsome mass of rottenness and corruption.

Such is sin. The introduction of sin into the nature of Adam at the fall was like the introduction of poison from the fang of a deadly serpent into the human body. It at once penetrated into his soul and body, and filled both with death and corruption. Or, to use a more scriptural figure, sin may be compared to the disease of leprosy, which usually began with a "bright spot," or "rising in the skin," scarcely perceptible, and yet spread and spread until it enveloped every member, and the whole body becoming a mass of putrefying hideous corruption. Or sin may be compared to a cancer, which begins perhaps with a little lump causing a slight itching, but goes on feeding upon the part which it attacks, until the patient dies worn out with pain and suffering.

Now if sin be this venom fang, this spreading leprosy, this loathsome cancer—if its destructive power be so great that, unless arrested and healed, it will destroy body and soul alike in hell, the remedy for it, if remedy there be, must be as great as the malady. Thus if there be a cure for sin—a remedy for the fall—a deliverance from the wrath to come—it must be at least as full and as complete as the ruin which sin has entailed upon us. The man who has slight, superficial views and feelings of sin will have equally slight and superficial views of the atonement made for sin. The groans of Christ will never sound in his ears as the dolorous groans of an agonizing Lord—the sufferings of Christ will never be opened up to his soul as the sorrows of Immanuel, God with us—the death of Christ will never be viewed by him, as the blood-shedding of the darling Son of God.

While he has such slight, superficial views of the malady, his views of the remedy will be equally slight and superficial. As we are led down into a spiritual knowledge of self and sin, so we are led up into a gracious knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. By suffering all the penalties of our sin, Jesus redeems us from the lowest hell and raises us up to the highest heaven—empowering poor worms of earth to soar above the skies and live forever in the presence of Him who is a consuming fire! "He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21 The sin of pride "I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13 Our hearts are desperately proud. If there is one sin which God hates more than another, and more sets Himself against, it is the sin of pride. Like a weed upon a dung-heap, pride grows more profusely in some soils, especially when well fertilized by rank, riches, praise, flattery, our own ignorance, and the ignorance of others. We all inherit pride from our fallen ancestor Adam—who got it from Satan, that "king over all the children of pride."

Those, perhaps, who think they possess the least pride, and view themselves with wonderful self-admiration as the humblest of mortals, may have more pride than those who feel and confess it. It may only be more deeply hidden in the dark recesses of their carnal mind. As God then sees all hearts, and knows every movement of pride, whether we see it or not, His purpose is to humble us! When I look back upon my life, and see all my sins, all my follies, all my slips, all my falls—my conscience testifies of the many things I have thought, said, and done, which grieve my soul, make me hang my head before God, put my mouth in the dust, and confess my sins unto Him. When I contrast my own exceeding sinfulness with God’s greatness, God’s majesty, God’s holiness, and God’s purity—I fall down, humbly and meekly before Him—I put my mouth in the dust—I acknowledge I am vile.

"I am nothing but dust and ashes!" (Abraham)

"Behold, I am vile!" (Job)

"Woe unto me! I am ruined!" (Isaiah)

"I am a sinful man!" (Peter) They need a mighty God "My eyes are ever on the Lord; for He will pluck my feet out of the net." Psalms 25:15 "Give us help from the adversary: for the help of man is vain." Psalms 60:11

What a mighty God we have to deal with! And what would suit our case but a mighty God? Have we not mighty sins? Have we not mighty trials? Have we not mighty temptations? Have we not mighty foes and mighty fears? And who is to deliver us from all this mighty army, except the mighty God? It is not a ’little God’ (if I may use the expression) that will do for God’s people. They

need a mighty God—because they are in circumstances where none but a mighty God can intervene in their behalf. And it is well worth our notice that the Lord puts His people purposely into circumstances where they may avail themselves, so to speak, of His omnipotent power, and thus know from living personal experience, that He is a mighty God, not in mere doctrine and theory, but a mighty God in their special and particular behalf.

Why, if you did not feelingly and experimentally know your mighty sins—your mighty trials—your mighty temptations—your mighty fears—you would not need a mighty God. O how this brings together the strength of God and the weakness of man! How it unites poor helpless creatures with the Majesty of heaven! How it conveys to feeble, worthless worms the very might of the Omnipotent Jehovah! This sense of our weakness and His power—our misery and His mercy—our ruin and His recovery—the aboundings of our sin and the superaboundings of His grace—a feeling sense of these opposite yet harmonious things, brings us to have personal, experimental dealings with God. And it is in these personal dealings with God that the life of all religion consists. "The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their trouble." Psalms 34:17 The Lord sometimes flogs His children home!

"As chastened, and not killed." 2 Corinthians 6:9 The Lord does not see fit to lay the same chastisements upon all His people. He has rods of different sizes and different descriptions—though all are felt to be rods when God brings them upon the back. The Lord chastises with one hand, and upholds with the other. In your spiritual experience, you may have passed under many chastising strokes. And when they fell upon you, they seemed to come as a killing sentence from God’s lips. You feared your illness might end in death. Under your bereavement, you felt as if you could never hold up your head again. You thought your providential losses might prove to be your earthly ruin. Your family afflictions seemed to be so heavy, as to be radically incurable. All these were killing strokes. But though chastened, you were not killed. You lost no divine life thereby—but you lost much that pleased the flesh—much that gratified the creature—much that looked well for days of prosperity, but would not abide the storm. But you lost nothing that was for your real good. If you lost bodily health—you gained spiritual health. If you lost a dear husband or child—God filled up the void in your heart by making Christ more precious. If you had troubles in your family—the Lord made it up by giving more manifestations of His love and grace. Your very losses in providence were for your good—for God either made them up, or what you lost in providence He doubled in grace. So that though chastened—you are not killed! Has anything that has happened to you quenched or extinguished the life of God in your soul? As the dross and tin were more separated—has not the gold shone more brightly? Have you not held spiritual things with a tighter grasp? When God chastens His people, it is not to kill them—it is to make them partakers of His holiness, to revive their drooping graces, to make them more sincere, upright and tender in conscience, to make them more separate from the world, to make them seek more His glory, to make them have a more single eye to His praise, to make them live more a life of faith.

Here is the blessedness—that when God chastises His people, it is not for their injury, but for their profit—not for their destruction, but for their salvation—not to treat them with the unkindness of an enemy, but with the love of a friend! Look at the afflictions, chastenings and grievous sorrows that you have passed through. Have they been friends to you—or enemies? instruments of helping you—or hindrances? ladders whereby you have climbed up to heaven—or steps whereby you

have descended into hell? means of taking you nearer to Christ—or means of carrying you more into the world?

If you know anything of God’s chastening, you will say, "Every stroke has brought me nearer to God! He has flogged me home!" As a father will seize his truant boy out of a horde of other children and flog him home, so the Lord sometimes flogs His children home! Every stroke laid upon their back brings them a step nearer to their home in the mansions above! In your own experience, you know that God’s chastenings have not killed you. But rather they have been the means of reviving and keeping alive the work of grace upon your heart! As chastened, yet not killed.

Talk like an angel—and live like a devil

There is "a knowledge of the things of God" which a man may possess without a personal experience of the new birth—without any divine operation upon his soul whatever, or any participation of the grace of God. From reading the scriptures and hearing the Gospel preached, many attain to a carnal, intellectual, barren head knowledge of the truth—who, as to any experimental, vital, saving acquaintance with it, are still in the very gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. A man may have the ’knowledge of an apostle’—and the ’worldliness of a Demas.’ He may be clear in head—and rotten in heart. He may talk like an angel—and live like a devil. He may understand all mysteries and all knowledge—and be nothing but a hypocrite and an impostor. In our day such characters abound in the churches. But distinct from this "head knowledge," as distinct from it as heaven from hell, there is a most blessed "spiritual knowledge" of the things of God, with which the people of God are favored. "Then He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45 This idol-making, idol-loving world

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself." Exodus 19:4 The idea here, is of snatching His people out of Egypt as an eagle would snatch her young away from the hands of the spoiler of her nest, and bear them away and aloft on her outstretched wings. Deliverance—from idolatry, from bondage, from a state of degradation and abject slavery—is the leading idea of bringing His people out of Egypt. So, spiritually, the Lord bears us out of a worse Egypt by His Almighty power. Has He given you some deliverance from the world and the spirit of it, and brought you to Himself by the power of His grace? Has He carried you up out of sin—its open commission, its secret practice, its inward indulgence—and broken in some measure the love and the power of it? Has He carried you not only out of the grosser iniquities of Egypt, but its more ’refined and acceptable sins,’ such as creature idolatry, religious lip-service, self-righteousness, and mocking God by superstition, tradition, and vain ceremony? Has He carried you, as on eagles’ wings, out of all the idols of Egypt? For Egypt was a land teeming with idolatry, and therefore an apt emblem of this idol-making, idol-loving world. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their bondmen." Leviticus 26:13 "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians." Exodus 18:10 Accomplished actors! The pulpit, as well as the playhouse, has its accomplished actors!

Many hard lessons "He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunken with wormwood." Lamentations 3:15 The Lord’s people have many hard lessons which they have to learn in the

’school of Christ.’ Each one has to carry a daily cross, and are burdened and pressed down under its weight. This daily cross may and does differ in individuals. But every child of God has his own cross, which laid upon his shoulders by an invincible hand, he has, for the most part, to carry down to the very grave.

Thus, some of God’s people are afflicted in body from the very time the Lord begins His work of grace upon their heart. Or if exempt from disease, are shattered in nerve, depressed in spirits, and weighed down by lassitude and languor, often harder to bear than disease itself. Some are tied to ungodly partners, meeting with opposition and persecution at every step. Others have nothing but trouble in their family, either from the invasion of death into their circle, or what sometimes is worse than death—disgrace, shame, and ungodliness. Others have little else but one continual series of losses and crosses in their circumstances, wave after wave rolling over their heads.

O, view the family of God toiling homeward—some dragging along an afflicted body—others a wounded spirit—others carrying upon their shoulders dying children—others with scarcely a rag to their back or a crust in their hand—footsore, fearful in heart, trembling at a rustling leaf—a deep river to pass, and a furious enemy in sight.

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains." Habakkuk 3:17-19 Were we left wholly in its hands!

"No temptation has taken you but such as man can bear." 1 Corinthians 10:13

There is not a single sin ever perpetrated by man which does not lie deeply hidden in the recesses of our fallen nature! But these sins do not stir into activity until temptation draws them forth. Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart, what fire is to stubble. Sin lies quiet in our carnal mind until temptation comes to set it on fire. Temptation is to our corrupt nature, what the spark is to gunpowder. Have you not found this sad truth—how easily by temptation are the corruptions of our wretched heart set on fire, and burst into every kind of daring and dreadful iniquity? In temptation, we learn what sin is—its dreadful nature, its aggravated character, its fearful workings, its mad, its desperate upheavings against God—and what we are or would be—were we left wholly in its hands! "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41 "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117 Romantic dreams of pleasure & earthly joy?

"The removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made—so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Hebrews 12:27

Man is always seeking happiness in some shape or other, in the things of this world. He does not see or feel that outside of God, happiness is impossible—and that to seek it in ’the creature’ is to add sin to sin. But look at this vain attempt in a variety of instances. Look at people young in life. What romantic prospects dance before their eyes! "What dreams of love and home by flowery streams!" But what a crude shock do these ’dreams of earthly happiness’ usually experience! This is true of most, if not all, who build their hopes of happiness on ’the creature.’ But particularly so in the case of the family of God. How jealous is He of all such schemes of earthly bliss—and how, sooner or later, He shatters them all by His mighty hand!

Look, for instance, at health, that indispensable element of all earthly happiness! What a crude shock many of the dear family of God have experienced in their earthly tabernacle, even in their youthful days, by accident or disease, so as to mar all earthly happiness almost before the race of life was begun! Look again at wedded happiness—that "perpetual fountain of domestic sweets"—how bitter a drop often falls from the hands of God into that honeyed cup! Why does that mourning widow sigh? Why does her heart swell, and her eye run over? What does that scalding drop on her cheek mean? How many a blooming daughter has faded away in consumption before a mother's eye! How many a fine strong son has been cut down by an accident—or sudden illness has borne him away to the cold grave, in the very pride and prospect of life! But apart from these elements of shattered and broken creature happiness, what disappointment, what vexation, what sorrow and care we find in everything we put our hands to! Even with health and home unbroken, wife and child untouched by death's cold hand, there is sin and misery enough in a man's own bosom to fill his heart with continual sorrow! Thus wisely and mercifully, all our attempts to grasp earthly happiness fail and come to nothing. Child of grace, do not murmur at the hand of the Lord which has broken your 'dreams of creature happiness.' God does not intend that you should have your heaven here on earth, nor live after the fashion of this world. It is a kind hand, though a rough one—which blasts all your schemes of creature happiness—which breaks your body into pieces with sickness—which blights all your prospects of wealth, and fame, and reputation, and ambition—and pours bitter gall into each honeyed cup!

Why does the Lord break all your earthly schemes of human happiness? Why does He blight all your prospects—your plans of ambition and of success in life—your romantic dreams of pleasure and earthly joy? That they may all be removed out of your hearts' affections—and give you happiness which shall endure forever and ever! Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. The love of the truth "They didn't receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thessalonians 2:10

There is a receiving of 'the truth,' and a receiving of 'the love of the truth.' These two things widely differ. To receive the truth will not necessarily save—for many who receive the truth, never receive 'the love of the truth.' Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed—but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive 'the love of the truth' by Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself. "Unto you therefore who believe He is precious." 1 Peter 2:7 These lovers of ours

"I will go after my lovers, who gave me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink." Hosea 2:5

Here is the opening up of what we are by nature, what our carnal mind is ever bent upon, what we do or are capable of doing, except as held back by the watchful providence and unceasing grace and goodness of the Lord. These lovers of ours are our old sins and former lusts which still crave for gratification. To these sometimes the carnal mind looks back and says, "Where are my lovers that gave me my food and drink? Where are those former delights that so pleased my vile passions, and so gratified my base desires?" These lovers, then, are the lust of the flesh—the lust of the eyes—and the pride of life—all which, unless subdued by sovereign grace, still work in our depraved nature, and seek to regain their former sway. But the Lord, for the most part, mercifully

interposes, nor will He usually let His children do what they gladly would do—or be what they gladly would be. He says, "therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, that she can’t find her way." (Hosea 2:6) The Lord, in His providence or in His grace, prevents our carnal mind from carrying out its base desires—hedges up our way with thorns—by which we may spiritually understand prickings of conscience, stings of remorse, pangs of penitence—which are so many thorny and briery hedges that fence up the way of transgression, and thus prevent our carnal mind from breaking forth into its old paths, and going after these former lovers to renew its ungodly alliance with them. A hedge of thorns being set up by the grace of God, our soul is unable to break through this strong fence, because the moment that it seeks to get through it, or over it, every part of it presents a pricking brier or a sharp and strong thorn, which wounds and pierces our conscience. What infinite mercy, what surpassing grace, are hereby manifested! Were our conscience not made thus tender so as to feel the pricking brier, we can hardly tell what might be the fearful consequence, or into what a miserable abyss of sin and transgression our soul would fall. But these lacerating briers produce remorse of soul before God—for finding, as the Lord speaks, "she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them," there comes a longing in her mind for purer pleasures and holier delights than her adulterous lovers could give her. And thus a change in her feelings is produced, a revolution in her desires. "Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now." The idea is of an adulterous wife contrasting the innocent enjoyments of her first wedded love with the state of misery into which she had been betrayed by base seducers. And thus the soul spiritually contrasts its former enjoyment of the Lord’s presence and power, with its present state of darkness and desertion. "Where," she would say, "are my former delights, my first joys, and the sweetness I had in days now passed, in knowing, serving, and worshiping the Lord? Ah! He was a kind and loving Husband to me in those days. I will return to Him if He will graciously permit me, for it was better with me when I could walk in the light of His countenance, than since I have been seeking for my lovers, and reaping nothing but guilt, death, and condemnation."

It is in these storms "When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever!" Proverbs 10:25 The very storms through which the believer passes, will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ. As the same wind that blows down the shallow-rooted tree, only establishes the deep-rooted tree, so the same storms which uproot the ’shallow professor,’ only establish the ’true believer’ more firmly in Christ. Though these storms may shake off some of his ’leaves,’ or break off some of the ’rotten boughs’ at the end of the branch, they do not uproot the believer’s faith, but rather strengthen it.

It is in these storms that he learns more of his own weakness—and of Christ’s strength; more of his own misery—and of Christ’s mercy; more of his own sinfulness—and of superabounding grace; more of his own poverty—and of Christ’s riches; more of his own desert of hell—and of his own title to heaven.

It is in these storms that the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on—and goes on to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart—and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus. "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me: for my soul takes refuge in You. Yes, in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge, until disaster has passed." Psalms 57:1

10.03. Volume 3

The incredible greatness of His power

"I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of His power to us who believe Him." Ephesians 1:19 The work of God on the soul, is a work of sovereign and omnipotent power! See what a mighty power was put forth in turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; and how it was the outstretched arm of Omnipotence alone, which could deliver us from the power of darkness and bring us into the eternal heavenly kingdom! Consider the difficulties which grace has to overcome, in the "quickening" of a dead soul into spiritual life. View the depths of the fall. Contemplate—the death of the soul in trespasses and sins—the thorough alienation from the life of God—the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the understanding—the perverseness of the will—the hardness of the conscience—and the depravity of the affections!

View the soul's obduracy, stubbornness and obstinacy—its pride, unbelief, infidelity and self-righteousness; its passionate love to, habitual practice of, and long imprisonment to sin. Consider its strong prejudices against everything godly and holy!

Contemplate the desperate, implacable enmity of the carnal mind against God Himself—its firm and deep rooted love to the world, in all its varied shapes and forms—and remember also how all its hopes, happiness, and prospects are bound up in the things of time and sense! O what a complicated mass of difficulties, do all these foes form in their firm combination, like a compact, well armed, thoroughly trained army—against any power which would seek to dislodge them from their position!

Add to this—all the power, malice, and deceitful arts of Satan, as the strong armed man—keeping the palace night and day, and yielding to none but the stronger than he!

Consider, too, the sacrifices which must often be made by one who is to live godly in Christ Jesus—the tenderest ties, perhaps, to be broken—the lucrative prospects which have to be abandoned—old friends to be renounced—family connections to be given up—position in life to be lost—shame and contempt to be entailed on oneself!

Viewing, then, a soul dead in sin, with all these difficulties and obstacles in their complicated array, must we not pronounce that to be a mighty act of power which, in spite of all these apparently invincible hindrances, lifts it up and out of them all, into a new and spiritual life? So fully and thoroughly is this fruit and effect of omnipotent power, and of omnipotent power alone, that it is spoken of in the word as—a new and heavenly birth—a new creation—a resurrection—all which terms imply a putting forth of a divine power, as distinct from and independent of any creature effort.

Contemplate also, the mighty power of God in "maintaining" divine life in our soul. We have to see and feel—what mountains of difficulty—what seas of temptation—what winds and storms of error—what assaults and snares of Satan—what floods of vileness and ungodliness within and

without—strong lusts and passions—what secret slips and falls—what backslidings and departures from the living God—what long seasons of darkness, barrenness, and death—what opposition of the flesh to the strait and narrow way—what crafty hypocrites, pretended friends, false professors—all striving to throw down or entangle our steps!

Consider also, what helplessness, inability, and miserable impotency in ourselves to all that is good—and what headlong proneness to all that is evil. We have also to ponder over what we have been and what we still are, since we professed to fear God—and how, when left to ourselves, we have done nothing but sin against and provoke God to His face! And thus as read over article by article, this long dark catalogue, still to have a sweet persuasion that the life of God is in our soul—we realize, believe, and feel, and bless God for His surpassing, superabounding grace, in maintaining this divine life in our soul. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" His secret power & influence "No man can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44 "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3

None can really come to Jesus by faith, unless this drawing power is put forth. The Holy Spirit—that gracious and blessed Teacher, acts upon the soul by His secret power and influence, puts ’cords of love’ and ’bands of mercy’ around the heart, and by the attractive influence that He puts forth, draws the soul to Jesus’ feet—and in due time reveals Him as the chief among ten thousand—and the altogether lovely one. As the Spirit reveals and manifests these precious things of Christ to the soul, He raises up a living faith whereby Jesus is sought unto, looked unto, laid hold of, and is brought into the heart with a divine power, there to be enshrined in its warmest and tenderest affections. All through its Christian pilgrimage, this blessed Spirit goes on to deepen His work in the soul, and to discover more and more of the suitability, beauty, and blessedness of the Lord Jesus, as He draws the soul more and more unto Him. There is no maintaining of the light, life, and power of God in our souls, except as we are daily coming unto Jesus as the living stone, and continually living upon Him as the bread of life.

All iniquity "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." Titus 2:14

Sins of heart. Sins of lip. Sins of life. There are five things as regards sin, from which our blessed Lord came to redeem us—its guilt, its filth, its power, its love, its practice. By His death, He redeemed us from sin’s guilt. By the washing of regeneration, He delivers us from sin’s filth. By the power of His resurrection, He liberates us from sin’s dominion. By revealing His beauty, He frees us from sin’s love. By making the conscience tender in His fear, He preserves us from sin’s practice. The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin.

If your flesh had its full swing

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you may not do the things that you desire." Galatians 5:17 At times, we can hardly tell how we are kept from evil. There is in those who fear God, a spiritual principle which holds them up, and keeps them back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. This inner principle of grace and godly fear has, in thousands of instances, preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their

own conscience! They cannot do the EVIL things that they would do. The flesh is always lusting towards evil, but grace is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. Grace does not wholly overcome the evil lustings of the flesh, but it can prevent those lustings from being carried out into open action. For the Spirit fights against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have its own will and way unchecked. What a mercy lies couched here! For what would you be, if your flesh had its full swing? What evil is there which you would not do? What crime which you would not commit? What slip which you would not make? What open and horrid fall which you would not be guilty of—unless you were upheld by Almighty power—and the flesh curbed and checked from running its destructive course? We can never praise God sufficiently for His restraining grace—for what would we be without it? "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117 A coward's castle A pastor has no right to turn the pulpit into a coward's castle, and from there attack those in the congregation, whom he is afraid to meet face to face privately. It is cruelly unfair to attack an individual who cannot defend himself—to hold him up, as if on the horns of the pulpit, before the congregation, (who generally know pretty well who is meant), and to condemn him without hearing his side, with the pastor being the only judge and jury.

Some beloved idol?

"It is a land of engraved images, and they are mad over idols." Jeremiah 50:38 Have we not all in our various ways, set up some beloved idol—something which engaged our affections, something which occupied our thoughts, something to which we devoted all the energies of our minds, something for which we were willing to labor night and day? Be it money, be it power, be it esteem of men, be it respectability, be it worldly comfort, be it literary knowledge, there was a secret setting up of SELF in one or more of its various forms, and a bowing down to it as an idol. The man of business makes money his god. The man of pleasure makes the lust of the flesh his god. The proud man makes his adored SELF his god. The Pharisee makes self-righteousness his god. The Arminian makes free-will his god. The Calvinist makes dry doctrine his god. All in one way or other, however they may differ in the object of their idolatrous worship, agree in this—that they give a preference in their esteem and affection to their peculiar idol, above the one true God. "And the idols He shall utterly abolish." Isaiah 2:18

There is, then, a time to break down these idols which our fallen nature has set up. And have not we experienced some measure of this breaking down, both externally and internally? Have not our idols been in a measure smashed before our eyes, our prospects in life cut up and destroyed, our airy visions of earthly happiness and our romantic paradises dissolved into thin air, our creature-hopes dashed, our youthful affections blighted, and the objects from which we had fondly hoped to reap an enduring harvest of delight removed from our eyes? And likewise, as to our religion—our good opinion of ourselves, our piety and holiness, our wisdom and our knowledge, our understanding and our abilities, our consistency and uprightness—have they not all been broken down, and made a heap of ruins before our eyes? That monstrous creature within us!

"I abhor the pride of Jacob." Amos 6:8

O cursed pride, that is ever lifting up its head in our hearts! Pride would even pull down God that it might sit upon His throne. Pride would trample under foot the holiest things to exalt itself! Pride is that monstrous creature within us, of such ravenous and indiscriminate gluttony, that the more it devours, the more it craves! Pride is that chameleon which assumes every color—that actor which

can play every part—and yet which is faithful to no one object or purpose—but to exalt and glorify self!

"I will make the pride of the strong to cease." "He shall bring down their pride." (Ezekiel 7:24, Isaiah 25:11) God means to kill man’s pride! And oh, what cutting weapons the Lord will sometimes make use of to kill a man’s pride! How He will bring him sometimes into the depths of temporal poverty, that He may make a stab at his worldly pride! How He will bring to light the iniquities of his youth, that He may mortify his self-righteous pride! How He will allow sin to break forth, if not openly, yet so powerfully within, that piercing convictions shall kill his spiritual pride! And what deep discoveries of internal corruption will the Lord sometimes employ, to dig down to the root, and cut off the core of that poisonous tree, pride! The Searcher of hearts dissects and anatomizes this inbred evil, cuts down to it through the quivering and bleeding flesh, and pursues with His keen knife its multiplied windings and ramifications. "The lofty looks of man will be brought low, the haughtiness of men will be bowed down, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day." Isaiah 2:11 "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Isaiah 2:17 "The Lord of hosts has purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth." Isaiah 23:9 The soul’s natural element

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin. It is proud—and needs to be humbled. It is careless—and needs to be awakened. It is alive—and needs to be killed. It is full—and requires to be emptied. It is whole—and needs to be wounded. It is clothed—and requires to be stripped. The soul is, by nature, self-righteous, self-seeking, buried deep in worldliness and carnality, utterly blind and ignorant, filled with presumption, arrogance, conceit and enmity—hateful to all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is the soul’s natural element. Some of the features of the unregenerate nature of man are—covetousness, lust, worldly pleasure, desire of the praise of men, an insatiable thirst after self-advancement, a complete abandonment to all that can please and gratify every new desire of the heart, an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves. Education, moral restraints, or the force of habit, may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption, and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin, so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate the land. But no moral check can alter human nature. A chained tiger is a tiger still. "The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots." To make man the direct contrary of what he originally is—to make him love God instead of hating Him—fear God, instead of mocking Him—obey God, instead of rebelling against Him—to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change—requires the implantation of a new nature by the immediate hand of God Himself. Natural light, natural love, natural faith, natural obedience—in a word, all natural religion—is here useless and ineffectual.

Godly sorrow

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Corinthians 7:10

Godly sorrow springs from a view of a suffering Savior, and manifests itself by hatred of self—abhorrence of sin—groaning over our backslidings—grief of soul for being so often entangled by our lusts and passions—and is accompanied by softness—meltings of heart—flowings of love to the Redeemer—indignation against ourselves—and earnest desires never to sin more. But our coward flesh shrinks from them!

"Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

What benefit is there in afflictions? Does God send them without an object in view? Do they come merely, as the men of the world think, by chance? No! There is benefit intended by them. The branch cannot bear fruit unless it be pruned. The love of sin cannot be cast out—the soul cannot be meekened, humbled, softened, and made contrite—the world cannot be embittered—the things of time and sense cannot be stripped of their false hue and their magic appearance—except through affliction. Our greatest blessings usually spring from our greatest afflictions—they prepare the heart to receive them—they empty the vessel of the poisonous ingredients which have filled it, and fit it to receive gospel wine and milk. To be without these afflictions—these griefs—these trials—these temptations—is to write ourselves destitute of grace. But our coward flesh shrinks from them! We are willing to walk to heaven—but not to walk there in God’s way. Though we see in the Scripture that the path to glory is a rough and rugged way—yet when our feet are planted in that painful and trying path, we shrink back—our coward flesh refuses to walk in that road.

God therefore, as a sovereign, brings those afflictions upon us which He sees most fit for our profit and His glory, without ever consulting us, without ever allowing us a choice in the matter. And He will generally cause our afflictions to come from the most unexpected source, and in a way most cutting to our feelings—in the way that of all others we would least have chosen—and yet in a way which of all others, is most for our profit. God deals with us like a surgeon dealing with a diseased organ. How painful the operation! How deep the knife cuts! How long it may be before the wound is healed! Yet every stroke of the knife is indispensable! A skillful and faithful surgeon would not do his duty if he did not dissect it to the very bottom. As pain before healing is necessary, and must be produced by the knife—so spiritually, we must be wounded and cut in our souls, as long, and as deeply as God sees needful, that in His own time we may receive the consolation. Do the afflictions we pass through humble us? Do they deaden the love of the world in our hearts? Do they purge out hypocrisy? Do they bring us more earnestly to the throne of grace? Do they discover to us sins that we have not before seen? Do they penetrate into our very hearts? Do they lay bare the corrupt fountain that we carry within us? Do they search and test us before a heart-searching God? Do they meeken and soften our spirit? The filthy holes & puddles in which it grovels "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9 The sin of our fallen nature is a very mysterious thing. We read of "the mystery of iniquity." Sin has depths which no human plumb line ever fathomed, and lengths which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out. Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep—and at other times to awake with renewed strength, its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature—the many shapes and colors it wears—the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels—the corners into which it creeps—its deceitfulness—its hypocrisy—its craftiness—its persuasiveness—its intense selfishness—its utter recklessness—its desperate madness—its insatiable greediness—are secrets, painful secrets, only learned by bitter experience. "The heart is

deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The Lord’s secret power in our souls "He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might He increases strength." Isaiah 40:29 The Lord’s people are often in the state that they have no might. All their power seems exhausted, and their strength completely drained away—sin appears to have gotten the mastery over them—and they feel as if they had neither will nor ability to run the race set before them, or persevere in the way of the Lord.

Now what has kept us to this day? Some of you have made a profession ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years. What has kept us? When powerful temptations were spread for our feet, what preserved us from falling headlong into them? When we felt the workings of strong lusts, what kept us from being altogether carried captive by them? When we look at the difficulties of the way, the perplexities which our souls have had to grapple with, the persecutions and hard blows from sinners and saints that we have had to encounter—what has still kept in us a desire to fear God, and a heart in some measure tender before Him? When we view the infidelity, unbelief, carnality, worldly-mindedness, hypocrisy, pride, and presumption of our fallen nature—what has kept us still believing, hoping, loving, longing, and looking to the Lord? When we think of our deadness, coldness, torpidity, rebelliousness, perverseness, love to evil, aversion to good, and all the abounding corruptions of our nature—what has kept us from giving up the very profession of religion, and swimming down the powerful current that has so long and so often threatened to sweep us utterly from the Lord? Is it not the putting forth of the Lord’s secret power in our souls? Can we not look back, and recall to mind our first religious companions—those with whom we started in the race—those whom we perhaps envied for their greater piety, zeal, holiness, and earnestness—and with which we painfully contrasted our own sluggishness and carnality—admiring them, and condemning ourselves? Where are they all, or the greater part of them? Some have embraced soul-destroying errors—others are buried in a worldly religious system—and others are wrapped up in delusion and fleshly confidence.

Thus, while most have fallen into the snares of the devil, God, by putting forth His secret power in the hearts of His fainting ones, keeps His fear alive in their souls—holds up their goings in His paths that their footsteps slip not—brings them out of all their temptations and troubles—delivers them from every evil work—and preserves them unto His heavenly kingdom. He thus secures the salvation of His people by His own free grace.

How sweet and precious it is to have our strength renewed—to have fresh grace brought into the heart—to feel the mysterious sensations of renovated life—to feel the everlasting arms supporting the soul—fighting our battles for us, subduing our enemies, overcoming our lusts, breaking our snares, and delivering us out of our temptations!

God’s house In the New Testament Scriptures, we find mention made in several places of "the house of the God." The New Testament never, in any one instance, means, by "the house of God," any material building. It has come to pass, through the traditions received from the fathers, that buildings erected by man—collections of bricks and mortar—piles of squared and cemented stones—are often called "the house of God." In ancient Popish times they invested a consecrated building with the title of "God’s house," thus endeavoring to make it appear as though it were a holy place in which God specially dwelt. They thus drew off the minds of the people from any internal communion with God, and possessed them with the idea that He was only to be found in

some holy spot, consecrated and sanctified by rites and ceremonies. The same leaven of the Pharisees has infected the Church of England—and thus she calls her consecrated buildings, her piles of stone and cement, "churches," and "houses of God." And even those who profess a purer faith, who dissent from her unscriptural forms, have learned to adopt the same carnal language, and even they, through a misunderstanding of what "the house of God" really is, will call such a building as we are assembled in this morning, "the house of God." How frequently does the expression drop from the pulpit, and how continually is it heard at the prayer meeting, "coming up to the house of God," as though any building now erected by human hands could be called the house of the living God. It arises from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and is much fostered by that priestcraft which is in the human heart, inciting us to believe that God is to be found only in certain buildings set apart for His service. When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel

We often know the theory of the gospel, before we know the experience of the gospel. We often receive the doctrines of grace into our judgment, before we receive the grace of the doctrines into our soul. We therefore need to be brought down, humbled, tried, stripped of every prop—that the gospel may be to us more than a sound, more than a name, more than a theory, more than a doctrine, more than a system, more than a creed—that it may be soul enjoyment—soul blessing—and soul salvation. When the Holy Spirit preaches the gospel to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and tried—it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner’s broken heart.

We get entangled with some idol

Wherever the grace of God is, it constrains its partaker to desire to live to His honor and glory. But he soon finds the difficulty of so doing. Such is the weakness of the flesh, the power of sin, the subtlety of Satan, the strength of temptation, and the snares spread on every side for our feet, that we can neither do what we want, nor be what we want. Before we are well aware, we get entangled with some idol, or drawn aside into some indulgence of the flesh, which brings darkness into the mind, and may cut us out some bitter work for the rest of our days. But we thus learn not only the weakness of the flesh, but where and in whom all our strength lies. And as the grace of the Lord Jesus, in its suitability, in its sufficiency and its superaboundings, becomes manifested in and by the weakness of the flesh—a sense of His wondrous love and care in so bearing with us, in so pitying our case, and manifesting mercy where we might justly expect wrath, constrains us with a holy obligation to walk in His fear and to live to His praise. The sins & slips of the saints The Scriptures faithfully record the falls of believers—the drunkenness of Noah, the incest of Lot, the unbelief of Abraham, the peevishness of Moses, the adultery of David, the idolatry of Solomon, the pride of Hezekiah, the cowardice of Mark and the cursing and swearing of Peter. But why has the Holy Spirit left on record the sins and slips of the saints? First, that it might teach us that they were saved by grace as poor, lost, and ruined sinners—in the same way as we hope to be saved. Secondly, that their slips and falls might be so many beacons and warnings, to guard the people of God against being overtaken by the same sins. As the apostle speaks—"Now all these things happened to them by way of example, and they were written for our admonition." And thirdly, that the people of God, should they be overtaken by sin, might not be cast into despair—but that from seeing recorded in the Scripture the slips and failings of the saints of old, they might be lifted up from their despondency, and brought once more to hope in the Lord.

Experimental knowledge

"And this is eternal life, that they should know You, the only true God, and Him whom You sent, Jesus Christ." John 17:3 An experimental knowledge of Christ in the soul, is the only relief for sin's poverty, guilt, leprosy, bankruptcy and damnation. This is the true way of preaching Christ crucified—not the mere doctrine of the Cross, but a crucified Jesus experimentally known to the soul. I am deeply conscious of my own baseness, ignorance, blindness and folly. But my malady is too deeply rooted to be healed by dry doctrines and speculative theological opinions. The blood of the Lamb, spiritually and supernaturally sprinkled and applied, is the only healing balm for a sin-sick soul.

Friend, can you understand my riddle?

I find that sin has such power over me, that though I call on the Lord again and again for deliverance, I seem to be as weak as ever when temptation comes. If a window were placed in my bosom, what filth and vileness would be seen by all.

"O you hideous monster sin,

What a curse have you brought in!"

I love it—I hate it. I want to be delivered from the power of it—and yet am not satisfied without drinking down its poisoned sweets. Sin is my hourly companion—and my daily curse. Sin is the breath of my mouth—and the cause of my groans. Sin is my incentive to prayer—and my hinderer of it. Sin made my Savior suffer—and makes my Savior precious. Sin spoils every pleasure—and adds a sting to every pain. Sin fits a soul for heaven—and ripens a soul for hell.

Friend, can you understand my riddle? Is your heart, as my heart? Alas! Alas! We feel sin's power daily and hourly. We sigh and groan at times, to be delivered from the giant strength of our corruptions, which seem to carry us captive at their will. Though sin is a sweet morsel to our carnal mind, it grieves our soul. I am sure I must be a monument of grace and mercy, if saved from the guilt, curse, and power of sin! My greatest enemy?

I have ever found myself to be my greatest enemy. I never had a foe that troubled me so much as my own heart—nor has any one ever wrought me half the mischief or given me half the plague that I have felt and known within. And it is a daily sense of this which makes me dread myself more than anybody that walks upon the face of the earth! Keep a watchful eye upon every inward foe—and if you fight, fight against the enemy that lurks and works in your own bosom!

There are many plans in a man's heart "There are many plans in a man's heart; but the Lord's counsel will prevail." Proverbs 19:21 The plans of our heart are generally to find some easy, smooth, flowery path. Whatever benefits we have derived from affliction, whatever mercies we have experienced in tribulation, the flesh hates and shrinks from such a path with complete abhorrence. And, therefore, there is always a secret planning in a man's heart—to escape the cross, to avoid affliction, and to walk in some flowery meadow, away from the rough road which cuts his feet, and wearies his limbs. Another "plan in a man's heart" is, that he shall have worldly prosperity—that his children shall grow up around him, and when they grow up, he shall be able to provide for them in a way which shall be best suited to their station in life—that they shall enjoy health and strength and success—and that there shall not be any cutting affliction in his family, or fiery trial to pass through.

Now these plans the Lord frustrates. What grief, what affliction, what trouble, is the Lord continually bringing into some families! Their dearest objects of affection removed from them, at the very moment when they seemed clasped nearest around their hearts! And those who are spared, perhaps, growing up in such a searedness of conscience and hardness of heart, and, perhaps, profligacy of life, that even their very presence is often a burden to their parents instead of a blessing—and the very children who should be their comfort, become thorns and briers in their sides!

Oh, how the Lord overturns and brings to nothing the "plans of a man's heart" to make a paradise here upon earth. When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord's dealings with him from the first, he sees it was a kind hand which "blasted his gourds, and laid them low"—it was a kind hand that swept away his worldly prospects—which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty—which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations—because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally precious.

There are many plans in a man's heart. Now you have all your plans—that busy workshop is continually putting out some new pattern—some new fashion is continually starting forth from the depths of that ingenious manufactory which you carry about with you—and you are wanting this, and expecting that, and building up airy castles, and looking for that which shall never come to pass—for "there are many plans in a man's heart; but the Lord's counsel will prevail." And so far as you are children of God, that counsel is a counsel of wisdom and mercy. The purposes of God's heart are purposes of love and affection toward you, and therefore you may bless and praise God, that whatever be the plans of your hearts against God's counsel, they shall be frustrated, that He may do His will and fulfill all His good pleasure.

All are more or less deeply infected with it "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5 As we are led aside by the powerful workings of our corrupt nature, we are often seeking great things for ourselves. Riches, worldly comforts, respectability, to be honored, admired and esteemed by men—are the objects most passionately sought after by the world. And so far as the children of God are under the influence of a worldly principle, do they secretly desire similar things. Nor does this ambition depend upon station in life. All are more or less deeply infected with it, until delivered by the grace of God. The poorest man in these towns has a secret desire in his soul after "great things," and a secret plotting in his mind how he may obtain them. But the Lord is determined that His people shall not have great things. He has purposed to pour contempt upon all the pride of man! He therefore nips all their hopes in the bud, crushes their flattering prospects, and makes them for the most part, poor, needy, and despised in this world.

Whatever schemes or projects the Lord's people may devise that they may prosper and get on in the world, He rarely allows their plans to thrive. He knows well to what consequences it would lead—that this ivy creeping round the stem would, as it were, suffocate and strangle the tree. The more that worldly goods increase—the more the heart is fixed upon them, the more the affections are set upon idols, the more is the heart drawn away from the Lord. He will not allow His people to have their portion here below. He has in store for them a better city, that is a heavenly one, and therefore will not allow them to build and plant below the skies. A child of God may be secretly aiming at great things, such as respectability, bettering his condition in life, rising step by step in the scale of society. But the Lord will usually disappoint these plans—defeat these

projects—wither these gourds—and blight these prospects. He may reduce him to poverty, as He did Job—smite him with sickness, as He did Lazarus and Hezekiah—take away wife and children, as in the case of Ezekiel and Jacob—or He may bring trouble and distress into his mind by shooting an arrow out of His unerring bow into the conscience.

God has a certain purpose to effect by bringing this trouble, and that is to pull him down from "seeking great things." For what is the secret root of this ambition? Is it not the pride of the heart? When the Lord, then, would lay this ambition low, He makes a blow at the root. He strips away fancied hopes, and breaks down rotten props, the great things (so through ignorance esteemed) sought for previously, and perhaps obtained, fall to pieces. Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don't do it!

Ministers are often desirous "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not!" Jeremiah 45:5

Ministers are often desirous of a greater gift in preaching, a readier utterance, a more abundant variety, a more striking delivery than they presently possess. And this, not for the glory of God—but for the glory of the creature! Not that praise may be given God—but that pride, cursed pride, may be gratified—that they may be admired by men. My desire and aim is not to deceive souls by flattery—not to please any party—not to minister to any man's pride or presumption—but simply and sincerely, with an eye to God's glory, with His fear working in my heart—to speak to the edification of His people. A minister who stands up with any other motives, and aiming at any other ends than the glory of God, and the edification of His people, bears no scriptural marks that he has been sent into the vineyard by God Himself.

Superabounding grace "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

What are all the gilded toys of time compared with the solemn, weighty realities of eternity! But, alas! what wretches are we when left to sin, self, and Satan! How unable to withstand the faintest breath of temptation! How bent upon backsliding! Who can fathom the depths of the human heart? Oh, what but grace, superabounding grace, can either suit or save such wretches? "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Job's religion "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

What a mere shallow pretense to vital godliness satisfies most ministers, most hearers, and most congregations! But there was a reality in Job's religion. It was not of a flimsy, notional, superficial nature. It was not merely a sound Calvinistic creed, and nothing more. It was not a religion of theory and speculation, nor a well-compacted system of doctrines and duties. There was something deeper, something more divine in Job's religion than any such mere pretense, delusion, imitation, or hypocrisy. And if our religion be of the right kind, there will be something deeper in it, something more powerful, spiritual, and supernatural, than notions and doctrines, theories and speculations, merely passing to and fro in our minds, however scriptural and correct. There will be a divine reality in it, if God the Spirit be the author of it. And there will be no trifling with the solemn things of God, and with our own immortal souls. The way in which the Spirit of God works As pride rises, it must be broken down. As self-righteousness starts up, it must be brought low. As the wisdom of the creature exalts itself against the wisdom of God, it must be laid prostrate. The way in which the Spirit of God works is to lay the creature low, by bringing it into nothingness, and

crushing it into self-abasement and self-loathing, so as to press out of it everything on which the creature can depend. Like a surgeon, who will run his lancet into the abscess, and let out the gory matter, in order to effect a thorough cure—so the Spirit of the Lord thrusting His sharp sword into the heart, lets out the inward corruption, and never heals the wound until He has thoroughly probed it. And when He has laid bare the heart, He heals it by pouring in the balmy blood of Jesus, as that which, by its application, cleanses from all sin. The world is passing away "And the world is passing away with its lusts." 1 John 2:17 The world and all that is in it comes to an end. Where are the great bulk of the men and women who fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago trod London streets? Where are they who rode about in their gay carriages, gave their splendid entertainments, decked themselves with feathers and jewels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of life? Where are they? The grave holds their bodies, and hell holds their souls. "The world passes away." It is like a pageant, or a gay and splendid procession, which passes before the eye for a few minutes, then turns the corner of the street, and is lost to view. It is now to you who had looked upon it just as if it were not, and is gone to amuse other eyes.

So, could you go on for years—enjoying all your natural heart could wish—lay up money by thousands—ride in your carriage—deck your body with jewelry—fill your house with splendid furniture—enjoy everything that earth can give—then there would come, some day or other, sickness to lay you upon a dying bed. To you the world has now passed away with all its lusts—with you all is now come to an end—and now you have, with a guilty soul, to face a holy God. The world is passing away with its lusts.

All these lusts for which men have sold body and soul, half ruined their families, and stained their own name—all these lusts for which they were so mad that they would have them at any price, snatch them even from hell’s mouth—all these lusts are passed away, and what have they left? A gnawing worm—a worm that can never die, and the wrath of God as an unquenchable fire. That is all which the love of the world can do for you, with all your toil and anxiety, or all your amusement and pleasure. You have not gained much perhaps of this world’s goods, with all your striving after them. But could the world fill your heart with enjoyment, and your money bags with gold, as the dust of the grave will one day fill your mouth, it would be much to the same purpose. If you had got all the world, you would have got nothing after your coffin was screwed down, but grave-dust in your mouth. Such is the end of the world. The world is passing away with its lusts.

DEATH is the great and final extinguisher of all human hopes and pleasures. Look and see how man sickens and dies, and is tumbled into the cemetery, where his body is left to the worms, and his soul to face an angry God, on the great judgment day. The world is passing away with its lusts.

Weary "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 The Lord’s purpose in laying burdens upon us is to weary us out. We cannot learn our religion in any other way. We cannot learn it from the Bible, nor from the experience of others. It must be a personal work, wrought in the heart of each—and we must be brought, all of us, if ever we are to find rest in Christ, to be absolutely wearied out of sin and self, and to have no righteousness, goodness, or holiness of our own. The effect, then, of all spiritual labor is to bring us to this point—to be weary of the world, for we feel it, for the most part, to be a valley of tears—to be weary of self, for it is our greatest plague—weary of professors, for we cannot see in them the grace of God, which alone we prize and value—weary of the profane, for their ungodly

conversation only hurts our minds—weary of our bodies, for they are often full of sickness and pain, and always clogs to our soul—and weary of life, for we see the emptiness of those things which to most people make life so agreeable. By this painful experience we come to this point—to be worn out and wearied—and there we must come, before we can rest entirely on Christ. As long as we can rest in the world, we shall rest in it. As long as the things of time and sense can gratify us, we shall be gratified in them. As long as we can find anything pleasing in self, we shall be pleased with it. As long as anything visible and tangible can satisfy us, we shall be satisfied with them. But when we get weary of all things visible, tangible, and sensible—weary of ourselves, and of all things here below—then we want to rest upon Christ, and Christ alone. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest."

Oh, how religious he once used to be!

"For the Son of man came to seek and to save those who are lost." Luke 19:10

Oh, how religious he once used to be! How comfortably he could walk to church with his Bible under his arm, and look as devout and holy as possible! How regularly also, he could read the Scriptures, and pray in his manner, and think himself pretty well, with one foot in heaven. But a ray of heavenly light has beamed into his soul, and shown him who and what God is—what sin and a sinful heart is—and who and what he himself as a sinner is. The keen dissecting knife of God has come into his heart, laid it all bare, and let the gory matter flow out. When his conscience is bleeding under the scalpel, and is streaming all over with the gore and filth thus let out, where is the clean heart once boasted of? Where is his religion now? All buried beneath a load of filth! Where is all his holiness gone? His holy looks, holy expressions, holy manners, holy gestures, holy garb—where are they all gone? All are flooded and buried. The sewer has broken out, and the filthy stream has discharged itself over his holy looks, holy manners, holy words and holy gestures—and he is, as Job says, 'in the ditch.'

We never find the right religion, until we have lost the wrong one. We never find Christ, until we have lost SELF. We never find grace, until we have lost our own pitiful self-holiness. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save those who are lost."

It is a creature of many lives!

Man is a strange compound. A sinner, and the worst of sinners—and yet a Pharisee! A wretch, and the vilest of wretches—and yet pluming himself on his good works! Did not experience convince us to the contrary, we would scarcely believe that a monster like man—a creature, as someone has justly said, "half beast and half devil," should dream of pleasing God by his obedience, or of climbing up to heaven by a ladder of his own righteousness.

Pharisaism is firmly fixed in the human heart. Deep is the root, broad the stem, wide the branches, but poisonous the fruit, of this gigantic tree, planted by pride and unbelief in the soil of human nature. Self-righteousness is not peculiar to only certain individuals. It is interwoven with our very being. It is the only religion that human nature understands, relishes, or admires.

Again and again must the heart be ploughed up, and its corruptions laid bare, to keep down the growth of this pharisaic spirit. It is a creature of many lives! It is not one blow, nor ten, nor a hundred that can kill it. Stunned it may be for a while, but it revives again and again! Pharisaism

can live and thrive under any profession. Calvinism or Arminianism is the same to it. It is not the garb he wears, nor the mask he carries, that constitutes the man. The believer's chief troubles As earth is but a valley of tears, the Christian has many tribulations in common with the world. Family troubles were the lot of Job, Abraham, Jacob and David. Sickness befell Hezekiah, Trophimus and Epaphroditus. Reverses and losses fell upon Job. Poverty and famine drove Naomi into the land of Moab. Trouble, then, is in itself no sign of grace—for it inevitably flows from, and is necessarily connected with, man's fallen state. But we should fix our eye on two things, as especially marking the temporal afflictions of the Lord's family:

1. That they are all weighed out and timed by special appointment. For though man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, yet "affliction doesn't come from the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground." Job 5:6

2. That they are specially sanctified, and made to work together for good to those who love God. But the believer's chief troubles are internal, and arise from the assaults of Satan, powerful temptations, the guilt of sin laid on the conscience, doubts and fears about a saving interest in Christ, and a daily, hourly conflict with a nature ever lusting to evil. A religion that satisfies thousands "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." 2 Timothy 3:5

Much that passes for religion, is not true religion at all. Much that goes for hopes of salvation, is nothing but lying refuges. Much is palmed off for the teaching of the Spirit, which is nothing but delusion. Vital godliness is very rare. There are very few people spiritually taught of God. There are very few ministers who really preach the truth. Satan is thus daily deceiving thousands, and tens of thousands. A living soul, however weak and feeble in himself, cannot take up with a religion in the flesh. He cannot rest on the opinions of men, nor be deceived by Satan's delusions. He has a secret gnawing of conscience, which makes him dissatisfied with a religion that satisfies thousands.

Down they sink to the bottom!

"Until the pit is dug for the wicked." Psalms 94:13 In Eastern countries, the ordinary mode of catching wild beasts is to dig a pit, and fix sharp spears in the bottom. And when the pit has been dug sufficiently deep, it is covered over with branches of trees, earth, and leaves, until all appearances of the pitfall are entirely concealed. What is the object? That the wild beast intent upon bloodshed—the tiger lying in wait for the deer, the wolf roaming after the sheep, the lion prowling for the antelope, not seeing the pitfall, but rushing on and over it, may not see their doom until they break through and fall upon the spears at the bottom.

What a striking figure is this! Here are the ungodly, all intent upon their purposes—prowling after evil, as the wolf after the sheep, or the tiger after the deer—thinking only of some worldly profit, some covetous plan, some lustful scheme, something the carnal mind delights in—but on they go, not seeing any danger until the moment comes when, as Job says, "they go down to the bars of the pit." The Lord has been pleased to hide their doom from them. The pit is all covered over with leaves of trees, grass, and earth. The very appearance of the pit was hidden from the wild beasts—they never knew it until they fell into it, and were transfixed! So it is with the wicked—both with religious professors and the profane. There is no fear of God, no taking heed to their steps, no cry to be directed, no prayer to be shown the way—no pausing, no turning back. On they go, on

they go—heedlessly, thoughtlessly, recklessly—pursuing some beloved object. On they go, on they go—until in a moment they are plunged eternally and irrevocably into the pit! There are many such both in the professing church as well as in the ungodly world. The Lord sees what they are, and where they are. He knows where the pit is. He knows their steps. He sees them hurrying on, hurrying on, hurrying on. All is prepared for them. The Lord gives them no forewarning, no notice of their danger, no teachings, no chastenings, no remonstrances, no frowns, no stripes. They are left to themselves to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until they approach the pit that has been dug for them, and then down they sink to the bottom! Who can come out of the battle alive?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

We know little of ourselves, and less of one another. We do not know our own needs, what is for our good, what snares to avoid, what dangers to shun. Our path is bestrewed with difficulties, beset with temptations, surrounded with foes, encompassed with perils. At every step there is a snare! At every turn an enemy lurks! Pride digs the pit, carelessness blindfolds the eyes, carnality drugs and intoxicates the senses, the lust of the flesh seduces, the love of the world allures, unbelief paralyzes the fighting hand and the praying knee, sin entangles the feet, guilt defiles the conscience, and Satan accuses the soul. Under these circumstances, who can come out of the battle alive? Only he who is kept by the mighty power of God. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

God’s mercy "Look upon me, and be merciful to me." Psalms 119:132 When shall we ever get beyond the need of God’s mercy? We feel our need of continual mercy as our sins abound, as our guilt is felt, as our corruption works, as our conscience is burdened, as the iniquities of our heart are laid bare, as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit’s light. We need—mercy for every adulterous look—mercy for every covetous thought—mercy for every light and trifling word—mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts—mercy while we live—mercy when we die—mercy to accompany us every moment—mercy to go with us down to the portals of the grave—mercy to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan—mercy to land us safe before the Redeemer’s throne!

"Look upon me, and be merciful to me." Why me? Because I am so vile a sinner. Because I am so base a backslider. Because I am such a daring transgressor. Because I sin against You with every breath that I draw. Because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves. Because nothing but Your mercy can blot out such iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind. I need—inexhaustible mercy, everlasting mercy, superabounding mercy. Nothing but such mercy as this can suit such a guilty sinner! A flowery path? Does the road to heaven lie across a smooth, grassy meadow, over which we may quietly walk in the cool of a summer evening, and leisurely amuse ourselves with gathering of flowers and listening to the warbling of the birds? No child of God ever found the way to heaven a flowery path. It is the wide gate and broad way which leads to perdition. It is the strait gate and narrow way—the uphill road, full of difficulties, trials, temptations, and enemies—which leads to heaven, and issues in eternal life. But our Father manifests mercy and grace. He never leaves nor forsakes the objects of His choice. He fulfills every promise—defeats every enemy—appears in every difficulty—richly pardons every sin—graciously heals every backsliding—and eventually lands them in eternal bliss!

Toys & playthings of the religious babyhouse "I will feed My flock." Ezekiel 34:15 The only real food of the soul must be of God’s own appointing, preparing, and communicating. You can never

deceive a hungry child. You may give it a plaything to still its cries. It may serve for a few minutes—but the pains of hunger are not to be removed by a doll. A toy horse will not allay the cravings after the mother's milk. So with babes in grace. A hungry soul cannot feed upon playthings. Altars, robes, ceremonies, candlesticks, bowings, mutterings, painted windows, intoning priests, and singing men and women—these dolls and wooden horses—these toys and playthings of the religious babyhouse, cannot feed the soul that, like David, cries out after the living God. Christ, the bread of life, the manna that came down from heaven—is the only food of the believing soul. (John 6:51) But oh, the struggle! Oh, the conflict!

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more." Ezekiel 21:27

Jesus wants our hearts and affections. Therefore every idol must go down, sooner or later, because the idol draws away the affections of the soul from Christ. Everything that is loved in opposition to Him must sooner or later be taken away, that the Lord Jesus alone may be worshiped. Everything which exacts the allegiance of the soul must be overthrown. Jesus shall have our heart and affections, but in having our heart and affection, He shall have it wholly, solely, and undividedly. He shall have it entirely for Himself. He shall reign and rule supreme.

Now, here comes the conflict and the struggle. SELF says, "I will have a part." Self wants to be—honored, admired, esteemed, bowed down to. Self wants to indulge in, and gratify its desires. Self wants, in some way, to erect its throne in opposition to the Lord of life and glory. But Jesus says, "No! I must reign supreme!" Whatever it is that stands up in opposition to Him, down it must go! Just as Dagon fell down before the ark, so self must fall down before Christ—in every shape, in every form, in whatever subtle guise self wears, down it must come to a wreck and ruin before the King of Zion!

So, if we are continually building up SELF, Jesus will be continually overthrowing self. If we are setting up our idols, He shall be casting them down. If we are continually hewing out "cisterns that can hold no water," He will be continually dashing these cisterns to pieces. If we think highly of our knowledge, we must be reduced to total folly. If we are confident of our strength, we must be reduced to utter weakness. If we highly esteem our attainments, or in any measure are resting upon the power of the creature, the power of the creature must be overthrown, so that we shall stand weak before God, unable to lift up a finger to deliver our souls from going down into the pit. In this way does the Lord teach His people the lesson that Christ must be all in all. They learn—not in the way of speculation, nor in the way of mere dry doctrine, not from the mouth of others—but they learn these lessons in painful soul-experience. And every living soul that is sighing and longing after a manifestation of Christ and desiring to have Him enthroned in the heart—every such soul will know, sooner or later an utter overthrow of self—a thorough prostration of this idol—a complete breaking to pieces of this beloved image—that the desire of the righteous may be granted, and that Christ may reign and rule as King and Lord in him and over him, setting up His blessed kingdom there, and winning to Himself every affection of the renewed heart. Are there not moments, friends, are there not some few and fleeting moments when the desire of our souls is that Christ should be our Lord and God—when we are willing that He should have every affection—that every rebellious thought should be subdued and brought into obedience to the cross of Christ—that every plan should be frustrated which is not for the glory of God and our soul's spiritual profit? Are there not seasons in our experience when we can lay down our souls

before God, and say—"Let Christ be precious to my soul, let Him come with power to my heart, let Him set up His throne as Lord and King, and let self be nothing before Him?" But oh, the struggle! oh, the conflict—when God answers these petitions! When our plans are frustrated, what a rebellion works up in the carnal mind! When self is cast down, what a rising up of the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature! When the Lord does answer our prayers, and strips off all false confidence—when He does remove our rotten props, and dash to pieces our broken cisterns, what a storm—what a conflict takes place in the soul! But He is not to be moved—He will take His own way. "I will overturn—let the creature say what it will. I will overturn—let the creature think what it will. Down it shall go to ruin! It shall come to a wreck! It shall be overthrown! My purpose shall be accomplished—and I will fulfill all My pleasure. Self is a rebel who has set up an idolatrous temple—and I will overturn and bring the temple to ruin—for the purpose of manifesting My glory and My salvation, that I may be your Lord and your God."

If God has overturned our bright prospects—shall we say it was a cruel hand that laid them low? If He has overthrown our worldly plans—shall we say it was an unkind act? If He has reduced our false righteousness to a heap of rubbish, in order that Christ may be embraced as our all in all—shall we say it was a cruel deed? Is he an unkind father who takes away poison from his child—and gives him food? Is she a cruel mother who snatches her boy from the precipice on which he was playing? No! The kindness was manifested in the act of snatching the child from destruction! So if the Lord has broken and overthrown our purposes, it was a kind act—for in so doing He brings us to nothing—that Christ may be embraced as our all in all—that our hearts may echo back, "O Lord, fulfill all Your own promises in our souls, and make us willing to be nothing—that upon the nothingness of self, the glory and beauty and preciousness of Christ may be exalted!" A snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!" 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart. We need not go very far to find the most convincing proofs of this. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly—and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and power of God. It is true that now this sin does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped—at least the calf is not, if the gold is. Nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone. But rank, property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—are as much idolized now, as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea.

What is an idol? It is that which occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, which is due to God only. Whatever is to us, what the Lord alone should be—that is an idol to us. It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times, the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size. So is it in these inner idols, of which the outer idols are mere symbols and representations. Nothing has been too base or too brutal, too great or too little, too noble or too vile, from the sun walking in its brightness—to a snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag—which man has not worshiped. And these intended representations of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what man inwardly worshiped. For the inward idol preceded the outward—and the fingers merely carved what the imagination had

previously devised. The gross material idol, then, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man. But we need not dwell on this part of the subject. There is another form of idolatry much nearer home—the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan, or a modern Hindu—but that of a Christian. Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to each find out our own idol—what it is, how deep it lies, what worship it obtains, what honor it receives, and what affection it engrosses. Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?" If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another—"What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?"—for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot. If, then, the thoughts flow continually to the farm, the shop, the business, the investment—to the husband, wife, or child—to that which feeds lust or pride, worldliness or covetousness, self-conceit or self-admiration—that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts the thoughts of the mind towards it. Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours—and yet we may both be idolaters! You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool, or such a sinner, as to hug it to my bosom! And I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours! You may condemn me, and I condemn you. And the Word of God, and the verdict of a living conscience may condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable these idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning, literature, languages, general information, shall be his idol. Music, vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second—so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. Science, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind. These are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper—or even that less debasing but enervating idol—sleep and indolence, as if life’s highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty. You middle-class people—who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ball field—may still have an idol. Your garden, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty children, so admired as they walk in the street—or your new house and all the new furniture—or your son who is getting on so well in business—or your daughter so comfortably settled in life—or your dear husband so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer SELF that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to. Who shall count the thousands of idols which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone? You may not be found out. Your idol may be so hidden, or so peculiar, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer—it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with divine eye-salve. Hidden diseases are the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor’s. But an idol is still an idol, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue. An idol is not to be admired for its beauty, or loathed for its ugliness—but to be hated because it is an idol. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!"

10.03. Volume 3 cont'd

The mother & mistress of all the sins "I hate pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse mouth." Proverbs 8:13 "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Proverbs 16:5 Of all sins, pride seems most deeply embedded in the very heart of man. Unbelief, sensuality, covetousness, rebellion, presumption, contempt of God’s holy will and word, deceit and falsehood, cruelty and wrath, violence and murder—these, and a forest of other sins have indeed struck deep roots into the black and noxious soil of our fallen nature—and, interlacing their lofty stems and gigantic arms, have wholly shut out the light of heaven from man’s benighted soul. But these and their associate evils do not seem so thoroughly interwoven into the very constitution of the human heart, nor so to be its very life-blood, as pride. The lust of the flesh is strong, but there are respites from its workings. Unbelief is powerful, but there are times when it seems to lie dormant. Covetousness is ensnaring, but there is not always a bargain to be made, or an advantage to be clutched.

These sins differ also in strength in different individuals. Some seem not much tempted with the grosser passions of our fallen nature—others are naturally liberal and benevolent, and whatever other idol they may serve, they bend not their knee to the golden calf. But where lust may have no power, covetousness no dominion, and anger no sway—there, down, down in the inmost depths, heaving and boiling like the lava in the crater of a volcano, works that master sin—that sin of sins—pride!

Pride is the mother and mistress of all the sins—for where she does not conceive them in her ever-teeming womb, she instigates their movements, and compels them to pay tribute to her glory. The ’origin of evil’ is hidden from our eyes. Whence it sprang, and why God allowed it to arise in His fair creation, are mysteries which we cannot fathom. But thus much is revealed—that of this mighty fire which has filled hell with sulphurous flame, and will one day envelop earth and its inhabitants in the general conflagration, the first spark was pride!

Pride is therefore emphatically the devil’s own sin. We will not say his darling sin, for it is his torment, the serpent which is always biting him, the fire which is ever consuming him. But it is the sin which hurled him from heaven, and transformed him from a bright and holy seraph, into a foul and hideous demon! How subtle, then, and potent must that poison be, which could in a moment change an angel into a devil! How black in nature, how concentrated in virulence that venom—one drop of which could utterly deface the image of God in myriads of bright spirits before the throne, and degrade them into monsters of uncleanness and malignity!

I needed no monkish rules then A man may have a consistent profession of religion—have a sound, well ordered creed—be a member of a Christian church—attend to all ordinances and duties—seek to frame his life according to God’s word—have his family prayer, and private prayer—be a good husband, father, and friend—be liberal and kind to God’s cause and people—and yet with all this bear no fruit Godwards. What is all this but pitiful self-holiness?

Real gospel fruit is only produced by the word of God's grace falling into the heart, watering and softening it. Without this there is not one gracious feeling, not one spiritual desire, not one tender thought, not one heavenly affection. We have tried, perhaps, to make ourselves holy. We have watched our eyes, our ears, our tongues—have read so many chapters every day out of God's word—continued so long upon our knees—and so tried to work a kind of holiness into our own souls.

Many years ago, I used to try to pray for the better part of an hour—and I am ashamed to say, I have been glad to hear the clock strike. What was this but a monkish, self-imposed rule, to please God by the length of my prayers? But when the Lord was pleased to touch my conscience with His finger, He gave me a remarkable spirit of grace and supplication—I needed no monkish rules then. The strong man sinks down into a babe!

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge." Psalms 18:2 As long as a man has any strength of his own, he will never have any strength in the Lord—for the strength of Jesus is made perfect in our weakness. Oh, what a painful lesson we have to learn to find all our strength is weakness. There was a time when we thought we had strength, and could—resist Satan—overcome the world—endure persecution—bear the reproach of man—mortify and keep down pride, and the evils of our heart. Have we found ourselves able to carry out our 'imagined strength'? What has been our experience in this matter? That we have discovered more and more our own weakness—that we cannot stand against one temptation—the least gust blows us down! Our besetting lusts, our vile passions, and the wicked desires of our hearts, so entice our eyes and thoughts—so entwine themselves around our affections—that we give out in a moment—unless God Himself holds us up! We cannot stand against sin—our heart is as weak as water. Thus we learn our weakness, by feeling ourselves to be the very weakest of the weak, and the very vilest of the vile. As the Lord leads a man deeper down into the knowledge of his corruptions, it makes him more and more out of conceit with his righteous, pious, holy self. The more the Lord leads a man into the knowledge of temptation, his besetting sin, the power of his corruptions, the workings of his vile nature—the more deeply and painfully he learns what a poor, helpless, weak, powerless wretch he is. As the Lord is pleased to unfold before his eyes the strength, power, and fullness lodged in Jesus Christ, He draws him—leads him—brings him—encourages him—and enables him to come to this fullness. And by the hand of faith he draws supplies out of that fullness. As the Lord enables the soul to look to Jesus, His blessed strength is communicated and breathed into his soul. Then the 'poor worm Jacob' threshes the mountains, beats down the hills, and makes them fly before him as chaff. When the Lord strengthens him, he can stand against temptation—overcome sin—bear persecution—subdue the evils of his heart—and fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. When the Lord leaves him, he is like Samson with his locks cut. He sinks into all evil, and feels the helplessness of his fallen nature. Let the Lord but remove His gracious presence, and the strong man sinks down into a babe! And he who in the strength of the Lord could thresh the mountains, falls down as weak and helpless as a little child. Thus the Lord painfully and solemnly teaches us, that being nothing in ourselves, and feeling our weakness, helplessness, and wretchedness—in Him alone we have strength.

Save me, and I shall be saved!

"Save me, and I shall be saved!" Jeremiah 17:14 This implies salvation from the power of sin—the secret dominion sin possesses in the heart. O, what a tyrannical rule does sin sometimes exercise in our carnal minds! How soon are we entangled in flesh-pleasing snares! How easily brought under the secret dominion of some hidden corruption! And how we struggle in vain to deliver ourselves when we are caught in the snares of the devil, or are under the power of any one lust, besetment, or temptation! The Lord, and the Lord alone can save us from all these things. He saves from the power of sin by bringing a sense of His dying love into our hearts—delivering us from our idols—raising our affections to things above—breaking to pieces our snares—subduing our lusts—taming our corruptions—and mastering the inward evils of our dreadfully fallen nature.

Here is this sin! Lord, save me from it. Here is this snare! Lord, break it to pieces. Here is this temptation! Lord, deliver me out of it. Here is this lust! Lord, subdue it. Here is my proud heart! Lord, humble it. None but the Lord can do these things for us—nothing but the felt power of God, nothing but the putting forth of His mighty arm, nothing but the shedding abroad of His dying love, nothing but the operations of His grace upon our soul, can deliver us from the secret power of evil. Save me, and I shall be saved!

Crush its viper head with the heel of our boot!

"Whoever wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Mark 8:34 To deny and renounce self lies at the very foundation of vital godliness. It is easy in some measure to leave the world—easy to leave the professing church—but to go forth out of self, there is the difficulty, for this "self" embraces such a variety of forms. What varied shapes and forms does this monster SELF assume! How hard to trace his windings! How difficult to track this wily foe to his hidden den—drag him out of the cave—and immolate him at the foot of the cross, as Samuel hewed down Agag in Gilgal.

Proud self—righteous self—covetous self—ambitious self—sensual self—deceitful self—religious self—flesh-pleasing self. How difficult to detect, unmask, strip out of its changeable suits of apparel, this ugly, misshaped creature, and then stamp upon it, as if we would crush its viper head with the heel of our boot! Who will do such violence to beloved self, when every nerve quivers and shrinks—and the coward heart cries to the uplifted foot, "Spare, spare!" But unless there is this self crucifixion, there is no walking hand in hand with Christ, no heavenly communion with Him—for there can no more be a partnership between Christ and self, than there can be a partnership between Christ and sin.

What a battlefield is the heart

I have so much opposition within, so many temptations, lusts, and follies—so many snares and besetments—and a vile heart, dabbling in all carnality and filth. I am indeed exercised "by sin and grace." Sin or grace seems continually uppermost—striving and lusting against one another. What lustings, sorrowings—fallings, risings—defeats—and victories. What a battlefield is the heart—and there the fight is lost and won! When sin prevails, mourning over its wounds and slaughter. When grace and godly fear beat back temptation, a softening into gratitude.

How can he travel through this waste-howling wilderness?

If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner—you will see yourself surrounded by enemies, temptations, sins, and snares. You will feel yourself utterly defenseless, as weak as water, without any strength to stand against them. You will see a mountain of difficulties before your eyes. If you know anything inwardly and experimentally of yourself—of the evils of your heart, the power of sin, the strength of temptation, the subtlety of your unwearied foe, and the daily conflict between nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, which are the peculiar marks of the true child of God—you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality.

How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies—external—internal—infernal—and reach heaven's gates safe at last? There is present salvation, an inward, experimental, continual salvation communicated out of the fullness of Christ as a risen Mediator. Don't you need to be daily and almost hourly saved? But from what? Why, from everything in you that fights against the will and word of God. Sin is not dead in you. If you have a saving interest in the precious blood of Christ—if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and heaven is your eternal home—that does not deliver you from the indwelling of sin, nor from the power of sin—except as grace gives you present deliverance from it. Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will work in it until your dying hour! What then you need to be saved from is the guilt, filth, power, love and practice of that sin which ever dwells and ever works in you—and often brings your soul into hard and cruel bondage.

Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for His dear people, that He may be ever saving them by His life. There He reigns and rules as their glorious covenant Head, ever watching over, feeling for, and sympathizing with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the deliverance and consolation for all His suffering saints spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth—and as He lives on their behalf, He maintains by His Spirit and grace, His life in their soul.

Each Christian has to walk through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought (Deuteronomy 8:15)—where he is surrounded with temptations and snares—his own evil heart being his worst foe! How can he travel through this waste-howling wilderness unless he has a Friend at the right hand of God to send him continual supplies of grace—who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle—who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them—who observes from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it bursts into word or action? He needs an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can—save him from pride by giving him true humility—save him from hardness of heart by bestowing repentance—save him from carelessness by making his conscience tender—save him from all his fears by whispering into his soul, "Fear not, I have redeemed you." The Christian has to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus Christ—to revive his soul when drooping—to manifest His love to his heart when cold and unfeeling—to sprinkle his conscience with His blood when guilty and sinking—to lead him into truth—to keep him from error and evil—to preserve him through and amid every storm—to guide every step that he takes in his onward journey—and eventually bring him safe to heaven. We need continual supplies of His grace, mercy, and love received into our hearts, so as to save us from the love and spirit of the world—from error—from the power and strength of our own lusts—and the base inclinations of our fallen nature. These will often work at a fearful rate—but this will only make you feel more your need of the power and

presence of the Lord Jesus to save you from them all.

You are a poor, defenseless sheep, surrounded by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and defense of the good Shepherd. You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all wise and able pilot to take you safe into harbor. There is not a single thing on earth or in hell which can harm you—if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength from Him.

Trifles, toys, empty vanities What trifles, what toys, what empty vanities—do the great bulk of men pursue!

If God left us for a single hour "Don't leave us!" Jeremiah 14:9

How much is summed up in those three words! What would it be for God to leave us? What and where would we be—if God left us for a single hour? What would become of us? We would fall at once into the hands of sin, of Satan, and of the world. We would be abandoned to our own evil hearts—abandoned, utterly abandoned to the unbelief, the infidelity, to all the filth and sensuality of our wicked nature—to fill up the measure of our iniquities, until we sank under His wrath to rise no more! An idol is an idol

"Son of man, these men have set up idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of iniquity before their face." Ezekiel 14:3 An idol is an idol, whether worshiped inwardly in heart—or adorned outwardly by the knee. A worldly spirit will ever peep out "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Galatians 1:4 The first effect of sovereign grace in its divine operation upon the heart of a child of God, is to separate him from the world by infusing into him a new spirit. There is little evidence that grace ever touched our hearts if it did not separate us from this ungodly world. Where there is not this divine work upon a sinner's conscience—where there is no communication of this new heart and this new spirit—no infusion of this holy life, no animating, quickening influence of the Spirit of God upon the soul—whatever a man's outward profession may be, he will ever be of a worldly spirit. A set of doctrines, however sound, merely received into the natural understanding—cannot divorce a man from that innate love of the world which is so deeply rooted in his very being. No mighty power has come upon his soul to revolutionize his every thought, cast his soul as if into a new mold—and by stamping upon it the mind and likeness of Christ to change him altogether. This worldly spirit may be checked by circumstances—controlled by natural conscience—or influenced by the example of others—but a worldly spirit will ever peep out from the thickest disguise, and manifest itself, as occasion draws it forth, in every unregenerate man.

Enticing words of man's wisdom

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Corinthians 2:4 The word "enticing" is as we now say, "persuasive." It includes, therefore, every branch of skillful oratory, whether it be logical reasoning to convince our understanding—or appeals to our feelings to stir up our passions—or new and striking ideas to delight our intellect—or beautiful and eloquent language to please and captivate our imagination. All these "enticing words" of man's wisdom—the very things which our popular preachers most speak and aim at—this great apostle renounced, discarded, and rejected! He might have used them all if he liked. He possessed an almost unequaled share of natural ability

and great learning—a singularly keen, penetrating intellect—a wonderful command of the Greek language—a flow of ideas most varied, striking, and original—and powers of oratory and eloquence such as have been given to few. He might therefore have used enticing words of man's wisdom, had he wished or thought it right to do so—but he would not. He saw what deceptiveness was in them, and at best they were mere arts of oratory. He saw that these enticing words—though they might touch the natural feelings, work upon the passions, captivate the imagination, convince the understanding, persuade the judgment, and to a certain extent force their way into men's minds—yet when all was done that could thus be done, it was merely man's wisdom which had done it.

Earthly wisdom cannot communicate heavenly faith. Paul would not therefore use enticing words of man's wisdom, whether it were force of logical argument, or appeal to natural passions, or the charms of vivid eloquence, or the beauty of poetical composition, or the subtle nicety of well arranged sentences. He would not use any of these enticing words of man's wisdom to draw people into a profession of religion—when their heart was not really touched by God's grace, or their consciences wrought upon by a divine power. He came to win souls for Jesus Christ, not converts to his own powers of oratorical persuasion—to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God—not to charm their ears by poetry and eloquence—but to bring them out of the vilest of sins that they might be washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit of God—and not entertain or amuse their minds while sin and Satan still maintained dominion in their hearts!

All the labor spent in bringing together a church and congregation of professing people by the power of logical argument and appeals to their natural consciences would be utterly lost, as regards fruit for eternity—for a profession so induced by him and so made by them would leave them just as they were—in all the depths of unregeneracy, with their sins unpardoned, their persons unjustified, and their souls unsanctified. He therefore discarded all these ways of winning over converts, as deceitful to the souls of men, and as dishonoring to God. It required much grace to do this—to throw aside what he might have used, and renounce what most men, as gifted as he, would have gladly used.

What a lesson is here for ministers! How anxious are some men to shine as great preachers! How they covet and often aim at some grand display of what they call eloquence to charm their hearers—and win praise and honor to self! How others try to argue men into religion, or by appealing to their natural feelings, sometimes to frighten them with pictures of hell, and sometimes to allure them by descriptions of heaven. But all such arts, for they are no better, must be discarded by a true servant of God. Only the Spirit can reveal Christ, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us, applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul. "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Unless we have a measure of the same demonstration of the Spirit, all that is said by us in the pulpit drops to the ground—it has no real effect—there is no true or abiding fruit—no fruit unto eternal life. If there be in it some enticing words of man's wisdom, it may please the mind of those who are gratified by such arts—it may stimulate and occupy the attention for the time—but there it ceases, and all that has been heard fades away like a dream of the night. A peculiar, indescribable, invincible power

"Our gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with much assurance." 1 Thessalonians 1:5 The gospel comes to some in word only. They hear the word of the gospel, the sound of truth—but it reaches the outward ear only—or if it touches the inward feelings, it is merely as the word of men. But where the Holy Spirit begins and carries on His divine and saving work, He attends the word with a peculiar, an indescribable, and yet an invincible power. It falls as from God upon the heart. He is heard to speak in it—and in it His glorious Majesty appears to open the eyes, unstop the ears, and convey a message from His own mouth to the soul.

Some hear the gospel as the mere word of men, perhaps for years before God speaks in it with a divine power to their conscience. They thought they understood the gospel—they thought they felt it—they thought they loved it. But all this time they did not see any vital distinction between receiving it as the mere word of men, and as the word of God. The levity, the superficiality, the emptiness stamped upon all who merely receive the gospel as the word of men—is sufficient evidence that it never sank deep into the heart, and never took any powerful grasp upon their soul. It therefore never brought with it any real separation from the world—never gave strength to mortify the least sin—never communicated power to escape the least snare of Satan—was never attended with a spirit of grace and prayer—never brought honesty, sincerity, and uprightness into the heart before God—never bestowed any spirituality of mind, or any loving affection toward the Lord of life and glory. It was merely the reception of truth in the same way as we receive scientific principles, or learn a language, a business, or a trade. It was all—shallow, superficial, deceptive, hypocritical. But in some unexpected moment, when little looking for it, the word of God was brought into their conscience with a power never experienced before. A light shone in and through it which they never saw before—a majesty, a glory, an authority, an evidence accompanied it which they never knew before. And under this light, life, and power they fell down, with the word of God sent home to their heart. When then Christ speaks the gospel to the heart—when He reveals Himself to the soul—when His word, dropping as the rain and distilling as the dew, is received in faith and love—He is embraced as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One—He takes His seat upon the affections and becomes enthroned in the heart as its Lord and God. Is there life in your bosom? Has God’s power attended the work? Is the grace of God really in your heart? Has God spoken to your soul? Have you heard His voice, felt its power, and fallen under its influence? "For this cause we also thank we God without ceasing, that, when you received from us the word of the message of God, you accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also works in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13 The deep things of God

"But to us, God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:10 The Spirit of God in a man’s bosom searches the deep things of God, so as to lead him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of them. What depths do we sometimes see in a single text of Scripture as opened to the understanding, or applied to the heart? What a depth in the blood of Christ—how it cleanses from all sin—even millions of millions of the foulest sins of the foulest sinners! What a depth in His bleeding, dying love, that could stoop so low to lift us so high! What a depth in His pity and compassion to extend itself to such guilty, vile transgressors as we are! What depth in His rich, free, and sovereign grace, that it should superabound over all our aggravated iniquities, enormities, and vile abominations! What depth in

His sufferings—that He should have voluntarily put Himself under such a load of guilt, such outbreakings of the wrath of God—as He felt in His holy soul when He stood in our place to redeem poor sinners from the bottomless pit—that those who deserved hell, should be lifted up into the enjoyment of heaven! The religionists of the day "You will be hated by all men for My name’s sake." Luke 21:17

Professors of religion have always been the deadliest enemies of the children of God. Who were so opposed to the blessed Lord as the Scribes and Pharisees? It was the religious teachers and leaders who crucified the Lord of glory! And so in every age the religionists of the day have been the hottest and bitterest persecutors of the Church of Christ! Nor is the case altered now. The more the children of God are firm in the truth, the more they enjoy its power, the more they live under its influence, and the more tenderly and conscientiously they walk in godly fear, the more will the professing generation of the day hate them with a deadly hatred. Let us not think that we can disarm it by a godly life—for the more that we walk in the sweet enjoyment of heavenly truth and let our light shine before men as having been with Jesus, the more will this draw down their hatred and contempt. So don’t be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. My leanness, my leanness!

"My leanness, my leanness! Woe is me!" Isaiah 24:16

There is no more continual source of lamentation and mourning to a child of God than a sense of his own barrenness. He would be fruitful in every good word and work. But when he contrasts his own miserable unprofitableness—his coldness and deadness—his proneness to evil—his backwardness to good—his daily wanderings and departings from God—his depraved affections—his stupid frames—his sensual desires—his carnal projects—and his earthy grovelings—with what he sees and knows should be the fruit that should grow upon a fruitful branch in the only true Vine, he sinks down under a sense of his own wretched barrenness and unfruitfulness. Yet what was the effect produced by all this upon his own soul? To wean him from the creature—to divert him from looking to any for help or hope, but the Lord Himself. It is in this painful way that the Lord often, if not usually, cuts us off from all human props, even the nearest and dearest, that we may lean wholly and solely on Himself.

Those poor stupid people!

"The world doesn’t know us." 1 John 3:1

Both the openly profane world, and the professing world, are grossly ignorant of the children of God. Their real character and condition—state and standing—joys and sorrows—mercies and miseries—trials and deliverances—hopes and fears—afflictions and consolations—are entirely hidden from their eyes. The world knows nothing of the motives and feelings which guide and actuate the children of God. It views them as a set of gloomy, morose, melancholy beings, whose tempers are soured by false and exaggerated views of religion—who have pored over the thoughts of hell and heaven until some have frightened themselves into despair, and others have puffed up their vain minds with an imaginary conceit of their being especial favorites of the Almighty. "They are really," it says, "no better than other folks, if not worse. But they have such contracted minds—are so obstinate and bigoted with their poor, narrow, prejudiced views—that wherever they come they bring disturbance and confusion." But why this harsh judgment?

Because the world knows nothing of the spiritual feelings which actuate the child of grace, making him act so differently from the world which thus condemns him. It cannot understand our sight and sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—and that is the reason why we will not run riot with them in the same course of ungodliness. It does not know with what a solemn weight eternal things rest upon our minds—and that that is the cause why we cannot join with them in pursuing so eagerly the things of the world, and living for time as they do—instead of living for eternity. Being unable to enter into the spiritual motives and gracious feelings which actuate a living soul, and the movements of divine life continually stirring in a Christian bosom, they naturally judge us from their own point of view, and condemn what they cannot understand.

You may place a horse and a man upon the same breathtaking hill—while the man would be looking at the woods and fields and streams, the horse would be feeding upon the grass at his feet. The horse, if it could reason, would say—"What a fool my master is! How he is staring and gaping about! Why does he not sit down and open his basket of provisions, and feed as I do? I know he has it with him, for I carried it." So the worldling says—"Those poor stupid people, how they are spending their time in going to chapel, and reading the Bible in their gloomy, melancholy way. Religion is all very well—and we ought all to be religious before we die—but they make so much of it. Why don't they enjoy more of life? Why don't they amuse themselves more with its innocent, harmless pleasures—be more gay, cheerful, and sociable, and take more interest in those things which so interest us?" The reason why the world thus wonders at us is because it knows us not, and therefore cannot understand that we have sublimer feelings—nobler pleasures—and more substantial delights—than ever entered the soul of a worldling!

Christian! the more you are conformed to the image of Christ—the more separated you are from the world, the less will it understand you. If we kept closer to the Lord and walked more in holy obedience to the precepts of the gospel, we would be more misunderstood than even we now are! It is our worldly conformity that makes the world understand many of our movements and actions so well. But if our movements were more according to the mind of Christ—if we walked more as the Lord walked when here below—we would leave the world in greater ignorance of us than we leave it now—for the hidden springs of our life would be more out of its sight, our testimony against it more decided, and our separation from it more complete.

We were not always a set of poor mopes

"If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3

Men's pursuits and pleasures differ as widely as their station or disposition—but a life of selfish gratification reigns and rules in all. Now it is by this death that we die unto the things of time and sense—to all that charms the natural mind of man—to the pleasures and pursuits of life—to that busy, restless world which once held us so fast and firm in its embrace—and whirled us round and round within its giddy dance.

Let us look back. We were not always a set of poor mopes—as the world calls us. We were once as merry and as gay as the merriest and gayest of them. But what were we really and truly, with all our mirth? Dead to God—alive to sin. Dead to everything holy and divine—alive to everything vain

and foolish, light and trifling, carnal and sensual—if not exactly vile and abominable. Our natural life was with all of us a life of gratifying our senses—with some of us, perhaps, chiefly of pleasure and worldly happiness—with others a life of covetousness, or ambition, or self-righteousness. Sin once put forth its intense power and allured us—and we followed like the fool to the stocks. Sin charmed—and we listened to its seductive wiles. Sin held out its bait—and we too greedily, too heedlessly swallowed the hook. "But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14 You were secretly lifted up with pride "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations." James 1:2

You might have walked for some time in the ways of the Lord without any deep experience of the infidelity, blasphemy, rebelliousness, enmity, and horrid wickedness of your fallen nature. This being the case, you were secretly lifted up with pride and self-righteousness. You had not yet had that deep discovery of yourself which was needful to humble you in the dust. You did, it is true, look in some measure to the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation—but not knowing your utter ruin and the desperate wickedness of your heart, you looked with but half a glance—though you took hold of Him, it was but with one hand—and though you walked with Him, it was but with a limping foot. The reason was that temptation had not yet—shorn your locks—bound you with fetters of brass—and put you to grind in the prison-house. But you suddenly fell into one of these "various temptations." The poisoned arrow is rankling in the heart. There are temptations so thoroughly adapted to our fallen nature—snares so suited to our lusts—and Satan has such a way of seducing his victim little by little into the trap until it falls down upon him—that none can escape but by the power of God. None can deliver the soul from these snares of the fowler—except that mighty hand which brings up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay! To walk after the flesh

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don’t walk after the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Romans 8:1 To walk after the flesh carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us—as our leader, guide, and example—and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws we move after it, as the needle after the magnet. To walk after the flesh, then, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to the commands of the flesh—the lusts of the flesh—the inclinations of the flesh—and the desires of the flesh—whatever shape they assume, whatever garb they wear, whatever name they may bear. To walk after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh—whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume—whether molded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world—or the more refined and deceptive religion of the professing church. But are the grosser and more manifest sinners the only people who may be said to walk after the flesh? Does not all human religion, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes! Everyone who is entangled in and led by a fleshly religion, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences. Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that false religion has slain its thousands, if open sin has slain its ten thousands. To walk after the flesh—whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term—is the same in the sight of God. The very thought is appalling!

"You, being in past times alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works." Colossians 1:21

All man’s sins, comparatively speaking, are but ’motes in the sunbeam’ compared with this giant sin of enmity against God. A man may be given up to fleshly indulgences—he may sin against his fellow creature—may rob, plunder, oppress, even kill his fellow man. But viewed in a spiritual light, what are they compared with the dreadful, the damnable sin of enmity against the great and glorious Majesty of heaven? This is a sin that lives beyond the grave! Many sins, though not their consequences, die with man’s body, because they are bodily sins. But this is a sin that goes into eternity with him, and flares up like a mighty volcano from the very depths of the bottomless pit! Yes, it is the very sin of devils, which therefore binds guilty man down with them in the same eternal chains, and consigns him to the same place of torment! O the unutterable enmity of the heart against the living God! The very thought is appalling! How utterly ruined, then, how wholly lost must that man’s state and case be, who lives and dies as he comes into the world—unchanged, unrenewed, unregenerated!

I will not dwell longer upon this gloomy subject, on this sad exhibition of human wickedness and misery, though it is needful we should know it for ourselves, that we should have a taste of this bitter cup in our own most painful experience, that we may know the sweetness of the cup of salvation when presented to our lips by free and sovereign grace. Nothing but the mighty power of God Himself can ever turn this enemy into a friend! "You, being in past times alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and blameless before Him."

I will give you rest Are you ever weary—of the world—of sin—of self—of everything below the skies? If so, you desire something to give you rest. You look to SELF—it is but shifting sand, tossed here and there with the restless tide, and ever casting up mire and dirt. No holding ground—no anchorage—no rest there. You look to OTHERS—you see what man is, even the very best of men in their best state—how fickle, how unstable, how changing and changeable—how weak even when willing to help—how more likely to add to, than relieve your distress—if desirous to sympathize with and comfort you in trouble and sorrow, how short his arm to help, how unsatisfactory his aid to relieve! You find no rest there. You lean upon the WORLD—it is but a broken reed which runs into your hand and pierces you. You find no rest there. So look where you will, there is no rest for the sole of your foot. But there is a rest. Our blessed Lord says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 That which is highly esteemed among men "That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16:15 The pride—the ambition—the pleasures—the amusements—in which we see thousands and tens of thousands engaged, and sailing down the stream into a dreadful gulf of eternity—are all an abomination in the sight of God. Whereas, such things as faith, hope, love, humility, brokenness of heart, tenderness of conscience, contrition of spirit, sorrow for sin, self-loathing, self-abasement, looking to Jesus, tash some sweet whisper of His love to your soul? These are marks of saving grace. The carnal, the unregenerate, the ungodly, have no such desires and feelings as these!

O Self! Self!

Oh, to be kept from myself—my vile, proud, lustful, hypocritical, worldly, covetous, presumptuous, obscene self. O Self! Self! Your desperate wickedness, your depravity, your love of sin, your abominable pollutions, your monstrous heart-wickedness, your wretched deadness, hardness,

blindness, and indifference. You are a treacherous villain, and, I fear, always will be such! That dear, idolized creature "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Galatians 2:20 The crucifixion of self is indispensable to following Christ. What is so dear to a man as himself? Yet this beloved self is to be crucified. Whether it be proud self—or ambitious self—or selfish self—or covetous self—or, what is harder still—religious self—that dear, idolized creature, which has been the subject of so much fondling, petting, pampering, nursing—this fondly loved self has to be taken out of our bosom by the hand of God, and nailed to Christ's cross! The same grace which pardons sin also subdues it! To be crucified with Christ! To have everything that the flesh loves and idolizes put to death! How can a man survive such a process? "Nevertheless I live!" As the world, sin, and self are crucified, subdued, and subjugated by the power of the cross, the life of God springs up with new vigor in the soul. Here, then, is the great secret of vital godliness—that the more that sin and self, and the world are mortified, the more do holiness and spirituality of mind, heavenly affections and gracious desires spring up and flourish in the soul. O! blessed death! O! still more blessed life! I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live.

Unquenched and unquenchable!

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7 The bride uses a figure which shall express the insuperable strength of divine love against all opposition—and she therefore compares it to a fire which burns and burns unquenched and unquenchable, whatever be the amount of water poured upon it. Thus the figure expresses the flame of holy love which burned in the heart of the Redeemer as unquenchable by any opposition made to it.

How soon is earthly love cooled by opposition! A little ingratitude, a few hard speeches, cold words or even cold looks, seem often almost sufficient to quench love that once shone warm and bright. And how often, too, even without these cold waters thrown upon it, does it appear as if ready to die out by itself. But the love of Christ was unquenchable by all those waters. Not all the ingratitude, unbelief, or coldness of His people could quench His eternal love to them! He knew what the Church was in herself, and ever would be—how cold and wandering her affections—how roving her desires—how backsliding her heart! But all these waters could not extinguish His love! It still burnt as a holy flame in His bosom, unquenched, unquenchable! "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7 Crawl like a serpent, roar like a lion

"That no advantage may be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan well knows both how to allure and how to attack—for he can crawl like a serpent, and he can roar like a lion! He has snares whereby he entangles, and fiery darts whereby he impales. Most men are easily led captive by him at his will, ensnared without the least difficulty in the traps that he lays for their feet—for they are as ready to be caught as he is to catch them! Why would Satan need to roar against them as a lion, if he can wind himself around them and bite them as a serpent?

If you want to see what sin really is To cast the sinning angels out of heaven—to banish Adam from Paradise—to destroy the old world by a flood—to burn Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—these examples of God's displeasure against sin were not sufficient to express His

condemnation of it. He would therefore take another way of making it manifest. And what was this? By sending His own Son out of His bosom, and offering Him as a sacrifice for sin upon the tree at Calvary, He would make it manifest how He abhorred sin, and how His righteous character must forever condemn it. See here the love of God to poor guilty man in not sparing His own Son—and yet the hatred of God against sin, in condemning it in the death of Jesus.

It is almost as if God said, "If you want to see what sin really is, you cannot see it in the depths of hell. I will show you sin in blacker colors still—you shall see it in the sufferings of My dear Son—in His agonies of body and soul—and in what He as a holy, innocent Lamb endured under My wrath, when He consented to take the sinner's place." What wondrous wisdom—what depths of love—what treasures of mercy—what heights of grace—were thus revealed and brought to light in God's unsparing condemnation of sin, and yet in His full and free pardon of the sinner!

If you have ever had a view by faith of the suffering Son of God in the garden and upon the cross—if you have ever seen the wrath of God due to you, falling upon the head of the God-Man—and viewed a bleeding, agonizing Immanuel—then you have seen and felt in the depths of your conscience what a dreadful thing sin is. Then the broken-hearted child of God looks unto Him whom he has pierced, and mourns and grieves bitterly for Him, as for a firstborn son who has died. Under this sight he feels what a dreadful thing sin is. "Oh," he says, "did God afflict His dear Son? Did Jesus, the darling of God, endure all these sufferings and sorrows to save my soul from the bottomless pit? O, can I ever hate sin enough? Can I ever grieve and mourn over it enough? Can my stony heart ever be dissolved into contrition enough, when by faith I see the agonies, and hear the groans of the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God?"

Christians hate their sins. They hate that sinful, that dreadfully sinful flesh of theirs which has so often, which has so continually, betrayed them into sin. And thus they join with God in passing condemnation upon the whole of their flesh—upon all its actings and workings—upon all its thoughts and words and deeds—and hate it as the prolific parent of that sin which crucified Christ, and torments and plagues them.

Hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed

We are surrounded with snares. Temptations lie spread every moment in our path. These snares and these temptations are so suitable to the lusts of our flesh, that we would certainly fall into them, and be overcome by them, but for the restraining providence or the preserving grace of God. The Christian sees this—the Christian feels this. The hard-hearted, cold-blooded, wise-headed professor sees no snares. He is entangled in them, he falls by them, and not repenting of his sins or forsaking them, he makes utter shipwreck concerning the faith. The child of God sees the snare—feels the temptation—knows the evil of his heart—and is conscious that if God does not hold him up, he shall stumble and fall. As then a burnt child dreads the fire, so he dreads the consequence of being left for a moment to himself—and the more is he afraid that he shall fall. If his eyes are more widely opened to see the purity of God—the blessedness of Christ—the efficacy of atoning blood—and the beauties of holiness—the more also does he see the evil of sin, the dreadful consequences of being entangled therein. And not only so, but his own helplessness and weakness and inability to stand against temptation in his own strength. And all these feelings combine to raise up a more earnest cry—Hold me up, and I shall be safe! Our sanctuary

"Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Ezekiel 11:16

Every place in which the Lord manifests Himself, is a sanctuary to a child of God. Jesus is now our sanctuary, for He is the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands. We see the power and glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Every place is a sanctuary, where God manifests Himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb—it was but a common thorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the thicket. But on one solemn occasion it was all in a flame of fire, for the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst—and though it burned with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to take off his shoes from his feet. Was not this a sanctuary to Moses? It was—for a holy God was there!

Thus wherever God manifests Himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul. We don’t need places made holy by the ceremonies of man—but places made holy by the presence of God! Then a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any unadorned corner may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with His sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul.

Poor, miserable, paltry works of a polluted worm!

"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah 64:6

We once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favor of God, and induce Him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey His commandments. A

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Can Christ love one like me?

"That you. . . . may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge." Ephesians 3:17-19

You may wonder sometimes—and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise—how such a glorious Jesus can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such worms of earth—what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked Him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, how this exalted Christ, in the height of His glory, can look down from heaven on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we—this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment! We feel we are such crawling reptiles—such undeserving creatures—and are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from Him, that we say, "Can Christ love one like me? Can the glorious Son of God cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me—who can scarcely at times bear with myself—who sees and feels myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? O, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?" And yet, He has loved you with an everlasting love! His love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown! Its breadth exceeds all human span—its length outvies all creature line—its depth surpasses all finite measurement—its height excels even angelic computation! Because His love is so wondrous, so deep, so long, so broad, so high—it is so suitable to our every want and woe. A woman’s best ornament

"Let your beauty be not just the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on fine clothing; but in the hidden person of the heart, in the incorruptible adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God very precious." 1 Peter 3:3-4 This beauty that comes from within is that meekness, quietness, gentleness, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, humility of mind, tenderness of conscience, which are fitting to the children of God. A gentle and quiet spirit is a woman’s best ornament. As to other gay and unbecoming ornaments, let those wear them, who wish to serve and to enjoy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Let the "daughters of Zion" manifest they have other ornaments than what the world admires and approves. Let them covet the teachings of God, the smiles of His love, the whispers of His favor. The more they have of these, the less will they care for the adornments which the "daughters of Canaan" run so madly after—by which also they often impoverish themselves, and by opening a way for admiration, too often open a way for seduction and ruin.

O you filthy creature!

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death?" Romans 7:24 No doubt you have your enemies—and so have we all. But I will tell you where you have an enemy—and a greater enemy than ever you have found in others—yourself! I have often felt that I could do myself more harm in five minutes, than all my enemies could do me in fifty years! I need

not fear what others may do or say—I fear myself more than them all—knowing what I am as a sinner—the strength of sin—and the power of temptation. Be sure of this—that YOU are the worst enemy you ever had—your sin, your lust, your covetousness, your pride, your self-righteousness. God Himself will make you feel your enemy. You shall see something of his accursed designs—how sin has deceived you, betrayed you, brought guilt upon your conscience, and made you a burden to yourself. You shall be brought to feel, and say, "There is nothing I hate so much as my own vile heart—my own dreadfully corrupt nature. O what an enemy do I carry in my own bosom! Of all my enemies, he is surely the worst! Of all my foes, he is the most subtle and strong!" Have you not sometimes felt as though you could take your lusts by the neck and dash their heads against a stone? Have you not felt you could take out of your breast this vile, damnable heart, lay it upon the ground, and stamp upon it? And when tempted with pride, or unbelief, or infidelity, or blasphemy, or any hateful lust, how you have cried out again and again with anguish of spirit, "O this heart of mine!" We hate our sins, and would, if possible, have no more to do with them, and would say to this lust, idol, or temptation, "O you filthy creature! What an enemy you are to my soul! O that I could forever be done with you! Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thanks be to God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord!"

You never knew what real happiness was!

One false charge against the children of God, is that they are a poor, moping, miserable people, who know nothing of happiness—renounce all cheerfulness, mirth, and gladness—hang their heads down all their days like a bulrush—are full of groundless fears—nurse the gloomiest thoughts in a kind of melancholy—grudge others the least enjoyment of pleasure and happiness—and try to make everyone else as dull and as miserable as their dull and miserable selves. Is not this a false charge? You know that you never had any real happiness in the things of time and sense—that under all your ’pretended gaiety’ there was real gloom—that every ’sweet’ was drenched with bitterness—that vexation was stamped upon all that is called pleasure and enjoyment. You never knew what real happiness was, until you knew the Lord, and were blessed with His presence, and some manifestation of His goodness and mercy! Were it no bigger than a child’s doll "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

Idolatry takes a wide range. There are ’respectable’ idols and ’vulgar’ idols—just as there are marble statues, and other objects of worship made up of shells and feathers. And yet each will still be an idol. Respectable idols we can admire—vulgar idols we detest. But an idol is an idol—however respectable, or however vulgar—however admired, or however despised they may be. But O how numerous are these respectable idols! Love of money, ambition, craving after human applause, desire to rise in the world—all these we may think are natural desires that may be lawfully gratified. But O, what idols may they turn out to be! But there are more secret and more dangerous idols. You may have a husband, or wife, or child—whom you love almost as much as yourself—you bestow upon this idol of yours all the affections of your heart. Nothing is too good for it, nothing too dear for it. You don’t see how this is an idol. But, whatever you love more than God, whatever you worship more than God, whatever you crave for more than God, is an idol. It may lurk in the chambers of imagery—you may scarcely know how fondly you love it. But let God take that idol out of your bosom—let Him pluck that idol from its niche—and you will then find how you have allowed your affections to wander after that idol and loved it more than God Himself.

It is when the idol is taken away—removed—dethroned—that we learn what an idol it has been. How we hug and embrace our idols! How we cleave to them! How we delight in them! How we bow down to them! How we seek gratification from them! How little are we aware what affections entwine around them—how little are we aware that they claim what God has reserved for Himself when He said, "My son, give me your heart."

Many a weeping widow learns for the first time that her husband was an idol. Many a mourning husband learns for the first time how too dearly, how too fondly, how too idolatrously he loved his wife. Many a man does not know how dearly he loves money until he incurs some serious loss. Many do not know how dearly they hold name, fame, and reputation until some slanderous blight seems to touch that tender spot. Few indeed seem to know how dear SELF is, until God takes it out of its niche and sets Himself there in its room. Self, pride, reputation, the love of money, the love of name and fame—these idols you cannot take with you into the courts of heaven. How would God be moved to jealousy if you could you carry an idol—were it no bigger than a child's doll—into the courts above! "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

All your filthiness "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity—how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be—when the guilt of our sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not sometimes loathed yourselves on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of your sin sometimes disgusted you—the opening up of that horrible, that ever-running sewer, which you daily carry about with you? We complain, and justly complain—of a reeking sewer which runs through a street—or of a ditch filled with everything disgusting. But do we feel as much—do we complain as often—of the foul sewer which is ever running in our soul—of the filthy ditch in our own bosom? As the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes—and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-abhorrence before the eyes of a holy God. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

What things were gain to me "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Php 3:7 This includes the loss of all your fancied holiness—of all your vaunted strength—of all your natural or acquired wisdom—of all your boasted knowledge—in a word, of everything in creature religion of which the heart is proud, and in which it takes delight. All, all must be counted loss for Christ's sake—all, all must be sacrificed to His bleeding, dying love. Our dearest joys—our fondest hopes—our most cherished idols—must all sink and give way to the grace, blood, and love of an incarnate God.

Looking down into a filthy pit!

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

Sometimes we are so astonished—at what we are—at what we have been—or at what we are capable of. We stand sometimes and look at our heart, and see what a seething, boiling, and bubbling is there! And we look at it with indignant astonishment, as we would look into a pool of filthy black mud, all swarming and alive with every hideous creature! So when a man takes a view of his own heart—its dreadful hypocrisy, its vile rebellion, its alarming deceitfulness, its desperate

wickedness, of what his heart is capable of plotting, of what evil it can conceive and imagine, it is as if he stood looking down into a filthy pit and saw with astonishment, mingled with self-abhorrence, what his heart is, as the fountain of all iniquity. A man must have some knowledge of his own heart to understand such language as this. You that are so exceedingly 'pious' and so 'extra good,' and from whose heart the veil has never been taken away to show you what you are, will perhaps think that I am drawing a caricature of human nature, and painting it as the haunt of thieves and prostitutes. Could you but have the veil taken off your heart, you would see that you were capable of doing all that wickedness that others have done, or can do! By this sight of ourselves, we learn what a wonderful God we have to deal with! Surely none so highly prize the grace of God as those who are most led into a knowledge of the fall, and the havoc and ruin, and the guilt and misery which it has brought into our own hearts. The largest slice of the well-sugared cake "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

Many profess that they are strangers and pilgrims here below. But they take care to have as much of this world's comforts as they can scrape together by hook and by crook. They talk about being 'strangers,' yet can be in close friendship with men of the world. And could you see them at the exchange, at the market, behind the counter, or at home with their families—you would not find one mark to distinguish them from the ungodly! Yet they come to chapel—and if called upon to pray, they will tell the people they are "poor strangers and pilgrims in a valley of tears"—while all the time their hearts are in the world—and their eyes stand out with fatness—and they are as light and trifling as a comic actor—and have no concerns except to get the largest slice of the well-sugared cake that the world sets before them!

It is not the 'mere profession of the lips'—but 'grace in the heart,' that makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim. God's people are strangers and sojourners—the world is not their home—nor can they take pleasure in it. Sin is often a burden to them—guilt often lies as a heavy weight upon their conscience—a thousand troubles harass their minds—a thousand perplexities oppress their souls. They cannot bury their minds in business and derive all their happiness from their successes, for they feel that this earth is not their home. They are often cast down and exercised, because they have to live with such an ungodly heart in such an ungodly world. "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den?

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117 The Lord's people are a tempted people. Satan is ever waiting at their gate, constantly suggesting every hateful and improper thought—perpetually inflaming the rebellion and enmity of their carnal mind—and continually plaguing, harassing, and besieging them in a thousand ways! Can they repel him? Can they beat back this monster to his filthy den? Can they beat back this leviathan? They cannot—they feel they cannot. They know that nothing but the voice of Jesus, inwardly speaking with power to their souls, can beat back the lion of the bottomless pit! One whisper, one soft word from the lips of His gracious Majesty, can and will put every temptation to flight! "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" When it comes in the guise of a friend "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33 Does not this verse show that the world is an enemy to the Lord—and to the Lord's people? and never so much an enemy—never to be so much dreaded—as when it comes in the guise of a friend. When it steals upon your heart, engrosses your thoughts, wins your affections, draws away your mind from God—then it is to be dreaded. When the world smites us as an enemy—its blows

are not to be feared. It is when it smiles upon us as a friend—it is most to be dreaded. When our eyes begin to drink it in, when our ears begin to listen to its voice, when our hearts become entangled in its fascinations, when our minds get filled with its anxieties, when our affections depart from the Lord and cleave to the things of time and sense—then the world is to be dreaded.

Canaanitish idols & heathenish abominations

"You shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their engraved images with fire!" Deuteronomy 7:5 Our hearts are by nature full of Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations, which must be destroyed! Lusts after evil things, adulterous images, idolatrous desires, strong hankerings after sin—along with evils which have the impudence to wear a religious garb—such as towering thoughts of our own ability, pleasing dreams of creature holiness, swellings up of pride—dressed out and painted in all the tawdry colors of Satanic delusion—how can these abominations be allowed to run rampant in the human heart? The altars and religious rites of Canaanites were to be destroyed as much as their idols! And thus we may say of that very religious being—man—that his false worship and heathenish notions of God must be destroyed, as well as his more flagrant, though not more dangerous, lusts and abominations. The sentence against both is, "Destroy them!" They must not stand side by side with Immanuel, who is to have the preeminence in all things, and who is "the Alpha and the Omega—the first and the last." And O what a mercy it is to have both our fleshly and religious abominations both destroyed! For I am sure that God and self never can rule in the same heart—that Christ and the devil can never reign in the same bosom—each claiming the supremacy! This inward conflict

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." Romans 7:18

Now it is this which makes the Lord’s people such a burdened people—that makes them so oppressed in their souls as to cry out against themselves daily, and sometimes hourly—that they are what they are—that they would be spiritual, yet are carnal—that they would be holy, yet are unholy—that they would have sweet communion with Jesus, yet have such sensual alliance with the things of time and sense—that they would be Christians in word, thought, and deed—yet, in spite of all, they feel their carnal mind, their wretched depravity intertwining, interlacing, gushing forth—contaminating with its polluted stream everything without and within—so as to make them sigh, groan, and cry being burdened, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

He would not be entangled in these snares for ten thousand worlds—he hates the evils of his heart, and mourns over the corruptions of his nature. They make the tear fall from his eye, and the sob to heave from his bosom—they make him a wretched man—and fill him day after day with sorrow, bitterness, and anguish. None but a saved soul, under divine teaching, can see this evil—and mourn and sigh under the depravity, the corruption, the unbelief, the carnality, the wickedness, and the deceitfulness of his evil heart. This inward conflict, this sore grief, this internal burden, that all the family of God are afflicted with—is an evidence that the life and grace of God are in their bosoms. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Romans 7:25 Desperately wicked "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah

17:9

Without a knowledge of the corruptions and abounding evils of our deceitful and desperately wicked heart—unbelief, infidelity, pride, hypocrisy, worldly mindedness, carnality, sensuality, selfishness—there will be no humility, no self-loathing, no dread of falling, no desire to be kept, no knowledge of the superaboundings of grace, over the aboundings of sin. So many truly sincere & religious people

"Cornelius. . . .a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave gifts for the needy generously to the people, and always prayed to God." Acts 10:1-2

Yet Cornelius wasn't saved! (Acts 11:14). A generous centurion builds a synagogue (Luke 7:3-5). A young man keeps the commandments from his youth up (Luke 18:21). Balaam prophesies (Numbers 23:16). Saul weeps (1 Samuel 24:16). Judas preaches the gospel (Matthew 10:5-8). Yet none of these men were saved! It is at times, enough to fill one's heart with mingled astonishment and sorrow—to see so many truly sincere and religious people, whose religion will leave them short of eternal life—because they are destitute of saving grace. To see so much amiability, benevolence, devotedness, self-denial, liberality, loveliness of character, integrity, consistency of life—all inescapably dashed against the rock of inflexible justice, and there shattered and lost—swallowed up with its unhappy possessors in the raging billows beneath—such a sight, did we not know that the Judge of the whole earth cannot do wrong, would indeed stagger us to the very center of our being!

Sick of sin, sick of self, sick of the world "Delight in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalms 37:4 By nature we delight in SIN. It is the very element of our nature—and even after the Lord has called us by His grace and quickened us by his Spirit, there is the same love to sin in the heart as there was before. We delight in it—we would wallow in it—take our full enjoyment of it—and swim in it as a fish swims in the waters of the sea! By nature we also are prone to IDOLATRY. Self is the grand object of all our sensual and carnal worship. Our own exaltation, our own amusement, our own pleasure, our own gratification. Something whereby SELF may be flattered, admired, adored, delighted—is the grand end and aim of man's natural worship. By nature we also delight in the WORLD. It is our element, our home, what our carnal hearts are intimately blended with. From all these things, then, which are intrinsically evil—which a pure and holy God must hate with absolute abhorrence—we must be weaned and effectually divorced—we need to have these things embittered to us. All the time we are doing homage and worship to self—all the time we are loving the world—all the time we delight in sin—all the time we are setting up idols in the secret chambers of imagery—there is no delighting ourselves in the Lord. We cannot delight ourselves in the Lord until we are purged of creature love—until the idolatry of our hearts is not merely manifested, but hated and abhorred—until by cutting temptations, sharp exercises, painful perplexities, and various sorrows, we are brought to this state—to be sick of SIN, sick of SELF, sick of the WORLD.

Until we are brought to loathe ourselves, we are not brought to that spot where none but God Himself can comfort, please, or make the soul really happy. Now the very means that God employs to embitter the world to us are cutting and grievous dispensations—as unexpected reverses in fortune—or afflictions of body, of family, or of soul. But these very means the Lord employs to divorce our carnal union from the world, stir up the self-pity, the murmuring, the

peevishness, and the rebelliousness of our nature, so that we think we are being very harshly dealt with, in being compelled to walk in this trying path. But only by these cutting dispensations are we eventually brought to delight ourselves in Him, who will give us the desires of our heart. How long you shall be walking in this painful path—how heavy your trials—what their duration shall be—how deep you may have to sink—how cutting your afflictions may be in body or soul, God has not defined, and we cannot. But they must work until they have produced this result—weaned, divorced, and separated us from all that we naturally love and idolatrously cleave unto—and all that we adulterously roam after. If our trials have not done this, they must go on until they produce that effect. The burden must be laid upon the back, affliction must try the mind, perplexities must encumber the feet, until we are brought to this point—that none but the Lord Himself, with a taste of His dying love, can comfort our hearts, or give us that inward peace and joy which our soul is taught to crave after. A hundred doctrines floating in the head By five minutes real communion with the Lord—we learn more, we know more, we receive more, we feel more, and we experience more than by a thousand years of merely studying the Scriptures, or using external forms, rites, and ceremonies. One truth written by the Spirit in the heart, will bring forth more fruit in the life, than a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

However low we may sink

What a mercy it is to have a faithful, gracious, and compassionate High Priest who can sympathize with His poor, tried, tempted family—so that however low we may sink—His piteous eye can see us in our low estate—His gracious ear hear our cries—His loving heart melt over us—and His strong arm pluck us from our destructions! Oh, what would we do without such a gracious and most suitable Savior as our blessed Jesus! How He seems to rise more and more in our estimation, in our thoughts, in our desires, in our affections, as we see and feel what a wreck and ruin we are, what dreadful havoc sin has made with us, what miserable outcasts we are by nature. But oh, how needful it is, dear friend, to be brought down in our soul to be the chief of sinners, viler than the vilest, worse than the worst—that we may really and truly believe in, and cleave unto, this most precious and suitable Savior!

Nothing but a slave!

"You were the servants of sin." Romans 6:17

What a picture does this draw of our sad state, while walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy! The Holy Spirit here sets forth Sin as a harsh master, exercising tyrannical dominion over his slaves! How this portrays our state and condition in a state of unregeneracy—slaves to sin! Just as a master commands his slave to go here and there—imposes on him certain tasks—and has entire and despotic authority over him—so sin had a complete mastery over us, used us at its arbitrary will and pleasure, drove us here and there on its commands. But in this point we differed from physical slaves—that we did not murmur under our yoke—but gladly and cheerfully obeyed all sin’s commands—and never tired of doing the most servile drudgery!

Thus some have had sin as a very vulgar and tyrannical master, who drove them into open acts of drunkenness, uncleanness, and profligacy—yes, everything base, vile, and evil. Others have been preserved through education, through the watchfulness and example of parents, or other moral

restraints, from going into such open lengths of iniquity, and outward breakings forth of evil. But still sin secretly reigned in their hearts—pride, worldliness, love of the things of time and sense, hatred to God and aversion to His holy will—selfishness and stubbornness, in all their various forms, had a complete mastery over them! And though sin ruled over them more as a gentleman—he kept them in a more refined, though not less real or absolute slavery! Whatever sin bade them do, that they did, as implicitly as the most abject slave ever obeyed a tyrannical master's command. What a picture does the Holy Spirit here draw of what a man is! Nothing but a slave!—and sin, as his master, first driving him upon God's sword, and then giving him eternal death as his wages! A glory, a beauty & a sweetness

How sweet it is to trace the Lord's hand in providence—to look back on the chequered path that He has led us by—to see how His hand has been with us for good—what difficulties He has brought us through—in what straits He has appeared—how in things most trying He has wrought deliverance—and how He has sustained us to the present hour. How sweet are providential favors when they come stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!" How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our very food, lodging, and clothing! How sweet is the least thing when it comes down to us as from God's hands! A man cannot know the sweetness of his daily bread until he sees that God gives it to him—nor the blessedness of any providential dealing until he can say, "God has done this for me—and given that to me." When a man sees the providence of God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, a beauty and a sweetness over every day of his life!

Having nothing—and yet possessing all things "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2 Corinthians 6:10

How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled? It is resolved thus—"having nothing" in self—"possessing all things" in Christ. And just in proportion as I have nothing in self experimentally—so I possess all things in Christ. My own beggary leads me out of self into His riches. My own unrighteousness leads me out of self into Christ's righteousness. My own defilement leads me out of self into Christ's sanctification. My own weakness leads me out of self into Christ's strength. My own misery leads me out of self into Christ's mercy.

Having nothing—and yet possessing all things. These two branches of divine truth, so far from clashing with each other—sweetly, gloriously, and blessedly harmonize. And just in proportion as we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "having nothing" in self—just so much shall we know spiritually, experimentally, and vitally of "possessing all things" in Christ.

Riches, honors & comforts "But we have this treasure in clay vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

How different is the estimate that the Christian makes of riches, honors and comforts—from that made by the world and the flesh! The world's idea of riches are only such as consist in gold and silver, in houses, lands, or other tangible property. The world's estimate of honors, are only such as man has to bestow. The world's notion of comfort, is "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." But the true Christian takes a different estimate of these matters, and feels that the only true riches are those of God's grace in the heart, the only real honor is that which comes from God, the only solid comfort is that which is imparted by the Holy Spirit to a broken and contrite spirit.

Now, just in proportion as we are filled by the Spirit of God, shall we take faith's estimate of riches, honors, and comforts. And just so much as we are imbued with the spirit of the world, shall we take the flesh's estimate of these things. When the eye of the world looked on the Apostles, it viewed them as a company of poor ignorant men—a set of wild enthusiasts, who traveled about the country preaching Jesus, who they said, had been crucified, and was risen from the dead. The natural eye saw no beauty, no power, no glory in the truths they brought forth. Nor did it see that the poor perishing bodies of these outcast men contained in them a heavenly treasure, and that they would one day shine as the stars forever and ever—while those who despised their word would sink into endless woe. The spirit of the world can never understand or love the things of eternity—it can only look to, and can only rest upon, the poor perishing things of time and sense. The continued teachings of the Spirit When once, by the operation of the Spirit on our conscience, we have been stripped of formality, superstition, self-righteousness, hypocrisy, presumption, and the other delusions of the flesh that hide themselves under the mask of religion—we have felt the difference between having a name to live while dead, and the power of vital godliness. And as a measure of divine life has flowed into the heart out of the fullness of the Son of God, we desire no other religion but that which stands in the power of God—by that alone can we live, and by that alone we feel that we can die.

And, at last, we are brought to this conviction and solemn conclusion—that there is no other true religion but that which consists in the continued teachings of the Spirit, and the communications of the life of God to the soul. And with the Spirit's teachings are connected all the actings of faith in the soul—all the anchorings of hope in the heart—all the flowings forth of love—every tear of genuine contrition that flows down the cheeks—every sigh of godly sorrow that heaves from the bosom—every cry and groan because of the body of sin—every breath of spiritual prayer that comes from the heart—every casting of our souls upon Christ—all submission to Him—all communion with Him—all enjoyment of Him—and all the inward embracements of Him in His suitability and preciousness.

It will come in at every chink & crevice!

"For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." Romans 7:18 The world within us is ten thousand times worse than the world outside of us! We may shut and bar our doors, and exclude the outside world—but the world within cannot be so shut out! More—we might go and hide ourselves in a hermit's cave, and never see the face of man again—but even there we would be as carnal and worldly as if we lived in Vanity Fair!

We cannot shut out the world—it will come in at every chink and crevice! This wretched world will intrude itself into our every thought and imagination! I don't know how it may be with you, but I have no more power to keep out the workings of sin in my heart, than I have power by holding up my hand to stop the rain from coming down to the earth! Sin will come in at every crack and crevice, and manifest itself in the wretched workings of an evil heart! The seeds of every crime are in our nature—and therefore, could your flesh have its full swing, there would not be a viler wretch in London than you! At last to cheat the devil!

If God is not your master—the devil will be. If grace does not rule—sin will reign. If Christ is not your all in all—the world will be. It is not as though we could roam abroad in total liberty. We must have a master of one kind or another. And which is best? A bounteous, benevolent Benefactor—a

merciful, loving, and tender Parent—a kind, forgiving Father and Friend—a tender-hearted, compassionate Redeemer?—OR—A cruel devil, a miserable world, a wicked, vile, abominable heart? Which is better? To live under the sweet constraints of the dying love of a dear Redeemer—under gospel influences, gospel principles, gospel promises, and gospel encouragements?—OR—To walk in imagined liberty, with sin in our heart, exercising dominion and mastery there—and binding us in iron chains to the judgment of the great day?

Even taking the present life—there is more real pleasure, satisfaction, and solid happiness—in half an hour with God—in sweet union and communion with the Lord of life and glory—in reading His word with a believing heart—in finding access to His sacred presence—in knowing something of the droppings in of His favor and mercy—than in all the delights of sin, all the lusts of the flesh, all the pride of life, and all the amusements that the world has ever devised to kill time and cheat self—thinking, by a death-bed repentance—at last to cheat the devil!

Cursed is the man

"Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trust in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." Jeremiah 17:5 The Lord here does not lay down a man's moral or immoral character as a test of salvation. He does not say, "Cursed is the thief—the adulterer—the extortioner—the murderer—the man that lives in open profanity." He puts all that aside, and fixes His eye and lays His hand upon one mark, which may exist with the greatest morality and with the highest profession of religion. "I will tell you," the Lord says, "who are under My curse—the person who trusts in man—who depends on flesh for his strength—and in so doing, his heart turns away from Me." That hideous idol self in his little shrine "Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods." Hosea 14:3 The besetting sin of Israel was the worship of idols. Perhaps, if you have walked into the British Museum, and seen the idols that were worshiped in former days in the South Sea Islands, you have been amazed that rational beings could ever bow down before such ugly monsters. But does the heart of a South Sea Islander differ from the heart of an Englishman? Not a bit! The latter may have more civilization and cultivation—but his heart is the same! And though you have not bowed down to these monstrous objects and hideous figures—there may be as filthy an idol in your heart! Where is there a filthier idol than the lusts and passions of man's fallen nature? You need not go to the British Museum to see filthy idols and painted images. Look within! Where is there a more groveling idol than Mammon, and the covetousness of our heart? You need not wonder at heathens worshiping hideous idols—when you have pride, covetousness, and above all that hideous idol SELF in his little shrine, hiding himself from the eyes of man—but to which you are so often rendering your daily and hourly worship! If a person does not see that the root of all idolatry is SELF, he knows but little of his heart.

Such a perpetual & unceasing conflict?

"For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice." Romans 7:19

What a picture of that which passes in a godly man's bosom! He has in him two distinct principles, two different natures—one holy, heavenly, spiritual, panting after the Lord, and finding the things of God its element. And yet in the same bosom a principle totally corrupt, thoroughly and entirely

depraved, perpetually striving against the holy principle within, continually lusting after evil, opposed to every leading of the Spirit in the soul, and seeking to gratify its filthy desires at any cost!

Now, must there not be a feeling of misery in a man’s bosom to have these two armies perpetually fighting? That when he desires to do good, evil is present with him—when he would be holy, heavenly minded, tender-hearted, loving, seeking God’s glory, enjoying sweet communion with Jehovah, there is a base, sensual, earthly heart perpetually at work—infusing its baneful poison into every thought, counteracting every desire, and dragging him from the heaven to which he would mount, down to the very hell of carnality and filth?

There is a holy, heavenly principle in a man’s bosom that knows, fears, loves, and delights in God. Yet he finds that sin in himself, which is altogether opposed to the mind of Christ, and lusts after that which he hates. Must there not be sorrow and grief in that man’s bosom to feel such a perpetual and unceasing conflict? Is there ever this piteous cry forced by guilt, shame, and sorrow out of your bosom, "O wretched man that I am!" If not, be assured that you are dead in sin, or dead in a profession.

We need grace, free grace "Grace and peace be multiplied to you." 2 Peter 1:2 When we see and feel how we need grace every moment in our lives, we at once perceive the beauty in asking for an abundant, overflowing measure of grace. We cannot walk the length of the street without sin. Our carnal minds, our vain imaginations, are all on the lookout for evil. Sin presents itself at every avenue, and lurks like the prowling night-thief for every opportunity of secret plunder. In fact, in ourselves, in our fallen nature, except as restrained and influenced by grace, we sin with well near every breath that we draw.

We need, therefore, grace upon grace, or, in the words of the text, grace to be "multiplied" in proportion to our sins. Shall I say in proportion? No! If sin abounds, as to our shame and sorrow we know it does, we need grace to much more abound! When the ’tide of sin’ flows in with its muck and mire, we need the ’tide of grace’ to flow higher still, to carry out the slime and filth into the depths of the ocean, so that when sought for, they may be found no more.

We need grace, free grace—grace today, grace tomorrow, grace this moment, grace the next, grace all the day long. We need grace, free grace—healing grace, reviving grace, restoring grace, saving grace, sanctifying grace. And all this multiplied by all our wants and woes, sins, slips, falls. and unceasing and aggravated backslidings. We need grace, free grace—grace to believe, grace to hope, grace to love, grace to fight, grace to conquer, grace to stand, grace to live, grace to die. Every moment of our lives we need keeping grace—supporting grace—upholding grace—withholding grace. May God’s grace and peace be multiplied unto you.

We are not flogged into loving Him "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2 Where are your affections to be set? Are they to be set on "things on the earth"—perishing toys, those polluting vanities, those carking cares, which must ever dampen the life of God in the soul? The expression, "things on the earth," takes in a wide scope. It embraces not only the vain toys, the ambitious hopes, the perishing pleasures in which a gay, unthinking world is sunk and lost—but even the legitimate calls of business, the claims of wife and home, family and friends, with every social tie that binds to earth.

Thus every object on which the eye can rest—every thought or desire that may spring up in the mind—every secret idol that lurks in the bosom—every care and anxiety that is not of grace—every fond anticipation of pleasure or profit that the world may hold out, or the worldly heart embrace—all, with a million pursuits in which man's fallen nature seeks employment or happiness—are "things on the earth" on which the affections are not to be set. We may love our wives and children. We should pursue our lawful callings with diligence and industry. We must provide for our families according to the good providence of God. But we may not so set our affections on these things, that they pull us down from heaven to earth. He who is worthy of all our affections claims them all for Himself. He who is the Bridegroom of the soul demands, as He has fairly won, the unrivaled love of His bride. But how are we to do this? Can we do this great work by ourselves? No! it is only the Lord Himself, manifesting His beauty and blessedness to our soul, and letting down the golden cord of His love into our bosom, that draws up our affections, and fixes them on Himself. In order to do this, He captivates the heart by some look of love—some word of His grace—some sweet promise—or some divine truth spiritually applied. When He thus captivates the soul, and draws it up, then the affections flow unto Him as the source and fountain of all blessings.

We are not flogged into loving Him, but are drawn by love into love. Love cannot be bought or sold. It is an inward affection that flows naturally and necessarily towards its object, and all connected with it. And thus, as love flows out to Jesus, the affections instinctively and necessarily set themselves "on things above, and not on things on the earth." Jesus must be revealed to our soul by the power of God before we can see His beauty and blessedness—and so fall in love with Him as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One! Then everything that speaks of Christ—savors of Christ—breathes of Christ—becomes inexpressibly sweet and precious! In no other way can our affections be lifted up from earth to heaven. We cannot control our affections—they will run out of their own accord. If then our affections are earthly, they will run towards earthly objects. If they are carnal and sensual, they will flow towards carnal and sensual objects. But when the Lord Jesus Christ, by some manifestation of His glory and blessedness—or the Holy Spirit, by taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul—sets Him before our eyes as the only object worthy of, and claiming every affection of our heart—then the affections flow out, I was going to say naturally, but most certainly spiritually, towards Him. And when this is the case, the affections are set on things above.

O what a company of lusts!

"We have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are on You." 2 Chronicles 20:12

There is no use fighting the battle in our own strength. We have none. O, when temptation creeps like a serpent into the carnal mind, it winds its secret way and coils around the heart. As the boa-constrictor is said to embrace its victim, entwining his coil around it, and crushing every bone without any previous warning—so does temptation often seize us suddenly in its powerful embrace. Have we in ourselves any more power to extricate our flesh from its slimy folds, than the poor animal has from the coils of the boa-constrictor? So with the corruptions and lusts of our fallen nature. Can you always master them? Can you seize these serpents by the neck and wring off their heads? To examine our heart is something like examining by the microscope a drop of

ditch-water—the more minutely it is looked into, the more hideous forms appear. All these strange monsters, too, are in constant motion, devouring or devoured. And, as more powerful lenses are put on the microscope, more and more loathsome creatures emerge into view, until eye and heart sicken at the sight. Such is our heart. Superficially viewed—passably fair. But examined by the spiritual microscope, hideous forms of every shape and size appear—lusts and desires in unceasing movement, devouring each other, and yet undiminished—and each successive examination bringing new monsters to light!

O what a company of lusts! How one seems to introduce and make way for the other! and how one, as among the insect tribe, is the father of a million! We must take these lusts and passions by the neck, and lay them down at the feet of God, and thus bring the omnipotence of Jehovah against what would destroy us—"Here are my lusts, I cannot manage them. Here are my temptations, I cannot overcome them. Here are my enemies, I cannot conquer them. Lord, I do not know what to do. Will You not subdue my enemies?" This is fighting against sin—not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Not by the law, but by the gospel. Not by self, but by the grace of God. And if your soul has had many a tussle, and many a wrestle, and many a hand-to-hand conflict with sin, you will have found this out before now—that nothing but the grace, power, and Spirit of Christ ever gave you the victory, or the least hope of victory. As if this beautiful viper had no poison fang!

"Deliver me from all my transgressions." Psalms 39:8

Ah! how rarely it is that we see sin in its true colors—that we feel what the apostle calls, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin!" O how much is the dreadful evil of sin for the most part veiled from our eyes! Our deceitful hearts so gloss it over, so excuse, palliate, and disguise it—that it is daily trifled, played, and dallied with—as if this beautiful viper had no poison fang! It is only as the Spirit is pleased to open the eyes to see, and awaken the conscience to feel "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and thus discover its dreadful character, that we have any real sight or sense of its awful nature. Sins of heart, sins of lip, sins of life, sins of omission, sins of commission, sins of ingratitude, sins of unbelief, sins of rebellion, sins of lust, sins of pride, sins of worldliness! As all these transgressions, troop after troop, come in view, and rise up like spectres from the grave, well may we cry with stifled voice, "Deliver me, O deliver me from all my transgressions! Deliver me from the guilt of sin—the filth of sin—the love of sin—the power of sin—and the practice of sin!" The very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under!

Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings. Thus no one can really desire to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and is brought to know and feel in the conscience, that his good works would damn him as equally with his bad works. When grace is thus opened up to the soul, it sees that grace flows only through the Savior’s blood—and that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin—heals all backslidings—covers all transgressions—lifts up out of darkness—pardons iniquity—and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under!

Weaned from feeding on husks & ashes "I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15 The Lord has given a special promise to Zion’s poor—"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Nothing else? Bread? Is that all? Yes! That is all God has promised—bread, the staff of life. But what does He mean by "bread"? The Lord Himself explains what bread is. He says, "I am the bread of life: he

who comes to Me will not be hungry; and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if anyone eats of this bread he shall live forever." The bread, then, that God gives to Zion's poor is His own dear Son—fed upon by living faith, under the special operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart. "I will satisfy her poor with bread." But must not we have an appetite before we can feed upon bread? The rich man who feasts continually upon juicy meat and savory sauces, would not live upon bread. To come down to live on such simple food as bread—why, one must be really hungry to be satisfied with that. So it is spiritually. A man fed upon 'mere notions' and a number of 'speculative doctrines' cannot descend to the simplicity of the gospel. To feed upon a crucified Christ, a bleeding Jesus!—he is not sufficiently brought down to the starving point, to relish such spiritual food as this!

Before, then, he can feed upon this Bread of life he must be made spiritually poor. And when he is brought to be nothing but a mass of wretchedness, filth, guilt, and misery—when he feels his soul sinking under the wrath of God, and has scarcely a hope to buoy up his poor tottering heart—when he finds the world embittered to him, and he has no one object from which he can reap any abiding consolation—then the Lord is pleased to open up in his conscience, and bring the sweet savor of the love of His dear Son into his heart—and he begins to taste gospel bread. Being weaned from feeding on husks and ashes, and sick "of the vines of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah," and being brought to relish simple gospel food, he begins to taste a sweetness in 'Christ crucified' which he never could know—until he was made experimentally poor. The Lord has promised to satisfy such. "I will satisfy her poor with bread." That secret loveliness "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Hosea 11:4 Where Christ is made in any measure experimentally known, He has gained the affections of the heart. He has, more or less, taken possession of the soul. He has, in some degree, endeared Himself as a bleeding, agonizing Savior to every one to whom He has in any way revealed Himself. And, thus, the strong cord of love and affection is powerfully wreathed around the tender spirit and broken heart. Therefore His name becomes as 'ointment poured forth'—there is a preciousness in His blood—there is a beauty in His Person—there is that secret loveliness in Him—which wins and attracts and draws out the tender affections of the soul. And thus this cord of love entwined round the heart, binds it fast and firm to the cross of the Lord Jesus. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."

Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness!

"O send out Your light and Your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to Your holy hill, to your tents." Psalms 43:3 The Christian is often dissatisfied with his state. He is well aware of the shallowness of his attainments in the divine life, as well as of the ignorance and the blindness that are in him. He cannot perceive the path of life. He sees and feels so powerfully the workings of sin and corruption, that he often staggers, and is perplexed in his mind. And therefore, laboring under the feeling of his own shortcomings for the past—his helplessness for the present—and his ignorance for the future—he wants to go forward wholly and solely in the strength of the Lord—to be led, guided, directed, kept—not by his own wisdom and power—but by the supernatural entrance of light and truth into his soul. When thus harassed and perplexed, he will at times and seasons, as his heart is made soft, cry out with fervency and importunity, as a beggar that will not take a denial, "O send out Your light and Your truth. Let them bring me to Your holy hill, to Your tents." As though he would say, "Lord, I feel my own utter helplessness! I know I must go astray, if You do not condescend to guide me. I have been betrayed a thousand times when I have trusted

my own heart. I have been entangled in my base lusts. I have been puffed up by presumption. I have been carried away by hypocrisy and pride. I have been drawn aside into the world. I have never taken a single step aright when left to myself. And therefore feeling how unable I am to guide myself a single step of the way, I come unto You, and ask You to send forth Your light and Your truth, that they may guide me, for I am utterly unable to lead myself." The child of God—feeling his own ignorance, darkness, blindness, and sinfulness—moans, and sighs, and cries unto God—that he might be led every step, kept every moment, guided every inch.

O what a way of learning religion!

"He was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." 2 Corinthians 12:4

Now, doubtless, the apostle Paul, after he had been thus favored—thus caught up into paradise—thought that he would retain the same frame of mind that he was in when he came down from this heavenly place—that the savor, the sweetness, the power, the unction, the dew, the heavenly feeling would continue in his soul. And no doubt he thought he would walk all through his life with a measure of the sweet enjoyments that he then experienced. But this was not God's way of teaching religion! God had another way which Paul knew nothing of, and that was—if I may use the expression—to bring him from the third heaven, where his soul had been blessed with unspeakable ravishment—down to the very gates of hell. For he says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." The idea "buffeting" is that of a strong man beating a weak one with violent blows to his head and face—bruising him into a shapeless mass! O what a way of learning religion!

Now I want you to see the contrast we have here. The blessed apostle caught up into the third heavens, filled with light, life, and glory—enjoying the presence of Christ—and bathing his soul in the river of divine consolation. Now for a reverse—down he comes to the earth. A messenger of Satan is let loose upon him, who buffets, beats and pounds this blessed apostle into a shapeless mummy—no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no features—but one indistinguishable mass of black and blue!

Such is the mysterious way in which a man learns religion! But what was all this for? Does it not appear very cruel—does it not seem very unkind that, after the Lord had taken Paul up into the third heaven, He would let the devil buffet him? Does it not strike our natural reason to be as strange and as unheard of a thing, as if a mother who had been fondling her babe in her arms, suddenly were to put it down, and let a large savage dog ravage it—and look on, without interfering, while he was tearing the child which she had been a few minutes before dandling in her lap, and clasping to her bosom?

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Here we have this difficult enigma solved, this mysterious knot untied! We find that the object and end of all these severe dealings was to keep Paul from pride! Three times Paul besought his loving and sympathizing Redeemer, that the trial might be taken away, for it was too grievous to be borne. The Lord heard his prayer and answered it—but not in the way that Paul

expected. His answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you." As though He would say, "Paul, beloved Paul, I am not going to take away your trial—it came from Me—it was given by Me. But My grace shall be sufficient for you, for My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. There is a lesson to be learned, a path to be walked in, an experience to be passed through, wisdom to be obtained in this path—and therefore you must travel in it. Be content then with this promise from My own lips—My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in your weakness." The apostle was satisfied with this—he wanted no more, and therefore he burst forth, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." O what a way of learning religion!

Wrought with divine power

"Our gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with much assurance." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Most men's religion is nothing else but 'a round of forms'—some have their 'doings'—some have their 'doctrines'—and others have their 'duties.' And when the one has performed his doings, the other learned his doctrines, and the third discharged his duties—why, he is as good a Christian, he thinks, as anybody. While all the time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands not simply in word, but in power. But as the veil of ignorance is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel that there is a power in vital godliness—a reality in the teachings of the Spirit—that religion is not to be put on and put off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes. Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power in a man's heart, and preached by the Holy Spirit into his conscience—it mingles, daily and often hourly, with his thoughts—entwines itself with his feelings—and becomes the very food and drink of his soul. Now when a man comes to this spot—to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit—it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God. The more lovely does Jesus appear! The poor believer feels, "I continually find all kinds of evil working in my mind—every base corruption crawling in my heart—everything vile, sensual, and filthy rising up from its abominable deeps. Can I think that God can look down in love and mercy on such a wretch?" When we see our vileness—our baseness—our carnality—our sensuality—how our souls cleave to dust—how we grovel in evil and hateful things—how dark our minds—how earthly our affections—how depraved our hearts—how strong our lusts—how raging our passions—we feel ourselves, at times, no more fit for God than Satan himself!

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Christ does not justify those who are naturally righteous, holy, and religious. But He takes the sinner as he is, in all his filth and guilt—washes him in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness—and clothes the naked shivering wretch, who has nothing to cover him but filthy rags, in His own robe of righteousness! The gospel of the grace of God brings glad tidings of pardon to the criminal—of mercy to the guilty—and of salvation to the lost! That the holy God should look down in love on wretches that deserve the damnation of hell—that the pure and spotless Jehovah should pity, save, and bless enemies and rebels, and make them endless partakers of His own glory—this indeed is a mystery, the depth of which eternity itself will not fathom! The deeper we sink in

self-abasement under a sense of our vileness, the higher we rise in a knowledge of Christ. And the blacker we are in our own view, the more lovely does Jesus appear!

We bring affliction upon ourselves

"Haven't you procured this to yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God, when He led you by the way?" Jeremiah 2:17

"Haven't you procured this to yourself?" says the Lord to His sinning Israel. Who dares say he has not by his sins—his carnality—his pride—his covetousness—his worldly-mindedness—his unbelief—his foolishness—his rebelliousness—procured to himself many things that have grieved and distressed his soul? If indeed we take no notice of the sin that dwells in us, and pay no regard to our thoughts, desires, words, and actions, and take our stand on our own righteousness—we may refuse to believe that we are such vile sinners. But if we are compelled to look within, and painfully feel that SIN is an indweller—a lodger, whom we are compelled to harbor—a serpent that will creep in and nestle in our heart, whether we will or not—a thief that will break through and steal, and whom no bolt nor bar can keep out—a traitor in the citadel who will work by force or fraud, and against whom no resolution of ours has any avail—if such be our inward experience and conviction, I believe there is not a man or woman here who will not confess, "Guilty, guilty! Unclean, unclean!"

We bring affliction upon ourselves. We procure suffering by our own iniquities. "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." "O!" says the fool—"my worldly-mindedness, my pride, my covetousness, my carnality, my neglect of divine things, my rebelliousness, my recklessness, the snares I entangled myself in, my various besetting sins—this it is which has provoked the Lord to afflict me so severely, and leave me, fool that I am, to reap the fruit of my own devices!" A religious animal

"You men of Athens, I perceive that you are very religious in all things. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." Acts 17:22-23

Man has been called, and perhaps with some truth, a religious animal. Religion of some kind, at any rate, seems almost indispensable to his very existence—for from the most civilized nation, to the most barbarous tribe upon the face of the earth, we find some form of religion practiced. Whether this is ingrained into the very constitution of man, or whether it be received by custom or tradition, I will not pretend to decide. But that some kind of religion is almost universally prevalent, is a fact that cannot be denied.

We will always find these two kinds of religion—false and true—earthly and heavenly—fleshly and spiritual—natural and supernatural. Compare this vital, spiritual, heavenly, divine, supernatural religion—this work of grace upon the soul, this teaching of God in the heart, this life of faith within—with its flimsy counterfeit. Compare the actings of real faith, real hope, real love—the teachings, the dealings, the leadings, and the operations of the blessed Spirit in the soul—with rounds of duties, superstitious forms, empty ceremonies, and a notional religion, however puffed up and varnished. Compare the life of God in the heart of a true Christian, amid all his dejection, despondency, trials, temptations, and exercises—compare that precious treasure, Christ's own grace in the soul—with all mere external religion, superficial religion, notional religion. O, it is no

more to be compared than a grain of dust with a diamond! No more to be compared than a criminal in a dungeon to the King on the throne! In fact, there is no comparison between them.

What a contrast!

"He who endures to the end, the same will be saved." Mark 13:13

Saved! Saved from what? Saved from hell! Saved from an eternity of endless misery and horror! Saved from the worm which never dies! Saved from the fire which is never quenched! Saved from the sulphurous flames! Saved from the companionship of devils and damned spirits! Saved from ever-rolling ages of ceaseless misery and horror! Have you not thought sometimes about eternity? What must an eternity of misery be—when you can scarcely bear the pain of a toothache half an hour! O! to be in torment forever! How it racks the soul to think of it! What tongue, then, can express the mercy and blessedness of being saved from hell—from the billows of the sulphurous lake—from infinite despair! When a soul strikes upon the 'rock of perdition,' it is at once swallowed up in a dreadful eternity! Not only are believers saved from all this infinite and unending misery—but they are saved into unspeakable happiness and glory! They are saved into heaven—saved into eternal communion with the infinite God—saved into the eternal enjoyment of His blessed presence—saved into the perfect enjoyment of that perfect and everlasting love in those regions of endless bliss where tears are wiped from off all faces!

What a contrast! Heaven—hell! Eternal misery—eternal bliss! Ages of boundless joy—ages of infinite despair! But salvation includes not only what we may call future salvation—but present salvation. Thus, there is a being saved in the present—from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin—from the curse and bondage of the Law—from the spirit and love of the world—from inward condemnation—from the entanglements of Satan—from worldly anxieties and cares—from following after idols—from carelessness—from coldness—from carnality—from every evil way—from every delusive path.

Sweet buy!

"You are the wretched one, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." Revelation 3:17-18 The only qualification is a deep feeling of our necessity, our nakedness and our shame—and a feeling that there is no other covering for a needy, naked, guilty soul, but the robe of the Redeemer's spotless righteousness. And when the soul is led to His divine feet, full of guilt, shame, and fear—abhorring, loathing, and mourning over itself—and comes in the actings of a living faith—in the sighs and cries of a broken heart—in hungerings, thirstings, and longings—desiring that

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Sweet buy! Blessed exchange! Our nakedness—for Christ's justifying robe! Our poverty—for Christ's riches! Our helplessness and insufficiency—for Christ's power, grace, and love!

God's perfect will "That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

God's will is "perfect." In it, there is no spot, no stain, no weakness, no error, no instability. It is and indeed must necessarily be as perfect as God Himself—for it emanates from Him who is all perfection, and is a discovery of His mind and character. But when God's perfect will sets itself against our flesh—thwarts our dearest hopes—overturns our fondest schemes—we cannot see that it is a perfect will, but rather, are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it.

God's perfect will may snatch a child from your bosom—strike down a dear husband—tear from your arms a beloved wife—strip you of all your worldly goods—put your feet into a path of suffering—lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing—cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods—make your life almost a burden to yourself!

How can you, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, acknowledge and submit to God's perfect will—and let it reign and rule in your heart without a murmur of resistance to it? Look back and see how God's perfect will has, in previous instances, reigned supreme in all points, for your good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to your injury—but all things have worked together for your good. Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away. Whatever property, or comfort, or friends, or health, or earthly happiness we have been deprived of, it was better for us to lose, than to retain them. Was your dear child taken away? It might be to teach you resignation to God's sacred will. Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend. Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith in the providence of God. Have your fondest schemes been marred—your youthful hopes blighted—and you pierced in

the warmest affections of your heart? It was to remove an idol, to dethrone a rival to Christ, to crucify the object of earthly love—so that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might be enshrined in its stead. To tenderly embrace God's perfect will is the grand object of all gospel discipline. The ultimatum of gospel obedience is to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His. "That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Which is the more obnoxious to God

"The Pharisee stood and prayed to himself like this: 'God, I thank you, that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get.'" Luke 18:11-12

Man unites in himself, what at first sight seem to be completely opposite things. He is the greatest of sinners—and yet the greatest of Pharisees. Now, what two things can be so opposed to each other as sin and self-righteousness? Yet the very same man who is a sinner from top to toe, with the whole head sick and the whole heart faint—who is spiritually nothing else but a leper throughout—how contradictory it appears that the same man has in his own heart a most stubborn self-righteousness!

Now, against these two evils God, so to speak, directs His whole artillery—He spares neither one nor the other. But it is hard to say which is the greatest rebellion against God—the existence of sin in man and what he is as a fallen sinner—or his Pharisaism, the lifting up his head in pride of self-righteousness. It is not easy to decide which is the more obnoxious to God—the drunkard who sins without shame—or the Pharisee puffed up with how pleasing he is to God. The one is abhorrent to our feelings—and, as far as decency and morality are concerned, we would rather see the Pharisee. But when we come to matters of true religion, the Pharisee seems the worst! At least our Lord intimated as much when He said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them. "But the tax collector, standing far away, wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:13-14

Five devilisms! As regards sin in its workings, we may say there are five devilisms from which we need to be saved—1. The guilt of sin. 2. The filth of sin. 3. The love of sin. 4. The dominion of sin. 5. The practice of sin.

1. We need the application of Christ's precious blood to our conscience, to take away the guilt of sin. 2. We need the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and to wash the soul in the fountain, to cleanse from the filth of sin. 3. We need the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, to take away the love of sin. 4. We need the power of Christ, to rescue us from the dominion of sin. 5. We need the grace of Christ, to preserve us from the practice of sin.

It is feeling sin in its various workings, which makes us value Christ! Strange mysterious way! O, strange path! that to be exercised with sin, is the path to the Savior! Very painful, very mysterious, very inexplicable—that the more you feel yourself a wretched, miserable sinner—the more you long after Jesus, who is able to save you to the uttermost! Thus, we shall find that we need all that Christ is. For we are no little sinners—and He is no little Savior! We are great sinners! He is a Savior—and a great one! "He is able also to save them to the uttermost." Hebrews 7:25 This is the struggle!

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24

If a person were to tell me he did not love sin in his carnal mind, I would say with all mildness, "You do not speak the truth!" If your carnal mind does not love sin—Why do you think of it? Why do you secretly indulge it in your imagination? Why do you play with it? Why do you seek to extract a devilish sweetness out of it?

O, what a mercy it would be, if there were not this dreadful love of sin in our heart! This is the struggle—that there should be this traitor in the camp—that our carnal mind should be so devilish as to love that which made the blessed Jesus die—as to love that which crucified the Lord of glory, and to love it with a vehement love!

It is I "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid!" Mark 6:50

It is I who formed you in the womb, and brought you forth into your present existence. It is I, the Lord your God, who has fed you, and clothed you from that hour up to the present moment. It is I, the Lord your God, who has preserved you on every side. When you were upon a sick bed, it was I, the Lord your God, who visited your soul, raised up your body, and gave you that measure of health which you do now enjoy. It is I, the Lord your God, who placed you in the situation of life which you do now occupy. It is I, the Lord your God, who deals out to you every trial—who allots you every affliction—who brings upon you every cross—who works in you everything according to My own good pleasure. When we can thus believe that the Lord our God is about our bed and our path, and spying out all our ways—when we can look up to Him, and feel that He is the Lord our God, there is no feeling more sweet, more blessed, more heavenly! "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid!" That sweet grace

"Remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you." Deuteronomy 8:2

We learn humility by a deep discovery of what we are—by an opening up of the corruption, the weakness, the wickedness, of our fallen nature. The Lord's way of teaching His people humility is by placing them first in one trying spot, and then in another—by allowing some temptation to arise—some stumbling block to be in their path—some besetting sin to work upon their corrupt affections—some idol to be embraced by their idolatrous heart—something to take place to draw out the sin which is in their heart—and thus make it manifest to their sight. As a general rule, we learn humility, not by hearing ministers tell us what wicked creatures we are—nor by merely looking into our bosoms and seeing a whole swarm of evils working there—but from being compelled by painful necessity to believe that we are vile, through circumstances and events time after time bringing to light those hidden evils in our heart, which we once thought ourselves pretty free from. We learn humility, not merely by a discovery of what we are, but also by a discovery of what Jesus is. We need a glimpse of Jesus—of His love—of His grace—of His blood. When these two feelings meet together in our bosom—our shame, and the Lord's goodness—our guilt, and His forgiveness—our wickedness, and His superabounding mercy—they break us, humble us, and lay us, dissolved in tears of godly sorrow and contrition, at the footstool of mercy! And thus we learn humility—that sweet grace—that blessed fruit of the Spirit in real, vital, soul-experience.

Slaves of Satan!

"And they may recover themselves out of the devil’s snare, having been taken captive by him to his will." 2 Timothy 2:26 In our natural state, we are all the slaves of Satan! We love our foul master, hug his chain, and delight in his servitude, little thinking what awful wages are to follow. This mighty conqueror has with him a numerous train of captives! This haughty master, the ’god of this world,’ has in his fiendish retinue, a whole array of slaves who gladly do his behests. They obey him cheerfully, though he is leading them down to the bottomless pit! For though he amuses them while here in this world with a few toys and baubles, he will not pay them their wages until he has enticed and flattered them into that ghastly gulf of destruction, in which he himself has been weltering for ages. "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them." 2 Corinthians 4:4 Trials, temptations, sorrows, perplexities

"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted excessively. Concerning this thing I begged the Lord three times that it might depart from me. He has said to me, ’My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest on me." 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Depend upon it, the Lord’s family have to go through much tribulation on their way to heaven. So says the unerring word of truth, and so speaks the experience of every God-taught soul. Now, in these seasons of trouble, in these painful exercises, in these perplexing trials, the Lord’s people need strength—yet the Lord sends these trials in order to drain and exhaust them of ’creature strength.’ Such is the ’self-righteousness’ of our heart—such the ’legality’ intertwined with every fiber of our natural disposition—that we cleave to our own righteousness as long as there is a thread to cleave to—we stand in our own strength as long as there is a point to stand upon—we lean upon our own wisdom as long as a particle remains! In order, then, to exhaust us, drain us, strip us, and purge us of this pharisaic leaven, the Lord sends trials, temptations, sorrows, perplexities. What is their effect? To teach us our weakness, and bring us to that one and only spot where God and the sinner meet—the spot of creature helplessness. In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally the strength of Christ, and feel it to be more than a doctrine, a notion, or a speculation—to know it as an internal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul—to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot—to feel our own utter weakness.

Love not the world

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

If the love of the Father is in us, we will not love the world—nor will the world love us! If your heart and spirit are still in the world—and you are not separated from its society, its amusements, its pursuits, its pleasures, its delights, its men, its maxims—you certainly lack any evidence of a divine change having been wrought in your soul. "Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God."

Paul’s highest attainment "Though I am nothing." 2 Corinthians 12:11 This was Paul’s highest attainment in the knowledge of self. To be a daily pauper living on alms is humbling to proud

nature, which is always seeking to be something, and to do something. If this self-nothingness was wrought in us, we would be spared much pain, in wounded pride. People are building up religion all over the country, but there is not one of a thousand who has yet learned the first lesson—to be nothing. Of all this noisy crowd, how few lie at Jesus' feet, helpless and hopeless, and find help and hope in Him! If you can venture to be nothing, it will save you a world of anxiety and trouble! But proud, vain, conceited flesh wants to be something—to preach well, to make a name for one's self, and be admired as a preacher. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "[I am] less than the least of all the saints."

Let God but take the cover off "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

It is our mercy, if we only feel and groan under corruption inwardly, without it breaking forth outwardly—to wound our own souls, grieve the people of God, and gladden our enemies. Let God but take the cover off the boiling cauldron of our corrupt nature, and the filthy scum would surface in the sight of all men! "Hold me up, and I shall be safe! When the cold winds are whistling over your grave

"While we don't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18

How really empty and worthless are all human cares and anxieties, as well as all human hopes and pleasures, when viewed in the light of a vast and endless eternity! In twenty years, today's price of oil will probably mean little to you. But it will matter much whether your soul is in heaven or hell. When the cold winds are whistling over your grave, or the warm sun resting on it—what will it matter whether sheep sold badly or well at the market? Could we realize eternal things more, we would be less anxious about temporal things. It is only our unbelief and carnality which fetter us down to the poor things of time and sense. This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever. The art of preaching

We are overrun with a shallow, superficial ministry, which is destitute of all life, savor, and power. A dry, dead-letter scheme of doctrine, as mathematically correct as the squares of a chess-board, prevails, where what is called "truth" is preached. And to move Bible texts on the squares as pawns, is called "the art of preaching."

How simple is truth! Man's misery—God's mercy. The aboundings of sin—the superaboundings of grace. The depths of the fall—the heights of the recovery. The old man—the new man. The diseases of the soul—the balm of a Savior's blood. These lessons are learned in the furnace of inward experience. How different from the monkish austerity of the Ritualist—the lip service of the Pharisee—and the dry Calvinistic formulary! What a dreadful lack is there of true preaching now! I look round and see so few men qualified to feed the church of God. We are overrun with parsons, but, oh dear! what are they? I cannot but attribute much of the low state of the churches to the ministers! Ezekiel 34:1-31 is a true picture of the false shepherds. My desire is My desire is—

1. To exalt the grace of God.

2. To proclaim salvation alone through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. To declare the sinfulness, helplessness, and hopelessness of man in a state of nature.

4. To describe, as far as I am able, the living experience of the saints of God in their trials, temptations, and sorrows—and in their consolations and blessings. A great & inestimable mercy

It is a great and inestimable mercy when our various trials and troubles are made a means of driving us to the Lord, as our only hope and help. Those circumstances, outward or inward, temporal or spiritual, which stir up an earnest spirit of prayer—make us cease from the creature—beat us out of all false refuges—wean us from the world—show us the vileness and deceitfulness of our hearts—lead us up to Jesus—and make Him near, dear, and precious—must be considered blessings.

It is true, troubles rarely come to us as such, or at the time appear as such—no, they usually appear as if they would utterly swallow us up! But we must judge of them by their fruits and effects. Job could not see the hand of God in his troubles and afflictions. But it was made plain after he was brought to abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes. I am very sure, if we are in the right way, we shall find it a rough way, and have many trials and troubles. God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Such monsters are more fit for a traveling circus

I have been much puzzled by those in the professing church. Most have a great assurance and unwavering confidence—unaccompanied by godly fear, and the other fruits and graces of the Spirit. I see this as presumption or delusion. Where the Holy Spirit works faith, He also works sorrow for sin, deadness to the world, tenderness of conscience, brokenness of spirit, humility, simplicity, sincerity, meekness, patience, spiritual affections, holy and heavenly desires, true hope, and love toward the Lord and His people. Where we see these fruits and graces of the Spirit lacking, or sadly deficient, there we must conclude that true faith, the root from which they all grow, is lacking or deficient likewise.

There are no ’freaks’ in the kingdom of heaven. I mean such as have ’little hearts’ and ’large heads’—active legs and withered hands—nimble tongues and crippled arms. Such monsters are more fit for a traveling circus than the Church of the living God. To fear God, to tremble at His word, to be little and lowly in our own eyes, to hate sin and ourselves as sinners, to pour out our hearts before the Lord, to seek His face continually, to lead a life of faith and prayer, to be dead to the world, to feel Jesus to be precious, to behold His dying love by the eyes of living faith—these realities are almost despised and overlooked by many ’great professors’ in our day! An apostolic face & a Judas heart

Many think that a minister is exempt from such coldness, deadness, and barrenness, as private Christians feel. And the hypocritical looks and words of many of Satan’s ministers favor this delusion. Holiness is so much on their tongues, and on their faces, that their deluded hearers necessarily conclude that it is in their hearts. But, alas! nothing is easier or more common, than an apostolic face and a Judas heart.

Most pictures that I have seen of the "Last Supper" represent Judas with a ferocious countenance. Had painters drawn a holy, meek-looking face, I believe they would have given a truer resemblance. Many pass for angels in the pulpit, who if the truth were known, would be seen to be devils and beasts in heart, lip, and life at home. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Matthew 23:25; Matthew 23:28 A languishing body (Letter to a dying youth) My dear friend,

A languishing body is a heavy cross. Sickness often depresses our spirits, shatters our nerves, and casts a gloom over our minds. But it is good thus to be weaned and detached, and gradually loosened from the strong ties that bind us to earth. I was ill once for many months, and many thought I would never recover. I found it a heavy trial, but I believe it was profitable to my soul. May the Lord make all your bed in your sickness, give you many testimonies of His special favor—and when He sees fit to take down your earthly tabernacle, remove you to that happy country where the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick," where tears are wiped away from all faces, and sorrow and sighing flee away. May the Lord speedily grant your desires, and visit your soul with looks of love, rays of mercy, and beams of tender kindness, so as to smile you into humility, resignation, patience, gratitude, contrition, love, and godly sorrow.

Yours affectionately in the bonds of the gospel,

J. C. Philpot, February 1, 1840 A painted bauble

"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, they have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

What a wonderful revolution is effected by divine teaching and heavenly visitations! The soul is brought to live in a new world and breathe a new element. Old things pass away, and behold, all things become new. New desires, feelings, hopes, fears, and exercises arise, and the soul becomes a new creature. The world appears in its true colors, as a painted bauble, and as its pleasures are valued at their due worth, so its good opinion is little cared for or desired. What is this poor vain world with all its gilded clay, deceptive honors and respectability, and soap-bubble charms—compared to one smile from our loving Savior? "And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves!" 1 John 2:17 The religion which I want

I am quite sick of modern religion—it is such a mixture, such a medley, such a compromise. I find much, indeed, of this religion in my own heart, for it suits the flesh well—but I would not have it so, and grieve it should be so. The religion which I want is that of the Holy Spirit. I know nothing but what He teaches me. I feel nothing but what He works in me. I believe nothing but what He shows me. I only mourn when He smites my rocky heart. I only rejoice when He reveals the Savior. This religion I am seeking after, though miles and miles from it—but no other will satisfy or content me. When the blessed Spirit is not at work in me, and with me, I fall back into all the darkness, unbelief, earthliness, idleness, carelessness, infidelity, and helplessness of my Adam nature. True religion is a supernatural and mysterious thing.

It will matter little when I lie in my coffin!

What does it really matter where we spend the few years of our pilgrimage here below? Life is short, vain, and transitory—and if I live in comfort and wealth, or in comparative poverty, it will matter little when I lie in my coffin! This life is soon passing away, and an eternal state fast coming on! It will greatly matter whether our religion was natural or spiritual—our faith human or divine—our hope a heavenly gift or a spider's web! But our blind, foolish hearts are so concerned about things which are but the dust of the balance, and so little anxious about our all in all. There is no greater inheritance than to be a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty. To have a saving interest in the electing love of the Father—the redeeming blood of the Son—and the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit—is worth a million of worlds! Without such, we must be eternally miserable—and with it eternally happy. "For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" A little drop of purity in the midst of impurity

How mysterious is the life of God in the soul. It seems like a little drop of purity in the midst of impurity. We shall always find sin to be our worst enemy, and self our greatest foe. We need not fear anything but sin—nothing else can do us any real injury. Though the Lord in tender mercy forgives His erring wandering children, yet He makes them all deeply feel that indeed it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against Him.

If Mr. Pride gets a wound in the head "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and envy and strife, and some also of good will." Php 1:15

I hope I can rejoice in the Lord's blessing the labors of other good men. It is indeed a sad spirit when ministers are jealous of each other, and would rather cavil and find fault with each other, instead of desiring that the blessing of God might rest upon them and their labors. Oh that miserable spirit of detraction and envy, which would gladly pull others down, that we might stand as it were, a little higher upon their bodies! Where is there any true humility of mind—simplicity of spirit—brotherly love—or an eye to God's glory when this wretched spirit is indulged? If Mr. Pride gets a wound in the head, it will not be the worse for the grace of humility. Our greatest enemy

I am more afraid of myself—my lusts and passions, and strong and horrible corruptions—than of anybody in the whole world! SELF is and ever will be our greatest enemy. And all our enemies would be as weak as water against us, were we not such vile wretches in ourselves! The end will make amends for all!

What a world it is of sin and sorrow! How everything serves to remind us that we are all passing away! I feel for you in your trials and afflictions—so various, painful, and multiplied. But dare I wish you free from what the all-wise, all-gracious Lord lays upon you? Could He not in a moment remove them all? Our Father sees fit in His wisdom and mercy to afflict His children, and we know that He would not do so unless it were for the good of their soul. What can we say then? All we can do is to beg of the Lord that He would support, comfort, and bless them.

It is in the furnace that we learn our need of realities, and our own helplessness and inability. The furnace also brings to our mind the shortness of life, and how vain all things are here below. Afflictions are sent to wean from this world—make life burdensome—and death desirable. I well know that the poor coward flesh is fretful and impatient under afflictions, and would gladly have a smoother, easier path. But we cannot choose our own trials, nor our own afflictions. All are

appointed in fixed weight and measure—and the promise is that all things shall work together for good to those who love God.

Wherever we go, and wherever we are, we must expect trials to arise. But it will be our wisdom and mercy to submit to what we cannot alter, and not fret or repine under the trial—but accept it as sent for our good. We need trial upon trial, and stroke upon stroke to bring our soul out of carnality. We slip insensibly into carnal ease, but afflictions and trials of body and mind stir us up to some degree of earnestness in prayer—show us the emptiness and vanity of earthly things—make us feel the suitability and preciousness of the Lord Jesus. The path in which you have been led so many years is a safe way, though a rough and rugged way. The end will make amends for all!

We are no longer young "My life is a breath." Job 7:7 "My days are swifter than a runner. They flee away!" Job 9:25

We are no longer young. Life is, as it were, slipping from under our feet! It is a poor life to live to sin, self, and the world—but it is a blessed life to live unto the Lord. I never expect to be free from trial, temptation, pain, and suffering of one kind or another, while in this valley of tears. It will be my mercy if these things are sanctified to my soul's eternal good. I cannot choose my own path, nor would I wish to do so, as I am sure it would be a wrong one. I desire to be led of the Lord Himself into the way of peace, and truth, and righteousness—to walk in His fear, live to His praise, and die in the sweet experience of His love. I have many enemies, but fear none so much as myself. O may I be kept from all evil and all error, and do the things which are pleasing in God's sight. Our days are hastening away swifter than a runner. Soon with us it will be time no longer, and therefore how we should desire to live to the Lord, and not to self! The afflictions of the ungodly "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Psalms 119:71

There is a great difference between the afflictions of the godly, and the afflictions of the ungodly. To the godly afflictions are a blessing—but to the ungodly afflictions are a curse. Afflictions soften the heart of the godly—but they harden the heart of the ungodly. In the case of the godly, afflictions stir up the grace of prayer, wean the heart from the world, bring us to Word of God, make us consider our latter end, give power and reality to divine things, show us the emptiness of all creature religion, make us look more simply and believingly to the blessed Lord, to feel how suitable He is to every want and woe—and that in Him, and in Him alone, is pardon, acceptance, and peace. But the afflictions of the ungodly only produce sullenness, self-pity, and rebellion.

Like a little child in the arms of eternal love

How I see men deluded and put off with a vain show, and how few there are, whether ministers or people, who seem to know anything of the transforming efficacy of real religion and vital godliness. We desire to be more separated from the world in heart, spirit, and affection—to be spiritually-minded, and to know more of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. And though we find sin still working in us, and sometimes as bad as ever, yet our desire is to have it subdued in its power, as well as purged away in its guilt and filth. We have lived to see what the world can do for us—and found it can only entangle—and what sin can do—which is to please for a moment and then bite like an adder. And we have seen also a little of the Person and work, blood and righteousness, grace and glory, blessedness and suitability of the Son of God—and He has won our heart and affections, so as at times to be the chief among ten thousand and the

altogether lovely One. May you experience the sweetness and blessedness of calmly relying on the faithfulness of God, and lying like a little child in the arms of eternal love. The end of God in all His doings & dealings

Blessed are those chastenings and those teachings which bring us to the feet of Christ, and by which He is made precious to the soul. This is the end of God in all His doings and dealings with His people—to strip and empty them wholly of self, and to manifest and make His dear Son feelingly and experimentally their All in all. In Him and in Him alone can we, do we, find either rest or peace. The only smile worth having

All the vain applause of mortals, and all that is called popularity, I think little of. It leaves an aching void, and often a guilty conscience. The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and all else is poverty, rags, and shame. Not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. God's smile, not man's, is the only smile worth having.

Dead & dark seasons

All Christians, even the most eminent servants of God, have their dead and dark seasons—when the life of God seems sunk to so low an ebb as to be hardly visible—so hidden is the stream by the mud-banks of their fallen nature. By these very dark and dead seasons, the people of God are instructed. They see and feel what 'the flesh' really is—how alienated from the life of God. They learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie. They are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing—that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God—and that all they are, and have—all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy—with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace—the rich, free, undeserved, yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God! They learn in this hard school of painful experience, their emptiness and nothingness—and that without Christ they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility—that rare, yet lovely garb—cease from their own strength and wisdom, and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them. At the cross

Standing at the cross of our adorable Lord, we see the law thoroughly fulfilled—its curse fully endured—its penalties wholly removed—sin eternally put away—the justice of God amply satisfied—all His perfections gloriously harmonized—His holy will perfectly obeyed—reconciliation completely effected—redemption graciously accomplished—and the church everlastingly saved! At the cross we see sin in its blackest colors—and holiness in its fairest beauties. At the cross we see the love of God in its tenderest form—and the anger of God in its deepest expression. At the cross we see the blessed Redeemer lifted up, as it were between heaven and earth, to show to angels and to men the spectacle of redeeming love, and to declare at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act of the suffering obedience and bleeding sacrifice of the Son of God—the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of His inflexible justice—and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of His heart to the elect. At the cross, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace. At the cross, and here alone, penitential grief and godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes. At the cross, and here alone, is sin subdued and mortified—holiness communicated—death vanquished—Satan put to flight—and happiness and heaven begun in the soul. O what heavenly blessings, what present grace, as well as what future glory, flow through the cross! What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners and a

sin-pardoning God! What a healing-place for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders! What a door of hope in the valley of Achor for the self-condemned and self-abhorred! What a blessed resting-place for the whole family of God in this valley of grief and sorrow!

How many, O how many

"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." Matthew 15:8

How many, O how many of those who sit in our chapels amid the people of God are perishing in their sins with the Bible and hymn-book before their eyes—the sound of the gospel in their ears—the doctrines of grace on their lips—but the love of the world in their hearts! "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

It has ruined him, body & soul

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:7 As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no tongue can adequately express, the state of wretchedness and ruin into which sin has cast guilty, miserable man. In separating him from God, it has severed him from the only Source and fountain of all happiness and all holiness. It has ruined him, body and soul. The body it has filled with sickness and disease. The soul it has defaced, and destroyed the image of God in which it was created. It has shattered all his mental faculties—broken his judgment—polluted his imagination—alienated his affections. It has made him love sin—and hate God. It has filled him from top to toe with pride, lust, and cruelty, and has been the prolific parent of all those crimes and abominations under which earth groans, the bare recital of some of which has filled so many hearts with disgust and horror. These are the more visible fruits of the fall. But nearer home, in our own hearts, in what we are or have been, we find and feel what wreck and ruin sin has made! There can be no greater mark of alienation from God than willfully and deliberately to seek pleasure and delight in things which His holiness abhors. But who of the family of God has not been guilty here? Every movement and inclination of our natural mind, every desire and lust of our carnal heart, was, in times past, to find pleasure and gratification in something abhorrent to the will and word of the living Jehovah.

There are few of us who, in the days of our flesh, have not sought pleasure in some of its varied but deceptive forms. The theater, the race-course, the dance, the sports, the card-table, the midnight revel, "the pleasures of sin" were resorted to by some of us. Our mad, feverish, thirst after excitement—the continued cry of our wicked flesh, "Give, give!"—our miserable recklessness or headlong, daring determination to 'enjoy ourselves,' as we called it, cost what it would, plunged us again and again into the sea of sin, where, but for sovereign grace, we would have sunk to rise no more!

Or, if the 'restraints of morality' put their check upon gross and sinful pleasures, there still was a seeking after such "allowable amusements" (as we deemed them), as change of scene and place, foreign travel, the reading of novels and works of fiction, fine dress, visiting, building up airy castles of love and romance, studying how to obtain human applause, devising plans of self-advancement and self-gratification, occupying the mind with cherished studies, and delighting ourselves in those pursuits for which we had a natural taste, as music, drawing, poetry, or, it might be, severer

studies and scientific researches.

We have named these middle-class pursuits as less obvious sins, than such gross crimes as drunkenness and vile debauchery in the lower walks of life. But, viewed with a spiritual eye, all are equally stamped with the same fatal brand of death in sin. The moral and the immoral, the refined and the unrefined, the polished few or the crude many, are alike "without God and without hope in the world."

We are often met with this question—"What harm is there in this pursuit, or in that amusement?" The harm is, that the amusement is delighted in for its own sake—that it occupies the mind, and fills the thoughts, shutting God out—that it renders spiritual things distasteful—that it sets up an idol in the heart, and is made a substitute for God. Now this we never really know nor feel, until divine light illuminates the mind, and divine life quickens the soul. We then begin to see and feel into what a miserable state sin has cast us—how all our life long we have done nothing but what God abhors—that every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts has been evil, and only evil continually—that we have brought ourselves under the stroke of God’s justice, under the curse of His righteous law, and now there appears nothing but death and destruction before our eyes, and unless we poor slaves of sin, Satan, and death were redeemed, we could not be reconciled to God. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

10.05. Volume 5

Three books There are three books which, if a man will read and study, he can dispense with most others.

1. The book of Providence—and this he reads to good purpose, when he sees written down line by line the providential dealings of God with him, and a ray of Divine light gilds every line.

2. The Word of God—and this he reads to profit, when the blessed Spirit applies it with power to his soul.

3. The book of his own heart—and this he studies with advantage, when he reads in the new man of grace the blessed dealings of God with his soul, and in the old man of sin and death, enough to fill him with shame and confusion of face, and make him loathe and abhor himself in dust and ashes. The whole apparatus of religion "I perceive that you are very religious in all things." Acts 17:22

Religion, in some shape or other, is indispensable to the very existence of civilized society. There is a natural religion—as well as a spiritual religion. Natural conscience is the seat of the former—a spiritual conscience the seat of the latter. One is of the flesh—the other of the Spirit. One for time—the other for eternity. One for the world—the other for the elect. One to animate and bind men together as component members of society—the other to animate and bind the children of God together as component members of the mystical body of Christ. True religion is what the world does not want—nor does true religion want the world. The two are as separate as Christ and Belial. But some religion the world must have! And as it will not have, and cannot have the true—it will and must have the false. True religion is spiritual and experimental, heavenly and divine, the gift and work of God, the birthright and privilege of the elect, the peculiar possession of the heirs of God. This the world has not—for it is God’s enemy, not His friend—walking in the broad way which leads to perdition, not in the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

Worldly religion cannot exist without an order of men to teach it and practice its ceremonies. Hence come clergy, forming a recognized priestly caste. And as these must, to avoid confusion, be governed, all large corporate bodies requiring a controlling power, thence come bishops and archbishops, ecclesiastical courts, archdeacons—and the whole apparatus of clerical government. The ceremonies and ordinances cannot be carried on without buildings set apart for the purpose—thence churches and cathedrals. As prayer is a part of all religious worship, and carnal men cannot, for lack of the Spirit, pray spiritually—they must have forms of devotion made ready to their hand, thence come prayer-books and liturgies. As there must be mutual points of agreement to hold men together, there must be written formulas of doctrine—thence come articles, creeds, and confessions of faith. And finally, as there are children to be instructed, and this cannot be safely left to oral teaching, for fear of ignorance in some and error in others, the very form of instruction must be drawn up in so many words—thence come catechisms.

People are puzzled sometimes to know why there is this and that thing in an established religion—why we have churches and clergy, tithes and prayer-books, universities and catechisms—and the whole apparatus of religion. They do not see that all these things have sprung, as it were, out of a moral necessity, and are based upon the very constitution of man—that this great and widespread tree of a human religion has its deep roots in the natural conscience—and that all these branches necessarily and naturally grow out of the broad and lofty stem. The attachment, then, of worldly people to a worldly religion is no great mystery. It is no riddle for a Samson to put forth—or requiring a Solomon to solve.

Things which the angels desire to look into "Things which the angels desire to look into." 1 Peter 1:12 To the carnal, earthly, debased, degraded mind of man—the mystery of the Person of Christ, of the cross, of the sufferings, blood-shedding, and death of Jesus, whereby He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—is foolishness. He sees no beauty, blessedness, or glory in the Person of the Son of God—nor any wisdom or grace in atoning blood and dying love. But not so with these bright and pure beings! They see in the Person and work of Christ not only the depths of infinite wisdom in the contrivance of the whole plan of redemption, and of power in its execution and full accomplishment—but they see such lengths, breadths, depths, and heights of love as fill their minds with holy wonder, admiration and praise. They see in His incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, blood-shedding, and death—such unspeakable treasures of mercy and grace as ever fill their minds with wonder and admiration.

What shame and confusion should cover our face that we should see so little beauty and glory in that redeeming blood and love, which fills the pure minds of the angelic beings with holy and unceasing admiration—and that they should be ever seeking and inquiring into this heavenly mystery, that they may discover in it ever new and opening treasures of the wisdom, grace, mercy, truth, and love of God—when we who profess to be redeemed by precious blood, are, for the most part, so cold and indifferent in the contemplation and admiration of it. This most precious & suitable Savior!

"For we don’t have a high priest who can’t be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15

What a mercy it is to have a faithful and gracious compassionate High Priest who can sympathize with His poor, tried, tempted family—so that however low they may sink, His pitiful eye can see them in their low estate—His gracious ear hear their cries—His loving heart melt over them—and His strong arm pluck them from their destructions! Oh what would we do without such a gracious and most suitable Savior as the blessed Jesus! How He seems to rise more and more in our estimation—in our thoughts—in our desires—in our affections—as we see and feel what a wreck and ruin we are, what dreadful havoc sin has made with both body and soul, what miserable outcasts we are by nature. But oh how needful it is, dear friend, to be brought down in our soul to be the chief of sinners, viler than the vilest, and worse than the worst—that we may really and truly believe in, and cleave unto, this most precious and suitable Savior! My path My path has been, and is, one mainly of trial and temptation, having a heart so evil, a tempter so subtle, and so many crosses and snares in which my feet are continually caught and entangled. All here on earth, is labor and sorrow. Our own sins, and the sins of others, will always make it a scene of trouble. Oh, you hideous monster, sin! What a mighty power it has—a power which grace alone can subdue. It

seems sometimes subdued, and then rises up worse than before. Well may we cry out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Hold me up Lord, and I shall be safe!" The desires of the flesh & of the mind

"Among whom we also once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others." Ephesians 2:3

We may observe here a distinction drawn by the Apostle between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind. Both are opposed to God and godliness, both are the fruits of our fallen nature. But the desires of the FLESH seem to be those grosser and more sensual lusts and passions which are connected, so to speak, with the lower part of our nature. The desires of the MIND are those which are connected with its higher qualities. Thus some are steeped up to the very lips in all manner of vile abominations of sensual lust, in the gratification of which they find all their pleasure. While others, who would scorn, or at least are not tempted to the baser lusts of the flesh, carry out with equal ardour the promptings of a more refined character and disposition. Ambition to rise in the world, thirsting after power over their fellow-men, a craving for fame and distinction in any particular branch of art or science, discontent with their present situation in life, envying everyone superior to them in birth, wealth, talent, accomplishments, position, or worldly happiness—attempts, more or less successful, to rise out of obscurity, poverty, and subjection, and to win for themselves name, fame, and prosperity—how wide a field does this open to our view, as embracing "the desires of the MIND!" And observe how the Apostle puts upon a level the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind, and stamps them both with the same black mark of disobedience and its consequences—the wrath of God. We look around us. We see the drunkard staggering in the street, we hear the oath of the common swearer, we view the sons and daughters of Belial manifesting in their very looks how sunk they are in deeds of shame. These we at once condemn. But what do we think of the aspiring tradesman—the energetic man of business—the active, untiring speculator—the man who, without scruple, puts into practice every scheme and plan to advance and aggrandize himself, careless who sinks if he rise? Is he equally guilty in our eyes? What do we think of the artist devoting days and nights to the cultivation of his skill as a painter, as an architect, as a sculptor—of the literary man, buried in his books—of the scientist, devoting years to the particular branch of study which he has selected to pursue—or similar examples of men, whose whole life and all whose energies are spent in fulfilling the desires of their mind? As far as society, public welfare, the comfort of themselves and their families, and the progress of the world are concerned, there is a vast difference between these two classes—and we would do violence to right feeling to put them upon a level. But when we come to weigh the matter as before God, with eternity in view, and judge them by the word of truth, we see at once that there is no real difference between them—that the drunkard does but fulfill the desires of his flesh—and the scholar, the artist, the man of business, the literary man—in a word, the man of the world, whatever his world be, little or great—does but each fulfill the desires of his mind. Both are of the earth, earthy—both are sworn enemies to God and godliness, and could you look into the very bottom of his heart, you might find the man of intellect, refinement, and education to be a greater foe to God and His word than the drunkard or the profligate! The sin in both is one and the same, and consists in this, that in all they do they seek to gratify that carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. God is not in all, or indeed in any of their thoughts. Instead of living to and for Him in whom, as creatures of His

hand, they live and move and have their being, they live wholly unto and for themselves—and thus are practical rebels against God, as rejecting His rightful claims upon their obedience!

If you are at home in the world

"We are here for only a moment, aliens and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace!" 1 Chronicles 29:15

If you possess the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and, Jacob—you, like them, confess that you are a stranger—and your confession springs out of a believing heart and a sincere experience. You feel yourself a stranger in this ungodly world. It is not your element. It is not your home. You are in it during God's appointed time, but you wander up and down this world—a stranger to its company—a stranger to its maxims—a stranger to its fashions—a stranger to its principles—a stranger to its motives—a stranger to its lusts—a stranger to its inclinations—and all in which this world moves as in its native element.

Grace has separated you by God's sovereign power, that though you are in the world, you are not of it. I can tell you plainly—if you are at home in the world—if the things of time and sense are your element—if you feel one with—the company of the world—the maxims of the world—the fashions of the world—and the principles of the world—grace has not reached your heart—the faith of God's elect does not dwell in your bosom. The first effect of grace is to separate. It was so in the case of Abraham. He was called by grace to leave the land of his fathers, and go out into a land that God would show him. And so God's own word to His people is still to come out from among them, and be separate. Separation, separation, separation from the world is the grand distinguishing mark of vital godliness. There may be indeed separation of body where there is no separation of heart. But what I mean is—separation of heart—separation of principle—separation of affection—separation of spirit. And if grace has touched your heart, and you are a partaker of the faith of God's elect, you are a stranger in the world, and will make it manifest by your life and conduct that you are such. "We are here for only a moment, aliens and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace!"

Thirst "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6

Thirst, as a feeling of the soul, in a spiritual sense, is certainly indicative of divine life. It is as impossible, spiritually viewed, for a man 'dead in sin' to thirst after a living God—as for a corpse in the graveyard to thirst after a draught of cold water from the well. Such a feeling as thirsting after God had no place in my bosom until the Lord was pleased to quicken my soul into spiritual life. I had heard of God by the hearing of the ear. I had seen Him—in creation—in the starry sky—in the roaring sea—in the teeming earth. I had read of Him in the Bible. I had learned His existence by education and tradition. I had some apprehensions of His holiness in my natural conscience. But as to any spiritual thirsting after Him—any earnest desire to fear Him, know Him, believe in Him, or love Him—no such experience or feeling ever dwelt in my bosom! I loved the world too dearly to look to Him who made it—and my self too warmly to seek Him who would bid me crucify and mortify it. A man must be made alive unto God by spiritual regeneration before he can experience any such sensation as is here conveyed by the figure 'thirst.' "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink."

All the devil’s tricks!

"So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Satan is so wily—his agents so surround us—their designs are so masked—their language so plausible—their manners so insinuating—their appearance often so imposing—their arguments so subtle—their activity so unwearied—their insight into our weaknesses so keen—their enmity against Christ and His gospel so implacable—their lack of all principle and all honesty so thorough—that the net may be drawing around us, before we have the slightest suspicion of these infernal plots being directed against us! Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against all the devil’s tricks! A natural religiosity

There is in some people a natural religiosity—that is, a disposition to be religious. If they had been born in Turkey, they would have been devout Muslims; if in Italy, they would have become priests, monks, or nuns, and as ready to burn a heretic as their fathers; if born and bred in England, they would be devout churchmen, pious dissenters, and so forth—just as the various circumstances of birth and education, habits and associations, might dispose or determine. Now to these naturally religious minds, when fully ripened and blended with a stern spirit of self-denial, which usually accompanies and grows up with it—no system so thoroughly adapts itself as that of Popery—for it just meets and gives full play to that habit of mind which yields, like clay, to every object of groveling, superstitious veneration. A louder witness

"Be an example to those who believe, in word, in your way of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12 A godly life is a louder witness against the inconsistent conduct of loose professors, than scolding reproofs. There should be—a tenderness of spirit—a holy prudence—a godly awe of the word of truth—and a reverent walking before God—all of which speak plainly against the light, easy, loose, slip-shod profession of the day.

Precious & glorious

All that Jesus is and has, all that He says and does is precious and glorious—His miracles of mercy, while here below—His words so full of grace, wisdom, and truth—His going about doing good—His sweet example of patience, meekness and submission—His sufferings and sorrows in the garden and on the cross—His spotless holiness and purity—His tender compassion to poor lost sinners—His atoning blood and justifying obedience—His dying love, so strong and firm—His lowly, yet honorable burial—His glorious resurrection—His ascension and present reign and rule—His constant intercession for His people. What beauty and glory shine forth in all these divine realities! A view of His glory and a foretaste of the bliss and blessedness it communicates has a transforming effect upon the soul.

We are naturally proud, covetous, worldly—grievously entangled in various lusts and passions—prone to evil, averse to good—easily elated by prosperity—soon dejected by adversity—peevish under trials—rebellious under heavy strokes—unthankful for daily mercies of food and clothing—and in other ways ever manifesting our base nature. To be brought from under the power of these abounding evils, we need to be conformed to the image of Christ. Now, this can only be by beholding His glory by faith. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the

Lord." It is this believing view of the glory of Christ which supports under heavy trials, producing meekness and resignation to the will of God. That was more than His holy soul could bear!

Thousands have died in greater bodily agony than the Lord, for He only suffered in body for six hours. But of all the generations of men, none have ever felt what the Lord endured in His soul—for He had to suffer in His soul what the elect would have had to suffer in hell, if He had not suffered it for them.

What is the body? That is not the chief seat of suffering. Martyrs have rejoiced in the flames. It is the soul that feels. It was so with Jesus. His body, it is true, was racked and torn—but it was the racking of His soul in which lay His chief agonies. And the greatest of all was the final stroke God reserved to His last moments—the last drop of the cup in all its bitterness—which was hiding His face from His Son. Nothing else but this last bitter drop extorted the cry of suffering from His lips! But when, to crown all the scene of suffering, the Father hid His face from Him—that was more than His holy soul could bear! That extorted from Him the dolorous cry—such a cry as earth never before or since heard—a cry which made the sun to hide its face as if in sackcloth; the solid earth to shake; and the very graves to open their mouths as if they could no longer hold their dead! "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46 The religion of man To the mass of mankind nothing is so attractive in religion as outward beauty and magnificence. The spiritual worship of God—the glory of Jesus—the beauties of holiness—the still small voice of the Spirit—inward communion with the Lord—the consolations of His presence—meltings of heart under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness—all that gives power to vital godliness is beyond the reach of human nature in its highest flights of sensuous devotion! Denied the wings of faith, she must raise and sustain herself on artificial pinions. These, the Church of Rome furnishes for birds of every size, from the vulture to the wren. A religion of sight, sense, and touch is the religion of man. To this depraved religion, or rather superstition, the Church of Rome panders. The wings of a butterfly

We are all desperate infidels in heart! Though all through the word of God we see His providence shine forth in the minutest events, though the Lord Himself tells us that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without God’s providence or permission—yet to believe that He is everywhere so present, and that He everywhere so directly lives, moves, and acts as to regulate and control the minutest circumstances of daily life—all this so surpasses all our natural credence that nothing can enable us to believe it but the faith of God’s own giving and maintaining—and having had ourselves some personal experience of it, so as to set our own seal to its reality and truth.

Most have noticed the wings of a butterfly, and observed the uniformity and beauty of the pattern. Now to produce that beautiful uniformity of pattern, hundreds of thousands, if not millions of little feathers must combine. And were we to have to calculate the exact shape, situation, and tint of marking which every single plume of this countless feather-dust must have, to prevent the whole being a confused blotch, it would exceed all the powers of human mathematics, not to say all the faculties of the human mind! But we might as well believe that a group of boys, by throwing together stone after stone for a number of years, could build up a Westminster Palace—as that all these minute feathers came together by chance!

Now if in ’creation,’ and this is but one instance out of a million, we are obliged to recognize a divine hand in so minute a circumstance as the marking of a butterfly’s wing, why should we not see the same hand in the minutest events of ’providence’ also? The grand difficulty is to see God at all—anywhere or in anything. If once by faith we see Him who is invisible, and feel the presence of a God at hand and not afar off, all other difficulties vanish! Be it our happy portion to be ever watching the hand of God in providence and grace, and surely we shall watch for neither in vain!

Yawning & lounging their time away

"Be diligent in these things; give yourself wholly to them, that your progress may be revealed to all." 1 Timothy 4:15 That their progress may be evident to all, ministers must give themselves wholly to their work. Every pursuit, therefore, however useful for other men as a part of their business or profession, which is not of the things of God, hinders the real and visible profit of a servant of Christ.

Now, we firmly believe that, if instead of yawning and lounging their time away in sloth and idleness, or gossiping from house to house, pastors would—apply their minds to reading, prayer, and meditation—live more alone—commune more with their own heart—be more separate from everything worldly and carnal—and give themselves more to the work, when out of it as well as in it, in the home as well as in the pulpit—they would find the benefit of it, not only in their own souls, but in the exercise of their ministry! A cold, lifeless, indifferent heart—though at various times, every servant of God has to mourn over his coldness and deadness—but a heart habitually cold, lifeless, and indifferent, and rarely otherwise, cannot be expected to warm up and cheer the drooping, desponding hearts of the family of God.

Pride, worldliness & covetousness

Pride, worldliness and covetousness may reign rampant—even where grosser sins are not committed—or kept hidden from observation. The blind, three-headed idol

There is scarcely a truth of divine revelation which has not been at some time disputed, and against which a whole army of arguments has not been from some quarter arrayed. Some of these disputants have denied the Sovereignty of God, and have sought to snatch the reins of the government of the world out of the hands of the King of kings and the Lord of lords—that they might commit them to the blind, three-headed idol, "Luck, Chance, and Fortune" and thus reduce all events to that chaos of confusion, that wild and desolate region of uncertainties in which their own dark minds wander in endless mazes lost!

Overcoming the world "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:5 A man must either overcome the world—or be overcome by it. To overcome the world is to be saved—to be overcome by it is to be lost. He, then, who does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God does not and cannot overcome the world—for he has not the faith of God’s elect—he is not born of God—there is no divine life in his soul—and he has therefore no power to resist the allurements, endure the scorn, or rise superior to the frowns and smiles of the world—but is entangled, carried captive, and destroyed by it! Where the world is loved, the heart is necessarily overcome by it—for in the love of the world, as in the love of sin, is all the strength of the world. Now unless the love of Christ in the soul be stronger than the love of the world, the weaker must give way to the stronger. Those who do not love Christ cannot

overcome the world, for such are utter strangers to the faith which purifies the heart from the lust of it, to the hope which rises above it, and to the love which lifts up the soul beyond it.

We must be taught of God "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him." John 6:44

Four things are absolutely necessary to be experimentally known and felt before we can arrive at any saving or sanctifying knowledge of the truth—

1. Divine light in the understanding.

2. Spiritual faith in the heart.

3. Godly fear in the conscience.

4. Heavenly love in the affections.

Without light we cannot see. Without faith we cannot believe. Without godly fear we cannot reverentially adore. Without love we cannot embrace Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. We must be taught of God and receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child—or we shall never enter therein. This reptile heart "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Romans 8:7

'Enmity against God' must not only include in its bosom the seeds of every other crime—but be in itself the worst of all crimes. To be an enemy to God must be a most dreadful position for a creature to be in—but to be enmity itself must be the concentrated essence of sin and misery! An enemy may be reconciled, appeased, turned into a friend—but enmity, never. Enmity knows no pity, feels no remorse, is subject to no control, is unappeasable and irreconcilable. And when we think for a moment who and what the great and glorious God is, against whom this reptile heart bears an enmity so enduring and so wicked—when we view Him by the eye of faith as filling heaven and earth with His glory, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, and yet day after day loading all His creatures with benefits, and to His people so full of the tenderest love and compassion—then to see a dying mortal, whom one frown can hurl from all the pride of health and vigor, into the lowest hell of misery and woe—spewing forth, like some miserable toad, his spit and venom against the glorious King of kings and Lord of lords—well may we stand amazed at the height of that presumption and the depth of that wickedness which can so arm a 'worm of earth' against the 'Majesty of heaven!'

What cold—what heartless work

What is religion without a living faith in, and a living love to the Lord Jesus Christ? How dull and dragging, how dry and heavy, what a burden to the mind, and a weariness to the flesh, is a round of forms, where the heart is not engaged and the affections not drawn forth! Reading, hearing, praying, meditation, conversation with the people of God—what cold, what heartless work where Jesus is not! But let Him appear, let His presence and grace be felt, and His blessed Spirit move upon the heart—then there is a holy sweetness, a sacred blessedness in the worship of God and in communion with the Lord Jesus that makes, while it lasts, a little heaven on earth.

Means are to be attended to, ordinances to be prized, the Bible to be read, preaching to be heard, the throne of grace to be resorted to, the company of Christian friends to be sought. But what are

all these unless we find Christ in them? It is He who puts life and blessedness into all means and ordinances, into all prayer, preaching, hearing, reading, conversing, and everything that bears the name of religion. Without Him all is dark and dead, cold and dreary, barren and bare! Wandering thoughts at the throne—unbelief at the ordinance—deadness under the word—formality and lip service in family worship—carelessness over the open Bible—carnality in conversation—and a general coldness and stupidity over the whole frame—such is the state of the soul when Jesus does not appear, and when He leaves us to prove what we are, and what we can do without Him!

We are, most of us, so fettered down

We are, most of us, so fettered down—by the chains of time and sense—by the cares of life and daily business—by the weakness of our earthly frame—by the distracting claims of a family—by the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature—that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life! We can take no pleasure in the world, nor mix with a good conscience in its pursuits and amusements. We are many of us poor, moping, dejected creatures—from a variety of trials and afflictions. We have a daily cross and the continual plague of an evil heart. We get little consolation from the family of God or the outward means of grace. We know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF there is neither help nor hope—and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart, or to be able to do tomorrow what we cannot do today. As then the weary man seeks rest, the hungry food, the thirsty drink, and the sick health—so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize communion with Him. From Him come both prayer and answer—both hunger and food—both desire and the tree of life. He discovers the evil and misery of sin—that we may seek pardon in His bleeding wounds and pierced side. He makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God's wrath—that we may hide ourselves under His justifying robe. He puts gall and wormwood into the world's choicest draughts—that we may have no sweetness but in and from Him. He keeps us long fasting to endear a crumb—and long waiting to make a word precious. He wants the whole heart, and will take no less; and as this we cannot give, He takes it to Himself by ravishing it with one of His eyes, with one chain of His neck. If we love Him it is because He first loved us; and if we seek communion with Him, it is because He will manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world.

Forever swallowed up with His presence & love

Nothing distinguishes the divine religion of the child of God, not only from the dead profanity of the openly ungodly, but from the formal lip-service of the lifeless professor—so much as communion with God. God calls elect souls—out of the world—out of darkness—out of sin and death—out of formality and self-righteousness—out of a deceptive profession—to have fellowship with Himself, to be blessed with manifestations of His love and mercy. To this point all His dealings with their souls tend to bring them near to Himself—all their afflictions, trials, and sorrows are sent. In giving them 'tastes' of holy fellowship here, He grants them foretastes of that eternity of bliss which will be theirs when time shall be no more—in being forever swallowed up with His presence and love! Even in the first awakenings of the Spirit, in the first quickenings of His grace, there is that in the living soul which eternally distinguishes it from all others, whatever be their profession, however in doctrine sound or unsound, however in practice consistent or inconsistent. There is, amid all its trouble, darkness, guilt, confusion, and self-condemnation—a striving after communion with God.

There is a sense of His greatness and glory—a holy fear and godly awe of His great name—a trembling at His word—a brokenness—a contrition—a humility—a simplicity—a sincerity—a self-abasement—a distrust of self—a dread of hypocrisy and self-deception—a coming to the light—a laboring to enter the strait gate—a tenderness of conscience—a sense of helplessness and inability—a groaning under the guilt and burden of sin—a quickness to see sin's workings, and an alarm lest they should break forth—all which we never see in a dead, carnal professor—whether the highest Calvinist or the lowest Arminian.

They shall come with weeping "They shall come with weeping." Jeremiah 31:9

O, how much is needed to bring the soul to its only Rest and Center. What trials and afflictions—what furnaces, floods, rods, and strokes—as well as smiles, promises, and gracious drawings! What pride and self to be brought out of! What love and blood to be brought unto! What lessons to learn of the freeness and fullness of salvation! What sinkings in self! What risings in Christ! What guilt and condemnation on account of sin! What self-loathing and self-abasement! What distrust of self! What fears of falling! What prayers and desires to be kept! What clinging to Christ! What looking up and unto His divine majesty! What desires never more to sin against Him—but to live, move, and act in the holy fear of God, do we find, more or less daily, in a living soul! When the body sinks When the body sinks under a load of pain and disease, and all sources of happiness and enjoyment from health and strength are cut off—when flesh and heart fail, and the eye-strings are breaking in death—what can support the soul or bear it safe through Jordan's swelling flood, but those discoveries of the glory of Christ that shall make it sick of earth, sin, and self; and willing to lay the poor body in the grave, that it may be forever ravished with His glory and His love! Thus we see how the glory of Christ is not only in heaven—but also the unspeakable delight of the saints here on earth, in their days of tribulation and sorrow.

Christ, as revealed to their hearts—supports and upholds their steps—draws them out of the world—delivers them from the power of sin—conforms them to His image—comforts them in death—and lands them in glory! We thus see Christ irradiating also the path of His people on earth, casting His blessed beams on all their troubles and sorrows, and lighting up the way wherein they follow Him from the suffering cross to the triumphant crown. The general religion of the day

There are few things more sickening to us than this widespread profession of religion—without the vital power. Open profanity is bad. It is grievous to see the sin which runs down our streets like water. The scenes which meet the eye, especially in London, are grievous—but they carry with them their own condemnation, and do not intrude into the sacred precincts of truth and godliness. But a loud, noisy profession, with just enough 'truth in the letter' to salve over the convictions of the natural conscience—but not enough of life or power either to save or sanctify—to deliver from the dominion of sin or separate from the world—like the salt that has lost its savor, is good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. True religion differs as much from the general religion of the day as grace differs from nature, spirit from flesh, and the power of God from the wisdom of man!

Walking with God "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed?" Amos 3:3

What God hates we must learn to hate. What God loves we must be taught to love. Sin is the especial object of God’s hate—and it must be the special object of ours. Christ is the especial object of God’s love—and He must be the object of our heart’s warmest, tenderest affection. Pride, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, the lusts of the flesh, covetousness—in a word, everything worldly and wicked, earthly, sensual, and devilish—is and ever must be hateful and abominable in the eyes of infinite Purity and Holiness. If not made hateful to us, where is the agreement, where the walking with God?

Humility, brokenness, godly fear, tenderness of conscience, spirituality of mind, singleness of eye to God’s glory, separation from the world; faith, hope, love, submission, resignation to the divine will, filial obedience, heavenly fruitfulness in every good word and work—if these, and all other graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, are pleasing and acceptable to God, must they not be also to us, if we are to walk with Him in holy agreement?

If there were no furnace "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

"And He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver." Malachi 3:3

If there were no furnace, there would be no fruits of the furnace—no taking away the dross and tin—no bringing forth the gold seven times refined in the fire—no meekness, submission, resignation, confession, self-abhorrence—no forsaking idols—no vomiting up the poisonous draughts of sin and folly!

Known to our hearts by a divine power The only real knowledge which we can possess of the truth of God, or of any one branch of that truth, is from a vital, experimental, heartfelt acquaintance with it through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Men, learned or unlearned, priest or people, may theorize and speculate, may think they see and understand, may reason and argue, preach and prate, talk and write—wisely and well upon this and that point of doctrine, or upon this or that portion of Scripture. But unless the sacred truth of God is made known to our hearts by a divine power, and laid hold of by a living faith, we have no true knowledge of, as we have no saving interest in it.

What good will the purest, clearest, soundest doctrines—even if preached by an apostle—do us, unless there be that living principle of divine faith in our hearts which mixes with the word, and so profits the soul? We see, then, that it is not truth—the purest and clearest, even when uttered by the Redeemer’s own lips, that can save the soul—unless applied to the heart by the special power of God! But when the truth of God is made known to the heart by divine teaching and divine testimony, what a holy sweetness and heavenly savor are then tasted, felt, and realized in it! When thus favored to sit down under the shadow of its Beloved, and find His fruit sweet to its taste, the soul says, with Jeremiah, "Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Let us beware, then, of unsanctified knowledge, or unapplied truth! A man who reads his eyes out!

"Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." 1 Corinthians 2:13

It is not reading, learning, or study that can make an able minister of the New Testament. If so, the academies would give us an ample supply. But the greatest readers and most laborious students are usually the most ignorant of the teaching of the Spirit, and the work of faith with power. This learning is not of the schools! A man who reads his eyes out may be most ignorant—for he may know nothing as he ought to know. And a man who reads nothing but his Bible may be most learned—for he may have the unctuous teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Holiness & truth As a love of holiness necessarily includes as well as implies a hatred of, and a fleeing from sin—so will a love of truth contain in it a hatred of, and a fleeing from, error. People deny the truth, trifle with it, or are indifferent to it—because they feel no urgent personal need of it.

Such exceedingly religious people

Until the Blessed Spirit quickens the soul into spiritual life, we know nothing really or rightly of the truth as it is in Jesus. We may be strictly orthodox in doctrine—may abhor infidelity and error—may be shocked at profanity and irreverence—may be scrupulously attentive to every relative duty—may repeat, with undeviating regularity, our prayers and devotions—may seem to ourselves and to others exceedingly religious—when, in the sight of a heart-searching God, we are still dead in trespasses and sins! The world is full of such exceedingly religious people! Every church and every chapel can produce samples in abundance of such "devout and honorable" men and women. We may have a form of godliness in a profession of truth—may have been suckled and bred up from childhood in a sound creed—may have learned the doctrines of grace in theory and as a religious system—may be convinced in our conscience of their substantial agreement with the Word of God—may contend for them in argument, and prove them by texts—may sit under the sound of the gospel with pleasure—or even preach it with eloquence and fervor; and yet know nothing of the truth savingly and experimentally, by divine teaching and divine testimony! Does the Scripture afford us no example of these characters? Who more religious, more strict, scrupulous, and orthodox than the 'Pharisee' of old? He sat in Moses' seat, as the teacher of the people—he tithed his mint, anise, and cummin with the most scrupulous care—he strained his drinks, that no unclean gnat might unawares pollute him—he prayed and fasted rigidly and regularly—and seemed to himself and to others the prime favorite of heaven. But what was he really and truly? What was he in the sight of God? According to the Lord's own testimony—a hypocrite—a viper—a whited sepulcher, ripening himself for the damnation of hell! Who were those against whom holy John, fervent Jude, and earnest Peter warned the churches so strongly? Who were those spots in their feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear? Who were those clouds without water, carried about with winds—those trees whose fruit withered, twice dead, plucked up by the roots? Who else but graceless professors of the truth! It is not then, the form, the letter, the mere outside, the bare shell and husk of truth, that makes or manifests the Christian—but the vital possession of it as a divinely bestowed gift and treasure!

Hard as a stone, cold as ice, motionless as a corpse

Ministers of truth are thought sometimes to speak too strongly of the dreadful state of man through the fall—but, in fact, it is impossible to exaggerate the blindness and darkness of the human heart—nor can pen or tongue adequately set forth the misery and utter helplessness of the unregenerate man. The Scriptures are much and widely read, it is true, but merely as a duty, a daily or weekly self-imposed task, a religious performance in which a certain amount of merit is

invested. It thus becomes a mere sop for conscience in some, and in others amounts at best to a perusing with the eye a certain quantity of words and letters, chapters and verses, unwillingly taken up, badly laid down. The beauty and blessedness—divine sweetness and inexpressible power and savor—seen and felt in the Scriptures by a believing heart are, to the unbelieving multitude unknown, untasted, unfelt, uncared for! Whatever be the subject, however solemn or weighty—and what can be so solemn and weighty as the soul's eternal happiness or misery?—the word of truth, without a divine application, absolutely makes no impression on the conscience. The threatenings produce no terror or trembling—create no fear or conviction—draw out neither sigh nor groan—no, nor raise up one faint, feeble cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The promises, the invitations, the portions that speak of Christ and His sufferings—neither melt nor move, touch nor soften their conscience. The unregenerate heart responds to neither judgment nor mercy. Nothing stirs it Godwards. Hard as a stone, cold as ice, motionless as a corpse—it lies dead in trespasses and sins! But not so with the heart which the finger of God has touched. It fears, it trembles, it melts, it softens—it is lifted up, it is cast down—it sighs, it prays, it believes, it hopes, it loves, it mourns, it rejoices, it grieves, it repents—in a word, it lives the life of God, and breathes, acts, and moves just as the Blessed Spirit visits and works in it by His gracious power and influence. Under His teaching, the Scriptures become a new book—read, as it, were, with new eyes—heard with new ears—thought and pondered over with new feelings—understood with a new understanding—and felt in a new conscience.

When, then, we are favored with a spiritual, experimental knowledge of God's truth, it is putting into our hands a master-key to open cabinets closed against the wise and prudent—a clue to guide the feet amid the mazes, where learned doctors and studious theologians wander and are lost—a light penetrating and pervading the hidden depths of the sanctuary, on the threshold of which the scribe and the Pharisee stumble and fall.

Those divine & heavenly truths

How little do we, for the most part, realize—and daily, hourly, live and feed upon—those divine and heavenly truths which we, as Christians, profess to believe! For the most part, it is only at times and seasons that we so realize who and what Jesus is, as to obtain any sensible victory over—the evils of our heart—the strength of sin, the snares of the world—or the assaults of Satan! The grand deceit of Satan To our mind one of the greatest mysteries in religion is the difference between the power of truth on the natural conscience, and the power of truth on the spiritual conscience—between the faith produced in the natural mind by the 'letter of the word,' and the faith wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God through the word. And yet in this lies all the difference between a professor and a possessor—between the damned and the saved.

Here is the grand deceit of Satan as an angel of light—that a man may have the strongest and most unwavering faith in his natural mind, generated there by the 'mere letter of the word'—and yet live and die in his sins an unpardoned criminal, an unsanctified rebel—may obey the precept, and yet be damned for disobedience! This is the grand key of the cabinet—and he who holds not this key in his hand, be he preacher or writer that attempts to describe the work of the Spirit, will but fumble—for without it he cannot unlock one secret drawer of the heart, or penetrate into any one innermost recess of nature, or of grace!

Tremendous mystery, yet not more tremendous than true, that between a spiritual and a natural faith lay all the difference—between David and Saul—between John and Judas—and that on it hangs life or death, heaven or hell, unutterable bliss or eternal despair!

Divine breathings

There are what we may call 'devotional writings' in Scripture. The Holy Spirit not only inspired men of God to breathe forth prayer and praise, not only taught them to sigh and groan, rejoice and sing—but instructed them to commit to writing those breathings of their soul after the living God. As these divine breathings were usually set to music and sung in the tabernacle worship, they were called "Psalms." What a manual of living experience—what a standing model and exemplar of vital communion with God—what a perpetual stream of consolation and edification to the church of Christ these divine compositions are and ever have been—it is unnecessary for us here to mention. From the lowest depths of trouble and sorrow to the loftiest heights of joy and praise, there is no state or stage, movement or feeling of divine life in the soul, which is not expressed in the simplest and sweetest language in the Psalms. They are thus not only a test and guide of Christian experience—a heavenly prayer-book—a daily devotional companion—a bosom friend in sorrow and joy—a sure chart for the heaven-bound voyager—and an infallible standard of divine teaching—but a treasury of strength and comfort, out of which the Holy Spirit blesses the waiting soul!

We will find eternity too short

We will find eternity too short—to see Christ's beauty—to behold Christ's glory—and to sing Christ's praise!

Shrouded in mystery The ways of God and His dealings with His people in providence and in grace are usually at the outset shrouded in mystery—and yet in the end shine resplendently forth as stamped with the most perfect wisdom, mercy, and grace!

Composed out of dead men's brains!

We may have men who are clear in doctrine—but where can we find that life and power, that ardent zeal, that burning eloquence, that devotedness to the work, those astonishing labors, that self-denying life, that singleness of eye to the glory of God, that unwearied perseverance, and that flame of holy love—which is the life and power in the soul of a minister? Mere book learning is but a flickering flame, composed out of dead men's brains, too faint to illuminate, too cold to kindle. Sound views of truth are most valuable—no, indispensable. But there may be the soundest creed in the head, with death in the heart and sin in the life. Sound views without divine life merely charm the ear. A flow of words as unceasing as a babbling brook, a voice as musical as the evening nightingale, gestures as elegant as ever graced the stage, pathos as touching as ever bedewed female cheeks with tears, animation as vehement as ever stirred an audience, and eloquence as ardent as ever led men on to mount the breach or charge a battalion? Alas! what are they all, destitute of spiritual life? The caged wolf

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Jeremiah 13:23 The caged wolf does not lose his thirst for blood because it is fenced off in the zoo. Likewise, the sensual, depraved heart of man cannot be

regenerated by the outward restraints of morality or religion.

We have no abiding city here

"For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down—when we die and leave these bodies—we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God Himself and not by human hands." 2 Corinthians 5:1 As then we see and feel that all is passing away, what a mercy it is if we can look beyond this vain scene to that which abides forever and ever! "We have no abiding city here," is a lesson which the Lord writes upon the heart of all His pilgrims. And as it is more deeply engraved upon their bosom, and cut into more legible characters, they look up and out of themselves, to that City which has foundations—of which the maker and builder is God.

It is very blessed when we can use the favors of God in providence without abusing them—when we can see His kind hand in the gift, and not make an idol of it—when we can bless Him for His providential mercies, and yet feel that without Himself they are not only worthless but miserable. How many have lived all their lives in beautiful houses—have never known a day's hunger—have eaten of the fat and drunk of the sweet all the days of their life—have lain down at night in a luxurious bed, where they have felt neither cold nor frost—and yet at last when their mortal existence has come to a close, have made their bed in hell! A refuge from our sinful, vile & guilty selves! When we take a review of all the temptations, trials, sins, backslidings, wanderings, and startings-aside that we have been guilty of—all the hard thoughts, peevish and rebellious uprisings, with all the sad unprofitableness, backwardness to good, proneness to evil, determination to have our own will and way—and all that mass of inconsistency which sometimes seems to frighten us in the retrospect—when we look over these things, what reason we have to cling close to the precious blood and righteousness of the Christ, that we may find in Him a refuge from our sinful, vile and guilty selves!

It seems sad that, after so many years experience of the goodness and mercy of God, and after all we have seen, known, tasted, felt, and handled—of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus—of His suitability, beauty, blessedness, grace, and glory—we should still find so much sin, carnality, unbelief, infidelity, and every other evil, alive and lively within! How it shows the depth of the Fall, and the incurable corruption of our nature, that neither time, nor advancing years, nor bodily infirmity, nor any other change of circumstances can alter this wretched heart, turn it into a right course, or make it obedient and fruitful—but that like the barren heath, no cultivation can bring out of it either flower or fruit! But what an unspeakable mercy it is for us, that the Lord views us—not as standing in all our rags and ruin, all our filth and folly—but in the Person of His dear Son, in whom He is ever well pleased! A smooth easy path The way of the cross is hateful to flesh and blood, and therefore a smooth easy path securing, as they think—the benefits and blessings of salvation, without self-denial, mortification of the flesh, painful exercises, and many trials—is eagerly embraced and substituted for the straight and narrow way which leads unto life. And by this, or some other deceit of the flesh or delusion of the devil, all would perish in their sins—unless the Lord had chosen a peculiar people in the furnace of affliction and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His dear Son—here in suffering, and hereafter in glory. They, like all the rest, would gladly, as far as the flesh is concerned, thus make a covenant with death and hell that they might be disturbed by fears of neither. Will not this make ample amends for all?

Oh, what is this wretched world, and this poor vain life of ours, which every day is shortening and bringing to its appointed close! Surely, well has it been said of it, that it is all "vanity and vexation of spirit." But to be able, in sweet hope and confidence, to look beyond this wretched life to a state of eternal bliss, where there is neither sin—the greatest of all ills; nor sickness, nor sorrow, will not this make ample amends for all? To learn our religion in such a painful way My dear friend, I was sorry to learn from your last kind letter that the Lord had again laid upon you His afflicting hand. But it was your mercy to find profit from the furnace, and that the painful trial was sanctified to your spiritual good. We are such poor, stupid, cold, lifeless wretches when things are smooth and easy with us, that we seem to need trial and affliction to stir us up, and bring us out of carnality and death. The Word of God is written for an afflicted and poor people—and they alone understand it, believe it, feel it, and realize it. How often you had read the word, and yet did not enter into its sweetness, suitability, and blessedness—as you did in your late affliction. Luther used to say that, before he was afflicted, he never understood the Word of God. This witness is true. There is no real place for it in our conscience or affections. And yet how hard it seems, and trying to the flesh, to learn our religion in such a painful way—but any way is better than to miss the prize at last. And if we are favored to reach the heavenly shore, we shall forget all the perils and sufferings of the voyage! The sum & substance of the Scriptures

If we read the early chapters of Leviticus with an enlightened eye, how much there is in them to illustrate the one great sacrifice of our gracious Lord. In Him we see the burnt offering as offering Himself without spot to God—the sin offering as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree—the trespass offering as especially applicable to sins of commission—and the grain offering as representing Him to be the food of our souls. CHRIST is the sum and substance of the Scriptures! Without Him they are a dead letter, full of darkness and obscurity. But in and with Him they are full of light and blessedness. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly!"

Trials & afflictions

How various are the trials and afflictions of those who desire to fear God, and walk in His ways. But though they may differ in nature and degree, yet they are, for the most part—as much as they can well bear. The Lord indeed is very gracious in not laying upon them more than they can bear; but He will give them all enough to find and feel—that this world is full of sin and sorrow—that their own hearts are full of evil—that nothing but the pure, rich, superabounding, free grace of God can save or bless their souls! A great lesson "I am nothing." 2 Corinthians 12:11

It is a great lesson, and yet a painful one—to be made nothing—to feel one’s self weaker than the weakest, and viler than the vilest—to be a pauper living upon daily alms—and to be made often to beg, and yet sensibly to get nothing. Where we err is, that we want to be something, when we are nothing. We want in some way to recommend ourselves to God, and do or be something that we can be pleased with, and which we think will therefore please Him. It is very hard to learn—the depth of our spiritual poverty—the greatness of our sin—our thoroughly lost, ruined, and helpless condition.

What a mercy it is to have any grace and divine life in the soul—to be made to see and feel—the emptiness of the world—the sinfulness of sin—the evils of the heart—and above all, to see and feel the preciousness of Christ in His bleeding, dying love!

If we were wholly left to ourselves

"My son, don't take lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him: For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:5-6 Our afflictions and trials strip, as it were, the world and worldly things off our backs—as well as all our own wisdom, and strength, and righteousness. The Lord Himself disciplines His children! The nature, season, duration, and all attending circumstances of all their trials, are—determined for them—selected by infinite wisdom—decreed by unalterable purpose—guided by eternal love, and brought to pass by almighty power. To believe less than this is secret infidelity, and will always result in murmuring, rebellion, self-righteousness, worldly sorrow, and self-pity. But with faith in exercise, there will be submission and resignation to the will of God. When the Lord is carrying into execution His secret counsels, they are so contrary to the will of the flesh, and so opposed to our thoughts and ways—that we can hardly see His hand in them. Our flesh murmurs and rebels under the heavy strokes. It wants ease, indulgence, and self-gratification—not to be mortified and crucified. Our coward flesh shrinks from the trial of affliction through which the blessing comes. If we were wholly left to ourselves—we would greedily and eagerly choose the way of destruction! When we are in the furnace "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

Trials, sufferings, afflictions, vexations, and disappointments are our appointed lot. And though grievous to the flesh, yet when they are sanctified to the soul's good—are made to be some of our choicest blessings! Levity, carelessness, and indifference, with a general hardness and deadness in the things of God, soon creep over the mind—unless it be well weighted with trials and afflictions. But when we are in the furnace, we rarely see what benefit it is producing—or what profit is likely to arise to ourselves or to others out of it. Our coward flesh shrinks from the cross, and until submission and resignation are wrought in us by a divine power, and the peaceable fruits of the Spirit begin to show themselves, we cannot bless the Lord for the trial and affliction. Our trials vary as much as our outward circumstances or inward feelings, and each person perhaps, thinks his own trial the heaviest. But no doubt infinite wisdom appoints to each vessel of mercy, those peculiar trials in nature, or degree, which are required to work out God's hidden purposes.

Far better than living in this vain world

"For I am in a dilemma between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Php 1:23 The Lord, for the most part, will make His people thoroughly weary of this life, before He takes them out of it. Sickness of body, trials in providence, afflictions in the family, and above all, the wearing conflict under a body of sin and death, with a blessed view of a glorious immortality—sooner or later will make them willing to depart and be with Christ, as far better than living in this vain world! The charms of the world & the pleasures of sin My dear friend, I could wish that your path were more free from perplexity, anxiety, and care—but no doubt He who sees the end from the beginning, and all whose ways are ways of mercy and truth to those who fear His name—sees that these cares and perplexities are for your spiritual good. This world is proverbially a valley of tears. Thorns and briers spring up on every side, because the very ground on which we tread is under the curse. And as followers of the Lord the Lamb—we may expect our portion of sorrow. And indeed, though our weak flesh often staggers and sinks under the load, yet as the blessing of God for the most part only comes in this way, we are made willing to endure the

affliction—from the benefit connected with it. I have no doubt, the longer we live, the more we shall find of trouble, anxiety, and sorrow, both to body and soul—so as to be made willing at last to lay down our poor, worn-out frames in the dust—as being only full of sin and corruption. This seems to be the conclusion to which the Lord usually brings all His redeemed people—to be willing to depart and be with Christ, as far better than continuing in a body of sin and death.

We need something to wean us from life, and to deaden and mortify us to the charms of the world and the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment. Christ is not to be found in the path of carnal ease and worldly joy. It is in tribulation and trouble alone—that He is really sought and really found. We cannot choose for ourselves what that trouble shall be—but its fruits and effects must be good, if they lead us up to the Lord Jesus Christ, or bring down any measure of blessing from Him.

Trials & afflictions

Trials and afflictions are the appointed lot of the family of God—and if we belong to that favored number, we shall certainly have our share of them. Some of these afflictions are of the body—others of the mind—some are connected with the family—others with our circumstances in life—some come from the temptations of Satan—and others from our own evil hearts.

Tender mercies

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." Psalms 51:1 As our sins in thought, word, and deed are a countless multitude, of which every one deserves hell—we need the multitude of His most tender mercies to blot them out. If we could shed an ocean of tears, it would not wash away one sin—but the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. We may see—the stars in the sky—the sands on the sea-shore—the drops of dew on the grass—the waves rolling in upon the beach—but both our sins, and God’s tender mercies exceed them all! How He showed these tender mercies in giving His dear Son to suffer, bleed, and die for miserable sinners—and how we need all these tender mercies to pity and pardon us and our transgressions! The special & unceasing grace of God

It is a most rich and unspeakable mercy, that those whom Jesus loves, He loves to the end, and that His sheep shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of His hand. This is the grand security of the saints of God; for—their inherent sinfulness and weakness are so great—Satan is so crafty and so strong—sin so powerful and deceptive, and—the world so entangling and alluring—that but for the special and unceasing grace of God, they must perish, and concerning faith make sure and awful shipwreck! An adder would come out of every one of them!

What a paradox are we! What a bundle of contradictions! We love what we hate—and hate what we love. We follow what we flee—and flee what we follow. Sin is our sweetest delight—and sin is our bitterest morsel. God is our greatest friend—and most dreaded enemy. But I must not run on with my contradictions, or I shall fill up my sheet with them. You have got both the riddle and the key locked up in your heart. I cannot say what I would not do—or what I would not be—were I left to myself. For I never hear of evil or error committed by professor or profane which I do not find working within my heart—and a great deal worse too! For no man ever did, or ever could, carry out in word and act what our imagination can breed and sit upon until hatched, like a serpent upon its

eggs. It is a mercy when our eggs are crushed before they are hatched, for, depend upon it—an adder would come out of every one of them! A puzzle to myself

I am indeed very far from knowing what I desire to know, or being what I wish to be; and am often a puzzle to myself, seeing and feeling no more grace than the most carnal wretch who makes no profession; and yet having restraints

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A puzzle to myself

I am indeed very far from knowing what I desire to know, or being what I wish to be; and am often a puzzle to myself, seeing and feeling no more grace than the most carnal wretch who makes no profession; and yet having restraints and inward checks, breathings, and sighings of which I am persuaded such know nothing.

I feel so many evils daily, and sometimes hourly, working in my heart, and see so many traps and snares laid for my feet in every direction, that my wonder is, not that any fall, but that any stand! No, I am confident that all must fall were it not for everlasting love and almighty power—kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

I feel my ignorance in divine things

I see such sin in my wretched, fallen nature, and feel so much my weakness against temptation, and see at the same time what a horrible and dreadful thing sin is, that I am led from time to time earnestly to call upon the Lord to hold me up—that I shall be safe! I feel my ignorance in divine things—how dark my mind is when not enlightened by the Blessed Spirit—how unable I am to realize any portion of God’s Word, to feed upon any one truth, or taste the sweetness of any one promise. And thus I feel myself led to look up for divine teaching, and that the Lord Himself would make His blessed truth known to my soul.

Continually haunting me My own evil heart is more or less my daily burden—and hinders me in everything which I would think, say, or do for the Lord. Sin, in some shape or other, is continually haunting me—and I find the truth of what Paul says, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." But by this I am taught to prize the atonement which Jesus has made by shedding His own precious blood for my sin. A child of God can never rest satisfied with the knowledge of sin. He cannot rest in a spiritual discovery of the disease. No! he must have some experimental acquaintance with the remedy—the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin. Sweet words, when any measure of their truth is experimentally felt. "All sin" is a very comprehensive word. The horrible aboundings of iniquity in our carnal mind—the vain imaginations, polluting thoughts, presumptuous workings, vile lusts—what can cleanse our consciences from the filth, guilt, and power of those hourly abominations? Only the precious blood of Christ—the Lamb without blemish and without spot!

Gently whispering to you My dear friend, I have felt my mind moved to write you a few lines, not only to sympathize with you in your affliction, but also to express my affection for you, and my sincere pleasure that the blessed Lord has been with you to bless your soul with some melting sense of His mercy and love. If you can view it by the eye of living faith, you will see your present state of pain and bodily suffering—a million times preferable to all that the worldlings can covet! The things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal. It is incalculably better to be afflicted and have Jesus in the affliction—than to have all the honors,

pleasures, and riches that Satan can offer—or the world bestow. But we do not voluntarily choose afflictions. The Lord takes care to choose them for us, and they are just such as are suitable to our condition and circumstances. You would not have chosen to have your leg and arm broken—but doubtless it was good for you to have them broken—or they would not have been so. There is no curse in this affliction—no vindictive punishment. It is rather the voice of a kind Father, gently whispering to you, "My son, give me your heart!" May the Lord make your bed in your sickness, and sweetly overshadow your soul with His love which passes knowledge.

Almighty, though gentle, fingers

I find true religion to be a very different thing from what I once thought it. There was a time when, in all apparent sincerity, I was looking to my spirituality and heavenly-mindedness as evidences of my salvation—instead of being a poor needy suppliant and starving petitioner for a word or a smile from the Lord Himself. It seemed more as if my spirituality were to take me to Christ—than that my miserable poverty and nakedness were qualifications to bring Christ down to me—but all these idols have tumbled into ruins! I am now in that state that Immanuel must have all the glory, by stooping down to save, bless, and teach an undone wretch, who has—neither spirituality—nor piety—nor religion—nor anything holy or heavenly in himself—and whose chief desire, when able to breathe it forth, is to be but the passive clay in the hands of the Divine Potter, and sensibly to feel the almighty, though gentle, fingers molding him into a vessel of honor fit for the Master’s use!

Superabounding grace "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." Romans 5:20

I am sure that nothing but superabounding, victorious, overshadowing, and overpowering grace will subdue me to the feet of Jesus and slaughter my idols! Nothing suits my soul but sovereign, omnipotent, and superabounding grace. I am no common sinner—and must therefore have no common grace!

Snares of death "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning people from the snares of death." Proverbs 14:27

Snares of death surround and beset our path. Some arise from the world, some from Satan, some from the people of God—but far, far most from ourselves! The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life which detects and manifests these hidden snares—and by its bubbling up as a living spring in the heart it brings the soul into the presence of God—and thus strength, wisdom, and grace are communicated to flee them before fallen into them—or deliver our feet out of them when unhappily entangled. That wonderful medicine!

"Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases." Psalms 103:3

What a mass of—filth and folly—blindness and ignorance—deceit and hypocrisy—carnality, sensuality, and devilism are we! Prone to all that is bad—utterly averse to all that is good—bent upon sin—hating holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and spirituality—what earthly wretches, guilty monsters, abominable creature are we! And if our minds are sometimes drawn upwards in faith and affection, and we pant after the living God, how soon, how almost instantly, do we drop down again into our earthly self—whence we are utterly unable to rise until the Blessed Spirit lifts us out again! What fits of unbelief—shakings of infidelity—fevers of lust—plagues of carelessness—consumptions of faith, hope, love and zeal—yes, what a multitude of diseases

dwell in our poor soul!

Well, then, the soul must have many—and I am inclined to think there is some analogy between the body and soul in their diseases, and that a scriptural and spiritual parallel might be drawn between them. Some I have hinted at above, and blindness, deafness, dumbness, paralysis, leprosy—are scriptural analogies. But they all admit of a twofold cure—that wonderful medicine which John saw run from the wounded side of the Redeemer—blood and water, the one to heal, the other to wash—the one to atone, the other to cleanse—justification by blood, and sanctification by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. A living religion "Every tree that doesn't grow good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire." Matthew 7:19 A religion that does nothing for a man's soul is worthless. And a religion that never manifests itself in a man's life, is as worthless as a religion that does nothing for the soul. Death is stamped upon both. Religion to be worth anything, must be a living religion—a religion that proceeds from a work of grace upon the heart—communicating life to the soul—and exercising an influence wherever it exists, and in whomever it resides. For where there is a springing up of spiritual life in a man's soul—it must be made manifest by his words and actions!

If there were no love of sin

If there were no love of sin—there would be no power in sin. Sin does not come with a strong hand, seize us by the throat, and say "Obey me!" But sin—insensibly creeps into our heart—catches hold of our carnal mind—insinuates itself into our vile affections—and thus entraps us!

These hideous monsters

Perhaps, when the Lord was pleased to save you, you thought you would walk happily from earth to heaven. Like the children of Israel, you saw your enemies dead upon the seashore, little thinking, little dreaming of the wilderness before you. But after a time sin, which seemed dead—began to revive—to lust—to crave—to work—to seek its objects!

There is one thing which has often harassed and puzzled many—that all the spiritual blessings they have experienced and enjoyed, has made no change in their carnal mind. This is a deep mystery. The "mystery of ungodliness," I may well call it—that the carnal mind, the old man, undergoes no change! He may be subdued, and withdraw himself into some dark recess—for the human heart is full of caves and grottos—and in these dens, hideous monsters sit! These hideous monsters withdraw themselves in the light of day. The human heart is very deep—and these grottos and caves lie so out of sight, that we know not what these monsters are about—but there they are, and creep forth when night comes on!

All our acts in babyhood "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Romans 5:10

See in what state the people of God are. What word does Paul use to point out their state by nature? ENEMIES! Enemies to whom? To that great, glorious, and ever-living God, in whom they live, and move, and have their being—the God of heaven and earth—who called them into existence—and upon whom they depend for every breath they draw. What a dreadful state must they be in to be "enemies" to such a God!

Enemies! Enemies of God, who could crush them with a frown into the dust—who by one look could hurl them into hell—who could trample upon them in His righteous wrath—as I might trample upon a helpless worm beneath my feet! They are born enemies to God. As a toad is born a toad, and as a viper is born a viper—so man is born an enemy to God. We are conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity—and therefore we come into the world, enemies to God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Our very nature is intrinsic, abstract, irreconcilable, enmity against God—hating Him, hating His ways, hating all that is God and Godlike. O, what a fearful condition! Not only to be born enemies—but to grow up enemies—to be woven throughout in enmity to God—full of enmity—every nerve—every fiber—every power—every principle—every faculty—every passion—at enmity with God—warring against the Most High!

We go astray, speaking lies from the womb. All our acts in babyhood—in childhood—in youth and manhood—are all acts of daring enmity against God. They all show forth the enmity of the human heart against the blessed Jehovah. O, how deeply dyed in enmity must man be when he is by birth, nature, and practice utterly alienated from the life of God! That every fiber of our nature should be steeped in enmity against God—that our carnal heart in all its constitution, in its very blood, should be one unmitigated mass of enmity to God—O it is a dreadful thought! "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." A mysterious thing

"I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Your sight." Luke 10:21

True religion is a mysterious thing. Now, this secret, mysterious religion is the sole work of God upon the soul. We have no more, and we have no less than He is pleased to impart. But when we come to look at the nature of this mysterious—yet the only true religion—we find it to consist chiefly of two branches—a knowledge of sin, and a knowledge of salvation—an experience of self, and an experience of Christ—an acquaintance with hell, and an acquaintance with heaven. However varied, deep, or diversified our experience may be, yet, as far as it is of God, we shall find it very much to be summed up in the knowledge of these two distinct things.

Now of these two distinct things, God has said that they are both alike unsearchable. Describing the human heart, God gives this testimony concerning it—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The Lord here gives a challenge, declaring that the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart are so deep, that no man can, that no man does, know it to the bottom. And again, speaking of the love of Christ, which is the ultimatum—the sum and substance of the other branch of vital godliness—the Lord pronounces that also to be unsearchable. For Paul prayed that the Ephesian church might know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. He also speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." As we have no line sufficiently deep to sink to the bottom of human depravity, so we have no line sufficiently high to reach to the summit of the love of Christ! Thus, all our knowledge of self, as well as all our knowledge of Christ, must be, from the very nature of things, defective.

We are like truant children!

"Our Savior in times of trouble!" Jeremiah 14:8 For the most part, we do not need a Savior except "in time of trouble." We can do very well without God when we are—at ease—in health—in prosperity—and the carnal mind is uppermost. It is a sad thought, a dreadful thought—that we can often do so well without God—live without Him—think without Him—act without Him—speak without Him—walk without Him—work without Him—just as if there were no God. All this we can do when self, and sin, and the world are uppermost in our hearts and thoughts. But when can we not live without God? When our soul gets into "trouble." And therefore, the Lord, so to speak, is obliged to send "trouble" to flog us home! We are like truant children! Here is a truant child playing about in the street—taking up with every dirty companion, forgetting all about home—unmindful of his mother, who is all anxiety about him, and his father who is all solicitude. The father and mother have then to go and flog him home! So the Lord sees us, His truant children, wandering away from home, taking up with every foolish vanity, forgetting all we profess to know. He has to come with His rod and flog us home—and He does this by sending trouble! Thus, when we get into "trouble," we remember there is a God—we think once more of the Lord—we need Him to help us—He must come immediately, or we sink! We say, 'Lord come! come now! I cannot do without You—my soul is troubled—my mind distressed—Lord, you must come—come, Lord, and speak a word to my soul!'

Now what brings all these cries and desires, breathings and utterings unto the Lord? Why, the Lord taking the rod down, laying it on us, and flogging us with some "trouble," such as—affliction in the family—sickness in the body—trials in circumstances—chastisement in soul—lashes of conscience. And thus, the Lord by various "troubles" brings us to cry and sigh and feel our need of Him as a Savior. And He is so kind and compassionate—He is not offended, because we only make use of Him when we need Him. Anybody else would be offended. I would not like to have you for a friend, if you only came to me when you needed me. I would not care much for your friendship, if you merely valued it for what you could get from me. Yet we are such base, rebellious wretches, as at times to treat the Lord in this way—a way in which we would be ashamed to treat our earthly friends—only coming to Him when we can get something from Him—only fleeing to Him when we cannot do without Him—only visiting Him when we are in some distress. When the world smiles, and things are prosperous, and all is pleasant and comfortable within, it seems (such wretches are we) that we can do without the Lord. But when "trouble" comes, then the Lord is pleased often to make us feel that none but He can do our souls good. Him we must now have—Him we cannot now do without—He must save now, and bless now—for there is none that can help but He!

What a wretched man I am!

"What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24

What causes despondency in the saved sinner's soul? Is it not because he finds so much in himself that is utterly opposed to God and godliness? If there were—no inward adulteries—no secret idolatries—no darkness of mind—no deadness of soul—no hardness of heart—no tempting devil—no alluring world—no body of sin and death—you would not feel despondency set in upon you as a flood. But this is it which causes despondency in a living soul—to find in himself so much of everything that is opposite to the work of God upon the heart—so much of everything that is the very opposite to what he desires to be, and what he believes every Christian should be. But no

sooner do the evils of his fallen nature manifest themselves, than despondency begins to work. It must be so. If I had—no sinful heart—no unbelief—no infidelity—no inward adultery—no internal idolatry—no pride—no hypocrisy—no covetousness—no powerful lusts—no boiling corruptions—no harassing enemy—no alluring world—no wicked heart—why would I despond? But it is because there is such opposition to vital godliness in his heart, because there is so much in him that he knows and feels to be contrary to grace, and the work of grace, that casts him down. The grand bent of man's carnal heart In our natural state, we are all the slaves of self. Self in its various forms—proud self—lustful self—covetous self—righteous self—self in some shape or other—is the idol before whom all carnal knees bow—the master whom all carnal hearts serve. In our natural state, we are all the slaves of the world. What the world presents—we love. What the world offers—we delight in. To please the world—to get as large a portion as we can of its goods—to provide in it amply for ourselves and our children—to obtain and to maintain a respectable station in it—this is the grand bent of man's carnal heart. When they feel leprous to the core

"For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" 1 Peter 1:4

Bringing the elect through every storm—setting all the ransomed before the throne of the Almighty forever—deliverance from every temptation—escape from every snare—and complete salvation from every foe—are all secured to the heirs of promise in the word of truth. How needful this promise of 'preservation to the end' is for the Lord's people to experience, when they discover what hearts they possess, and how perpetually they are departing from the Lord—when they see what they have to contend with from within and from without—when they know that an ever watchful enemy is perpetually endeavoring to ensnare, or to assail their souls—when they view the depth of nature's corruption—when the hidden evils of their heart are dissected by the keen anatomizing knife of the Spirit—when they feel leprous to the core—and know that they have no power and no strength to keep themselves from falling! How sweet, how precious, how suitable it is then to believe that they are written in the book of life, that their names are engraved on Jesus' hands, and worn on Jesus' shoulder—that He will preserve them to the end, and bring them home through every storm! Your temporal trials are included

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28 This promise includes things providential—as well as things spiritual. If all things are to work together for your good, your temporal trials are included in the "all things." Every bodily affliction—every family trouble—everything that tries us in providence—everything that is bitter and cutting to our flesh—as well as everything spiritual and gracious is included in this comprehensive promise.

Don't leave my soul destitute

"For my eyes are on You, O God the Lord. In You I take refuge. Don't leave my soul destitute." Psalms 141:8

I am convinced that the Lord brings all His people to this spot, to know that they—have nothing spiritually but what He gives them—feel nothing but what He works in them, and—are nothing but what He makes them. They must be fully cut off from the creature, the arm of self-righteousness

must be broken, the idol of fleshly wisdom must be dethroned!

Secret divine communications

"For my eyes are on You, O God the Lord. In You I take refuge. Don’t leave my soul destitute." Psalms 141:8

Before we can savingly believe in Jesus—we must be thoroughly weaned from the creature—we must be cut off from an arm of flesh—our own righteousness must be dashed to a thousand splinters before our eyes—our wisdom must have become utter foolishness—our strength must have become thorough weakness—we must have felt the misery of our previous idolatries—we must have mourned over our perpetual and unceasing backslidings—and we must have seen in the Lord everything to draw forth the affections and desires of our soul.

Thus also before there can be trust in the Lord, there must be secret divine communications from Him. So that if there be trust in the Lord, there will be not only a going forth of the soul to Him, but there will be a coming down of that very Lord into the soul, enabling it to trust in Him. There will also be trials, and promises in those trials—temptations, and deliverances out of those temptations—afflictions, and consolations proportioned to those afflictions—miseries, and mercies suitable to those miseries. And these things being wrought in the heart, and brought into the conscience by a divine power, there will be strength to trust in God, such as He communicates only to those who truly and earnestly seek His face.

Earthen vessels "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

Each person at the best is but of the earth—earthy. Man was created out of the dust of the earth—his body, therefore, will always bear marks of that clayey origin. Some vessels may indeed be larger than others, made almost, as it would appear, of better, or at least more carefully wrought and tempered clay, and, may be more beautiful in shape—more decorated and adorned—and put to more honorable uses. For comparing man with man, as the world views them, one may be but a flowerpot hardly worth a penny—and another, a costly vase, worth thousands.

Rank and titles, honors and dignities, wealth, learning, education, may adorn some people—while ignorance, poverty, and rags debase others. Yet all are taken out of the same pit of clay—all are molded on the same potter’s wheel, all baked in the same furnace, and all eventually come to the same end! How frail these bodies of ours are! How easily our earthen vessel may be broken to pieces, and become but a piece of lifeless clay! The fruits of a godly life "By their fruits you will know them." Matthew 7:20

Honesty and uprightness in all acts of business—simplicity, sincerity, and trustworthiness in word and deed—manifesting there is a power given to us to make us—good husbands—good wives—good children—good employees—good masters—these are all so many evidences of true salvation. A tyrannical husband—a fretful discontented wife—an unkind father—a rebellious son—a harsh master—a fraudulent employee—those who walk inconsistently—and by their words and actions bring a reproach upon the truth of God—what right have these to call themselves children of God? Wherever the truth and power of saving religion come, there will be the fruits of a godly life attending it. No sooner is divine life implanted in the soul, than it begins to bubble and

spring up and thus to manifest its existence. When divine life is communicated, it immediately begins to manifest itself—for it is like a spring in a field, or out of a hillside, which breaks forth, as it were of itself, and cannot be kept back or pent up by putting your foot upon it. It is surprising what a change is created in the soul by the communication to it of divine life. It is truly, as the prophet speaks, that "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert"—the wilderness heart of man—that parched ground of the soul—that dry and thirsty land in which there is neither food nor water—that habitation of dragons where each serpent lies coiled up in his den. But even there, the voice of the Lord "will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." How soft—how tender, how simple and sincere—how full of life and feeling—how earnestly bent after God—how thoroughly changed from its former carnality and worldliness—is the soul made alive unto God by regenerating grace!

Dangerous & worst spots

One of the most dangerous and worst spots into which a child of God can fall, is when—we leave our first love—our heart grows cold and dead in the things of God—sin revives and begins again to manifest its hideous power—the world attracts and allures—our feet get entangled in the snares spread by Satan—and we wander, to our shame and sorrow, away from the Lord—leaving the fountain of living waters, and hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water. But the Lord will not leave His people here. After a time we begin to see and feel the miserable consequences of not walking tenderly and conscientiously—and not acting consistently with our holy profession. Guilt falls upon our conscience—the Lord withdraws the light of His countenance—and much bondage falls upon our spirit. Now we begin to see that it is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing to sin against the Lord! The sympathy of Christ

"For we don’t have a high priest who can’t be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15

All who fear God have now a High Priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities—and so can sympathize with us in our temptations and afflictions. Jesus has a personal acquaintance with every trial, temptation, and form of suffering which any one of His people might go through—that He might sympathize feelingly with them—through Himself having personally experienced them. And thus He sits in heavenly bliss with a human heart—tender, affectionate, feeling—and sympathizing, as having Himself passed through every phase of suffering—known every trial—been exposed to every temptation—and having had a personal experience of everything that shall befall any of His living family. This is a mysterious subject. I do not profess to understand or explain it—but I receive it upon the testimony of God’s word, and as such, I see in it a great blessedness—mines of grace—treasures of encouragement—a rich source of divine consolation! If you and I are in a trial, there is a sympathizing High Priest for us at the right hand of the Father. The widow, the orphan, the poor, the needy, the distressed, and the exercised—whatever be their affliction, there is a merciful and faithful High Priest, who can feel for and with them—whose tender, loving, and affectionate heart is melted with a sympathizing sense of what they are suffering here below.

Now to believe this—and in trial, suffering, and exercise to go to a tender, sympathizing, affectionate, and loving High Priest, and thus realize His pity toward us—what strength and support it gives. Do we feel the burden of sin? He felt it. Are we crying under a sense of guilt? He

felt it. He had indeed no personal guilt—but He felt all the guilt we can feel—by imputation. Does the world frown? It frowned upon Him. Do men persecute you? They persecuted Him. Are you oppressed? He was oppressed also. Are you scoffed at, mocked, jeered, insulted? He also endured all these things. Does God hide His face? Is your soul in darkness? Are you full of fear? He passed through all these things. This made Him sympathizing, tender-hearted, loving, kind, and affectionate. But O what a sympathizing High Priest there is in the courts above—for poor sinners here below! We may tell Him all our cares. The secret sins that you are obliged to keep locked up in your own bosom—the painful temptations you are exercised with—the various things that cut deep into your conscience, which you cannot breathe into any one's ear—all are open to this sympathizing High Priest—all may be spread before that throne of grace, on which He ever sits! A question which deeply interests A question which deeply interests—and often painfully exercises every true child of God—is how the life of God is maintained in his bosom. If he is a partaker of the grace of God, he desires to know how shall that grace be kept in living exercise, that he may be brought through every trial, temptation, and affliction, and eventually landed safe in glory. The love & worship of idols The love and worship of idols is both the cause and consequence of all backsliding. Now nothing but a more spiritual worship can dethrone the worship of an idol. And nothing but a stronger love can overpower the love of an idol—for we must love something—and if we do not love the Lord Jesus, we shall love some idol-god of our own.

You have been an idolater—you have set up some idols, and perhaps many, in the secret chambers of imagery—you have been caught in some hidden snare set by Satan—you have gotten into the spirit of the world—your wife, children, business, occupation have been entanglements—these and other household idols have drawn aside your heart from God, and you have fallen into a very cold, barren state. Be honest with your own conscience and say whether it be so or not. Lay bare your inmost spirit before God. Have you not got into a cold, backsliding state? Has not pride, or covetousness, or worldly-mindedness laid sad hold of you? "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." Jeremiah 3:22 If a man was left by God So desperately wicked is the heart of man—so determined to have its fill of evil—that if a man was left by God, he would sin one moment—and jump into hell the next! With bitter grief & mournful cry

We look at this sin and we look at that sin—we call to mind this and that slip or fall—and sometimes say with bitter grief and mournful cry, "O, that I had never committed that sin! O, that I had never broken out in this or that direction! O, that my lust, my pride, my covetousness, my angry temper, my foolish lightness, my carelessness, and carnality had never overcome me at that time! O, that I had never spoken that foolish word, done that sad thing, that I had never fallen into that snare of the flesh! O, that I had never got entangled in that awful trap of the devil!" The cross is the only place where a guilty sinner can meet with a forgiving God—where all his sins are pardoned, and all his iniquities, so great, so black, so aggravated, are forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7 Seas of blood & love!

What depths of agony it cost Jesus to redeem us from the bottomless pit! What seas of blood and love He had to wade through! What conflicts with Satan! What hidings of His Father's face! What a weight of unutterable woe! What an indescribable pressure of imputed sin! And yet He suffered all this, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree! The sum & substance of all vital godliness A profession of religion, without a real experimental knowledge of Christ—is but a deceit or a delusion. There is a solid reality and enduring substance in the divine teachings and gracious

operations of the blessed Spirit in the heart. "Possession and enjoyment"—personal possession, and spiritual, experimental enjoyment—of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—of the love of God—and of the communion of the Holy Spirit—is the peculiar privilege and supreme blessedness of the children of God. This is also the soul of all true religion—and the sum and substance of all vital godliness. I desire to know nothing in my own soul but what God is pleased to teach me out of the Scriptures by His blessed Spirit, that I may apprehend, firmly grasp, inwardly seize, blessedly realize, and experimentally enjoy Christ! The mountaintop of pride

If a Christian ever gets upon the mountaintop of pride, God will be sure to bring him into the 'valley of humility.' We pray—to be humble, teachable, dependent—to know more of the grace, spirit, and presence of Christ—to have more fellowship and communion with Him—to be more conformed to His image and example—to walk more in His footsteps—to more know and do those things which are pleasing in His sight. But we cannot have these desires granted except through trial and affliction—for it is in these trials and afflictions that Christ manifests and makes Himself known and precious. A boundless treasury of trials Be assured that you have that very trial which is most adapted to your particular case and state. You think sometimes that you could bear any trial except that which is laid upon you. But depend upon it, God has selected out of the variety of trials—that very trial which shall most suit your state and circumstances. He has, as it were, a boundless treasury of trials—all ready for use. And He has taken out of it that peculiar trial which shall most suit your case. He has selected that yoke which shall fit most closely upon your neck, and fastened that burden upon your shoulders which is most for your good, and His glory, that you shall carry, even though you bear it down to the gates of death! A world of deception & falsehood

We live in a lying world! The reason for this is not far to seek. Satan is its god and prince—and he is a liar, and the father lies! The present world, being by the permission of God under Satan's lordship and dominion, bears the impress which he has stamped upon it, and whereby he has made it a world of deception and falsehood. We ourselves went astray as soon as we were born, speaking lies. In lies we grew up. In lies we lived. And but for His grace, in lies we would have died—either as professors or profane—for there are thousands of both who live and die with a lie in their right hand!

Living then in a world of lies, there is little else to be heard or seen, but false words—false deeds—false doctrines—false professions. Living surrounded by an atmosphere of falsehood, if there is any truth in the world, or any truth in our hearts, lips, or lives—that truth must come from God, for He is the God of truth, as Satan is the father of lies. Until God the Spirit was pleased to work with a divine power upon your soul, you lived in lies, you loved lies. Your religion, if one you had, was a lying religion—for there was no truth in it, no reality, no power. For until our eyes are spiritually opened we see neither our nakedness nor our rags—neither know the truth nor care to know it—but as poor, self-deceived creatures you would have lived, and as such you would have died—but for the sovereign, distinguishing, superabounding grace of God, which plucked you as a brand from the fire made by the sparks of your own kindling!

Nothing but sovereign grace As the Lord is pleased to open our eyes, we shall see more what grace is—how pure, how free, and how sovereign. We shall see our sins so great—that nothing but free grace can pardon them; our backslidings so aggravated—that nothing but free grace can heal them; our hearts so hard—that nothing but free grace can soften them; our path so

rough—that nothing but free grace can help us over it; and our death so dreadful—that nothing but the grace of God can take away its sting, and make us shout, "Victory!" even in its very arms! We shall find nothing but sovereign grace can make us holy or happy either for time or eternity!

There is an outgoing of the single desire of the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ that His grace may be ever flowing forth into us, so as to dispel all doubt and fear—break to pieces all bonds and fetters—fill us with love and humility—conform us to His suffering image—produce in us every fruit that shall redound to His praise—be with us in life and death—and land us safe in eternity!

10.06. Volume 6

It was not the nails "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34

It was not the nails driven through His hands and feet—it was not the crown of thorns placed upon His brow—it was not the stripes which mangled His back—it was not the languor and faintness under which He suffered—that caused the Lord to die. It was not the mere bodily agony of the cross—it was not the mere pain, though most acute and severe, of the nails driven through His sacred hands and feet. It was not the being stretched upon the cross six hours, that constituted the chief part of the Redeemer's suffering. But it was the almost intolerable load of imputed sin—the imputed sins of millions—it was the tremendous pouring of the wrath of God into His holy soul—it was the hiding of His Father's face, and the very pangs of hell that there caught hold of Him! Our suffering Savior drank the cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs—when our vile, dreadful, and horrible sins were laid upon Him! "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin." Isaiah 53:10 Satan's tether!

"You have put all things in subjection under His feet." Hebrews 2:8

See the sovereign supremacy of Jesus! All temptations are also put under Jesus' feet. How sweet to see and feel this! Your path may at present be a path of great temptation—snares of the most dangerous and most deceitful kind may be laid for your feet in various directions—Satan may be allowed to assault your soul with all his infernal arts and weapons. You may have a sad conflict with the vile lusts of your depraved nature, and feel that you have as many sins alive in your heart as there are hairs upon your head! But are not these things put in subjection under His feet? Would it be true that God has put all things under His feet if temptations were omitted? Can Satan tempt you a single point beyond the Lord's permission? How was it with Job, when Satan was allowed to tempt him? Did not God fix the exact length of Satan's tether when He said, "Touch not his life?" Satan was allowed to destroy all his property—to sweep off all his children at a stroke—to smite him with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. But he could not touch his life, either natural or spiritual, or drive him to blaspheme God, though he so far prevailed as to make him curse the day of his birth. "Here you may come, but no further," the Lord virtually said to Satan, "and here shall your proud waves be stayed." So with you. Whatever temptations you may have to endure, they can never touch your life—for that is hidden with Christ—safely lodged in the heart and hands of Him who reigns supreme in power and glory!

Love at first sight!

"I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3

There is no beginning to the love of Christ, for it existed when He existed—which was from eternity. Neither is there any end to that love. His love then, is as eternal as Himself. O what a mercy it is for those who have any gracious, experimental knowledge of the love of Christ, to believe it is from everlasting to everlasting—that no incidents of time—no storms of sin or

Satan—can ever change or alter that eternal love—but that it remains now and will remain the same to all eternity! The love of Christ to His people is eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. And why? Because He loves as God. This eternal, unchanging character of the love of Christ gives us something to stand upon—apart from our fluctuating feelings—our wavering frames—and the changes that ever take place in our thoughts, hearts and lives. The love of Christ to us is not changing and changeable like ours to Him—but like Himself abides forever. Jesus freely, fully, and unchangeably loves those who were given to Him by the Father in the councils of eternity—and presented to Him as His future spouse and bride.

Christ's love to His bride was love at first sight! For when she was presented to Him by the Father that she might be His spouse—as soon as He beheld His chosen bride He fell in love with her—for He saw her not sunk and fallen—but in all her beauty as clothed in the fullness of that glory in which she will one day shine forth—when she sits down with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb!

Nothing can quench or destroy the love of Christ! It will prevail over sin, death, and hell—yes, over every impediment and obstacle—until it achieves the final victory, and in all the blaze of full perfection and fruition—fill heaven with its eternal glory!

They are mere muckworms!

"Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who think about earthly things." Php 3:19

Paul here cuts off thousands of nominal Christians, as those "who mind earthly things." This means that they have no taste, no appetite or relish for divine things—no affections fixed on things above. Their mind is on earthly things. They are mere muckworms—ever groping and groveling after money and gain!

According to their various needs "From His fullness we all received grace upon grace." John 1:16

Jesus is ever bestowing His grace to His people according to their various needs—grace for every burden we may have to carry—grace for every trial we may have to endure—grace for every affliction we may have to suffer—grace for every duty we may have to perform—grace to carry us through life—grace to be with us in, and carry us safely through, death itself! When the Lord makes up His jewels "As unknown, and yet well known." 2 Corinthians 6:9

God's people, as well as God's servants, are little known, and less esteemed in this world. It is God's purpose and a part of His infinite wisdom that it should be so. The Lord is training up heirs of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and preparing them for those mansions of holiness and bliss which He has prepared for them before the foundation of the world. But while they are here below, they are in a state of obscurity. We may compare them to a large and valuable diamond, which is now undergoing the operations of cutting and polishing in some obscure court in the city, no one scarcely knowing of its existence or value, but its owner and the jeweler who is patiently cutting it into shape. But one day it may adorn a monarch's crown! So while God is cutting and polishing His diamonds by trials and temptations—sufferings and afflictions—they are hidden from the eyes of men. But when the Lord makes up His jewels, they will shine forth forever in His crown!

God has chosen the poor of this world, for the most part, to be rich in faith. Not many notable in the annals of learning, power, or rank—not many noble, not many rich, not many mighty, has He called by His grace to a knowledge of Himself. The Lord’s people rarely possess any wealth, station, property, or worldly distinction. They are for the most part poor and despised, as their Lord and Master was before them—and such the world cares neither to know, nor notice. "They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up My jewels!" Malachi 3:17 Giver & Maintainer The Holy Spirit is not only the Giver, but the Maintainer of all life in the soul.

Offensive to the world?

Nothing is more offensive to the world than vital godliness! A monster in the church of God!

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He who doesn’t love his brother remains in death." 1 John 3:14

What would a Christian be without love? A monster indeed! We hear sometimes of monsters in nature—of a lamb born with two heads, or six legs, or two hearts. So a professing Christian, without any love to the people of God, would be a monster in the Church of God! Grace has many painful, many lingering births; but the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, never brought forth a monster from her teeming womb. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Galatians 5:22 Deaf & dumb?

"He who is of God hears the words of God. For this cause you don’t hear, because you are not of God." John 8:47

Some are born, as it is called, deaf and dumb. They are not really speechless, though called so, for all their vocal organs are as perfect as ours. But they cannot use them so as to form intelligible language, for no sound has ever reached their mind—and what they have never heard they cannot imitate.

We have our deaf and dumb in the religious world as well. They cannot speak the language of Canaan, for they have never heard it spoken into their heart. And we also have those once deaf who now hear—and that by the power of an Almighty "Be opened!" "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27 Transformed into His likeness "Leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." 1 Peter 2:21 "He who says he remains in Him ought himself also to walk as He walked." 1 John 2:6 The image of Jesus is reflected in the hearts of His people. A real Christian is one who is meek, humble, tender, broken, contrite—with a heart of faith, hope, and love—walking in the fear of God, desirous to know His will and do it—submissive under affliction—spiritually-minded—and adorning the doctrine by a godly life. But the ’mere professor of religion’ lives contrary to the mind and the image of Christ. He is proud, obstinate, worldly, covetous, boasting, presumptuous—full of self-exaltation and self-conceit—light, trifling, carnal, earthly-minded. The sovereignty of God

"All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: ’What have You done?’" Daniel 4:35 The verdict of God in His word is that He is Sovereign. The sovereignty of God, as exercised in all matters great or small, is often a hard thing for the people of God, especially when it touches them close. When it—takes away idols out of their bosom—blights their

schemes—withers their prospects—disappoints their hopes—and stands before them as a mountain of brass and a gate of iron, which they can neither pass over nor pass through. The wilderness

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her." Hosea 2:14 The children of God would not voluntarily go into the wilderness—it is a place too barren for them to enter, except as allured in a special manner by the grace of God—and led by the power of God. Nor do they for the most part know where the Lord is taking them. They follow His drawings—they are led by His allurings—they listen to His persuading voice, trusting to Him as to an unerring Guide. But they do not know the 'place of barrenness' into which He is bringing them—this the Lord usually conceals from their eyes. He allures and they follow—but He does not tell them what He is going to do with them, or where He intends to take them. He hides His gracious purposes, that He may afterwards bring them more clearly to light.

Look at the place where He brings His people—the wilderness. This is a type and figure much used by the Holy Spirit, and conveys to us much deep and profitable instruction. The wilderness is an isolated, solitary spot, far, far away from cities, and towns, and other busy haunts of men—a remote and often dreary abode, where there is no intruding eye to mark the wanderer's steps, where there is no listening ear to hear his sighs and cries. The Lord, when He puts forth His sacred power upon the heart, to allure His people into the wilderness, brings them into a spot where in solitude and silence they may be separated from every one but Himself. The 'wilderness,' we take as an emblem of being alone with God—coming out of the world—away from sin and worldly company—out of everything carnal, sensual, and earthly—and being brought into that solemn spot where there are secret, sacred, and solitary dealings with God!

Only a huge clod of dust

"Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust." Isaiah 40:15

Everything upon earth, as viewed by the eyes of the Majesty of heaven—is worthless and paltry. Earth is after all, only a huge clod of dust! And as such, as insignificant in the eyes of its Maker as a drop in the bucket, or dust on the scales. What, then, are all earth's—highest objects—loftiest aims—grandest pursuits—noblest employments—in the sight of Him who inhabits eternity—but base and worthless?

No, even in our eyes there is one consideration that stamps vanity upon them all. That all earth's pursuits, whatever high attainments men may reach in this life, be it of wealth, rank, learning, power, or pleasure—they all end in death! The breath of God's displeasure soon lays low in the grave all that is rich and mighty, high and proud—for the Lord Almighty will punish the proud, bringing them down to the dust! The effectual work of grace on the heart whereby the chosen vessels of mercy are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, calls them out of—those low, groveling pursuits—those earthly toys—those base and sensual lusts, in which the people of this world seek at once their happiness and their ruin! To enjoy fellowship with God—to feel the mind drawn up to high and heavenly things—to have the heart weaned and separated from the poor, groveling, miserable cares of this world—to have the soul solemnly engaged with the realities of a never-ending eternity—to live a life of faith in the Son

of God—to be spiritually-minded—to be dead to sin and the world—to seek happiness in knowing the will of God and doing it—and to be looking forward to the end of the race as giving a crown of glory—surely there is something in this vital experience of the child of God, which elevates his soul beyond this poor, wretched valley of tears—this miserable scene where everything is stamped with vexation and disappointment!

Many are called "Many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14

There is a calling which is not effectual—which is not saving—which does not prove and evidence the reality of a person's being chosen according to God's eternal purpose unto eternal life. Family bereavements—bodily sickness, especially if the illness be dangerous or severe—advancing age and infirmities—heavy strokes in providence—strong convictions of conscience—desires to repent and turn to the Lord—fears of death and hell—sitting under the sound of truth—the counsel and example of godly parents—the terrors of the Lord in a broken Law—and the invitations of mercy in a preached Gospel—all these are so many calls wherein and whereby Wisdom, at the entrance to the city, at the city gates, cries aloud. But we well know that all these 'external calls' are ineffectual until the Holy Spirit puts forth His secret and sacred power upon the heart!

He puts His hand in a mysterious way into the heart

Before we can receive Christ, there must be room made for Him, and this must be done by the power of God's grace—for sin and Satan are so strong that nothing else can overcome them. The usual way by which this room is made for Christ is by cutting convictions, distressing temptations, and alarming views of the majesty and purity of God—for it is by such dealings upon the conscience that we come experimentally to learn our own miserable sinfulness. The Blessed Spirit working in and by these convictions, and softening and melting the heart by a divine influence, thus breaks to pieces the pride, self-righteousness, prejudice, enmity, opposition—and all those obstacles that have so shut out the gospel—so blinded the eyes—stopped the ears—and hardened the heart against the voice of truth. It is not now whether we will turn to the Lord or not, and leave the ways of sin or not; for He makes us willing in the day of His power, and puts His hand in a mysterious way into the heart. The Lord, by the secret power and influence of His grace, puts His hand into the heart—and by the secret movements of His Spirit in and upon the conscience—raises up not only a sense of the soul's ruin and misery, but, being poured out as a Spirit of grace and of supplication—communicates desires, breathings, sighs, cries and groans, lookings and longings for mercy, pardon, and peace. It is in this way that the Lord Jesus Christ makes His people willing to receive him—for He not only convinces them of their miserable state—but in a secret, mysterious way discovers, from time to time, so much of His suitability, beauty, blessedness, grace, and glory—as to make the heart willing to entertain Him, and to dread nothing so much as to live and die without the manifestation of His blood and love!

How do we receive Jesus?

"But as many as received Him." John 1:12

How do we receive Jesus? We receive Jesus as the eternal Son of God in all His blessed relationships. We receive Jesus as our atoning High Priest. We receive Jesus as our teaching Prophet, that He may lead us into all truth. We receive Jesus as our most gracious Sovereign, who is to sway His peaceful scepter over every faculty of the soul. We receive Jesus as our Lord and

King. We receive Jesus as our Savior from the wrath to come. We receive Jesus as our Mediator between God and man. We receive Jesus as our Husband who has espoused us in eternal covenant ties. We receive Jesus as our Brother born for adversity. We receive Jesus as our Friend who loves at all times. We receive Jesus as our Substitute who has borne our sins in His own body. We receive Jesus as our Representative in the courts of heaven. We receive Jesus as our glorious Head, out of whom we receive all supplies to sanctify us, and make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Sin, Satan & the world

We often, through the power of sin—the subtlety of Satan—and the strength of temptation—get drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ.

1. When the Lord is pleased in any manner to manifest Himself to the soul, sin receives a paralyzing blow—it cannot lift up its head in the presence of Jesus. He puts His victorious feet upon its neck, for He will not allow it to reign and rule in the believer's heart. Nor indeed can it do so when under the influence of His grace, according to the promise—"Sin shall not have dominion over you." But when He withdraws His gracious presence, sin that before lay dead, begins to revive. It is like the sleeping serpent—torpid in the winter, but revived by the warm beams of spring. So when sin once more comes forth out of its torpid state, and begins again to manifest itself in all its secret power and all its dreadful influence—the soul gets into worse confusion and trouble than ever—for fresh sin brings fresh guilt, and when guilt falls as a dark and gloomy cloud over the conscience, it hides and obscures all that God has done in the heart; it buries evidences, casts a mist of darkness over the throne of grace, shuts out access to God, and fills the whole mind with bondage, doubt, and fear.

2. Satan, too, who, when the Lord was pleased to manifest Himself, withdrew for a time—begins again to lay his secret snares—sometimes puffing up the heart with pride—sometimes secretly insinuating what a good and blessed experience the soul has been favored with, so as to lift it up with vain confidence and presumption, exalting itself and despising others—sometimes spreading a hidden trap for the feet, whereby he entangles it in some vile sin, or thrusts it down at once by some sudden slip or fall. If he does not succeed in this way, he will sometimes beguile the mind with some error—or work upon our reasoning powers—or raise up infidel thoughts—or whisper vile suggestions—or insinuate that all the soul has tasted, handled, and felt, was but delusion and deception—and that we have been guilty of hypocrisy in speaking of anything which we thought God had done for us.

3. The world, which seemed to have little influence when the soul was under the blessed teaching of the Lord, begins again to work with renewed power. The worldly spirit which exists in every believer's bosom is easily inflamed—for sin and Satan are ever at hand to pile up combustible material and set it on fire. Under this wretched influence a whole troop of worldly thoughts and desires begin again to take possession of the mind—and as these regain their former strength—they shut out union and communion with the Lord of life and glory—and produce inward darkness, deadness, coldness, hardness, barrenness, and a general stupor of mind—all which sad evils give great encouragement to the powers of hell to renew their attacks, and often with too much success. By these and various other ways, the soul is drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ, and stripped of its enjoyments, its spirituality of mind, and its heavenly affections—and is

thus no longer able to walk with God in the sweet fellowship which it had been favored with when Christ was made precious to the soul. The hardest thing in the world!

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Before we can come rightly to Jesus, we must be taught by the Holy Spirit to feel our need of Him. This may seem very simple, and indeed is so in doctrine and theory—but not so in experience—for to come to Jesus is the hardest thing in the world! No one really comes to Him until he has tried every other refuge, every other hope of salvation—until he has been driven out of house and home, made an outcast and ready to perish. John Newton justly says, "Few, if any, come to Jesus, until reduced to self-despair." The first divine work upon the soul by the Holy Spirit, is chiefly to make us feel our need of Jesus. Our convictions—our distressing sensations of guilt, shame, and sorrow—our doubts and fears—our trials and temptations—our varied afflictions, from whatever source they come or of whatever nature they be, are all so many means in the hand of the Spirit to bring us near unto Jesus!

It was not the nails nor the spear "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:24 In a sense we are all murderers of Jesus. It was not the nails nor the spear that killed the Son of God. Our sins—these were the nails! Our iniquity—this was the Roman spear!

Deity suffered, bled & died!

"For you were bought with a price." 1 Corinthians 6:20

It may be that some of you have seen and felt yourselves at various times, to be some of the foulest, filthiest, blackest, most polluted wretches that God allows to crawl upon His earth—for though your lives may have been free from outward spot, and you are made to walk in the fear of God—yet the shining in of divine teaching has discovered to you the depths of your fallen nature. You felt that—your debt was unpayable—your crimes were too great—your sins were too black—your iniquity was too foul.

Millions of sins of millions of sinners were all put away, blotted out, cancelled, removed, cast behind God’s back, and drowned in the depths of the sea—as that precious blood fell from the hands and feet and side of Jesus upon Calvary’s cruel tree! Deity suffered, bled and died! Jesus stood, as it were, between the wrath of God and His people—and it was as if by so doing He said, "Let the law discharge all its curses upon Me. Here is My head—let the lightning fall. I bare My brow. Let the wrath of God come upon Me—that My sheep may go free!"

We shall never properly value redeeming love, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and the gift of the Son of God until we have known experimentally the slavery of sin—and groaned as poor captives under the dominion of Satan. Until the iron has entered our very soul—until the fetters have galled our feet and the manacles our wrists, and we can look up to God and point to our bleeding wounds as inflicted by sin, Satan, and the law—we can never truly feel our need of, or really value—the redemption that has been accomplished by the suffering Son of God. But O, what a blessed change it is when the first ray of mercy breaks in upon the soul, and cheers the poor captive, who has been groaning for years, shut up in our dungeon cells, half starved, covered with filth and loathsome with vermin—the vermin of sin. But O to have the light of day breaking in through the prison doors, and to hear sounds from above of pardon and peace and blessed

liberation—is not this enough to make the poor prisoner’s heart leap for joy within him?

If you had a crippled child "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me." Psalms 139:1

We may deceive ourselves, and we may deceive one another. But there is one whom we cannot deceive—a heart-searching God. The Lord Himself writes this truth with His own finger upon every regenerate heart. He teaches two lessons to every soul in whom His powerful hand works—

1. That He cannot be deceived.

2. That He must not be mocked. This teaching from above makes a man sincere before God. For if not sincere, what is he, or what is any man in a profession of religion? Nothing! Nothing, did I say? He is worse than nothing—because to be insincere before God is to add hypocrisy to our other sins—is to insult the Majesty of heaven—is to tie, if it were possible, a double millstone round our neck to sink us in the depths of hell. God, the all-seeing, the omniscient Jehovah, searches the hearts, and He searches them for good as well as for evil—for both lie equally naked before His penetrating eye. There is not—an evil thought—a licentious desire—a covetous wish—or an ungodly imagination framed in our mind—that does not lie open before the eyes of our heart-searching God!

Like the ostrich, you may bury your head in the sand, and think yourself unseen—but your whole body stands exposed to the bow of the unerring archer. God sees, then, all the evil which is in us—and well may that thought cover us with shame and confusion of face! You could not tell your nearest, dearest friend what daily and hourly takes place in the depths of your carnal mind—but all is open before God! This should make you watchful and prayerful, as living under the eye of an omniscient Being who reads every thought—hears every word—and spies out every action. This should make you fearful to offend, and desirous to please the Majesty of heaven. But He who searches the heart searches not only for evil—but also for good. He is full of compassion, mercy, love, and truth. To His children, He is not a rigorous Judge, or a hard Master. But He is a kind, affectionate Father, and Friend. And as a parent looks with very tender eye upon the unavoidable infirmities of his children, and deals with them accordingly—so does the great Searcher of hearts in the case of His spiritual family. For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. If you had a crippled child, would you harshly push him down, because he could not walk with a firm and vigorous step? Or if he were afflicted with any bodily or mental infirmity—would not that very affliction commend him all the more to your tenderest affection, and anxious care? How you would shield him to the utmost of your power from the rudeness and unkind treatment of others, and could scarcely bear him out of your sight, lest he meet with any injury. So our heavenly Father looks down with pity and compassion upon the infirmities of His children. He regards their woes with eyes of holy pity!

True prayer

True prayer is the inward breathing of the heart after God. There is often more depth, power, and prevalence in the inward sigh and groan of a broken heart and a contrite spirit—than in the vocal expression of the lips! A sealed book "Then He opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

Thousands read the Scriptures to whom it is a sealed book. We must beg the Lord to illuminate the sacred page, to cast a divine light upon the Scriptures, and thence into our heart. And then we shall understand the Scriptures by the same inspiration under which that holy word was written. "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of Your law." The eye of God "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me." Psalms 139:1

Men in general take no notice of 'heart sins.' If they can keep from sins in life—from open acts of immorality—they are satisfied. What passes in the chambers of imagery they neither see nor feel. Not so with the child of grace. He carries about with him the secret conviction that the eye of God reads every thought. Every inward movement of pride, self-righteousness, rebellion, discontent, peevishness, fretfulness, lust, and wantonness—he inwardly feels that the holy eye of God—reads all—marks all—hates and abhors all. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way." Psalms 139:23-24 A rough, rugged & thorny road "Through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22 The way to heaven is a way of trial, temptation, and tribulation. It is not a smooth and easy—but a rough, rugged, and thorny road. Events in providence, and trials in grace are continually springing up to teach us that lesson. Family afflictions—illness of body—painful bereavements—losses in property—and a path extremely rough and rugged in a variety of outward circumstances—are usually allotted to God's family. And to this rough path from without, there are generally added many painful trials from within. Jesus told His people that they would be hated and despised by the world—and would have to walk in a path of sorrow. Yet they find that all these things work together for their spiritual good—that none of these trials and afflictions do or can separate them from the love of God. They also discover that these sorrowful things are—all weighed out in due weight and measure—all appointed by sovereign wisdom—all timed by eternal love!

If I have learned anything "Without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

I have been a preacher more than thirty years—and yet I feel now weaker than ever. I am all weakness! Though I have preached hundreds, I might almost say thousands, of sermons, I have no power to open up any part of God's truth with utterance, liberty, life, or feeling. I stand before you this morning as I stand before God—depending wholly upon His strength made perfect in my weakness. If I have learned anything—it is my sinfulness and weakness. And I know and feel that if I am anything—have anything—do anything—speak anything—write anything spiritual and acceptable to the church of God—it must be by the operation and influence of the Blessed Spirit upon my heart!

As, then, we learn our weakness—we begin to learn our strength. Despairing of all strength in self—we look to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only as we thus receive strength out of His fullness that we are made strong—to believe—to hope—to love—to fight against our besetting sins—to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts!

Look how sin has ruined your soul

Look how sin has ruined your soul—how it has brought you under the wrath of God. See how you have been entangled in sin. Look at the long catalogue of crimes which you have committed—if not in deed, in word or thought—since you lay in your mother's lap. Think only of the sins of a

single day—what carnality—what unbelief—what pride—what covetousness—what selfishness! But I need not go through the catalogue. I could not stand up to read, nor could you sit to hear, article by article, the contents of that long dark scroll. The human heart is too deep an abyss of sin to be laid bare to open view! It is like the common sewer—it is best covered up by a culvert. There is stench enough at the mouth, without penetrating through the whole length of its hideous contents! A root is hidden in the ground

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10 The love of money, when at all inordinate, blinds the mind, and hardens and deadens the conscience to a fearful degree. Some sins, as, for instance, drunkenness, dishonesty or immorality—so carry with them their own condemnation—that they cannot well disguise their dreadful sinfulness—either from the guilty criminal himself or from the world around him. But covetousness is a sin of so subtle a nature—and so imperceptible a growth—that a man may be very far gone into it without his own conscience being alarmed—or its drawing down much observation or censure from professor or profane. A root is hidden in the ground—and therefore the love of money does not attract much attention until the stem gets stout and tall—and shows flowers and fruit. This very circumstance, therefore, makes it all the more deceptive and dangerous. Did you ever know a covetous man who could see his own covetousness? Or did you ever know one to be convinced of it, to confess it, and forsake it? No! They go on in it, and the older they get the more are they hardened and confirmed in it. For, unlike other sins, covetousness is the special and growing besetting sin of advancing years. "Beware! Keep yourselves from covetousness." Luke 12:15 The history of the Old Testament The history of the Old Testament is little else but a record of the perverseness of man—and of the goodness and mercy of God. From the day that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt to the close of the canon of the Old Testament—their history is but one unmingled series of perverseness and rebellion. And all God’s dealings with them from first to last were but repeated instances of His unparalleled patience—rich forbearance—and unspeakable goodness towards them. But though the Lord thus displayed His goodness and mercy towards them, we must ever bear in mind that He hated their sins, and was justly provoked by their iniquities. He, therefore, from time to time, raised up prophets to testify against their sins, and to denounce His displeasure against them. And not only so, but He sent chastisement after chastisement, and sold them again and again into captivity, in order to bring them to repentance for their disobedience.

Three branches of divine truth

There are three branches of divine truth which seem to have been specially opened up in the experience of the Apostle Paul; and which he therefore, as an inspired writer in the New Testament, opened and enforced with corresponding fullness, clearness, and power—

1. The first branch of divine truth into which he was so deeply led is the Fall of man, with its attendant consequences of sin and death.

2. The second branch of divine truth into which he was so blessedly led is the Person, work, obedience, death, resurrection and glorification of the Son of God, viewed in relationship to His Church and bride.

3. The third great branch of divine truth in which the eminent Apostle so blessedly shines, is sovereign grace in its justifying, sanctifying, and saving effects upon the Church of God.

It never was the purpose of God to address the Scripture merely to man's intellect—but to his heart and conscience. As, then, these divine truths formed part and parcel of the Apostle's experience, and flowed into his soul out of the bosom of Christ, so they flowed out of his heart, and were written by his pen in the inspired record.

They only plunge themselves deeper in the ditch!

How many poor souls are struggling against the power of sin—and yet never get any victory over it! How many are daily led captive by the lusts of the flesh, the love of the world, and the pride of life—and never get any victory over them! How many fight and grapple with tears, vows, and strong resolutions against the besetting sins of temper, levity, or covetousness—who are still entangled and overcome by them again and again!

Now, why is this? Because they know not the secret of spiritual strength against—and spiritual victory over them. It is only by virtue of a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ, drinking into His sufferings and death, and receiving out of His fullness—that we can gain any victory over the world, sin, death, or hell. Sin is never really or effectually subdued in any other way!

It is not, then, by legal strivings and earnest resolutions—vows, and tears, which are but monkery at best—the vain struggle of religious flesh to subdue sinful flesh—which can overcome sin. But it is by a believing acquaintance with, and a spiritual entrance into the sufferings and sorrows of the Son of God—having a living faith in Him—and receiving out of His fullness, supplies of grace and strength—His strength made perfect in our weakness. A sight of Him as a suffering God—or a view of Him as a risen Jesus—must be connected with every successful attempt to get the victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. You may strive, vow, and repent—and what does it all amount to? You just sink deeper and deeper into sin than before! Pride, lust, and covetousness come in like a flood—and you are swamped and carried away almost before you are aware! But if you get a view of a suffering Christ, or of a risen Christ—if you get a taste of His dying love—a drop of His atoning blood—or any manifestation of His beauty and blessedness—there comes from this spiritual baptism into His death or His life a subduing power—and this gives a victory over temptation and sin which nothing else can or will give!

Yet I believe we are often many years learning this divine secret—striving to repent and reform, and cannot—trying to get better by dipping the Ethiopian into the washing tub—until at last by divine teaching we come to learn a little of what the apostle meant when he said, "The just shall live by faith." And when we can get into this life of faith, this hidden life—then our affections are set on things above. There is no use setting people to work by legal strivings—they only plunge themselves deeper in the ditch! You must get Christ into your soul by the power of God—and then He will subdue—by His smiles, blood, love, and presence—every internal foe!

Grace & glory "The Lord will give grace and glory." Psalms 84:11

It is the peculiar glory of God to give out of the infinite fullness of His goodness and love. The more He gives—the more is He glorified. We should come to God's gracious footstool as to that of a free and bounteous Benefactor, saying before Him in the simplicity of a little child, "Lord, I am poor,

enrich me! Lord, I am hungry, feed me! Lord, I am naked, clothe me! Lord, I am sinful, forgive me! Lord, I am helpless, take pity and compassion upon me! Lord, I am weak and wandering, ever stumbling and falling—hold me up, and I shall be safe! Lord, I have nothing, and am nothing—give me what seems good to You—and make me what You would have me to be." The secret of superabounding grace

Those who know nothing—of their own heart—of their own infirmities—of their own frailties—of their own inward or outward slips and backslidings—know nothing of the secret of superabounding grace. We must be perpetually reminded that we have no strength of our own. And thus—our sins—our slips—our falls—our backslidings—our frailties—are mercifully overruled among the all things which work together for our good. They teach us our weakness—and by teaching us our weakness—lead us up to Christ's strength!

Fitted together perfectly In the body of Christ, every spiritual part supplies its allotted portion of strength and activity to the rest. This should be exemplified in a gospel church, where love and union reign. The Spirit gives to each member that measure of grace which is sufficient not only for his own salvation and consolation—but that which contributes something to the welfare of the whole. Thus, some contribute their prayers, having little else to bestow, for the good of their brethren. Others, whom the Lord has blessed with a measure of this world's goods, give of their substance to those poor members to whom their liberality is often a timely help. Others supply the church with a godly example, setting before their eyes a godly life, a self-denying, upright, consistent walk and conduct. Others are free to speak, possess a pleasing gift in conversation and prayer, and out of the fullness of a believing heart can testify what God has done for their souls in humble, simple, yet savory language. Others are patterns of humility, holding forth a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Others manifest much tenderness of conscience, great circumspection of conduct, and exercise of much godly fear. Some are possessed of a great spirit of love and affection. Others of much zeal and boldness for the truth. Others of a sound judgment and keen discernment. Others manifest much patience under suffering, or meekness under persecution, or great spirituality of mind. Some have a deep acquaintance with trials and temptations, and much knowledge of the wiles of Satan, and the deceitfulness and depravity of the human heart.

Thus, in one way or another, every part supplies something to the well-being of the body. However poor or weak a member may feel itself to be in a church—still it is as much an integral part of the body as the strongest. My little finger is as much an integral part of my body as my hand or arm—to part with it would give me pain, and I suffer if the least injury is done to it. So, the weakest and feeblest member of the body of Christ is as much a member—has as much fitness in the body—is as much honored by the Spirit for what he does, under His gracious influences—as the strongest in faith, hope, and love. The whole body is fitted together perfectly. Every part, whether large or small, adds something to the welfare of the whole body—so that if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. The body is thus fitted, or, as it were—welded together into one united mass of firmness and strength—the indwelling Spirit working effectually in every part, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon it.

Loaded dice!

"That we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error." Ephesians 4:14 The word

translated ’trickery’ means literally, ’cheating at dice’—the allusion being to the practice of gamblers loading the dice to obtain a favorable throw. The dice are rightly marked and rightly thrown, but being loaded on one side, they always come up in favor of the cheat who throws them. Likewise, errors and heresies resemble loaded dice! They look all right—properly marked with texts and passages—and the minister or writer seems to throw them fully and fairly down before the people. And yet, like loaded dice, there is jugglery and deception at the bottom! As in sleight of hand, things are made to appear what they are not—so jugglers and cheats in religion deceive people by a show of piety and holiness—under the cover of which they hide the most destructive errors! Simple souls are caught—and still the game goes on. Yet of all gamblers, religious gamblers are the worst, for the throw is for eternity, and the soul is at stake!

Whatever other form self may come "Grow up into Him in all things." Ephesians 4:15

We have to grow up into Christ—and we cannot do this except we grow out of self. Self is a deadly enemy to growth in Christ. Where self-righteousness, self-indulgence, self-conceit, self-dependence—or in whatever other form self may come—it is a deadly enemy to growth in grace!

What is your heaviest trial?

What is your heaviest trial? We all have our peculiar trials that we have each to pass through—trials in body—trials in circumstances—trials in the family—trials in the mind. But are any of our trials equal to what we feel from indwelling sin? Is it not our daily experience to go groaning and sighing before the Lord on account of the working of sin in our carnal mind? Is it not our heaviest burden to have sin so striving for the mastery—that such base lusts are seeking perpetually to captivate our affections—that such evil desires are ever struggling for the victory in our bosom—that such pride and infidelity, and other abounding corruptions—are perpetually struggling, like a volcano in our bosom—to get full vent, and desolate our souls? And what makes us feel this burden of sin? The fear of God in a tender conscience. To some men—sin is no burden. Their corruptions cause them no pain. Their pride, their presumption, their covetousness, their lewdness, all the workings of depraved nature never draw a tear from their eye, nor force a sob from their heart! Why? Because they lack the fear of God in a tender conscience. Just in proportion to the depth of godly fear, and to the tenderness of conscience before God, will sin be—inwardly perceived—inwardly felt—and inwardly mourned and groaned under! This body of sin & death!

"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24

What, then, was it that so pained this holy Apostle? It was the body of death that he carried in him! That moving mass of corruption—that Behemoth raising up his ponderous limbs in his soul, and trampling down all that was good and gracious in his heart! The idea is taken from a practice of the Romans of tying a dead body to a living one. And O! what must have been the sickening sensation of ever feeling the cold corpse close to the warm flesh—to wake, say, in the night, and feel the dead body tied around the living one—and clasping it in its cold arms! What a sensation of horror and disgust must the living feel from such a punishment!

Now look at it spiritually. Your ’new man’ is warm toward God. There are holy affections springing up—there are panting desires flowing forth—there are tender sighs, and longings and languishings

after the Son of God in His beauty. And then, linked to it, there is a carnal, torpid, sensual, dead, earthly heart—perpetually surrounding it with its cold, clammy embrace—communicating its deathly torpidity to the soul. Would we pray—would we pour the heart forth in warm desires? The cold paw of this body of sin and death quenches that rising desire! Would we in the secret chambers of our heart earnestly seek His face? The cold, clammy embrace of the body of sin and death chills it all—continually impeding every upward movement of the spirit, and clogging and fettering every desire of the heavenly nature! Now, the inward conflict produced by these exercises and perplexities forces out this cry—"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" A few grains of error No one can take even a few grains of error with impunity—it will stupefy—if it does not kill; it will weaken the soul—if it does not at once destroy life. It will and must affect his head or his heart—his hands or his feet—his faith or his walk. No man can drink down error and the spirit of error without being injured—his spiritual strength weakened—and his spiritual limbs paralyzed.

We are to beware of error as we would of poison! There is something in error alluring, as well as sweet to the carnal mind. Many a child has been allured by poisonous berries—first to taste, and, when tasted, their sweetness has drawn it on largely to eat. Let error once hang down its alluring berries from the pulpit—there are plenty in the congregation to pluck and eat. Therefore beware of error—and of erroneous men! I am jealous of error in proportion as I love and value the truth.

Whence comes this spiritual desire?

"My soul stays close to You." Psalms 63:8

Whence comes this spiritual desire? It arises from the quickening work of the Spirit in the soul. Until we are divinely enlightened to see—and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state—we are satisfied with the things of time and sense—our hearts are in the world—our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away—and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul. But when the Lord sends light and life into the conscience—to show us to ourselves in our true colors—then spiritual desires immediately commence. The eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened to see God, and the heart is divinely quickened to feel that He alone can relieve the desires that the soul labors under—and thus there is set before the eyes of the mind, the Person who alone can give us that which the soul craves to enjoy! When a man loathes himself "You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that you have committed." Ezekiel 20:43 When a man loathes himself, it is not merely that he hates himself. But that he looks upon himself as a vile, detestable wretch. Some loathe toads—some loathe spiders—some loathe filth. Loathing, then, not merely implies hating a thing—but hating it as a thing that we cannot bear to look upon!

Such a deceptive creature

Self must receive a death blow! But this self is such a deceptive creature—he can wear such masks—he can assume so many forms—he can rise to such heights—he can sink to such depths—he can creep into such holes and corners—that I must act the part of the police, so as to find out the felon, track him to his hiding-place, and drag him out into the light of day! The strait & narrow path "In the world you shall have tribulation." John 16:33

He who will walk in the path which God has chosen for him, will have to meet with every opposition to his walking therein—infidelity, unbelief, rebellion, peevishness, impatience—the assaults of Satan as an angel of darkness—the delusions of Satan as an angel of light—false friends—secret or open foes—the flattery of professors—often the frowns of God's children—the loss of worldly interests—the sacrifice of property—all these things are entailed upon those who will walk in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. They are all connected with the cross of Christ—and cannot be escaped!

He will never let you have an earthly paradise "I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalms 132:15

What a sweetness there is in the word "satisfy!" The world cannot satisfy us! Have we not tried, and some of us perhaps for many years, to get some satisfaction from it? But can wife or husband "satisfy" us? Can children or relatives "satisfy" us? Can all that the world calls good or great "satisfy" us? Can the pleasures of sin "satisfy" us? Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything that is of the creature—and of the flesh? Do we not find that there is little else but sorrow to be reaped from everything in this world? I am sure I find, and have found for some years—that there is little else to be gathered from the world but disappointment, dissatisfaction, vanity, and vexation of spirit! The poor soul looks around upon the world—upon all the occupations, amusements, and relations of life—and finds all one melancholy harvest—so that all it reaps is sorrow, perplexity, and dissatisfaction! Now when a man is brought here—to desire satisfaction—something to make him happy—something to fill up the aching void—something to bind up broken bones, bleeding wounds, and leprous sores—and after he has looked at everything—at doctrines, opinions, notions, speculations, forms, rites, and ceremonies in religion—at the world with all its charms—and at self with all its varied workings—and found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch—then it is that the Lord opens up to him something of the Bread of life—and he finds a satisfaction in that, which he never could gain from any other quarter! And that is the reason, my friends, why the Lord afflicts His people so—why some carry about with them such weak, suffering bodies—why some have so many family troubles—why others are so deeply steeped in poverty—why others have such rebellious children—why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be their end! It is all for one purpose—to make them miserable outside of Christ—dissatisfied except with gospel food—to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy—and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds! My friends, if there be any young people here whose heart God has touched with His Spirit, and you are yet seeking some satisfaction from the world—if your health and spirits are yet unbroken, and you are looking to reap a 'harvest of pleasure' from the creature—depend upon it, if you are a child of God—you will be disappointed! The Lord will pull up by the roots all your 'anticipated pleasure.' He will effectually mar your worldly happiness! He will never let you have an earthly paradise—and it is your mercy that He will not! If you are looking for happiness—from wife or husband—from business—from the world—from whatever your carnal heart is going out after—depend upon it, God will let you take no solid nor abiding pleasure in them—but He will cut up by the roots all your earthly enjoyments!

He will mar all your worldly plans, and bring you to this spot—to be a miserable wretch without Christ—to be a ruined creature without the manifestations of the Son of God to your soul. And when you can find no pleasure in the world, no happiness in the things of time and sense—but feel

misery in your soul, and are fearing lest eternal misery be your portion in the world to come—you will then be the very one who God will comfort through the gospel—and give you a manifested interest in the promise made to Zion, "I will satisfy her poor with bread."

It is our mercy that we cannot take pleasure in the world! If we could—I know where and what I would be! I would be pursuing the vain imaginations of my carnal heart—and trying to reap pleasure where real happiness never can be found! And if any of you, my friends, are mourning, sighing and groaning—and sometimes heaving up with rebellion and fretful impatience because you cannot have what you wish naturally to enjoy—or because you cannot bring about your earthly schemes—and have little else but sorrow of heart and trouble of soul—you are far more favored than if you could have all that heart could wish! God, who has made you wretched that you might find happiness in Him—will not leave you to live and die in your misery! He will bind up every bleeding wound, and pour the oil of joy into your troubled heart! "I will satisfy her poor with bread." The river

"You feed them from the abundance of Your own house, letting them drink from Your rivers of delight." Psalms 36:8

God does not give grudgingly or niggardly, as though He ever regretted what He bestowed. But what He gives He bestows as a God—freely, bounteously, overflowingly—worthy of an infinite, eternal, self-existent Jehovah! To be truly saved "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling." 2 Timothy 1:9 To be truly saved, is to be saved—from wrath to come—from the power of sin—from an empty profession—from a form of godliness—from the flesh—from the delusions of Satan—from the blindness and ignorance of one’s own heart.

How do you measure your knowledge of truth?

How do you measure your knowledge of truth? Is it by the number of texts that you have learned by heart? Is it by your being able to explain what you see in the Scriptures? Is it by the understanding that you have obtained by comparing passage with passage? If you have no better knowledge than this—it all stands in the flesh—and it is nothing else but ’dim letter speculation’ which leaves the soul barren before God.

Measure your knowledge by this test—what feelings are produced by it—what exercises before God—what breathings in the presence of Him with whom you have to do—what drawings forth of heart—what solemn questionings of soul before Him in whose presence you from time to time stand. Now this test will apply to every degree and stage and state of spiritual life—so far as that spiritual life is in exercise.

Whatever notions or opinions we may previously have had about God—and they may be most clear and systematic, they may run most completely in the channel of letter truth—whatever outward notions, speculations, or imaginations we may have concerning the being of God, we only know Him spiritually so far as He is pleased immediately to manifest Himself to our consciences. All other knowledge stands in the flesh—it is the mere fruit of the creature—and falls utterly short of that knowledge which is spiritual wisdom and eternal life. But whenever the Lord the Spirit brings home the truth of God with power to the soul—He raises up, by the application of that truth—spiritual feelings, spiritual breathings, and spiritual exercises upon that which He is pleased to communicate.

Behold, I am vile "Behold, I am vile." Job 40:4

Sometimes the believer—gets entangled in some temptation—backslides from God—goes out after broken cisterns which hold no water—deserts the living fountain—and seeks pleasure from its idols. If the Christian is entangled in any sin, or caught in any snare of the flesh or temptation of Satan—a tender conscience brings him down to the Lord's feet to moan and sigh and groan; and to confess—what a vile wretch he is to be so entangled with evil—what a monster of iniquity to be so overcome by evil—what a foul, filthy, polluted beast, to have so much evil at work in his heart, and continually carrying him away captive!

We may easily measure men's religion "He who says he remains in Him ought himself also to walk just like He walked." 1 John 2:6

We may easily measure men's religion by this test—not where they are in 'mere doctrine'—not where they are in 'empty notions'—not where they are in 'presumptuous confidence'—not where they are in 'towering speculation.' But where they are in—brokenness of heart—tenderness of conscience—contrition of spirit—meekness of soul—godly fear—filial awe—and trembling reverence. Where is the mind of Christ visible in them? Where is the image of a suffering Lord stamped upon them? It is 'vain confidence' to be always talking about Christ—and to know nothing of the Spirit of Christ. It is 'vain talking' to profess to know the cross of Christ—and never have any reflection of Christ's image in us. It is the worst of folly, and the height of presumption, to boast of ourselves as children of God, when there is nothing of the image of a broken-hearted Lord stamped upon our soul—or visible in our demeanor. Are you, then, a poor broken-hearted child of the living God? Is there any measure of the Spirit of Christ in you? Is there any faint resemblance of His meekness and holy image stamped upon you? A God who will not be mocked nor trifled with

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

If the Lord, then, has showed us any spiritual light, He has showed us light both with respect to Himself and with respect to ourselves. He has showed us, with respect to Himself, who HE is. He has stamped something of Himself upon our consciences. He has brought some testimony concerning Himself into our hearts. He has revealed something of His glorious character to our souls, and brought us, under the operations of the Holy Spirit, into His presence—there to receive communications of life out of Christ's inexhaustible fullness. Thus we see and feel that we have to do with a heart-searching God. We see and feel that we have to do with a sin-hating God. We see and feel that we have to do with a God who will not be mocked nor trifled with. As He is pleased to reveal it to us, we see and feel that every secret of our heart, every working of our mind is open before Him.

Also, so far as He is pleased to manifest it, we see what WE are in His holy and pure eyes—a mass of sin, filth, and corruption—without creature help—without creature strength—without creature wisdom—without creature righteousness—without creature loveliness—without anything of which we can say is spiritually good.

Also, so far as He is pleased to manifest it, He shows us the way of SALVATION through Jesus Christ. He has not only showed us what we are by nature, but He has in a measure condescended

to show us what we are by grace. Not merely brought into our hearts some acquaintance with Himself as a God of perfect justice—but He has also brought into our souls some acquaintance with Him as a God of mercy—and has thus brought us in some solemn measure to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

Absolute dependence upon the Lord "Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield." Psalms 33:20

There seems to be one feature which is common to every believer in whatever stage of spiritual experience he may happen to be—and that is an absolute renunciation of self—and an absolute dependence upon the Lord to work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Let men talk about the wisdom of the creature—or boast of human righteousness—or human merit—or any other such vain figment of the imagination. You will never find any of the Biblical saints breathing forth any other language than a complete renunciation of the creature in all its bearings, and a simple hanging and dependence upon the Lord of life and glory—to manifest Himself to them—to bless them—to teach them—to lead them into all truth. Thus the experience of the saints stamps the lie upon the whole fiction of human merit, creature wisdom, and fleshly righteousness. My grace is sufficient

"And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9 Not your strength—not your wisdom—not your prayers—not your experience—but "My grace"—My free, My matchless grace, independent of all works and efforts, independent of everything in the creature—flowing wholly and solely, fully and freely, out of the bosom of Jesus, to the needy—the guilty—the destitute—the undone. You who are tried in worldly circumstances, who have to endure the hard lot of poverty—My grace is sufficient for you! You who are tempted, day by day, to say or do that which conscience testifies against—My grace is sufficient for you! You who are harassed with family troubles and afflictions, and are often drawn aside into peevishness and fretfulness—My grace is sufficient for you! In whatever state, stage, trial, or circumstance of soul the child of God is, the promise still runs—My grace is sufficient for you! Our weakness, helplessness, and inability are the very things which draw forth the power, the strength, and the grace of Jesus. Believer, your case is never beyond the reach of the words—My grace is sufficient for you! The free, the matchless, sovereign grace of God, is sufficient for all His people—in whatever state, or stage, or trouble, or difficulty they may be in!

O, what opposition

O, what opposition there is to the life of faith! What difficulties, impediments, obstacles, and afflictions lie in a man’s path when he sets out in faith! There is sin perpetually working—there is the devil tempting or harassing him—sometimes the world ensnaring or persecuting him—and often his own heart deceiving and entangling him. Did ever a man see so filthy a sight? As the veil is removed, the soul also begins to see and feel the workings of inward sin that it was previously ignorant of. The removal of the veil not merely shows us the glory of God, but everything contrary to that glory—the pride of our heart—the power of our unbelief—the enmity of our carnal mind—the awful hypocrisy, the daring presumption—the abominable treachery—the fleshy lusts—and all the obscene imaginations of our depraved nature, that will work in us in spite of all our groans and cries to the contrary. All this, as the veil is taken off the soul, becomes more and more manifested, and we have (and O, what a sight it is!) a sight of ourselves! Did ever a man see

so filthy a sight as himself? When he looks down into the sewer of his own nature, does he not see everything there, creeping and crawling, like tadpoles in a ditch, to disgust him? But as a man sees and feels more and more of the workings of his depraved nature, and the breakings forth of the hypocrisy of his treacherous heart—he is brought to look more simply and more singly to the glorious Son of God, and cast himself more sincerely and unreservedly upon that blood which cleanses him from all sin! The veil is taken away!

"For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they didn’t subject themselves to the righteousness of God." Romans 10:3

What a motley monster is man in his natural state—full of evil—continually committing sin—daring God to His face by a thousand crimes—and yet setting up his own righteousness! We might just as well expect that a felon in prison, who is there awaiting in the condemned cell the merited punishment of his aggravated crimes—of his murders, robberies, and continued outrage against all human laws—should hope to come out of prison by his good deeds and obedience to the laws of his country—as expect such a vile wretch as man to hope to climb up to heaven by the ladder of his—good words—good thoughts—good works—and good intentions.

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Self-righteousness in all its forms is so interlaced with every thought of our heart, so intertwined with every fiber of our natural mind, that though we know ourselves to be sinners, yet self-applause and self-complacency bid us do something to gain God’s favor! O, in what a sunken state man is! We never can abase man too much. O, the gulf of misery and ruin into which he has fallen! O, the depths of depravity into which he has been hurled! O, the bottomless abyss of destruction and guilt into which, when Adam fell, he cast himself and all his race! But though so awful is man’s state, yet, "the veil" upon his heart prevents him from seeing the depths of his own fall. This is one of the worst features of man’s ruin—that it is hidden from him—and that he knows nothing of it until, through a miracle of grace, he is plucked out of the pit of horror, and saved from going down to the abyss of hell, with all his sins and crimes upon his head! Ministers, therefore, can never abase man too much, nor point out too clearly the awful abyss of ruin and degradation into which he has fallen. But "the veil" on man’s heart hides from him his own ruin! And until the veil in a measure is removed—he never knows, never sees, never feels one truth aright.

Two grand lessons

There are two grand lessons to be learned in the school of Christ, and all divine teaching is comprehended and summed up in them. One is to learn by the Spirit’s teaching, what WE are by nature—so as to see and feel the utter ruin and thorough wreck of self, and the complete beggary, weakness, and helplessness of the creature in the things of God. This is the first grand branch of divine teaching. And we have to learn this lesson day by day—line upon line, line upon line—here a little, and there a little. Through this branch of divine teaching we have almost daily to wade, and sometimes to sink into very painful depths under a sense of our depraved nature. And the other grand branch of divine teaching is to know who JESUS is, and to know what He is to us—to know the efficacy of His atoning blood to purge the guilty conscience—the power of His justifying righteousness to acquit and absolve from all sin—the mystery of His dying love to break down the hardness of our heart, and raise up a measure of love towards Him—and to see, by the eye of faith, His holy walk and suffering image, so as to be in some measure conformed to Him, and have

His likeness in some measure stamped upon our souls. By these two branches of divine teaching does the Spirit make and keep the children of God humble. And all our various providences, trials, temptations, and deliverances—all we pass through in nature, and all we pass through in grace—in a word, the whole course of circumstances by which the child of God finds himself surrounded—all tend to lead him into these two paths—either into a deeper knowledge of himself, or a deeper knowledge of Christ—in order to humble him, and exalt the Lord of life and glory. To this point all the dealings of the Spirit tend, and in this channel all the teachings of the Spirit run. And every teaching and every experience that does not run in this channel, and does not tend to this point—to abase us, and to bring us down to the dust; and at the same time exalt the Lord of life and glory, and put the crown on his blessed head—does not spring from the teachings of God the Spirit in the heart—for His covenant office is, to take of the things of Christ, and make them known to the soul, so as to exalt and glorify Jesus. That idol, religious self To have nothing and to be nothing but a beggar and a pauper—how this crushes human pride! We must have nothing in self to rest and hang upon. But the truth is, that until self is dethroned—until creature righteousness, creature piety, creature exertions, and creature strength are brought to nothing, we do not enter into the power, blessedness, and reality of Christ's kingdom—we are not fit guests to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We cannot enter into the treasures of pardoning love—see the riches of atoning blood—and feel the glory and beauty of justifying righteousness—until that idol, religious self, is hurled from its pedestal!

While full of pride and self, we cannot follow Jesus into the garden of Gethsemane—nor see, by the eye of faith, the suffering, groaning, agonizing, bleeding Son of God—we cannot take our station at the foot of the cross, and behold the wondrous mystery of Immanuel, the God-Man, bleeding and dying there. While we are engaged in looking at our own pharisaic religion, our own piety, our own exertions, our own doings—we have no eyes to see Jesus, no ear to hear His voice. We are so enamored with ourselves that the King of kings has no beauty in our eyes—He is to us as a root out of a dry ground, and there is no loveliness in Him that we should desire Him. But when we begin to see the ugliness, the depravity, the dreadful workings of self—we see how impossible it is that self can ever stand before God. And when we feel the ruin of self, then we begin to feel what a glorious salvation has been accomplished, according to the counsel and mind of God. We then see the Lord of life and glory stooping down to save wretches who could never climb up to Him—pardoning criminals that have no righteousness of their own—and opening up the treasures of His dying love and risen glory to those who without Him, must utterly perish. As this is revealed to faith, faith embraces it as the great "mystery of godliness"; hope casts out her anchor, and enters within the veil; and love flows out to Jesus, and embraces Him in the arms of affection, for such dying love as that which the Son of God manifested on the cross of Calvary.

Now this experience puts the sinner in his right place—it debases him in his feelings—humbles him in his soul—and breaks him to nothing. And at the same time, it exalts the Lord Jesus in his affections—and He becomes manifestly in his conscience as his all in all. The furnace of affliction "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10 From time to time God puts His people in severe situations and trying circumstances—so that they have no one else to look unto. They have no other help, shelter, or refuge—but out of sheer necessity are obliged to cast their souls on Him who is able to save. The Lord has chosen His people in the furnace of affliction. And O, how real affliction deadens us to everything else!

When there is no affliction, the "world" dances before us with a sunbeam upon it—attractive, dazzling, and beautiful—and we, in our carnal minds, can fly from flower to flower as a butterfly in the sun. Our religion is at a very low ebb when this is the case—there may be a decent profession—but as to any life and power, how little is there except when affliction presses the soul down! We can do without Jesus very well when the world smiles, and carnal things are uppermost in our heart. But let affliction come—a heavy cross, a burden to weigh us down—then we drop into the place where the Lord Jesus Christ alone is to be found. When the soul gets pressed down into the valley of affliction, the Lord is pleased to meet with it there!

Temptation "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation." 2 Peter 2:9

O, how continually is the poor child of God tempted! And what strong temptations! How painful! How powerful! How distracting! How entangling! How harassing! How bewitching! How Satanic is the black devil! How much more Satanic is the white devil! How continually is the child of God exercised with temptation! Temptations—so suitable—so powerful—so overpowering—that nothing but the grace of God can ever subdue the temptation, or deliver the soul out of it!

He fell through the sieve!

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Luke 22:31-32 The Lord did not pray for Judas—he was the son of perdition—and therefore he fell through the sieve, and fell into hell—where he now is—and where he will be to all eternity! And you and I would surely fall through too, unless we have a saving interest in the love and blood of the Lamb. You may escape for a time—but if you have no part in His atoning blood and grace—if He is not pleading for you—sooner or later you will fall through the sieve and will drop into hell—and that perhaps speedily!

Lean, barren, dead & unprofitable

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10 Who that has eyes to see, has not seen this plainly again and again? There shall be a member of a church, and he shall be, while in poor circumstances—a humble, contrite, broken-hearted character. His conversation shall be savory, sweet, and profitable—and receiving many marks of God’s favor, mercy, and love. But he shall have money left to him—or business shall prosper—or he shall marry a rich wife. And what is the effect? He becomes lean, barren, dead and unprofitable—and instead of his conversation being as before—savory and sweet, and upon the things of God—the world, and the things of the world, seem to eat up every green thing in his soul. And is not this a painful operation?

"Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." John 15:2

What are we by nature? Are we not closely riveted and glued—to the world—to the things of time and sense—to our own righteousness—to all that God hates with complete hatred? Must not the sharp sword of God’s Word cut asunder this close union—with the world—with the things of time and sense—with our own righteousness? Surely! Before we can be brought into any vital union with Christ, or any spiritual communion with His most gracious Majesty—the keen knife must pass between—us and self—us and our own righteousness—us and our own fleshly obedience—and

thus separate us from these things. And is not this a painful operation? Can the keen knife pass between—us and the world—us and our fleshly obedience—us and our own righteousness—us and that idol self which we so dearly love and pay such devout worship to—without leaving marks and scars upon our flesh—or without causing some grievous and acute sensations? It cannot! And those who have experienced these things know it cannot. But how indispensable, how utterly indispensable, is this operation in the hands of the Spirit—to cut us off from self—that we may have living union with the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ and self can never unite. Christ's righteousness—and our own righteousness; the love of God—and the love of the world; the worshiping of Jesus—and the worshiping of idols; admiring of ourselves—and admiring of Him; can never sit upon the same throne! Self must be laid in ruins before Jesus can be set up effectually in the heart. There must be a divorce from everything that nature cleaves to, before a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ can be brought about. This is the reason why the Lord's people pass through such severe exercises, perplexities, conflicts, trials, powerful temptations, varied feelings, deep afflictions—to uproot them—to cut them wholly off and out of self—that they may be brought by divine faith to have a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus comes into the heart, He comes as King! Being therefore, its rightful Sovereign, He sways the faculties of the soul, and makes it obedient to His scepter. O Lord our God, other masters have ruled us—but we worship You alone.

If Christ abides in us, there will be some marks and fruits flowing out of that abiding. There will be some outward, as well as inward evidences, that we are of another spirit from those dead in sins, or dead in mere profession. There will be humility, sincerity, godly simplicity, filial fear, deadness to the world, separation from evil, lowly thoughts of ourselves, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, tenderness of conscience, a fleeing from all things here below to make our sweet abode in the bosom of a risen Lord. Can we find these things going on in our souls? If not, we may call ourselves Christians—but we have little evidence that we are worthy of the name!

Earthly, sensual, devilish "This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." James 3:15

James is here contrasting the wisdom which comes from God, with the wisdom which comes from man. What is the decisive stamp which this great Apostle puts upon all human wisdom? He writes upon it three epithets as its distinctive marks—and thus condemns it to the lowest depth of abasement.

First, then, this wisdom which springs from the creature and the flesh has its origin in the EARTH—and above that earth whence it has its source, it can never rise. It must always, therefore, being earth-born, grovel on the ground—out of the earth it grows—and it can never rise above the mists and fogs which cover its native soil.

Secondly, it is "SENSUAL," or "natural" as we read in the margin. Thus, it is a wisdom adapted to our fallen nature—a wisdom which addresses itself entirely to our senses. It knows nothing of God—nothing of heavenly things—nothing of eternal realities—nothing of supernatural and revealed truth—but flows out of and is adapted to reason and sense, knowing only such objects as eye, ear, touch, taste, and smell are cognizant of, and conversant with. It is a wisdom, therefore, which begins in self—and ends in self—and never rises beyond the fallen nature of ruined man. And thirdly, comes that word which debases and degrades all human wisdom, in the matter of

salvation—to the lowest hell. By one word he puts upon it a fatal stamp, as though he would entirely reprobate it—"DEVILISH." It seems as though he would say, "Man, with all his boasted wisdom, is even exceeded by devils in that matter. The fallen spirits, those enemies of God, who are waging eternal war against God and His dear Son, are the parents of that wisdom which is earthly and sensual—and thus are stamped upon it the very features of hell." But bear in mind, that these epithets are applicable to human wisdom—only so far as it interferes with divine matters. In its own province, human wisdom is useful and necessary. It is only when it intrudes itself into divine things, and makes a bold entry into the sanctuary, bringing down sacred and heavenly realities to its own level—that it is to be condemned. It is because he saw that the carrying of natural wisdom into divine things that he condemned its origin as earthly—its nature as sensual—its end as devilish!

Man, then, in a state of nature, has not a grain of heavenly wisdom. He knows nothing experimentally of—the way of salvation—his own ruin and misery—the grace of God—the Person and operations of the Comforter—of His leadings, guidings, teachings, anointings. He may indeed possess a large amount of earthly wisdom—and if a professor of religion, he may carry it up to the greatest height in the 'letter of truth'—he may be wise in the Scriptures—wise in the plan of salvation—wise in comparing text with text, Scripture with Scripture, and passage with passage—but unless a measure of divine wisdom has dropped into his heart from the mouth of God, he has at present nothing but that wisdom which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish."

Divine eye-salve "Anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see." Revelation 3:18

We know nothing except by divine teaching. This leads us to the throne of grace to beg of the Lord to teach us and show us what we are—take the veil off our heart—and discover to us our real state. Divine light in a man's conscience will teach him what he is—and divine life in a man's soul will make him feel what he is. When he has not God's light—he is dark. When he has not God's teachings—he is ignorant. When he has not God's wisdom—he is all folly. When he has not God's guidance—he goes astray. When he has not God's upholding—he falls. When he has not God's preserving—he turns aside into the paths of crookedness and error. We cannot see ourselves—we cannot see others—we cannot see truth—we cannot see Jesus, in His justifying righteousness—atoning blood—dying love—except so far as the blessed Spirit anoints our eyes with eye-salve that we may see! Where are they?

"Preserved in Jesus Christ." Jude 1:1

Oh, it is a mercy to endure! When we look around, and see those who started with us in the Christian race—where are they? Some have gone into the world. Others have fallen into sin. Others have drunk down deadly draughts of heresy and error. But if we endure for a single year, or a single day—it is only by the grace of God! He who has begun the work of grace in the souls of His people will carry it on, and will make them endure—that He may crown His grace with eternal glory.

Mark the contrast!

"But I am poor and needy." Psalms 40:17

What an honest confession! How suitable to the experience of every God-taught soul! Let us contrast this humble confession with the boast that fell from the lips of the Laodicean church—I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing! Mark the contrast! The dead, carnal, lifeless professor, boasting—I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing! The exercised, tried, tempted child of God, confessing, "But I am poor and needy." The one, full of pride, and glorying in self! The other, broken, humble, contrite, and laid low at the footstool of mercy!

He cannot see, nor know, nor feel

If we take the Scriptures as our authority, in what a fearful state is mankind at large! O, how awfully fallen—O, how deeply sunk, man is! And yet one feature of man’s ruined state is his complete ignorance of the depths of the fall. Though the sinful child of a sinful parent—though under the curse of an avenging law—though an enemy to God and godliness—though passing rapidly down the broad road that leads to eternal destruction—he knows it not! The veil of ignorance and blindness is upon his heart, and he is, as the Scripture speaks, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him." God has poured upon him the spirit of slumber—therefore, he cannot see, nor know, nor feel who he is—nor what he is—nor where he is going! Language cannot describe the awful state in which man is.

But, through mercy, infinite mercy—there is "a remnant according to the election of grace," who are made deeply and sensibly to see, to know, and to feel their ruined and lost condition—into whose hearts the blessed Spirit puts a sigh and cry that they may know God’s great salvation—and whom the same blessed Spirit, who first convinced them of their ruined state and implanted that cry in their souls, eventually brings to a happy enjoyment of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit, and He alone—who makes us feel our guilty, lost, and undone condition. It is He, and He alone—who wounds and pierces our heart with conviction—who opens up the depths of the fall—brings to light the evils of our nature—and makes us sigh and lament beneath the load of guilt upon the conscience—and gives us not only to feel the burden of sin, but puts into our hearts a groan and a cry after God’s salvation to be made manifest to our heart. It is He, and He alone—who unfolds to our eyes who the Lord is—who reveals Christ in the heart, who sprinkles His blood upon the conscience—who manifests His justifying righteousness—who gives us eyes to see His glorious Person—and sheds abroad His dying love in the soul.

Take a glance As we take a glance at the suffering and dying Lamb of God, how it shows us the awful and abominable nature of sin! When we can see the Son of God, by the eye of faith, coming down into this lower world, taking our nature into union with His own divine Person—when, by faith, we can accompany the Man of Sorrows into the gloomy garden of Gethsemane—or behold Him groaning, bleeding, and dying on the cross—an object of ignominy and shame—and believe that in this way, and this alone, salvation could be wrought out—O, what a view it gives us of the demerit and awful nature of sin—that nothing short of the incarnation of God’s only begotten Son—nothing short of such a tremendous sacrifice could put away sin—and bring the elect back unto God! A believing sight of the Lord Jesus hanging upon Calvary’s tree, not only on the one hand shows us the awful nature of sin—but on the other, how full, how complete, how glorious, and how effectual must that salvation be of which the expiring Son of God could say, "It is finished!"

Snares, traps, baits The Lord’s people are, from time to time, deeply exercised with the power of sin. They find such ungodly lusts—they feel such horrid evils—the corruptions of their hearts are laid so naked and bare—and they find in themselves such a reckless propensity to all wickedness—they feel sin so strong—and themselves so weak! O how many of the Lord’s people are tempted with sin morning, noon, and night! How many evils, horrid evils, are opening, as it were, their jaws to wholly swallow them up! Wherever they go, wherever they turn, snares, traps, baits seem lying on every side—strewed thickly in their path! They feel so helpless—and so inwardly sensible that nothing but the almighty power of God can uphold them as they walk in this dangerous path—a path strewed with snares on every hand—that they are made to cry to the Lord—Hold me up, and I shall be safe! Nothing short of God’s salvation—in its freeness—in its fullness—in its divine manifestation—in its sin-subduing, lust-killing influence—can save them from the power of sin!

Carnal joy

Carnal joy is killed to a child of God. I do not mean to say, that the ’carnal mind’ is killed. We have too bitter and painful experience to the contrary. But the sources of carnal joy are killed. Why? Because those things which in time past did afford joy, are now discovered to be empty and destitute of the pleasure once found in them. Health, strength, wealth, honor, worldly amusements, sinful pleasures—all these things could once delight and gratify the carnal mind—but God in mercy has put bitterness into this cup. Our carnal mind may still be amused by them for a time. But O, what a gloomy retrospect! and how it pierces the conscience, that we could take a moment’s pleasure, or derive an instant’s happiness from those things which are so hateful and abominable in the sight of God! But if there be any real joy, or happiness, or consolation—it is only in Christ—His blood—His righteousness—His love—His preciousness—His suitability—His tender compassion—the riches of His grace—His glorious Person—all that He is—and all that He has for us.

If ever, as we pass through this wilderness, we feel one drop of solid joy, of true happiness, it must flow, it can flow only from one source—the manifestations of Christ to our souls. We can find joy and peace in Him alone. Sin, the world, the things of time and sense—business, amusement, so-called pleasure—afford now no true joy—there is an aching void—a feeling of dreariness and misery connected with everything short of divine communications of mercy, favor, and love. One smile from the Lord—one word from His lips—one gracious breaking in of the light of His countenance—does, while it lasts, communicate joy—and from no other quarter, from no other source can a moment’s joy be drawn.

Baubles, toys, passing shadows "That in Me you may have peace." John 16:33

Peace in self! That never can be found. Peace in the world! That never can be had. Peace in sin! God forbid any of His children should dream of peace there for a moment. Peace in the things of time and sense! Are they not all polluted—all baubles, toys, passing shadows—smoke out of the chimney—chaff on of the summer threshing floor? Can a tried, tempted, dejected believer, cast down with the difficulties of the way—can he find any peace in these things? His carnal mind may, to his shame, for a while be drawn aside by them—his wicked lusts and passions may be entangled in them—his fallen nature may grovel amid these poor perishing daydreams. But peace? There is no peace in these things! And so long as our wicked hearts are going out after

wicked things, there will be no true, solid peace within.

Now the Lord designs that all His dear family should have peace in Him. He therefore drives them out of every refuge of lies that they may find no peace in self. He brings them out of the world, that they may find no peace there. He hunts them out of sin, that they may find no peace there. He sees fit also to exercise their minds, and to try them again and again, that finding no peace in anything else—they may come as poor broken-hearted sinners to the footstool of mercy, look unto Jesus, and find peace in Him!

Glued & fettered The Lord has promised, that in the world we shall have tribulation. But how this staggers a child of God! He cannot understand that his allotted path in the world should be tribulation. And yet how needful—how indispensably needful it is—to have tribulation in the world—for how closely bound up our heart is in it. How glued and fettered our carnal heart is to the things of time and sense! What proneness—what daily, hourly proneness there is—to go after idols—to amuse our vain mind with passing shows—to take an interest in the smallest trifles which surround us—and thus forsake the Fountain of living waters—and hew out to ourselves cisterns—broken cisterns, that hold no water. What a veil of enchantment, too, is often over our eyes—and therefore, what a series of troubles—what days, and weeks, and months, and years of trial does it take to convince us that the world is—not our home—not our rest—not our enduring habitation. But the Lord mercifully and graciously makes use of tribulation in various shapes and forms, to bring us out of the world—that we may not be condemned with it—nor make it our rest and home. Thus He draws us to His blessed feet, that in Him we may find that peace which we never have found—which we never can find anywhere else. In the world we never can have—we never will have—anything but tribulation and trial. But what is the effect—the merciful effect, of these troubles? Is there not a voice with them? When the ear is opened—tribulation speaks. Are there not most beneficial fruits and effects that flow out of tribulation? For instance. Is not our heart by nature very much glued to the world? Do we not naturally love and cleave to it? As we watch the varied movements of our hearts—are they not perpetually going out after something idolatrous—something to gratify and amuse, to interest, occupy, and please our carnal mind?

It is in order to bring us out of the world, and make us feel it is not our abiding place, and that no happiness is to be found in it—that the Lord sees necessary to lay tribulation upon us—and tribulation of that peculiar nature which will genuinely separate us from the world. When we are passing through tribulation, what a poor vain thing the world appears to us! We need inward consolation—the world cannot give it. We need balm for our conscience—the world, instead of pouring in that balm, rather rips the wound asunder. So that we need—tribulation after tribulation—trial upon trial—affliction upon affliction—stroke upon stroke—grief upon grief—sorrow upon sorrow—to cut asunder that close affinity which there is between us and the world, and to convince us in our very heart and conscience that there is—no rest—no peace—no happiness—no consolation—to be found in anything that the world presents!

Dark marks stamped upon this bright profession!

If we cast a glance at the profession of some, it is all upon the bright side of things. They would gladly have you believe that they are actually and experimentally before God, what they profess to be before men. But when we come with close and searching eye to watch the fruits that spring from this 'splendid profession,' how little do they correspond with the profession itself! Pride,

covetousness, worldly-mindedness, levity and frivolity, a hard, contentious spirit, irreverence in divine things, running heedlessly into debt, general looseness of conduct. How often are these dark marks stamped upon this bright profession! They hold the truth doctrinally—but the work of the Spirit upon the heart is unknown! That huge, that deformed, that ugly idol "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." Hosea 14:4 Have you never backslidden from God? The Lord in mercy may have kept you from backsliding openly, or bringing a reproach upon His cause. But backslidings are not limited to open sins. Are there no heart idolatries? No eye adulteries? No departing from the living God? No hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water? No cleaving to the world? No delighting in the things of time and sense? No hugging in your bosom that huge, that deformed, that ugly idol, more ugly than the hand of Hindu ever framed—yourself, that monster self—which you so love, admire, and almost adore? Self, that ugly monster, will be perpetually drawing away your eyes and affections from the living God—to center in that worthless and abominable idol. Now, when we feel, deeply and daily feel, our inward idolatries, backslidings, adulteries, and departings from the living God—has not the Lord given a gracious promise that these backslidings shall be healed? He says, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." Our cobweb garment of creature righteousness Our cobweb garment of creature righteousness must be taken from us! We need to be stripped of those ’filthy rags’ which cannot shield us from the eye of omniscient Justice. When the corruptions of our heart are laid bare—when sin is allowed to come in like a flood, so as to sweep away all those ’dreams of fleshly holiness and creature perfection’—when we are put into Satan’s sieve and have our religion shaken backwards and forwards until every sound grain seems gone, and nothing rises to the top but the chaff which the wind blows away—when the Lord puts the soul into the furnace of affliction, and nothing comes to the surface but the dross and scum which are taken away by the Refiner—then we lose this ’fleshly holiness’ that we once so dearly prized—and so ardently and anxiously longed to obtain. It is lost, utterly lost, when the Lord gives us a sight of what we are, and gives us a glimpse of what He is!

Little else than ignorance & folly!

There was a time, doubtless, with us, when we fancied ourselves very wise—especially when we had made some little progress, as we fancied, in religion, and had stored a few doctrines in our heads—when we had read a few authors, or had studied the Bible, and compared passage with passage and chapter with chapter. We doubtless congratulated ourselves on possessing a vast amount of wisdom—and thought we knew everything because we had some understanding in the ’letter of God’s word.’ But when we get into difficulties, trials, temptations, and perplexities—then our wisdom all disappears, and we find it little else than ignorance and folly! It does not avail us when most needed. It cannot guide us into paths of peace. It cannot keep us from evil or error. Like a foot out of joint, it gives way the moment any weight or stress is laid upon it! The Sculptor

God deals with the soul in grace, as the clever sculptor deals with the marble block. He chips out a piece here, and makes prominent a piece there—and at last brings out the beautiful figure. So the blessed Spirit—that true sculptor, who engraves Christ’s image in the heart—sometimes gives and sometimes takes—sometimes pares here, sometimes puts on there—until at last He brings forth the image of Christ in the soul! The lusts of the flesh!

How strong are the lusts of the flesh! What power they have over the imagination! And how seductive they become, if in the least degree indulged—until the heart becomes a cage of unclean birds! The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye have sunk many a poor child of God into the deepest bondage! Pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, over-anxiety in business, conformity to worldly fashions in dress and furniture, society with those who fear not God—what crying evils are these in our day and generation!

If you want to eat your food in misery "Give us day by day our daily bread." Luke 11:3

It is seeing the Lord’s providential hand which makes the commonest temporal mercies sweet. Our daily bread—our various earthly and most undeserved comforts—our clothing—our house and home—our family and friends—are all bestowed upon us by God’s kind providence! It is doubly sweet when we can receive them as immediately from the hands of God—as though He Himself brought them unto us! Whenever, then, we can see the goodness of God in giving us the bounties of providence, it seems to stamp upon them a double value—and we enjoy them, as it were, with a twofold relish—as coming from His bounteous hand!

If you want to eat your food in misery, take it with a thankless, rebellious heart. If you want to eat in sweetness, take it with a thankful heart—seeing it stamped with the goodness of God. A crust of bread, received thankfully as the gift of God, is sweeter than the richest and daintiest meal in which His hand is not seen—at a table so spread, you may sit down with discontent, and rise up with ingratitude. My groaning!

"Lord, all my desire is before You. My groaning is not hidden from You." Psalms 38:9 The Lord’s people are very subject to carnality, darkness, hardness, deadness, barrenness, and lukewarmness. And sometimes there seems to be only just so much life in their souls as to feel these things—and groan under them. Under these feelings, therefore, they cry to the Lord—they cannot bear that carnality and darkness, barrenness and death—which seems to have taken possession of them. They come with these burdens to the throne of grace, beseeching the Lord to revive His work in their hearts.

What is implied in the expression, ’my groaning’? Do we not groan under a sense of pain? It is the most natural expression of our feelings when we are under acute suffering. The woman in travail of childbirth—the patient under the keen knife of the surgeon—the man afflicted with some painful internal disease—can only give vent to their distressing feelings by groaning. And is it not so spiritually? When the Lord’s people groan, it shows there is some painful sensation experienced within them—and these painful feelings they can only express by groaning aloud before the footstool of mercy!

10.07. Volume 7

God’s presence!

What solemn feelings are produced in the mind under a sense of God’s presence! How the Lord’s presence turns night into day—makes every crooked thing straight—and every rough place plain! How it banishes all the gloom, melancholy, and despondency which hang over the soul! How it clears up every difficulty—and like the shining sun, it drives away the damps and darkness of the night. If there is one thing to be coveted more than another, it is that the Lord’s presence might be more felt in our hearts!

If I wash myself with snow By nature, man knows nothing of the purity and perfection of God—or the deep sinfulness and corruption of the creature. There is a veil over man’s heart—a veil of ignorance—of delusion—of unbelief—of self-deception as regards the nature of sin. No man is vitally and experimentally acquainted with—its hideous nature—its awful depths—its subtlety—its workings—its movements—its cravings—its lustings—the heights to which it rises—the depths to which it sinks. But when the Lord the Spirit takes a man really and vitally in hand—and He truly begins His sovereign work of grace upon the soul—He commences by opening up to the astonished eyes of the sinner, something of the real nature of sin. He not only shows him the huge, high, wide-spreading branches of sin—but bids him look down and see how deeply-rooted sin is in his very being—that sin is not an accident—a faint blot that may soon be washed out—a something on the surface, like a skin disease that may be healed by a simple ointment. He shows him that sin is seated in his very bones—that this deep-rooted malady has taken possession of him—that he is a sinner to his very heart’s core—that every thought, every word, every action of man’s whole being—is one mass of sin, filth, and pollution. And if he attempts, as most awakened sinners do attempt—to purify himself—to ease his guilt by lopping off a few external branches—if he attempts to wash himself clean from iniquity, the Spirit will teach him the meaning of Job’s words, "If I wash myself with snow, and cleanse my hands with lye, yet You will plunge me in the ditch. My own clothes shall abhor me." (Job 9:30-31). Until at last God brings him to this spot—that he is a sinner throughout—yes, that he is the chief of sinners—that every evil lodges in his heart—and the seed of every crime dwells in his fallen nature. When a man is brought here, he is brought to the place of the stopping of mouths—his own righteousness is effectually cut to pieces—his hopes of salvation by his works are completely removed from under him. Those rotten props are cut away by the hand of the Spirit from the sinking soul, that he may fall into himself one mass of confusion and ruin. And until he is brought here, he really can know nothing—of a free-grace salvation—of the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin—of God’s electing love—of Christ’s substitution and suretyship—of His atoning blood—of His justifying righteousness—of His dying love. He can know nothing of the rich provisions of almighty power and eternal mercy that are lodged in the fullness of Christ. He has—no eyes to see—no ears to hear—no heart to feel—no arms to embrace a whole Christ—a precious Christ, a Savior from the wrath to come—who has stood in the sinner’s place and stead—made full atonement for sin—fulfilled the law—brought in everlasting righteousness—and justified the ungodly! The

unceasing conflict "Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me?" Psalms 42:5

One thing that casts down the souls of God's family is the unceasing conflict which they have to maintain—between those desires to live under God's leading—and those desires to live after the course of this world. In other words, the conflict between nature and grace—between the spirit and the flesh—will always cast down the soul in proportion to the intensity of the struggle. To be baffled, as we are hourly baffled, in all our attempts to do good—to find the carnality of our hearts perpetually obstructing every desire that rises in our bosom to be heavenly-minded, spiritual, enjoy God's word, feel His presence, and live to His honor and glory—thus to have the tide of carnality and pollution perpetually bearing down every spiritual desire in the heart—must not that cast down the soul which covets nothing so much as to live under a sense of God's presence and favor? And that this conflict should be a perpetual and unceasing one—that we should have so little respite from it—that it should not be merely now and then, but more or less, in proportion to the depth of godly fear—always be going on in our soul—must not this cast down the poor soul which is the subject of it? I am sure it cast me down day after day, and sometimes hour after hour—to feel such an unceasing and perpetual conflict between that in us which is spiritual, heavenly, and holy—and that in us which is earthly, carnal, sensual, and devilish! The Lord sends afflictions for a special purpose "Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me?" Psalms 42:5 The many afflictions that the Lord's people have to pass through, is one cause of their souls being cast down. And the Lord intends these things to cast them down. The Lord in sending afflictions means them to do a certain work. We are high—afflictions are sent to bring us low. We are proud—afflictions are meant to humble. We are worldly—afflictions are meant to purge out of us this worldly spirit. We are carnal—afflictions are sent to subdue this carnality. We are often straying from the Lord into bypaths—afflictions are meant to bring us into the strait and narrow path that leads to glory. Now the Lord sends afflictions for a special purpose—and this special purpose is to cast down the soul—that He Himself may have the honor of raising it up! The greatest burden & trial "Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me?" Psalms 42:5

One of the greatest, if not the greatest burden and trial to the child of God, is the daily, hourly, minutely, momently workings of sin. The adulterous eye—the roving heart—the defiled imagination—the constant stream of iniquity polluting every word and thought, every feeling and desire—is and must be a burden to the soul—just in proportion as the fear of God lives and works in a man's conscience. And whenever sin gets the mastery over us, though it be but for a short time, (I am not speaking here necessarily of gross sins, or of outward falls—for sin in some shape or other is perpetually striving to rule within where it does not rule without), guilt will as surely follow it as the shadow does the sun. But even where sin does not get the mastery, those whose consciences are tender in God's fear, continually feel the workings of pride, hypocrisy, presumption, self-righteousness, carnal desires, filthy lusts, worldly-mindedness—and of everything that is hateful and vile in the eyes of a holy God. Do we not continually find how, in spite of all our desires, and all the resolutions we make to the contrary, how instantaneously temptation sets fire to the combustible materials we carry within? And what a dreadful flame there is at times bursting forth in our carnal mind? These things, I am sure, will bring guilt, shame, and sorrow upon every conscience that is quickened to fear God. And just in proportion to the depth and working of

godly fear in a man’s soul will be the burden of sin from time to time upon his conscience.

Such a poor, blind, ignorant creature as I

He who knows himself by divine teaching, and has had a glimpse of future bliss and glory, will often reason with himself, "How is such a poor, blind, ignorant creature as I—surrounded by so many enemies—oppressed or beguiled by so many of Satan’s temptations—beset by the workings of a depraved nature—how am I ever to enter the heavenly inheritance, and enjoy the promised rest?" To get to heaven we must wade through difficulties, improbabilities, and impossibilities. We shall meet with hindrances, impediments, obstacles. And yet, for the Christian, grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin, and lands him safe in glory! A great deal of talk about religion

How many there are who are mistaking the ’form of religion’ for the power of it—mistaking ’doctrines learned in the head’ for the teachings of the Spirit in the soul! There is a great deal of talk about religion—but how few know anything of—what true religion is—the secret of vital godliness—the inward teachings and operations of the Spirit upon the heart! Many men speak fluently enough of doctrines, and of the blessed truths of the gospel. But what good can mere doctrines do for me—unless they are sealed on my heart, and applied with divine power to my conscience? Without this, the greatest truths can do me no good. But when the Lord lays us low, puts us into the furnace, and drags us through the waters—He shows us that true religion, vital godliness, is something deeper, something more spiritual, something more supernatural, something that stands more in the teachings of God the Spirit and His operation on the heart, than ever we dreamt of before we entered upon the trial. We might have had the clearest views of doctrinal truth—and yet these were but ’dim notions floating in the head,’ before we came into the furnace. But these things now are seen in a different light, and felt in a totally different manner. What before was but a doctrine—becomes now a most certain truth. And what before was but a sound sentiment—is now sealed as a living reality in experience. As the Lord, then, brings us into the dust, He strips away our ’mere notional, doctrinal religion.’ He begins to open up to our heart the real nature of vital godliness—that it is something deeper, something more spiritual, something more powerful, something more experimental than anything we have ever yet known—that it consists in the teachings and leadings of God the Spirit in the conscience. As soon as this is felt, it strips a man of everything he has learned in the flesh—and brings him down to the dust of death. And when brought there, the blessed Spirit opens up the truths of the gospel in a way he had never known before. Many people know the truth in the letter—but how few by the teachings and operations of God the Spirit in the heart! They have sound views of the way of salvation—but it has never been wrought out with a mighty power into their soul. They have clear heads—but their hearts are not broken into contrition and godly sorrow. Their minds are well-instructed in the truths of the gospel—but these truths have not been communicated by an unction from the Holy One.

Until a man is made to see the emptiness of a mere profession—to have his free-will stripped and purged away—and to be brought out of that empty religion so generally current—and is broken down into humility at the footstool of divine mercy—he will not feel the power, the reality, the sweetness, and the blessedness of the overwhelming love of God displayed in the gospel. Until the soul is thus stripped—until the vessel is thus emptied—these things cannot be known—nor is it in a condition to receive the glorious riches of free grace. Until the dross and tin is removed from

the heart—the pure metal cannot shine. Until this chaff is blown away—the wheat lies heaped up in one confused mass on the threshing floor. The Lord, therefore, will test His work on the heart—for He is a jealous God, and He will not give His glory to another—but reserves to Himself, His prerogative of sovereign mercy, and of saving to the uttermost. This sacred teaching

All God's people are sooner or later brought to this point in their experience—they are all brought to know their own sinfulness, ignorance, and helplessness. And when their eyes are thus anointed with eye-salve to discover their own wretchedness, the same unction from the Holy One reveals to them what Christ has done to save them from it! They learn by this sacred teaching, their own iniquity—and His atoning blood; their misery—and the bliss and blessedness which is secured up in Him! And when these two extremes meet in the quickened soul, it is brought in one and the same moment—while it debases itself—to exalt the Lord of life and glory! And while it thus sinks down in the depth of creature wretchedness—it learns to glory in the Lord Jesus alone, as its all in all. When the eye is spiritually opened When the eye is spiritually opened to see the glory of Jesus, it follows Him as a suffering Mediator to Calvary—there to view Him as a crucified Jesus—as the Lamb of God bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. And as the child of God looks by faith to the bleeding Lamb, he desires to have a spiritual revelation and manifestation of the mystery of the cross to his heart. And by this dying love entering into his soul, he is able to understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep the love of Jesus really is!

Only the dying love of Christ spiritually felt and realized, can wean the soul from the world, and make the things of time and sense to appear in their true light—as stamped with vanity and vexation of spirit. The dying love of Christ, also, revealed to the soul, is the only thing that can make us love Jesus, and cleave to Him with full purpose of heart. Nothing but the dying love of Jesus can make us willing to leave the world, and part with the things of time and sense, so that we may forever be with the Lord. As the Lord Jesus in His endearing relationships is presented to the eyes of the spiritual understanding, faith flows out towards, hope anchors in, and love clasps firm hold of Him as thus revealed—and thus ardent desires and fervent longings are kindled in the soul to know Him experimentally in all these relations—and inwardly realize their sweetness and power!

Every other object of desire & affection faded away

"I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ." Php 3:8

God, by a secret and powerful work in Paul's conscience, not only—cast down all his fleshly confidence—stripped him entirely of his natural religion—showed him the emptiness of every hope in which he had so fondly trusted—but also, He manifested to his understanding, and revealed in his soul a precious Savior—and thus drew forth all the affections of his heart, fixing them wholly and solely upon Jesus. Paul then saw, by the eye of faith, such loveliness and preciousness in Christ, that every other object of desire and affection faded away—and those aims and pursuits which once seemed his richest gain, he could now rejoice in and pursue no longer—they utterly sank in his esteem—vanity and emptiness were stamped upon them—and he counted them as absolute loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

Holy longing & intense desires "That I may know Him." Php 3:10

There can be no earnest desire to know Christ, nor any holy panting after a spiritual revelation of Him—while the heart is pursuing worldly objects. But he who is spiritually taught is at times panting with holy longing and intense desires to know Jesus—that He would come down in His heavenly power, in all His sweetness and suitability—and take up His abode in his soul, conforming it to His own image and likeness.

God will have all the glory!

"My glory will I not give to another." Isaiah 42:8

God will have all the glory to Himself! But you and I are such base wretches, that we would rob the Lord Himself of His glory—if He did not teach us otherwise. If He did not open up to us the depth of our corruption, and show us the depravity that lurks and works in our carnal minds—if He did not cover our faces with shame—if He did not put us in the furnace to burn out our pride—if He did not drag us through the water to drown our hypocrisy—if He did not humble us under a daily sense of our frailty and feebleness—we would soon want to sit down on the same throne with the Lord—and share the glory of salvation with Him! Your greatest sweets

We often find that those very times when God's people think they are faring ill—are the seasons when they are really faring well. And again, at other times, when they think they are faring well—then they are really faring ill. For instance, when their souls are bowed down with trouble—it often seems to them that they are faring ill. God's hand appears gone out against them in trouble, sorrow, and affliction. These troubles wean them from the world. If their heart and affections were going out after idols—these troubles instrumentally bring them back. If they were hewing out broken cisterns—these troubles dash them all to pieces. If they were setting up, and bowing down to idols in the chambers of imagery—affliction and trouble smite them to pieces before their eyes—take away their gods—and leave them no refuge but the Lord God almighty.

If you can only look back, you will often see that your greatest sweets have sprung out of your greatest bitters, and the greatest blessings have flowed from the greatest miseries, and what at the time you thought your greatest sorrows—you will find that the brightest light has sprung up in the blackest darkness, and that the Lord never made Himself so precious as at the time when you were sunk lowest—so as to be without human help, wisdom, or strength. So that when a child of God thinks he is faring very ill, because burdened with sorrows, temptations, and afflictions—he is never faring so well.

Such a mystery

True religion is such a mystery. When we think we are faring well—we are often faring ill. When we think we are faring ill—we are often faring well. When we think that now we have got into an easy, smooth, and comfortable path—it is then leading us wrong. When we say, 'The path is so rugged and intricate; we are so perplexed, and so little able to see the way that we fear we are out of the track altogether'—that is the very time when the Lord is leading us in the right way!

Sometimes we feel, 'We are so black and polluted—such awful sinners—such horrible creatures—that the Lord cannot look on us!' That is the very moment when He may smile into the heart! When we may think we are getting on at a rapid pace in spirituality and holiness, making

wonderful advances in the divine life, and getting almost to the pinnacle of 'creature perfection'—we discover through some terrible inward slip, that we are on the wrong path, and have been drawn aside by self-righteousness and pharisaical pride. So that at last we seem brought to this point—to have no wisdom of our own to see the way—and to have no strength to walk in the way when seen—but that we must be guided every step by the Lord Himself. And thus we sink down into creature nothingness and creature emptiness, and feel no more merit in our heart, lip, or life, why God should save us, than there is in Satan himself. And thus we sink so low—that none but God Himself can lift us up. And this is the very time when God usually appears—and most singularly displays His mercy, love, and grace!

Now, it is by walking in this trying path that we learn our utter ruin—and learn to prize God's salvation. The power of saving truth is only prized by those whom God is thus teaching. Others are satisfied with 'shadows'—but those that are deeply exercised in their mind, must have the 'substance.' Those who have had their false refuges destroyed—their lying hopes broken—and a thousand difficulties and perplexities surrounding them—as the Lord opens the eyes, and brings His truth before them—want the power and application of this truth to their heart. Nothing suits or satisfies them but the unction of the Spirit—and the dew of God's power and presence resting on and felt in their souls. They can no longer be satisfied with the mere form—no longer rest for salvation on a few notions—no longer hang their eternal all upon the good opinion of the creature. And thus, by this painful work in their souls, they learn—that they have no more religion than God works in them—that they can only know what God teaches them—that they can only have what He communicates to them—and that they are wholly and solely dependent upon Him to guide and keep them every moment of their lives!

Worldly men indeed despise them—mere professors hate them—the devil harasses them—their names are generally cast out as evil—and universal charity, which has a good opinion of all, has not a single, good word for them! That they are such a mystery to others is no wonder, when they are such a mystery to themselves. How they hold on they cannot tell—but they find they cannot move unless God moves them. How they pray is a mystery—yet at times they feel the spirit of prayer alive in their bosoms. How their souls are kept pleading and waiting for the Lord at the footstool of His mercy is a mystery—yet they cannot deny that this is the experience of their hearts. So that when they come to look at the way in which the Lord has led them, from first to last—it is all an unfathomable mystery!

Why God should have chosen them in Christ is a mystery. Why He should have quickened their souls when "dead in trespasses and sins," is a mystery. Why He should have wrought a sense of contrition in their hearts is a mystery. Why He should have given a sense of His love to them is a mystery. Why He should have preserved them from error, while thousands have been entangled in it, is a mystery. Why He should keep them day by day, and hour by hour—without allowing them to disgrace His cause, deny His truth, turn their back on Him, or go into the world, is a mystery. And yet they find that they have and are all these things—so that the greatest mystery of all is—that they are what they are!

Thus, do they fare well, because God takes care they shall fare well. He manages all their concerns—He watches over them by night and by day—He waters them continually—He guides and leads them until He brings them home to His heavenly kingdom!

Destitute of vital godliness "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power." 2 Timothy 3:5

There is nothing so deceitful as having "a form of godliness," while the "power" of it is denied—nothing so delusive as having a "name to live," while the soul is dead before God. If there is one hypocritical character more than another, whom the man of God should point out—it is he who, with a profession, is destitute of vital godliness—he who has the 'form of doctrinal truth in the judgment,' but who never has experienced 'the power of that truth in his soul'—humbling him in the dust, and raising him up to a spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our lost, ruined state "My soul stays close to You." Psalms 63:8

Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Until we are divinely enlightened to see, and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state, we are satisfied with the things of time and sense—our hearts are in the world—our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away—and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul.

Inward ornaments

"Let your beauty be not just the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on fine clothing; but in the hidden person of the heart, in the incorruptible adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God very precious." 1 Peter 3:3-4

O what wise instruction does the Apostle give to those wives and daughters that profess godliness! And how he warns them against attiring themselves like the daughters of Belial, and following the women of Canaan in their love of gay and fashionable apparel—while they slight the inward adornings of the Spirit, such as kindness, gentleness, meekness, and humility! But how far better are these inward ornaments which the Spirit of God puts into the heart! And how much more lovely do they look thus spiritually attired than if loaded with all the finery that the daughters of Belial array themselves in! A precious, saving experience A precious, saving experience springs out of the teaching of God in the soul, and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. Every conviction of sin that springs from the Spirit's inward convincing operations is precious as being the handiwork of God. Every sigh, every cry, every groan, every tear, every honest, humble confession before God of what we have been and are, is precious—because it is wrought by a divine power in the soul and the result of it, is salvation. Every sweet manifestation of the Son of God to the soul—every glimpse, glance, gleam, or view of His glorious Person by faith—every shining in of the light of His countenance—every application of His Word with power—every whisper of His heavenly love—every drawing of His divine grace—every application of His precious truth to the heart is precious. It comes from God—it leads to God—it is the work of the Holy Spirit—it prepares the soul for eternity—it is a jewel of God's own gift.

Even the humblings that we experience under the hand of God—the breaking down of a hard heart—the softening of an obdurate spirit, the melting of soul under the breath of the Lord—with the going forth of supplication, confession, and desire unto the God of all our mercies to look upon us and bless us—is precious, because it is His gift and work. Everything which—brings out of self—draws to the Lord—makes sin hateful—makes Jesus precious—puts the world under our feet—gives us the victory over sin—weans us from the love of self—and makes the Lord Jesus precious, should be called a precious experience!

They will not & cannot give it up

Grace calls us out of the world—out of the love and spirit of it. But where there is no regenerating grace, the world cleaves so fast to men's hearts that they will not and cannot give it up—they rest in the world and the satisfaction that the world gives. Others are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Satan spreads his snares for their feet—some base lust—some vile scheme—some covetous plan—some secret plan which he has baited with a bait exactly suitable to their fallen nature—he spreads for their feet—they are entangled, overcome, and become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!

O visit me "O visit me with Your salvation." Psalms 106:4

How is a man brought and taught to want to be "visited with" God's salvation? He must know something first of condemnation. Salvation only suits the condemned. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost," and therefore salvation only suits the lost. A man must be lost—utterly lost—before he can prize God's salvation. And how is he lost? By losing all his religion—losing all his righteousness—losing all his strength—losing all his confidence, losing all his hopes—losing all that is of the flesh—losing it by its being taken from him—and stripped away by the hand of God. A man who is brought into this state of utter beggary and complete bankruptcy—to be nothing—to have nothing—to know nothing—he is the man who in the midnight watches, in his lonely hours, by his fireside, and at times well-near night and day—is crying, groaning, begging, suing, seeking, and praying after the manifestation of God's salvation to his soul—O visit me with Your salvation!

He needs a visit from God! He wants God to—come and dwell with him—take up His abode in his heart—discover Himself to him—manifest and reveal Himself—sit down with him—eat with him—walk with him—and dwell in Him as his God. And a living soul can be satisfied with nothing short of this. He must have a visit. It profits him little to read in the Word of God what God did to His saints of old. He wants something for himself—something that shall do his soul good. He wants something that shall cheer, refresh, comfort, bless and profit him—remove his burdens—and settle his soul into peace. And therefore he wants a visitation—that the presence and power, the mercy and love of God should visit his soul. The Word, in the hands of the Spirit

True and saving religion is the work of the Holy Spirit operating upon the heart through the Word—giving us faith by the application of the Word—raising up hope by the power of the Word—shedding abroad love by bringing the truth of the Word with power into the soul. The Word, in the hands of the Spirit, has—an enlightening power—a quickening influence—a penetrating energy—a divine force—an invincible power—which carries it into the inmost depths of the soul. This special and invincible power distinguishes the work of the Spirit from all and every work of the flesh. The work in those who merely believe for a time is superficial, shallow, external—there is no penetration with divine power, so as to change the man in the depths of his heart, to renew him in the spirit of his mind, and make him a new creature in Christ.

Free from its power & influence "And you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:32

We are by nature in bondage to the world. But a saving knowledge of the truth will bring a freedom from the world, and all its alluring charms—its vain attractions—its sensual pleasures—its carking cares—its toils and anxieties. It sets the soul free from being entangled in, overcome, and

over-burdened by these things—as if they were our all. We still have to do with the world. We must be daily occupied with it. But the truth will give you sweet liberty from it. You will not—walk with the men of the world—love the company of the world—nor be entangled in the love of the world—because the truth in its purity and power applied to your heart, will make you free from its power and influence. There is no holy liberty but the freedom which springs from the blessed influence and operations of the Holy Spirit on the heart, applying the Word of God with power to the soul. This gives true freedom—brings into the soul real liberty—and relieves it from that bondage in which we have so often to walk.

It is hard work to have our filth removed "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

It is hard work to have our filth removed, and often takes a long time to effect, and that, perhaps, amid much opposition and rebellion against such humbling dealings. But we shall be made, sooner or later, to pine after the Lord’s sensible presence in our soul, and then we shall feel, that before we can realize it, there must be a solemn repenting and honest confession of sin—and that we must fall down before God as poor guilty sinners, condemned in our own conscience. We stand as long as we can upon our own legs—we rest as long as we can upon something in self. But all this self-dependence and self-righteousness, sooner or later, must come down—must give way—though it may take years to do it—with trial upon trial—affliction after affliction—and temptation after temptation. The Lord brings us to fall flat before Him in the dust of self-abasement, having no hope but in Him. But when He has purged away the filth of pride, self-righteousness, creature strength, with all other evils—and there is nothing left in the soul but the ashes of self—we can fall flat before God, putting our mouth in the dust. Then He will come—gently and sweetly come over all the hills and mountains of our sin and shame—and manifest His sensible presence to our souls. Your money "You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19 Your money is not your own. You may not spend it just as you please—without check of conscience—without restraint of godly fear—without putting to yourself any inquiry how far you are spending it aright. You should be like a miser who looks at every shilling before he parts with it. So should every shilling be looked at, carefully and narrowly, by a Christian, whether it is spent for the honor and glory of God or not. I grant that this may seem to tie us up very closely, and that is one reason, perhaps, why the people of God are kept, for the most part, so tight in hand, that they have very little loose money to spend as they like. But even if we have a competency, or perhaps more than a competency, if we are under divine influences and gospel obligations, although we may have the money, we cannot throw it here and there to please and gratify the flesh—adorning the body with costly clothing, either for ourselves or our children—and decorating the house with new and unnecessary furniture. This is not the obligation of gospel grace. Your money is not your own, if you are a Christian. You are but a steward. If you have much, the more responsible you are for the right use of it. If you have little, still you are a steward for that little. A slavery too galling for our proud heart to bear!

"Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." John 8:34

Once we thought we were our own. We dreamed of liberty—when we really were in the hardest, cruelest bondage. We thought we had no master—when we were serving the hardest of all masters. We boasted of our freedom—that we could do what we liked, and say what we liked,

without being called to account for it by anyone—that we could roam at will, like a bee, from flower to flower, sucking up the sweets of sin—and promising to ourselves as rich a feast on the morrow, as we were enjoying today. We little dreamt that all the time sin held us fast in fetters which—though they seemed made of silk—yet really were of iron! It is the greatest delusion to think and call ourselves free—when we are slaves to pride and lust!

Now during all this time of 'imagined freedom'—but real servitude, it seemed as if we were our own lord and master. The idea of independence was sweet to us, and to be dependent upon anyone, even upon the God who made us, was a slavery too galling for our proud heart to bear! But now assume that grace has made us free from this 'imagined independence'—but real slavery—that the gospel has been made the word of salvation to our souls—that we have been brought under new obligations—live under fresh constraints—are influenced by different motives—are led by another spirit—and are brought into a childlike dependence upon God, both in providence and in grace. We can now feel the force of the apostle's words—Ye are not your own.

Now you can look back upon a time when you served hard masters, and yet loved their service. The world had possession of your affections—sin domineered, rioted, and raged in your carnal heart. SELF was uppermost in all your thoughts and desires, and whatever line of conduct it prompted, or rather, 'commanded,' you willingly obeyed. Now when you were under these hard masters, though their servitude was sweet to you as long as you thought you were your own, you could do, to a certain extent, as you pleased with yourself. Your jailer, though he watched you narrowly as being able to pounce upon you at any moment, like a cat on a wounded mouse, yet gave you a certain latitude, as knowing thereby you would do more effectually his work and bind his chains more strongly round your neck. In this way, therefore, your time, your talents, your money, the members of your body, the faculties of your mind were your own. You could spend your time as you pleased—use your abilities as you thought most conducive to your worldly interests—do with your money as your inclination best prompted—and use the members of your body to minister to your natural desires. And in all this there was no one to check you, no one to call you to account for what you had said or done.

You did not, indeed, see that all this time sin was your master, and the love of the world deeply rooted in your heart ruled and governed you. Nor did you see what ignorance and blindness held your eyes in the grossest darkness. Thus you imagined you were free—when you were the greatest slave of sin and Satan! But now you have been brought out of all this miserable bondage, and having been convinced of sin by the law, and been brought in guilty, have found peace and pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now what is the effect of this blessing from on high? Has it not liberated you from that miserable bondage to sin, Satan, the world, and self—which I have described? Has it not set your feet, as it were, into a new track, opened before you a new field, laid upon you new obligations, and to crown all, in one word, brought you under the easy yoke of a new Master?

Romantic expectations of a little earthly paradise?

"You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away." Haggai 1:9 Have you found your airy dreams and cherished projects realized? Have your ambitious projects been crowned with success? Have you not had repeated

disappointments—and have not others, who seemed inferior to you in ability or in promise, outstripped you in the race? Your fleshly projects—your carnal hopes—your airy castles—your dreams of happiness—your romantic expectations of a little earthly paradise—have all been cruelly—as you have thought in the bitterness of your soul, disappointed—the buds dropped off just when they began to promise flower, and a blight fell upon your whole life, so that you could not reap the harvest you had been indulging anticipations of.

God will take care to lay cross after cross, and trial after trial upon His people—until He brings them to submission. O how soon He can give this sweet and heavenly grace! How, in a moment, He can pour oil upon the troubled waves! How He can break to pieces that stubborn obstinacy and rebelliousness of which the heart is full—and give submission to His will! How He can humble and bend the proud spirit—fill the heart with humility and love—enable us to kiss the rod—and to fall prostrate before His dispensations—however severe they may be to the flesh!

Satisfaction? Have we not tried the world? For how many years did we labor to glut our fleshly appetites with the dust and dirt that the world offered us. But did we ever reap any solid satisfaction from it? Have we not endeavored to satisfy ourselves with the pleasures of sin? And did they ever leave anything but pain and sorrow behind them? Have we not attempted to satisfy ourselves with a form of godliness, a name to live, a self-righteous religion? And was there not always something lacking? Have we not tried to satisfy ourselves with 'doctrines floating in the judgment,' and yet reaped no satisfaction—for there was always an aching void? Guilt was not purged away—sin was not pardoned—Christ not revealed—the love of God not shed abroad—salvation not known.

We have found that there was no satisfaction in anything—all was a blank—all is vanity and vexation of spirit—except the goodness of God to our souls. But when the Lord has fixed His choice upon a vessel of mercy, and when, in pursuance of that choice, cutting him off from the world, He causes him, by the internal teachings and drawing of His Spirit, to approach unto Himself, and shows him something of the beauty and glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—that satisfies him—and there is no satisfaction until that is made known. And what are we to be satisfied with? With a mere apprehension of Gospel truth? There is no satisfaction there. With our experience? Why, if we look at it, there are so many flaws and failings, so many ins and outs, so many things that stagger us, that we cannot be fully satisfied with all of that. Can we take the opinions of men concerning us? O, we think, they may all be deceived. Can we take our own opinion of ourselves? That is worse than the opinion of others—for he who trusts his own heart is a fool. With what, then, are we to be satisfied? In the goodness manifested in the Person of Christ. What grace and mercy, what favor and love are manifested in the Person of Jesus! And when we see and feel how good and kind, how gracious, favorable, and merciful He is—that brings satisfaction. There is in Him a righteousness and atoning blood to satisfy all the demands of the law, and all the cravings of a guilty conscience. There is a power that satisfies—a love that satisfies—a salvation that satisfies—and nothing else but these will satisfy. The first step in the divine life "They shall come with weeping." Jeremiah 31:9

Wherever God begins a gracious work in the soul, He takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh. Repentance, true repentance, is the first step in the divine life. True religion begins with a sorrowful heart and weeping eyes. Wherever there is a spiritual conviction of sin, there will

be penitential grief and godly sorrow on account of it. And it is by—this godly sorrow—this brokenness of heart—this contrition of spirit—this penitential grief—that the true convictions wrought by the blessed Spirit are distinguished from those mere natural convictions under which the heart is as hard as adamant, and as full of rebellion as Satan himself. It is in this broken heart—broken up with the plough of convictions, that the seed of the word takes root; and the deeper, for the most part, the convictions, and the more pungent the grief and sorrow for sin—the deeper root will the word of grace strike into the soul. The Christian's conscience "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Hebrews 10:22

Christ dwells in the Christian's conscience. He makes the conscience tender in His fear. He, when He has convinced it of the evil of sin, purges and cleanses it from guilt, filth, and dead works to serve the living God. He moves in it, and acts upon it, reveals to it His precious blood, bids it open to receive His word, and bids it close itself against all error. He makes it move in accordance with His precepts—softens it into contrition and godly sorrow for sin—heals it when wounded—binds it up when broken—comforts it when cast down—soothes it when, like a crying child, it would lie weeping in His arms, or upon His lap. Thus by making the conscience tender, and applying His precious blood to remove guilt and filth from it, He softens and conforms it to His own suffering image.

They were out of their minds!

Men often accuse those who profess the doctrines of grace of enthusiasm, of fanaticism, of embracing wild doctrines, and being led aside by visionary delusions. But the real fanatics and enthusiasts are those who dream of serving at the same time sin and God—who are looking for heaven as the reward of their works, when all those works are evil. And as to true sobriety of mind, and calm collectedness of judgment, I believe that none are so sober-minded as the real partakers of grace. Before the light of God's teaching illuminated their understanding, before the grace of God in its regenerating influence took possession of their hearts, they were out of their minds! There was no real sanity in them, for, like insane people, they were madly bent upon their own destruction! They spent their lives in insane hopes—in wild and visionary dreams of happiness—ever stretching forth their hands to grasp what always eluded their reach, and, like madmen, alternately laughed and wept, danced and sang as on the brink of a precipice, or the deck of a sinking ship. But when grace came to illuminate their mind, regenerate their soul, and begin that work which should fit and prepare them for eternity, they became sober. They were awakened from that state of intoxication in which they had spent their former life—they were sobered out of that drunkenness, so to speak, in the indulgence of which they had drunk down large draughts of intoxicating pleasure—and became for the first time morally and spiritually sober.

How different might it have been with us!

"For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:9 This is meant for our encouragement—to strengthen our faith and hope—and keep us sober and vigilant. How different might it have been with us! How just and righteous would God have been if His thoughts towards us had not been thoughts of peace—but of evil. And O, where might we even now have been if God had appointed us to wrath? Even now, instead of being in the house of prayer, we might have been lifting up our eyes in hell, being in torment. Thus a child of God sees what a mercy it is that God did not cut him down, as he deserved, when he

was an open foe, and daily adding to the catalogue of his sins—nor abandoned him to utter impenitence, unbelief, and carelessness!

Some of the most amiable people Some of the most amiable people in the world, have no grace at all.

Day by day

It seems as if we needed day by day to be taught over and over again our own sinfulness, weakness, and helplessness—and that none but Jesus can do us any real good. True religion is not like any art or science which, when once learned, is learned forever—but is a thing which we are ever forgetting—and ever learning over and over again.

Man’s ways & God’s ways

Man’s ways and God’s ways differ in well near every respect. Man’s ways are hastily planned, and for the most part imperfectly executed. God’s ways are designed with infinite wisdom, and performed with infinite power.

Man’s aim is the aggrandizement of self in some shape or form. Pleasure or profit, of some kind or other, is the mainspring of all his actions. The aim of God is His own eternal glory.

Man, when bent upon any particular object, leaps hastily towards it, and cannot brook the slightest obstacle. God slowly brings about His own eternal purposes, in the face of every obstacle, and in spite of all opposition or contradiction from earth or hell. Man’s purpose is to bring things to a rapid conclusion—no sooner does he scatter the seed, than he wants to reap the harvest. God’s plans are carried out through a series of years; and, as they are planned with infinite wisdom, so they are brought to pass by a succession of apparently opposing and contradictory events. A desperately wicked old man "The old man, that grows corrupt after the lusts of deceit." Ephesians 4:22

O how deceitful is lust in every shape and form! Whether it be of the flesh, or of the eyes, or a lusting after money, worldly advantage, prosperous circumstances, rising in life, doing well for ourselves or our families—whatever shape it takes—for indeed it wears a thousand forms—how deceitful it is! How gradually, if indulged, will it lead us into everything which is vile. How it—blinds the eyes, hardens the conscience—perverts the judgment—entangles the affections—draws the feet aside from the strait and narrow path—suffocates the life of God in the soul, until one scarcely knows what he is, or where he is—and only knows that he is full of confusion, and burdened with guilt and fear and bondage.

How deceitful, too, lust is in ever promising what it never can perform! How it promises happiness and pleasure if we will but indulge and gratify it, and paints all sorts of pleasant pictures and charming prospects to entangle the thoughts and allure the affections! But if listened to and obeyed, what does lust give us in the end? Alas! we find that as we sow so we reap—and that if we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption. Nor are these lusts few or small, for this old man of ours is full of them. There is—not a passion—nor an inclination—nor a desire—nor a craving after any earthly or sensual enjoyment—there is not a sin that ever has broken out in word or action in man or woman that is not deeply seated in our old man—for he is according to, in the measure of, and in proportion to our deceitful lusts.

You need not wonder, then, that whether—old or young—male or female—rich or poor—educated or uneducated—morally trained or immorally brought up—deceitful lusts are ever moving in your bosom. They were born with you—your family inheritance—and all that you can strictly call your own. You need not wonder, then, if the vilest thoughts, the basest ideas find a harbor, a resting place, and a nest in your corrupt bosom. I say this not to encourage you to cherish what should be your plague and torment—but as a word that may be suitable to some who are deeply exercised at finding in themselves such monstrous sins—and think that theirs is an unusual or exceptional case.

If the 'old man' is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—if he is incurably depraved—and never can be anything else but a desperately wicked old man—need you wonder if he is continually manifesting his real character—showing his ugly face—and is to you a continual grief—a plague and a torment? This 'old man' is the greatest plague a child of God has or can have! All our trials, afflictions, bereavements, and sorrows are not worthy to be compared with the trouble, sorrow and anguish, which have been caused by the plotting, the contriving, and the working of this wicked old man in the various deceitful lusts by means of which he has at various times, more or less, drawn us off the path of holiness and obedience—into some of his crooked ways.

It is your mercy if this depraved old man's presence is your grief—his temptations your trial—and his movements and workings your sorrow and your burden. He will never do you any real harm so long as he is your plague and torment. Mortify him, bind him, set your foot upon him, keep him down, and gag his mouth when he would vent his blasphemies and try to stir up deceitful lusts. He is to be put off. He is not to be cuddled, indulged, put in the best chair, fed with the best food, kept close and warm by the fireside, handsomely dressed, nor made the pet of the whole house!

Five particular points connected with sin

There are five particular points connected with sin, from all of which we need redemption. These are—the guilt of sin—the filth of sin, the power of sin—the love of sin—the practice of sin. The guilt of sin we must be delivered from by the application of atoning blood to the conscience. The filth of sin we must be washed from by the sanctifying operations and influences of the Spirit. The power of sin we must have broken in us by the power of Christ's resurrection. The love of sin overcome by the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The practice of sin destroyed and broken up by the fear of God planted deep in the soul.

We can never understand what redemption is

Without a knowledge of man's state by nature and practice—without a living experience of the state of ruin, misery, and wretchedness, to which sin has personally reduced us—we can never understand what redemption is, either in doctrine or in experience.

You can do yourself more harm in five minutes

You can do yourself more harm in five minutes than all your foes in fifty years. One incautious word—one heedless footstep—one wrong action—may lay you crippled and wounded! A snare, a mockery & a delusion

Doctrine is good, and sound doctrine the very foundation of faith, hope, and love. But the doctrine which does not lead to holiness of heart and life is a snare, a mockery and a delusion.

Bosom idols "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

We would greatly err if we think that idolatry is confined to setting up and bowing down to such idols as made by human hands—and as formed heathen worship. There are heart idols—bosom idols—and though not made of wood and stone, yet, if we pay them the secret worship of devotion and affection, and inflame ourselves secretly with them—they are as much idols in the sight of God who searches the heart, as if we bowed our knee to an image made with the fingers of men. A mother sin

Unbelief is a mother sin—a breeding sin. It does not remain in the heart alone, but gives birth to thousands of sins, all springing up out of its prolific womb—like the fabled sea monsters. We see in the wilderness how all through all their journeyings the crying sin of the people of Israel was unbelief. It was the parent of all their fretfulness, murmuring, and rebellion—it lay at the root of everything done by them displeasing to God—gave birth to all their idolatry and all their other sins—and eventually shut out all but Caleb and Joshua from the promised land. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness through unbelief.

Believing a few doctrines In the present day, many think that true religion consists in believing a few doctrines, and adopting a few set phrases—without any vital operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.

Reading the word under divine influence

Never, perhaps, was the Bible more read, and never, perhaps less understood—less felt—less tasted—less handled—less enjoyed—and above all—less acted on—than in our day. But if reading the word under divine influence is so blessed, how much more is it when the Holy Spirit applies it to the heart—when there is some sweet breaking up of the word of truth in some gracious promise—or the application of some part that speaks of Jesus—or that holds forth some encouragement to our languid faith.

He will turn again

"He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19 This turning again implies that He has for a time turned away, turned His back upon us—withdrawn Himself on account of the cruel and unkind way in which we have neglected Him, basely and shamefully treated Him—wickedly and wantonly wandered from Him, and, in the dreadful idolatry of our vile hearts, hewn out to ourselves cisterns which hold no water—and forsaken Him, the fountain of living waters. But He turns again—He delights in mercy—He cannot bear to see His people afflicted, grieving, groaning, sighing, crying under their sins on account of His absence. And, therefore, moved and softened by His own mercy, influenced by the grace of His own heart—He turns again, as the Lord turned to Peter to give him a look to break, melt, soften his heart into repentance and love. For a small moment He may hide His face from His people, as vexed and displeased with their sins and backslidings—but in the display of His infinite, sovereign, and superabounding grace, He will turn again to give them—one more look of love—one more discovery of the freeness of His grace—one more breaking in of the light of His countenance—one more softening touch of His gracious hand—one more whisper of His peace-speaking voice. If He did not thus turn again, our heart would grow harder and harder, colder and colder. Either sin would get stronger and stronger until it

gained entire dominion, or despondency and despair would set in to leave us without hope.

Strangers & pilgrims "Confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

True religion is not a burdensome, painful, melancholy, wearisome, toilsome task—as many think. It has indeed its trials, temptations, afflictions, cutting griefs, and depressing sorrows. But it also has its sweetness, its peace, its delights, and its enjoyments. And it is the sweetness that we feel—the enjoyment that we have—and the delighting ourselves in the things of God—which encourage us still to persevere and travel on through the wilderness.

It is not all bondage—nor distress of mind—nor sorrow of heart—nor perplexity of soul—which the heirs of promise feel. There are—sips and tastes—drops and crumbs—and momentary enjoyments, if not long nor lasting, yet sweet when they come, sweet while they last, and sweet in the recollection when they are gone. The Lord gives that which encourages, strengthens, comforts, and delights, and enables us to see that there is that beauty, blessedness, and glory in Him which we have tasted, felt, and handled, and which we would not part with for a thousand worlds!

Now this is what they sought in desiring a heavenly country. They wanted something heavenly, something that tasted of God, savored of God, smelled of God, and was given by God—a heavenly religion, a spiritual faith—a gracious hope, and a love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit—something which came from heaven and led to heaven—something which gave heavenly feelings—heavenly sensations—heavenly delights—and heavenly joys—whereby the heart was purified from the love of sin, carnality, and worldliness—by having something sweeter to taste, better to love, and more holy to enjoy. It is these heavenly visitations, droppings in of the favor, goodness, and mercy of God, which keep the soul alive in its many deaths—sweeten it amid its many bitters—hold it up amid its many sinkings. A carnal mind has—no taste for heavenly things—no sweet delight in the word of God—no delight in the Lord Jesus—no delight in secret meditation. There must be a heavenly element in the soul to understand, realize, enjoy, and delight in heavenly things. The Holy Spirit must have wrought in us a new heart, a new nature, capable of understanding, enjoying, and delighting in heavenly realities—as containing in them that which is sweet and precious to the soul. Our religious works

All the works which a man may do before he experimentally knows the grace of God, are dead works. He may work hard and long, and by his strenuous exertions work himself out of breath. But when he has done all that he can do in his own strength, wisdom, and righteousness—it is all but a dead work. His prayers are dead prayers—his services are dead services—his readings are dead readings—his duties are dead duties. Thus all that he does in the name of God, and as he thinks for the honor of God, are but dead works.

Now as spiritual light and life are communicated to our souls, our conscience gets loaded with dead works, and they become doubly burdensome; for there will always be in these dead works not only inherent imperfection, but actual sin mingled with them. Thus our works, our best works—what I may call our religious works—are not only dead in themselves, but they are so polluted by the dark and turbid stream of sin ever running over and through them, that they defile the conscience with guilt. It thus has to bear not only a heavy burden—but a guilty burden.

All these slips & falls

"How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience." Hebrews 9:14

How many of the dear family of God are troubled nearly all their days with a guilty conscience. And generally speaking, the more tender their conscience, the more they feel the burden of guilt for—the backsliding—the wandering eye—the roving mind—the foolish heart—the indifference—the coldness—the rebellion—the ingratitude—the worldliness—the carnality—the unbelief—the infidelity—the pride—the self-seeking. All these slips and falls—each mourning heart recollects—and each guilty conscience testifies against. Where the conscience is tender and alive in the fear of God, guilt is very soon contracted; and when contracted it lies as a load which cannot be thrown off, for there it remains until taken away. It is this continually fresh contracted guilt which causes so much dejection on the part of the family of God—tries their mind and casts them down. Let them walk with the uttermost tenderness and carefulness, yet through the entanglements produced by the snares of sin and Satan—the workings of corruption in their carnal mind—the constant oozings up of a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—they feel their conscience to be an evil conscience—under which they mourn and sigh, being burdened.

Until they get an application of the atoning blood—a manifestation of the pardoning love of God—and a sweet sense of reconciliation through the finished work of the Son of God experimentally enjoyed within—their conscience gets no real ease nor peace. Having obtained eternal redemption for us, His blood will never lose its efficacy, but will ever purge the conscience, until He presents all His ransomed saints faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy! A tender, gracious, humble & godly spirit

It is the possession of a tender, gracious, humble and godly spirit which so particularly distinguishes the true children of God. That meek and lowly spirit of Christ in them, draws our heart towards them in admiration and affection, creating and cementing a love and union which cannot be explained, and yet is one of the firmest, strongest ties which can knit soul to soul. And do we not see in most others, a worldly, carnal, selfish, proud, unhumbled spirit? A Pharisaical, self-righteous spirit

There are those, who, from natural temperament, general strictness of life and conduct, absence of powerful temptations, and having been shielded by various restraints from the commission of open evil, are secretly imbued with a strong spirit of self-righteousness.

These having been preserved from the corruptions of the world and the open sins of the flesh, frequently manifest in their religious profession a Pharisaical, self-righteous spirit, which is dangerous, and casts contempt upon salvation by grace.

What a dreadful explosion there would be!

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death." James 1:14-15

Now what does temptation meet with in my bosom—but everything which is suitable to its nature? I am a heap of combustible material—I have everything in my nature alive to sin, yes, in itself

nothing but sin. Temptation is the spark to the gunpowder—temptation is the torch to the dry sheaf—temptation is the midnight adulterer that enters into close embrace with the evils of my heart, and by their adulterous union, sin is begotten, conceived, and brought forth.

I am only speaking of the natural tendency of temptation, as meeting the evils of our heart. I am not saying that a child of God complies with, gives way to it, or is overcome by it. But he is tempted, which is more his misery, than his sin. Temptation would have no effect or influence, unless I had that in my bosom to which temptation was fully suitable. If I had—no pride—no unbelief—no infidelity—no covetousness—no lust—no presumption—no despondency; temptation to pride, to unbelief, to infidelity, to covetousness, to lust, to presumption, to despair—could have no influence upon my mind—and would not deserve the name of temptation. But my nature being a mass of combustible material, ready to go off with the faintest spark when temptation comes—unless God interposes, the spark and the gunpowder meet together, and what a dreadful explosion there would be unless the showers of heaven wet the powder, and prevent the catastrophe!

There may be true grace in the heart

There may be true grace in the heart, real faith and hope and love, even where there is much ignorance in the understanding. I have no doubt that there are now many people whose judgments are extremely weak and whose minds are on many points much uninstructed, who yet possess the fear of God and believe in His dear Son.

Felt helplessness & utter ruin

We have to be effectually stripped of all our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, that Christ may be experimentally and feelingly our all in all. But O what stripping do we need to pull away the rags of self-righteousness which cleave so closely to us! What hard labor to wear us out of all our own strength, and exhaust us of our own wisdom! What discovery after discovery of our wretched and miserable inability is needed to bring us down to that spot of felt helplessness and utter ruin, in which Christ becomes our all in all. A paradox & an apparent contradiction A Christian is a paradox and an apparent contradiction both to himself and to others. At one time, none more earnest, more diligent, more active, more zealous, more bent upon every good word and work—and yet at another time, how slothful, how indifferent, how cold, lifeless, and dead—as if he had neither a grain of grace nor a spark of spiritual feeling. Sometimes he is as watchful as a sentinel in the face of an advancing enemy—and at another time drops asleep in the sentry box, overcome with weariness and listlessness. Sometimes so filled with the Spirit of prayer as if he would seize heaven by storm—and then at another time seeming scarcely to have a breath of prayer in his soul. Sometimes he loathes and abhors himself in dust and ashes as exceedingly vile, the very worst and basest of all sinners—then again is puffed up with a sense of his own importance as if there were no such saint as he; or if a minister, no minister like him for gifts and abilities, and usefulness. Sometimes his affections are so fixed on things above, that it seems as if he had no desire for anything but the presence, love, favor, and glory of God—then at another time his heart is as cold as ice and as dead as a stone. Sometimes the things of eternity lie so weightily and yet so warmly upon his bosom, that it seems as if nothing else were worth a single thought—and then come trooping in the cares and anxieties of this present life to engross his mind and carry him away to the very ends of the earth. Thus the Christian is a contradiction to himself.

We have to fight The Christian’s daily experience is one of conflict. We have to fight against—besetting sins—the snares and temptations laid every moment for our feet—the daily unceasing influence of an ungodly world—the very things that our carnal heart most fondly loves—the workings and arguments of o

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Whenever the word of truth comes home with power to the heart, it carries with it a sanctifying influence. It draws the affections upwards—it fixes the heart upon heavenly things—Jesus is viewed by the eye of faith, and every tender desire of a loving bosom flows forth toward Him as "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One." This view of Christ, as the King in His beauty, has a sanctifying influence upon the soul—communicating holy and heavenly feelings—subduing the power of sin—separating from the world and worldly objects—and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Thus Faith clasps to her bosom these glorious and heavenly truths, and says, "How suitable are they to all my sins and sorrows—how they distill consolation into my burdened spirit—how adapted they are to every season of darkness and distress!"

We are troubled on every side "Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Job 5:7

Since the fall, trouble is the lot of every man. If there never had been sin, there never would have been sorrow. There is, therefore, nothing strange or peculiar that the children of God should be troubled—for that they have in common with their fellow sinners and fellow mortals. Poverty, bereavements, sickness, vexation, disappointment, misery, wretchedness, and death—are the common lot of all—from the wailing child to the aged father. Thus look where you will, let your eye range through every class of society, from the prince’s palace to the pauper’s hovel—you cannot find any one of the sons of men who can claim exemption from troubles. They gather round his head, like clouds on a mountaintop, under some form of—disappointed hopes—blighted expectations—family troubles—painful bereavements—or bodily afflictions.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair." Here, then, is the distinguishing blessing of those into whose hearts God has shone—that though trouble may be on every side, yet it never will be with them as with those who have no Father to bless them with His Fatherly love—no Savior to bedew them with His atoning blood—and no blessed Spirit to comfort them with His choice consolations.

Delivered!

"Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Colossians 1:13 By nature and practice we are slaves to sin and Satan. We are the sport of the Prince of the power of the air, who takes us captive at his will. We are also held down by many hurtful lusts; or, if free from gross sin, are slaves to pride, covetousness, or self-righteousness. Perhaps some idol is set up in the chambers of imagery, which defiles all the

inner man—or some snare of Satan entangles our feet, and we are slaves to sin, without power to liberate ourselves from this cruel slavery. We groan under it, as the children of Israel under their burdens, but, like them, cannot deliver ourselves.

Some of the privileges of sonship A daily cross—a path of trial and tribulation—a chastening rod for going astray—a furnace of affliction, purging away the dross and tin—producing true humility of mind—brokenness of heart—contrition of spirit—tenderness of conscience—with much self-loathing—self-abhorrence—godly sorrow for sin—and earnest desires for close and holy communion with God. These are some of the privileges of sonship, not indeed much prized or coveted by the professors of our day—but blessed marks of a heavenly birth. A heavenly religion

True religion is a heavenly religion. It comes down from God—and ascends up to God. Do not be deceived! Do not think that a mere external religion or a profession of the truth will ever save you—without an experience of its life and power. Until the eyes of our understanding are spiritually enlightened, and our heart touched by regenerating grace, we see, we know, we feel nothing savingly or experimentally of the power of God in the salvation of the soul. We may be religious—very religious; serious—extremely serious; pious—decidedly pious. We may attend church or go to chapel—receive the sacrament or sit down to the ordinance—say our prayers—read the Scriptures and good books—and comparing our religious life with the profane conduct of many by whom we are surrounded, may please ourselves with the deceptive illusion that we are recommending ourselves to the favor of God—and when death shall close the scene, shall be rewarded with eternal life. And yet all this time we may be as destitute of the power of God in saving the soul, as ignorant of law and gospel, of condemnation or salvation, of what we are as sinners or who the Lord Jesus is, as the very beasts which perish.

True religion must be wrought in the soul by the power of God. The grace that wrote our names in the Lamb’s book of life, is the same grace that—quickens our soul into spiritual life—convinces us of sin—gives us repentance—brings us to the foot of the cross—reveals in us a precious Savior—and raises up a faith and hope and love which both save and sanctify us unto eternal life. Thus we are not saved by anything of a religious nature which we can communicate to ourselves, or others communicate to us—but we are saved by the grace of God, and by the grace of God alone!

If, then, that grace never visits our heart with its regenerating power and its sanctifying influences, we may have all the religion that the flesh can be possessed of—and yet die under the wrath of God and have our portion with the damned. An earthly religion may content a Pharisee. A carnal, formal worship may satisfy a dead professor. But it is living union with a living Lord, and receiving communications out of His fullness which alone can satisfy a living soul. A dead professor is satisfied with—an earthly religion—a round of forms—external ordinances—the flattering applause of dying creatures like himself. But the child of God, in whose heart the Spirit dwells and whom He teaches by His own heavenly grace, is from time to time looking up unto Jesus to receive out of His fullness. Into the bosom of Christ he pours out his sorrows—from that bosom he receives his joys.

We are not to set our affections on them "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

Naturally we have no affection for anything else. There is no such thing as a spiritual desire or a heavenly affection in our soul when we are in a state of unregeneracy. So fallen are we that we love—and cannot but love the world, and the things of the world. We have no heart for anything but the things of time and sense—no, rather, as our carnal mind is enmity against God, we hate everything which is spiritual, heavenly, and holy. One main part, therefore, of the work of God upon the soul is to take off our affections from these earthly things, and to fix them upon Jesus where He sits enthroned above—that we may love and hate those things which He loves and hates. Our affections are not to be set upon things on the earth. Business, worldly cares, the interests of our family, the things of time and sense—in whatever form they come—whatever shape they may assume—must not so entwine themselves round our affections as to bind them down to the earth. We may use them for the support and sustentation of our life—but we must not abuse them. We are not to set our affections on them! Houses, gardens, land, property, friends, family—all these earthly things—we are not to set our affections on them, so that they become idols. Thus any lovely object may be foul—because turned to an idol. It may be but a flower—and yet be an idol. It may be a darling child whom everybody admires for its beauty and attractiveness—yet it may be a defiling idol. A cherished project may be an idol. A crop of wheat—a flock of sheep—a good farm—a thriving business—respect of the world—may all be defiling idols—for all these things, when eagerly pursued and loved, draw the soul away from God, and by drawing it insensibly from Him, bring pollution and guilt into the conscience. Now we are, or by grace in due time shall be, weaned and divorced from earth with all its charms and pleasures and all its polluting idols. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. " 1 John 5:21 Defiled, loathsome & abominable

Sin has defiled us individually, and personally made us loathsome and abominable to God. Sin had brought us under the stroke of God’s justice, opened to us the door of hell, and shut against us the gate of heaven. Sin also, as a polluted thing, has contaminated us from head to foot—clothed us in filthy garments, so as to render us unclean in body and soul, and, as such, unfit to enter into the pure courts of heavenly bliss. This one point of divine truth on which the Scriptures are very express and plain, and yet is most stoutly resisted by the pride and self-righteousness of man’s heart—the completeness of the fall. This truth is unpalatable to man’s self-righteous nature. How few are willing to admit that man is in such a state as the word of God describes him to be—"dead in trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" "serving diverse lusts and pleasures;" "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another," "having no hope, and without God in the world." And yet these unquestionable and express declarations of Scripture are so opposed to that natural principle which exists in all of us, that we think we are not so thoroughly helpless as not to be able to do something to please God and obtain salvation. When this truth contained is brought forth and enforced—then it is that the enmity manifests itself. He hates God’s Word, because it condemns him—and he knows if he were to live under its power and influence he must give up those practices which that Word condemns.

Deepest enmity of the profane & professing world When the Lord is pleased first to deal with our soul, in those early days of our spiritual youth when we are but little acquainted with the evils of our own heart, or the evils that lodge in other men’s—we are often astonished at the sudden burst of persecution that arises against us from most unexpected quarters—and frequently from some of

our nearest and dearest friends and relatives. In those days, eternal realities usually lie with great weight and power upon our mind—they occupy our waking and sleeping thoughts; and the whole subject being new, it takes fast hold both of heart and tongue—for we cannot be silent, and as we are made honest and sincere we speak as we feel. The things of eternity pressing with serious and solemn weight upon our hearts, press words out of our mouth—we at the time little anticipating the effect which those words produce upon the minds of those to whom they are addressed.

What is that effect? What we little expect—enmity! We anticipate some conviction of the truth which we lay before them, or, at least, some kind and favorable reception of it. We speak it honestly and sincerely, meaning it for their good—but instead of receiving it as we intended, they rise up in enmity and rebellion against us.

Why is this? Because their carnal mind, and they can have no other, is enmity against God. A veil, too, of unbelief and ignorance is spread over their heart, so that our meaning is misunderstood—our actions misrepresented—and our kindest words and intentions perverted to evil. The servants of God are especially liable to the manifestation of this enmity. The gospel they preach—the faithfulness they manifest—the holiness they display—the separating line which they draw when "they take forth the precious from the vile"—stir up the deepest enmity of the profane and professing world. No condemnation "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1

Though I am not living in sin, I cannot live without sin. I have—sinful thoughts—sinful imaginations—sinful desires—sinful passions—and very sinful feelings. I cannot—look without sin—nor speak without sin—nor hear without sin—no, nor can I preach without sin. But if so, how can it be true that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus?" Why, because if I am in Christ Jesus, I am loved in Christ Jesus—I am chosen in Christ Jesus—I am justified in Christ Jesus—I am pardoned in Christ Jesus—and I am saved in Christ Jesus. If, therefore, my conscience condemns me, God is greater than my heart and knows all things. So that though I have the daily condemnation of a guilty conscience, yet if all my sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb and my conscience is purified from guilt and filth by the blood of sprinkling, I shall not be condemned at the great day—and even now, so far as the power of that blood is felt, I am free from all condemnation.

Sin will lurk & work As long as we carry about with us a body of sin and death, a nature corrupt to the very core, sin will lurk and work in our bosom; and if we have a conscience made tender in God’s fear, it will condemn us for the evils which thus daily and hourly manifest themselves; which may indeed be resisted and subdued, but are never eradicated.

What has enabled you to continue up to this day?

"Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I continue to this day." Acts 26:22

It may be many years since the Lord first called you by His grace. What has enabled you to continue up to this day? How has your faith been preserved amid—so many temptations and trials—so much internal and external opposition—so many fightings without—so many fears within? You well know that it is not by your own exertions, your own striving—but by the pure grace of God that you still stand. "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day"

was Paul’s language, and will be the language of all who have his faith and his continuance. No reconciliation or regeneration in the grave

We come into the world alienated from God’s image, for we lost it in the fall; we grow up still more and more alienated from it, and if we die thus alienated, what must that end be but eternal destruction from the presence of His glory? for there is no reconciliation or regeneration in the grave. There is no possibility of coming into a state of friendship with God when the breath has left the body. As the tree falls, so it lies. If we die alienated from God, we die under the wrath of God.

How utterly ruined, then, how wholly lost must that man’s state and case be who lives and dies as he comes into the world—unchanged, unrenewed, unregenerated! To poison the soul To poison the soul is no less criminal or dangerous—than to poison the body! This simple, this single, this sincere desire "Draw me—and I will run after You! Let the King bring me into His chambers." Song of Solomon 1:4

There was raised up in the heart of the Bride this simple, this single, this sincere desire to follow Jesus wherever He goes—and that is the mark of a true follower of the Lamb. Through the flood, through the fire—through the wilderness—through the darkness—through temptation—through tribulation—through conflict—wherever the Lamb leads, His people follow. He is their Head, He is their Guide, He is their Lord, He is their Husband, He is their King—and Him they follow, Him they run after, and in His footsteps they desire to walk. Thus the Bride, under the blessed operations of the Holy Spirit, and from a simple, sincere, single breathing forth of love and affection to Jesus, as being perfectly suitable, and altogether lovely says, Draw me—and I will run after You!

O how cruel!

"Cruel as the grave." Song of Solomon 8:6

O how cruel the grave is, has been, and ever will be, as long as there is a grave left on earth to swallow up in its devouring throat the remains of a fondly loved object of affection! O how cruel the grave seems to be that swallows up the beloved husband or the fond, affectionate wife—or the blooming daughter in the flower of youth and beauty—or the brave, manly son in the very prime and vigor of life. O how cruel the grave that often separates lovers when perhaps the wedding day has been fixed. All is fond anticipation, but death comes—the cruel grave opens its mouth, and the intended bride or bridegroom is stretched in that gloomy abode. O how cruel the grave is—sparing no age or sex—pitying no relationship—divorcing the tenderest ties—and triumphing over all the claims of human affection. My grace is sufficient "My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9 This grace the Lord puts forth in communicating secret supplies of strength. As, then, the grace of the Lord in the season of trial and temptation is found to be sufficient, it gives the soul a firm standing-place, a holy rest—and an all-sustaining prop for weakness to lean upon. And this grace of the Lord is thus given under trial and temptation—it is found to be sufficient—but not more than sufficient—enough but nothing to spare. No child of God will ever have too much grace. He will have enough to supply his need—enough to save and sanctify him—enough to support him under his afflictions—enough to make him live honorably and die happily, but not more than enough. As your days so shall your strength be.

Why are you now where and what you are? Who held you up in the trying hour? Who preserved you when your feet were almost gone, when your steps had nearly slipped? What but His grace?

Eternal life

Eternal life is a very sweet subject to a believer. The prospect of an eternity of bliss in the presence of God, where tears are wiped away from all faces, is a blessed consolation to the believing heart. When we think of what this life is, how short, how uncertain—when we feel burdened with its cares and troubled with its anxieties, and, above all, are loaded and weighted with a miserable body of sin and death—is it not enough to make us sigh and say, "What is there in this life really worth living for?" But to look beyond the narrow isthmus of this wretched, dying world—to those eternal mansions in his Father’s house which Jesus has gone to prepare for His people, seems to console the weary pilgrim as he travels through this valley of tears, burdened with sin and sorrow, in the sweet hope of reaching at last that heavenly shore! Shall we then go back

"From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus to the twelve, Will you also go away?" John 6:66-67 Shall we then go back to the WORLD? Have we not had enough of that? Were we not in it before the Lord was pleased to call us out of it by His grace? Was there any true happiness there—any real satisfaction, contentment, rest, peace, or quiet? Well may we answer, "No!" Even then, it was but one continued scene of—harassing turmoil—vain amusement—empty pleasure—the end of which we knew would be death. When we were in it there was no real happiness—and will there be happiness now when we have come out of it, to go back to it? Take it now at its best or at its worst. Do you find any comfort in worldly company, any happiness in carnal society? Do its maxims suit you, its customs, its pleasures, its vanities? Do you get any happiness from them? No! Then must you not at once reply, "Whatever I do, whatever becomes of me, I cannot go back into the world, because when I was in it I had no comfort from it, and to go back now would be but to redouble my misery and ensure my utter ruin." But shall we go back to SIN? O, perish the thought! What! sin that was the cause of such guilt upon your conscience in times past! Sin that brought such a very hell into your soul! Sin that crucified a dear Redeemer! To go back to sin—to wallow in the base lusts of the flesh—to drink down iniquity—to work all uncleanness with greediness—and to spend health, strength, and life itself in those things the end of which we know is certain destruction—O, how can we for a single moment dare to entertain the thought that we can leave a holy Jesus, a heavenly Redeemer, the sweet company of God’s family, the sacred communion with the Lord Himself—to wallow in sin, and thus to bring a certain hell into our conscience, death into our soul, and the dreadful end of all our profession to be banishment from the presence of the Lord into the blackness of darkness forever!

O Lord, whatever we do, wherever we go—we never can go back to sin! Lord, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!"

Only two grand classes With all the social distinctions that exist in the world, of rank, class, and station, there are really in the sight of God only two grand classes. The righteous and the wicked—the godly and the ungodly—the saint and the sinner—the wheat and the tares—those who are Christ’s, and those who are the wicked one’s.

We need a high priest

"For we don’t have a high priest who can’t be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15

"We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Hebrews 8:1

We need a high priest, not merely one who offered a sacrifice upon the cross—not merely one who died and rose again—but one who now lives at the right hand of God on our behalf—and one with a tender, merciful, and compassionate heart, with whom we can carry on from time to time sacred communion—whom we can view with believing eyes as suitable to our case, and compassionating our wants and woes—in whom we can hope with expecting hearts, as one who will not turn away from us—and whom we can love, not only for His intrinsic beauty and blessedness, but as full of pity towards us.

We need a friend at the right hand of God at the present moment—an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and yet a compassionate and loving Mediator between God and us—an interceding High Priest, Surety, and Representative in our nature in the courts of heaven, who can show mercy and compassion to us now upon earth—whose heart is touched with tenderness—whose affections melt with love! Our needs make us feel this. Our sins and sorrows give us perpetual errands to the throne. This valley of tears is ever before our eyes, and thorns and briars are perpetually springing up in it that rip and tear our flesh. We need a real friend. Have you not sometimes tossed to and fro upon your weary couch, and almost cried aloud, "O that I had a friend!" You may have received bitter blows from one whom you regarded as a real friend—and you have been cruelly deceived. You feel now you have no one to take care of you or love you, and whom you can love in return—and your heart sighs for a friend who shall be a friend indeed. The widow, the orphan, the friendless, the deserted one, all keenly and deeply feel this. But if grace has touched your heart, you feel that though all men forsake you, there is the friend of sinners—a brother born for adversity—a friend who loves at all times—who will never leave or forsake you. And how it cheers the troubled mind and supports the weary spirit to feel that there is a friend to whom we may go—whose eyes are ever open to see—whose ears are ever unclosed to hear—whose heart is ever touched with a feeling of pity and compassion towards us! But we need this friend to be almighty, for no other can suit our case—he must be a divine friend. For who but God can see us wherever we are? What but a divine eye can read our thoughts? What but a divine ear can hear our petitions? And what but a divine hand can stretch itself forth and deliver? Thus the Deity of Christ is no dry, barren speculation—no mere Bible truth—but an experience wrought powerfully into a believer’s inmost soul. Happy soul! happy season! when you can say, "This is my Beloved—and this is my Friend!" Thus the very desires of the soul instinctively teach us that a friend, to be a friend, must be a heavenly friend—that His heart and hand must be divine—or they are not the heart and hand for us. This friend, whose bitterest reproach on earth was that He was the friend of sinners—is the blessed Jesus, our great high priest in the courts above. We find Him at times to be very merciful, full of pity, and very compassionate. And I am sure that we need all the compassion of His loving bosom; for we are continually in states of mind when nothing but His pure mercy can suit, when nothing but His rich and boundless compassion is adapted to our case. The consequences of death "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." Hebrews 9:27

Gloom must dwell in "the valley of the shadow of death." When we consider what death really is—not merely as putting a final close, and that, perhaps, with a pang of mortal agony, to all that nature loves, but an opening gate into endless woe—our wonder is rather that men meet it with such stoical insensibility, instead of being more alarmed and terrified at its approach. But what is death? Is it merely what we see with our bodily eyes when we view the corpse stretched upon the bed—or as we represent it to our imagination when we follow the coffin to the cemetery? Does death merely mean that pale corpse, that funeral hearse, those weeping mourners, those gasping sobs of wife or husband, with all the sights and sounds of woe as the heavy clods, amid the still silence, fall on the coffin? To most this is all they see or know of death. But death, in a scriptural sense, has a far wider and more extensive meaning than these mere outward trappings of sorrow.

It is not then so much death as the consequences of death, that makes it—to be so truly dreadful—to be the king of terrors—and invests it with that terrible visage which strikes gloom—to be cast into the lake of fire—to be forever under the dreadful wrath of God—to be eternally wallowing in the billows of sulphurous flame—to be shut up in that dreadful pit into which hope never penetrates.

Why should death be an object of fear? Because after death comes the judgment! And why should judgment be an object of terror? Because judgment implies condemnation, and condemnation implies an eternity of woe!

Errors abound on every side

Errors abound on every side. Few know and love the truth—few ministers preach it—few churches profess it—and few, very few, live under the power and in the practice of it.

Give! Give!

"The leach has two daughters, crying, Give, give." Proverbs 30:15

Such is the world in its cravings for happiness. All the bounties of God in His kind providence cannot enrich the worldly heart. The craving desires of the carnal mind are like the two daughters of the leech, which are ever crying, "Give! Give!"

"Give! Give!" cries covetousness. "Give! Give!" cries pride. "Give! Give!" cries every carnal desire of the earthly mind as its various lusts and passions are stirred up. But could all be given that sin could lust after, the result would be still the same, "Give! Give!"

Sin is like a drunkard, who the more he drinks the more he wants to drink—ever craving—ever craving stronger and stronger drink, as if nothing but drink could cool his parched tongue or boost his sinking spirits. And so he drinks until he dies—a poor miserable, drunken suicide. Such is the natural heart of man!

Holy longings & spiritual breathings

"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water." Psalms 63:1 Do carnal, unregenerate men know anything of these holy longings and spiritual breathings after an invisible God—or after a manifestation of the love of Christ? Depend upon this, that no unregenerated man ever longed

truly and really for God. He might desire to have his sins pardoned—under the convictions and stingings of his natural conscience. He might even wish to go to heaven—that he might escape hell. But he never desired God for what He is in Himself. God is too pure and holy, too great and glorious a Being for a natural heart to love—or a carnal mind to desire. Every unregenerate sinner says unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Your ways!"

There must be a new nature raised up in the soul, a new heart and a new spirit, before God can be desired for His own sake. If you have similar longings, seekings, and thirstings, you have an indubitable evidence that God has done a work of grace upon your heart. If a man knows nothing of the power of God in his soul, he can know nothing of true religion or vital godliness. The scale!

"For what will it profit a man, if he will gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

Put your soul in one side of the scale—and put all that the world calls good and great in the other side. Think of everything that the heart of man can desire—riches, honor, pleasure, power. Heap it up well! Fill one side of the scale until there is no room for more. Put in—all the gold of Australia—all the diamonds of India—all the delights of youthful love—all the pleasures of wife and home—of children and friends, of health and strength, of name and fame. Put in all that the natural mind of man deems the height of happiness, and everything that may weigh this side of the scale down.

Now, when you have filled this side of the scale, put your soul into the other side—the state of your soul for all eternity. Represent to yourself your deathbed—hold the scale with dying hands as lying just at the brink of eternity. See how the scale now hangs! What if you had the whole world that you have put into the scale, and could call it all your own—but at that solemn hour felt that your soul was forever lost—that you were dying under the wrath of God—and there was nothing before you but an eternity of misery! At such a moment as this, what could you put in the scale equal to the weight of your immortal soul?

Take the scale again. Put into one side, every affliction, trial, sorrow, and distress that imagination can conceive, or tongue express. Let them all be yours—distress of mind—pain of body—poverty of circumstances—contempt from man—assaults from Satan—Job’s afflictions—Jacob’s bereavements—David’s persecutions—Jeremiah’s prison—Hezekiah’s sickness. Put into this side of the scale everything that makes life naturally miserable—and then put into the other side, a saved soul.

Surely, as in the case of worldly honors, and riches, and happiness—a lost soul must weigh them all down! So in the case of afflictions and sorrows and troubles—a saved soul must weigh them all down too! When Jesus manifests Himself to the soul When Jesus manifests Himself to the soul, He becomes its Lord—for He puts down all other rivals, and seats Himself on the throne of the affections. He then becomes in reality what before He was but in name—Christ Jesus our Lord. We then lie at His sacred feet—we embrace Him with the arms of faith—He sways the scepter over a willing heart, and we crown Him Lord of all. A few minutes sweet communion

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

You may have read the Bible from childhood, and may know it almost by heart from end to end. You may be able to read the Hebrew text, and understand the Greek original. You may study commentator after commentator. And yet all your reading, and all your searching after the meaning of the Scripture, if continued until your eyes are worn out with fatigue, will never give you that spiritual and saving knowledge of the Person and work, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus which one five minutes of His manifested presence will discover to your soul. The light of His countenance, the shining in of His glory, and the shedding abroad of His love, will teach you more, in a few minutes sweet communion, who and what He is as the King in His beauty, than without this manifestation you could learn in a century.

What grace!

"However, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yes most assuredly, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ." Php 3:7-8

Oh what grace must be in your hearts to enable you to renounce what the world so madly pursues and what your own nature so fondly loves! To see all these earthly delights spread, as if in a panorama, before your eyes—the pleasures, the amusements, the show and finery of the world presented to you—to carry within you a nature which loves and delights in them—and yet, by the power of grace and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to regard them as far beneath your notice, as contemptible, and as polluting as the refuse in the street, over which you step in haste lest you defile your shoes or clothes—Oh what a deep and vital sense must the soul have of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus its Lord, and what a view by faith of His beauty and glory to bring it to that state—to count all that earth can give or contribute to individual enjoyment as rubbish and dross!

There is no purgatory

There is no middle path to heaven. There is no intermediate state between hell and heaven. There is no purgatory for that numerous class who think themselves hardly good enough for heaven, yet hardly bad enough for hell. No! There is no intermediate road nor state. We must win Christ as our own most blessed Jesus, and with Him enjoy the happiness and glory of heaven—or sink down to hell with all our sins upon our head beneath His most dreadful frown. The soul then that has been charmed with the beauty and blessedness of Jesus, longs to have Him, and that not for a day, month, or year, but for eternity—for in obtaining Him, it obtains all that God can give the soul of man to enjoy as created immortal and for immortality. A miracle of grace

Every saved sinner is a miracle of grace. The Lord will make every vessel of mercy know, feel, and acknowledge this—for He will give him from time to time such deep discoveries of his sin, as will convince him beyond all question that nothing but the rich, sovereign, distinguishing, and superabounding grace of God can save his soul from the bottomless pit!

Strength in the time of trouble

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: He is their strength in the time of trouble." Psalms 37:39 The afflictions of the righteous are many. We can lay down no certain path of suffering. You

may be called upon to pass through heavy trials in providence—bereavements of wife or child, or painful and peculiar family troubles, which may wound and lacerate your warmest affections and tenderest feelings. All the family of God have their allotted number and measure of griefs and sorrows, which, as they come upon them, form "times of trouble" which, with all our other times, are in the hands of the Lord—and are dealt out by Him with unerring wisdom and most faithful love. The Lord 'strengthens' His children by enabling them to bear the weighty cross—to sustain the heavy load of trial and affliction—to put their mouth in the dust as needing and deserving His chastising strokes, and to submit to His righteous dispensations and dealings as plainly sent by a gracious and loving hand. We walk by faith, not by sight. It must be a naked trust in an invisible God.

Heaven would be no heaven to you

Suppose you were taken to heaven, having no new heart—no inward element of holiness breathed into your soul by the Spirit of God. In such a case, heaven would be no heaven to you. You would want to get out of it—the presence of a holy God would appall you—the saints in bliss singing the praises of the Lamb would be so foreign to your every feeling, that you would say, "Send me to hell, for I have no heart to enjoy heaven. Let me go to hell, where I can curse and blaspheme, hate and howl. Hell, hell is the only fit place for me."

What would have been our gloomy case

"Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Colossians 1:13

None but the Holy Spirit, by His Almighty power, can thus take a poor sinner in all his guilt and filth, rags and ruin—in all his condemnation, misery, and wretchedness—and by applying the word of His grace with power to his soul, by sending a sweet promise home to his heart, by revealing Christ in His blood and righteousness, and shedding abroad His love—can bring him feelingly and experimentally into His kingdom. And this God is doing, has done, or will do for all who are really and truly His. No strength of the creature, no arm of the flesh can avail here. Mercy and grace do it all. Love and power combine, and reaching down, as it were, their arms from heaven, lift up the sinner from the power of darkness and bring him into the kingdom of light, and life, and liberty, where Jesus is all in all.

What would have been our gloomy case, even as regards this present world, and what would have been our still more gloomy case as regards our eternal condition—if God had not stretched forth His hand to rescue us from the power of darkness? We would have lived under the power of darkness, until we had sunk into the blackness of darkness forever! We would have loved and hugged and been proud of our darkness—and have fallen, as thousands fall, self-deceived and miserable victims to the ignorance, pride, and self-righteousness of our fallen nature! But God was determined to break in upon our benighted souls—and when He broke in, darkness fled. And thus the Lord was pleased to rescue us from the dominion of darkness and bring us into the kingdom of His dear Son. And shall we not render thanks and praises, and adore His blessed Majesty for these acts of His grace, these manifestations of His mercy, goodness, and love?

10.08. Volume 8

The great strength of sin The great strength of sin consists in its subtle and secret influence pervading and permeating every thread and fiber of the human mind, and acting in a way that must be felt to be known. It is like a river, deep and rapid, but flowing along so quietly and noiselessly that, looking down upon it, you could scarcely believe there was any strength in the stream. Try it—get into it. As long as you let yourself float with it you will not perceive its force—but turn and swim or row against it—then you will soon find what strength there is in the stream that seemed to glide so quietly along. So it is with the power of sin. As long as a man floats down the stream of sin, he is unconscious of the power that it is exercising over him. He gives way to it, and is therefore ignorant of its strength, though it is sweeping him along into an abyss of eternal woe. Let him oppose it. Or let a dam be made across the river that seemed to flow along so placidly. See how the stream begins to rise! See how it begins to rage and roar! And see how soon its force will sweep over or carry away the barrier that was thrown across it! So with the strength of sin. Serve sin—obey it—it seems to have no strength. Resist it—then you find its secret power, so that but for the strength of God, you would be utterly carried away by it. A sound mind "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

What a mercy it is naturally to have a sound mind! It is one of the greatest temporal blessings that God can bestow upon a man. It is far better than intellect, imagination, poetical gift, or reasoning power. And how wretched it is to have an unsound mind! a mind in the least degree diseased, eccentric, or in any way tainted with those delusive fancies which mar all comfort and often lead to the worst of consequences. But however great be the blessing of a healthy body, a healthy mind as much exceeds it in value as it is superior to it in nature. How you see men ruining themselves every day for lack of a sound mind! What extravagance, what folly are they daily committing! What disorder they bring upon their families, upon their property, and upon others also. What havoc and ruin from being crazed with some fancy or wild delusion! To possess, then, the spirit of a sound mind is to have a sound judgment in the things of God—not to be drawn aside by every passing opinion—not to be allured by every novel doctrine—not to be charmed by every fresh device of the wicked one—not to be caught by every one of his flesh-pleasing snares—but to have that sobriety of judgment and holy wisdom in the things of God, with that fixedness of heart upon the Lord Jesus, and that solid experience of His Spirit and grace, as shall keep us from errors and delusions on the right hand and on the left.

Unless we have this spiritual sobriety—this ripe and matured judgment—and this firm establishment in the truth of God—we are almost sure to be drawn aside into some error or other. Satan will somehow deceive us as an angel of light. He will puff us up with pride and presumption—he will entangle us in a maze of confusion and error—he will beguile our minds with some of his subtle deceits. But where there is a sound mind, there will be a sound faith—a sound hope—a sound love—a sound repentance—and a sound work of grace upon the heart from first to last. To have a sound mind is to have a mind deeply imbued and vitally impregnated with the truth of God. And as that truth is the only really solid and enduring substance under the sun, it follows

that those who know it experimentally for themselves are the only people really possessed of soundness of mind—for they only take right and sound views of all things and all events, natural and spiritual, and have, as the apostle says, "the mind of Christ." The soul melts at the sight!

"We love Him, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19 Our affections never flow unto Jesus, until we have had some divine discovery of Him to our heart and conscience. We may try to love Him—we may think it our duty to do so—we may be secretly ashamed of our miserable coldness, and may lament our barrenness in love to Jesus. But no power of our own can raise up true love to Jesus. We cannot love the Lord until we know that the Lord loves us—nor can we love Him with all our heart and soul, until He tells us that He loves us with all His. When He says "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and sheds abroad His love in the soul—this gives power to love Him. When, too, He sets Himself before our eyes in His divine beauty and blessedness—this makes us fall in love with Him. For beauty kindles love. It is so often in natural love—and always so in divine love. Jesus has but to touch the heart and it softens. He has but to appear—and the soul melts at the sight! Our best works?

"What is man, that he should be clean? He who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones; Yes, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water?" Job 15:14-16

What are our works—our best works? Imperfect—tainted and defiled with sin. Has ever a good thought, a good word, or a good work, passed from you which sin has not, in the conception or in the execution, more or less defiled? Any man who knows the movements of sin in his own heart will bear me witness that he has never conceived a thought, spoken a word, or done an action, in which sin has not in some degree intermingled itself, and, by intermingling itself, has defiled and polluted that thought, word, or work.

Seducers & corrupters "They have corrupted themselves. . . .they are a perverse and crooked generation." Deuteronomy 32:5 The Scripture does not spare the creature, or human pride, or self-righteousness—but boldly declares the corruption of man, and thus lays the axe to the very root of the tree. This doctrine—of human corruption—of the total fall of man—of the innate wickedness and perverseness of his heart—will always be acceptable to the child of God, because he has in his conscience an inward witness to its truth. He knows that he has corrupted himself—he feels that not only unclean thoughts lodge within him—but that he has given way to and indulged in them. Ever since he had light to see, life to feel, and a conscience to bear witness, he knows that in many flagrant instances he has corrupted himself. We speak of seducers and corrupters with just abhorrence—but a man’s worst corrupter is his own heart! There is no greater source of inward condemnation and guilt, than when a man is obliged to confess he has corrupted himself—made his own heart worse than it really is, by pandering to its lusts and heaping fuel upon its smouldering flame!

Up from the wilderness "Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

He is one made alive unto God by regenerating grace—one who knows something of the entrance of the word into his conscience, laying bare the secrets of his heart, and discovering the guilt, the filth, the evil, and the miserable consequences of sin. He is one who knows something of the

deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his own fallen nature. He is one who is separated from the world, whether dead in sin or dead in a profession, by a sovereign work of grace upon his heart. He is one who has been led to see the emptiness of a mere 'notional knowledge' of the truth, without knowing experimentally, the healing power of Jesus' love and blood. He is one who has been stripped of creature wisdom, human strength, and a fig-leaf righteousness—and been made to see that unless he has a vital saving interest in the blood and obedience of Jesus, he must perish in his sins.

He is one whom God the Spirit has blessed with a living faith that works by love—purifies the heart—separates from the world—delivers from the power and practice of sin—overcomes the wicked one—receives grace and strength, life and power out of the fullness of Christ—and the end of which is the salvation of the soul. He is one who is blessed also with a good hope through grace—who has had some discovery of the Lord Jesus to his soul, so as to raise up in his heart a hope in His mercy, enabling him to cast forth that anchor which is both sure and steadfast, into that within the veil, where he rides secure from death and hell, and where, through upholding grace, he will outride every storm. He is one who is blessed with a vital union with the Lord Jesus—for he is said in the text to lean upon Him—which implies that he has such a union with Jesus as enables him to rest wholly and solely upon Him, and upon what He is made unto him.

He is one who is also blessed and favored at times with a measure of sweet and sacred communion with the Lord of life and glory—for to lean upon Jesus implies that he is favored with some such holy nearness as John had when he lay in His bosom. He is one, too, who is not ignorant of trial or temptation, for the wilderness finds him enough of both. Nor is he one who is ignorant of sufferings, afflictions, and sorrows—for this is the distinctive character of the present wilderness condition. He is not unacquainted with spiritual hungering and thirsting—for the wilderness in itself affords neither food nor water. Nor is he a stranger to the fiery flying serpents that haunt the wilderness—nor to the perils and dangers that encompass the traveler therein from the pestilential wind, the roving Arab, and the moving columns of sand. Who is this?

"Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5 A saved sinner is a spectacle for angels to contemplate! That a sinful man who deserves nothing but the eternal wrath of God, should be lifted out of justly merited perdition, into salvation to which he can have no claim—must indeed ever be a holy wonder! And that you or I should ever have been fixed on in the electing love of God—ever have been given to Jesus to redeem—ever quickened by the Spirit to feel our lost, ruined state—ever blessed with any discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His saving grace—this is and ever must be a matter of holy astonishment here—and will be a theme for endless praise hereafter! To see a man altogether so different from what he once was—once so careless, carnal, ignorant, unconcerned about his soul—to see that man now upon his knees begging for mercy, the tears streaming down his face, his bosom heaving with convulsive sighs, his eyes looking upward that pardon may reach him in his desperate state—is not that a man to be looked at with wonder and admiration? To see another who might have pushed his way in the busy, bustling scenes of life, who might have had honors, riches, and everything the world had to bestow heaped upon his head—abandon all for Jesus' sake, and esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt—is not that man a wonder? To live while here on earth in union and communion with an invisible God—to talk to Jesus, whom the eye of sense has never seen, and whose voice the ear of sense has never

heard—and yet to see Him as sensibly by the eye of faith as though the natural eye rested upon His glorious Person, and to hear His voice speaking into the inmost heart, as plainly and clearly as though the sound of His lips met the natural ear—is not that a wonder also? To see a man preferring one smile from the face of Jesus and one word from His peace-speaking lips—above all the titles, honors, pleasures, and power that the world can bestow—why surely if there be a wonder upon earth, that man is one! May we not, then, say with admiring as well as wondering eyes, "Who is this? Why, this man I knew—worldly, proud, ambitious, self-seeking. That man I knew—given up to vanity and pride. Another man I knew—buried in politics, swallowed up in pleasure and gaiety, abandoned to everything vile and sensual. But he has now become prayerful, watchful, tender-hearted, choosing the company of God's people—giving up everything that his carnal mind once approved of and delighted in—and manifesting in his walk, conversation, and whole deportment that he is altogether a new creature."

Whenever we see any of those near and dear to us—touched by the finger of this all-conquering Lord—subdued by His grace—and wrought upon by His Spirit—then not only do we look upon such with holy wonder, but with the tenderest affection, mingled with the tears of thankful praise to the God of all our mercies. "Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?"

Heavenly wisdom

"Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding. For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver, and the profit of it better than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies. None of the things you can desire are to be compared to her." Proverbs 3:13-15

Few, however, seem to know, few to prize this heavenly wisdom—this divine teaching—this unction or anointing from the Holy One which teaches all things. Forms and ceremonies content some—a name to live satisfies others—a sound creed, with a tolerably consistent life, is enough for this professor—the approbation of men, the flattery of his own heart, are sufficient for others. But O the insufficiency, the emptiness, the deceptiveness of all these forms and shadows, when we are made to see and feel who and what we are—when our spiritual poverty comes upon us like an armed man—when our miserable destitution, nakedness, beggary, and thorough insolvency, with all their attendant needs and woes, stare us in the face—when we stand before the throne of the Most High without a rag to cover us, a refuge to hide us, or a plea to avail us!

It is this view of ourselves within and without—this sinking down before God as the great Searcher of hearts—this deep and feeling sense of the pitiable state into which sin, original and actual, has brought us—which, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, opens our eyes to see what alone can profit us. One beam of divine light shining into the soul is enough to show us not only what we are—but what alone can do us any good. One drop of the unction from the Holy One falling upon the lids is enough to open the eyes to see in whom all salvation is, and from whom all salvation comes—and thus forever to chase away those idle dreams, those vain delusions, those deceptive hopes in which thousands trust.

We may have a sound creed

We may have a sound creed, a form of words perfectly consistent with the truth in the Scriptures—but this will neither sanctify nor save. Truth in the bare letter brings no deliverance

from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin. It does not bring the soul near unto God—nor repel Satan—nor set up the kingdom of God with power in the heart. We need a better teaching than this! We need "the Spirit of truth," whose especial office is to take the truth of God, and to open up, reveal, make known, apply, and seal it with His own gracious operation, divine influence, and holy power, upon the heart and conscience.

Through rich and unspeakable mercy, there are times and seasons when a spiritual light seems to shine upon the sacred page. You read the Bible with enlightened eyes. Power and sweetness seem to stream, as it were, in rich unction through the Word of truth—and as you read it with softened heart and tearful eyes, the truth of God shines from it into your understanding as brightly and as clearly as the sun in the noonday sky. And why? Because the Spirit of truth is opening it up to your understanding and applying it with power to your heart! He is illuminating your mind—radiating light from the Scriptures into your soul—and opening up the truth of God with divine power to your heart!

They love to be deceived

We are surrounded with error—the carnal heart is full of it. For wherever truth is not—there error must be. A veil of ignorance is by nature spread thickly over the mind, through which not one ray of divine light penetrates. Men love error—religious error—for God’s own testimony is that they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They love to be deceived—they hate the hand which would tear the delusion away. While then they are encompassed with the mists of error, how can they find the way to truth? The Spirit alone can dissipate these clouds, disperse these mists, and take away this veil of unbelief and ignorance spread over the heart—and this it is His sacred office to perform, for He is the "Spirit of truth."

Opened up in all its filth & gore "And when He has come, He will convict the world in respect to sin." John 16:8

Under the Spirit’s sacred and spiritual influence, there are times and seasons when your conscience seems in an especial manner wrought upon. The evil of sin is set before you as perhaps you have never seen it before. Your conscience bleeds with the guilt and weight of it. You see what a dreadful and an evil thing sin is—how loathsome—how detestable! You could almost weep tears of blood that you have been such a sinner. Your backslidings rise up to view as so many mountains of iniquity. The wickedness of your heart is laid bare, and you feel that there cannot be such another wretch on earth. Your corrupt nature is opened up in all its filth and gore—you wonder how the patience of God could have borne with you so many years. And not only so, but tears flow down your cheek—sobs of contrition heave from your bosom—you could almost weep your life away, because you have sinned so deeply against such redeeming love! The infirmities of Christian brethren

"Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults in love." Ephesians 4:2

Learn to be patient, meekly bearing with the infirmities of Christian brethren. There is a time in our Christian life when we desire to set everybody right and make everything square. But we begin to find after a while that we cannot set our own selves right, nor make our own spirit and conduct square with the word of truth. This conviction, forced increasingly upon us, makes us less keen to

see the mote in the eyes of others, and more willing to take out the beam out of our own eye—less desirous to condemn others, more willing to condemn ourselves—less sure of the sins of our friends, more certain of our own.

We sooner or later learn that it is one thing to wink at our brethren's sins—another to bear with our brethren's infirmities. We see that we naturally differ from one another, and that though grace changes the heart, the 'natural disposition' is rather subdued by grace, than radically altered. Thus our natural tempers, stations and occupations, education, and bringing up—modes of thought and feeling, views of men and things—family and business connections, prejudices and prepossessions—besetting sins and infirmities—our very knowledge and experience of the truth of God—our various stages in the divine life—our afflictions, trials, and temptations, and many other circumstances which we cannot now enumerate—all so widely differ that you can scarcely find two Christians alike—each having his own peculiar infirmities. As, then, we expect others to bear with our infirmities—let us learn to bear with theirs—loving them for the grace that we see in them.

Anticipate no easy road "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

Expect a path of increasing, rather than diminishing tribulation. Don't be surprised at your daily cross within or without—with bodily afflictions, sharp trials, and painful conflicts. Anticipate no easy road in providence or in grace—in the church or in the world—in the family or in the business—in your dealings with sinners or in your dealings with saints.

God means to make us thoroughly sick of this world and of everything in it, that, wearied and worn out with trials, temptations, and conflicts—we may find all our rest in Himself. And thus, as through much tribulation we enter into His kingdom of grace—so through much tribulation we may enter into His kingdom of glory. Our only preservation Our only preservation against the winds of error which are blowing on every side—our only safety amid the perils and evils which daily beset us from without or from within—is a personal, experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus!

Afflictions, crosses, losses, bereavements

If our afflictions, crosses, losses, bereavements, family troubles, and church trials have been a means of humbling our proud hearts—bringing us to honest confession of, and godly sorrow for our sins and backslidings—if they have instrumentally separated us more effectually from the world, its company, its ways, its maxims, and its spirit—if they have, in the good hand of God, stirred up prayer in our hearts—led us into portions of the word of truth before hidden from view—laid us more feelingly and continually at the footstool of mercy—made mercy more dear and grace more sweet—these trials and afflictions have been neither unprofitable or unseasonable. The influence of worldly professors "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 2 Timothy 3:5

Nothing is more dangerous than a profession of the truth without an experience of its power—for nothing more hardens the heart and sears the conscience, than a wanton handling of sacred things. Let us dread the influence of worldly professors. The more we are in their company the more they rob us of every tender, humble, gracious, and spiritual feeling.

Dying men & women in a dying world

We are all poor dying men and women in a dying world, and in a few years at best, the praise or censure of men will be no more to us, than the sun which shines upon our tomb, or the storm that sweeps over our grave!

They must exert a daily & visible influence

Many hold to the inspiration of the Bible—more from tradition than any experience of its power. The mere fact of its inspiration may be held—and still be in the heart as a stone lies in a field. The Bible is widely read—but the veil remains over the heart of thousands of its readers. Religion was never more talked about—but was never less known as an inward spiritual reality. Profession was never greater—and practice never less. Bible knowledge was never more spread—and faith, and hope, and love less manifested. But when Jesus comes with power into a sinner's heart, He cannot be hidden. His superabounding grace, His constraining love, His matchless beauty and blessedness, His heavenly glory—when experimentally seen and known—must be made manifest in the believing lip and life. When merely seen in the Word of God—when merely held as a creed—the most blessed truths are powerless and fruitless—as unhappily there are continual instances everywhere before our eyes. But as experimentally known and felt, they must exert a daily and visible influence.

Only Jesus can "Without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Only Jesus can—support us under our trials—comfort us in our afflictions—deliver us out of our temptations—subdue our sins, smile away our fears—cheer us in life—bless us in death—and present us in eternity before His Father's throne, holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight!

We are all in the hospital A sight and sense of the evils in ourselves and others, should teach us mutual forbearance. We are all in the hospital—and shall we quarrel with our fellow patients? Should we not rather sympathize with each other's infirmities—and be looking out for the arrival of the Physician who alone can cure each and all? But if we cannot keep out of contention, and desire a matter of strife with the brethren, let this be our ground of dispute—Who is the greater sinner? Who owes most to the Savior? Who shall live most to His glory? When the children of God meet When the children of God meet there is little real spiritual conversation. Worldly subjects, the mere trifles of the day, the weather, the markets, and the crops, politics and gossip—thrust out the things of God. When religion is talked of, it is all at a distance—spiritual experience is lost in a cloud of generalities. The gifts and abilities, texts and sermons, changes and movements of ministers are a prevailing topic. Some controversial point is broached, on which the combatants fall tooth and nail—the contending parties lose their tempers—one harsh word produces another, until the whole degenerates into a squabble—and poor religion is as much trampled down in the vestry, as sobriety is in the bar-room! The creature

All true religion flows out of the life of God in the soul. Wherever this divine life does not exist, there may be 'the name of religion'—but it will be—a shadow without substance—a form without power—an imitation without reality. Probe all false religion to the bottom—look into its heart and center—strip off its garments and trappings—and what will you find? SELF! False religion may assume a thousand shapes. It may run through all shades of profession. But hunt it down through all its turnings and windings, and you will find the creature at the end of the chase! Our base

ingratitude Our base ingratitude is one of our most crying sins. What mercies and favors we have enjoyed! And what base returns have we rendered! Did we but see and feel how much we owe to the ever-watchful eye and ever-bountiful hand of Him in whom we live, move, and have our being—and did we compare His favors with our returns—we would be overwhelmed with shame and confusion of face! Where sin abounded "Where sin abounded, grace did abound much more exceedingly." Romans 5:20

Sin has abounded—fearfully abounded in thought, word, and deed—but grace does much more abound! Take your sins, then, with all their horrid and dreadful aggravations—sins against light, conscience, love, mercy, and blood. Examine them well—search thoroughly, as far as you can—their height, depth, length, and breadth—until your knees tremble, and your heart sinks with fear and dread. Must you perish? Must you sink to rise no more? Is all hope gone? Is hell your destined unavoidable place? Look, look, see this view of the gospel declaration concerning grace. Only get this brought by the Spirit into your heart, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"—and your debts are at once liquidated. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin! "All sin!" How comprehensive! What sin does this not embrace? And take with it, too, this word from the Lord's own lips, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Then all vile, infidel, blasphemous thoughts and suggestions—all the pride, unbelief, infidelity, obscenity, and filth of a depraved, desperately depraved nature—all the dregs of that foul sewer which floods the imagination—all the hard, rebellious uprisings of a carnal mind at enmity with God—all the heavings and tossings of a heart bottomless as hell—with all the boilings-up, fermentings, and workings to and fro of an abyss of iniquity—all, all evil from within and from without—shall be forgiven—and is already forgiven to the repenting, believing children of God! This secret anointing oil "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know the truth." 1 John 2:20 The anointing of the Holy One—the internal teaching and operation of the Spirit—penetrates into every heart to which it comes. It does not merely lie on the surface. It does not merely change the creed. It does not merely alter the life. It goes deeper than creed, lip, or life. The religion of God consists in the anointing of the Holy One which goes beneath the shell and the skin—which works down to the very bottom of man's heart and opens it up and lays it bare before the eyes of Him with whom he has to do.

It is by virtue of this anointing that our secret motives are discovered—and the pride, presumption, self-righteousness, self-seeking—and all that depravity which ferments in a man's heart, are laid open. It is by the penetrating effects of this divine light and life in a man's soul, that all the secret workings and inward movement of his heart are discovered and laid bare. A man can never loathe himself in dust and ashes—never abhor himself as the vilest of the vile—until this secret anointing oil touches his heart! He will be satisfied with a name to live—with an empty profession—until this teaching of the Spirit goes through every cloak and veil—and searches into the very vitals—so as to sink into the secret depths of a man's spirit before God! The sins of devils "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Proverbs 16:5

There are sins which men commit, that devils cannot. Unbelief, infidelity, and atheism, are not sins of devils—for they believe and tremble, and feel too much of the wrath of God to doubt His threatenings or deny His existence. The love of money is a sin from which they are exempt—for gold and silver are confined to earth, and the men who live on it. The lusts of the flesh in all their bearings—whether gluttony, drunkenness, or sensuality, belong only to those who inhabit

tabernacles of clay. But pride, malignity, falsehood, enmity, murder, deceitfulness, and all those sins of which spirits are capable in these crimes—devils as much exceed men as an angelic nature exceeds in depth, power, and capacity a human one. The eye of man sees, for the most part, only the grosser offences against morality—it takes little or no cognisance of internal sins. Thus a man may be admired as a pattern of consistency, because free from the outbreaks of fleshly and more human sins—while his heart, as open to God's heart-searching eye, may be full of pride, malignity, enmity, and murder—the sins of devils. Such were the scribes and pharisees of old—models of correctness outwardly—but fiends of malice inwardly. So fearful were these 'holy men' of outward defilement, that they would not enter into Pilate's judgment-hall—when at the same moment their hearts were plotting the greatest crime that earth ever witnessed—the crucifixion of the Son of God! The exceeding greatness of His power

"The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might." Ephesians 1:19

Consider, first, the difficulties which grace has to encounter in the quickening of a dead soul into spiritual life. View the depths of the fall. See the death of the soul in trespasses and sins—its thorough alienation from the life of God, through the darkness, blindness and ignorance of the understanding—the perverseness of the will—the hardness of the conscience—and the depravity of the affections.

View the obduracy, stubbornness and obstinacy of the soul—its pride, unbelief, infidelity and self-righteousness—its passionate love to, habitual practice of, and long inurement in sin. Consider the strong prejudices of the soul against everything godly and holy—the desperate, implacable enmity of the carnal mind against God Himself. Consider the soul's firm and deep-rooted love to the world in all its varied shapes and forms. Remember also how all its hopes, happiness and prospects are bound up in the things of time and sense. O what a complicated mass of difficulties do all these foes form in their firm combination—like a compact, well-armed, thoroughly trained army—against any power which would dislodge them from their position!

Consider, also, the sacrifices which must often be made by one who is to live godly in Christ Jesus—the tenderest ties, perhaps, to be broken—the lucrative or advantageous prospects which have to be abandoned—old friends to be renounced—family connections to be given up—position in life to be lost—and often the shame and contempt to be entailed on one's family and oneself! All, indeed, are not so hedged about with these peculiar difficulties which we have just named—but few are wholly free from them—and I have had much personal experience of them in my first setting my face Zionward.

Consider, also, the mighty power of God in maintaining divine life in our soul. See and feel what mountains of difficulty—what seas of temptation—what winds and storms of error—what assaults and snares of Satan, and the latter more dangerous than the former—what floods of vileness and ungodliness without and within—what strong lusts and passions—what secret slips and falls, backslidings and departures from the living God—what long seasons of darkness, barrenness and death—what opposition of the flesh to the strait and narrow way—what crafty hypocrites, pretended friends, but actual foes—false professors and erroneous characters, all striving to throw down or entangle our steps, we had to grapple with—what helplessness, inability and miserable impotency in ourselves to all that is good—what headlong proneness to all that is evil. All these

things we have to pass in solemn review.

We have also to ponder over what we have been, and what we still are, since we professed to fear God—and how when left to ourselves, we have done nothing but sin against and provoke Him to His face from first to last—and yet still have divine life maintained within. And thus as we hold in our hands and read over article by article this long dark catalogue—still to have a sweet persuasion that the life of God is in our soul, and that because Jesus lives, we shall live also. Thus to realize, believe and feel, and bless God for His surpassing, superabounding grace—is to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us who believe—in maintaining divine life after it had been first communicated!

What a creature man is!

"I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid My face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways." Isaiah 57:17

What a creature man is! What an obstinate, perverse, rebellious wretch—that wrath and judgments will not mend him! The Lord tells us here why He smote His people. It was for the iniquity of their covetousness—the word "covetousness" pointing out what the human heart is chiefly engaged upon. For we must not limit the expression merely to avarice after money—but consider it as embracing the going out of the heart of man after the things of time and sense—the insatiable desire of the carnal mind after earthly and sensual gratification. This covetousness God speaks of as iniquity lies in this—that man loves everything earthly and sensual better than God—that he seeks pleasure from every object but the Lord—that he willfully and greedily runs into every base lust—making carnal things his delight and happiness.

Now the Lord, provoked by the iniquity of his covetousness, smote him—with stroke upon stroke—with disappointment upon disappointment—with affliction upon affliction—with trouble upon trouble. But His corrective measures were all thrown away! They did not raise up in him a spiritual work—nor bring him to the Lord’s feet—nor change his will—nor renew him in the spirit of his mind. They left him as they found him—earthly, sensual, and dead. Or rather, they left him worse than they found him—for his heart became more hardened, and his conscience more stupefied than before! So obstinate, rebellious, wayward, perverse a wretch is man, that no step which the Lord could take in a way of judgment or anger, (independent of the Spirit’s operations, for that is the point I am endeavoring to enforce)—could ever have the least effect upon him. Now do not you parents often see this very thing in your children naturally? You sometimes cannot make anything of them—there is such a frowardness and perversity of disposition in them—that all your chastisements and every means you employ to make them better—only seem to make them worse. You cannot, with all the pains you take with them, make them one whit better!

Now what froward children often are to their parents, such are we toward God—His stripes—His frowns—His hiding Himself—His sharp afflictions—do not produce in us any spiritual good. But we go right on sinning—muttering perverseness, full of rebellion, peevishness, and discontent. And though we may feel the rod of God upon us, yet there is—no breaking down of heart—no submission of soul—no contrition of spirit before Him!

They make him mourn

"To all who mourn in Israel, He will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the Lord has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for His own glory." Isaiah 61:3 The child of God will be more or less a spiritual mourner on account of the evil that dwells in him. The more that he knows of his heart—the longer he walks in the divine life—and the more that sin is opened up to him as seen in the light of God's countenance—the more will he be a spiritual mourner. Sometimes he will mourn over the evils of his heart—that his lusts and corruptions are so strong—and he so weak against them. Sometimes over the temptations that Satan has laid for his feet, in which he has been entangled, and by which he has been cast down. Sometimes over the absence of God, and that he finds so little access to His blessed Majesty. Sometimes he will mourn as feeling how little grace he has. Sometimes he will mourn over his backslidings—how he has been entangled in, and given way to his lusts—how he has been overcome by his temper—how he has murmured and fretted against God's dealings with him, so as at times to have been almost ready to break forth into cursing, or do something desperate. As these and a thousand other evils are felt in a man's heart, they make him mourn, and as the text speaks, have ashes for his covering. He mourns also over his lack of fruitfulness—and that he cannot be, do, or say what he would. He has strong desires to adorn the doctrine of God in all things—to have spirituality of mind and a tender conscience—and to lead a life of faith, prayer, and watchfulness. But he is obliged to confess with the apostle—"For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do." For his mind is often, very often, doing the exact contrary. All these things, combined with Satan's powerful temptations—and his many misgivings on account of the hidings of God's face from him on account of his sins—with his thorough inability to cast off the burdens that press him down—sink him very low. In addition to all this, he may have also to experience persecution for the truth's sake from those, perhaps, near and dear to him. So that it is not one, but many sorrows, that he has to wade through, so as at times to make him, in his feelings, of all men most miserable!

I am full of confusion!

"I am full of confusion!" Job 10:15

God is the great Ruler, Director, and Controller of all things! We must not look on the varied events that are ever taking place in this world, as a mere matter of 'chance'—a confused medley—as though these multitudinous circumstances were all thrown like marbles into a bag, and thrown out without any order or arrangement. God is a God of order. In the natural world, the world of creation—all is in order. In the spiritual world, the world of grace—all is in order. And in the providential world, the world of providence—all is order also. To our mind, indeed, all often seems disorder. But this arises from our ignorance, and not seeing the whole as one definitely arranged plan.

If you were to see a weaver working at a loom, and saw nothing but the threads and needles jumping up in continual motion—you would see nothing but confusion—nor could you form the slightest conception of the pattern which was being worked. But when the whole was completed, and the silk taken off the roller, then you would see a pattern arranged in beautiful order—every thread concurring to form one harmonious design. But all this was known beforehand by the artist who designed the pattern, and every arrangement was made in strict subserviency to it. But if this is the case as to God's appointments in providence, how much more is it true of His glorious

designs in grace. Every trial, temptation, affliction, sorrow—are but the result of a definite plan in the eternal mind. Yet to us how often all seems confusion! This confusion is not so much in the things themselves—as in our mind. Job surrounded by trouble cried out, "I am full of confusion!" Yet we can see in reading his history that all his trials were working toward an appointed end. So every trial, sorrow, temptation or affliction, which has ever lain, or ever will lie, in your path—has been marked out by infinite, unerring wisdom! Is not the commonest road laid out according to a definite plan, and does not the surveyor, when he lays it out, put every mile-stone in its proper place? So, does not the Lord lay out beforehand the road in which His people should walk? And does He not put a trial here and a sorrow there—an affliction at this turning, and a trouble at that corner? All is definitely planned in His infinite wisdom, to bring the traveler safely home to Zion! My inward diabolism

"I have a daily cross, a daily burden, a daily affliction. It is my dreadful heart, my carnal mind, my corrupt nature—sin dwells in me—my unbelief, my infidelity, my worldly mindedness, my backsliding, my deceptive, adulterous, idolatrous heart—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. My inward diabolism, with which I am filled, daily makes me deeply groan, draws forth many a sigh, and makes me mourn before God—that I have such a wicked hard heart. My sins, my backslidings afflict me, and deeply grieve me." The afflictions the Lord sends on His people "You have afflicted me with all Your waves." Psalms 88:7

Jesus was a man of sufferings—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And His people, in their measure, must have the same. The Lord has appointed it should be so. He has chosen His Zion in the furnace of affliction. There is no escape. The afflictions the Lord sends on His people are of varied kinds. The Lord sees necessary to send afflictions suitable to the case, state and condition of each. What might be an affliction to one, might not be so to another. Each must carry his own affliction. Each must bear his own load—and each endure his own appointed lot. Our wise God sees exactly what affliction to lay on each and all—when it shall come—where it shall come—why it shall come—how it shall come—how it shall work—what it shall work—how long it shall endure—when it shall be put on—and when taken off. In these matters, the Lord acts as a sovereign. We did not choose of what parents we would be born—nor our situation in life—nor had we any choice of our stature or skin color. The Lord appointed all our afflictions for us—and when He puts them on—no human arm can take them off. He knows our constitution and troubles—our characteristics and the minutest things relating to our situation in life. The Lord knows all our concerns. Therefore He lays on each individual the very affliction He sees that individual needs—no greater, no less—exactly the very affliction which shall bring about the very appointed purpose intended by God to be brought about—which shall be for the soul’s good and God’s own glory! Who are these men?

"To Him shall men come." Isaiah 45:24 Who are these men? Are they not regenerated men and women—redeemed of the Lord, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and made alive to God, by His special teaching in the conscience? These men belong to God’s own blessed, redeemed, regenerated family. It is God’s solemn, unalterable declaration, that "to Him shall men come." It does not rest, therefore, in the will of the creature—it hangs wholly and solely on the sovereign determination of God Himself. How does He bring it about? By a special work of grace in the heart. How do these men come? Under the teaching, drawing, and leading of the blessed Spirit of God in their soul. Where does the blessed Spirit find them? Does He find them willing to come, willing to

leave all those things that men, by nature, love, and to which they cleave? No! It must be the special work of God Himself in the heart and conscience. He brings it about by showing us plainly, that in ourselves, we are lost.

Until a man feels in himself lost and undone, he will never come to Jesus Christ, for He is the Savior of the lost. Until we feel lost, He is no Savior to us. When we feel lost, all our righteousness opened up as filthy rags, see no way of escape from the horrible pit—and the Lord is pleased to open up to us the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—His atoning blood—His perfect obedience—His justifying righteousness, and dying love—laying these things with some degree of sweetness and power on the soul—we come. Why do we come? Because the blessed Spirit works in us to will and do of His good pleasure—He enables us to come, under His blessed teachings, leadings, and actings.

Self-esteem & self-exaltation?

"That no flesh should boast before God. . . .He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:29; 1 Corinthians 1:31 In order that we should glory in the Lord, it is absolutely necessary that we should cease to glory in SELF. By nature, we are all prone to glory in self through those cursed principles of self-esteem and self-exaltation. Nothing but the mighty power of God can put down these cursed principles. We are prone to this pride, and it is strengthened and matured in a fallen sinner's heart.

It is the work of the Spirit in the sinner's conscience—to pour contempt on all the pride of man—to open up the depth of the fall—to bring to light all his hidden corruptions—to unbosom and lay bare all the evils of his heart—to upturn the deep corruptions of his fallen nature before his astonished eyes—that he may learn with true humility of soul, brokenness of heart, and contrition of spirit before God—to loathe and abhor himself in dust and ashes, as a monster of iniquity.

If a man has not been taught by the strong hand of God in his soul to abhor, loathe, and cry out against himself as one of the vilest wretches that crawls on God's earth—he has never learned to glory in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to his soul a sense of His love, and unfolds a sight of His glory before his astonished eyes, he is brought to look out of himself, and from all he has—to the Lord Jesus Christ! The highest privilege The highest privilege, the greatest blessing, the richest favor that God can bestow upon any person is to make him His own dearly beloved child. For in so doing he not only advances him to the noblest dignity, but to the highest summit of glory and happiness that can be enjoyed in His own eternal, blissful presence. Our heavenly Father bestows upon us His children all those needful mercies and favors which—His wisdom can devise—His love prompt—and His power perform. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." What is it to be an heir of God? It is to have God for our eternal possession—for all the love, glory, bliss, and blessedness of the self-existent Jehovah to be given to us for our everlasting enjoyment. Whatever the love of God can give—whatever the grace of God bestow—whatever the glory of God reveal—whatever fullness of bliss there is in the eternal presence of the great and glorious Jehovah—all that is ours if we are the children of God! A pilgrim & a stranger The child of God is separated from the world as a pilgrim and a stranger—and is pressing onward through a thousand foes and fears, to a heavenly country.

They have done you good

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28 Have your trials humbled you? Have they made you meek and lowly? If so, they have done you good. Have they stirred up a spirit of prayer in your bosom—and made you sigh, cry, and groan for the Lord to appear, visit, or bless your soul? Then they have done you good. Have they opened up those parts of God's word which are full of mercy and comfort to His afflicted people? Then they have done you good. Have they made you more sincere, more earnest, more spiritual, more heavenly-minded, more convinced that the Lord Jesus can alone bless and comfort your soul? Then they have done you good. Have they made the Bible more precious to you, the promises more sweet, the dealings of God with your soul more prized? Then they have done you good.

Now this is the way that "all things work together for good." Not by puffing you up with pride—but by filling your heart with humility. Not by encouraging presumption—but by raising your affections to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Not by carrying us into the world—but by bringing us out of it. Not by covering us with a veil of ignorance and arrogance—but by stripping this veil off, and bringing light, life, and power into the soul!

God's divine appointment

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

"All things!" Look at that! All that concerns our body and soul—everything in providence—everything in grace—everything you have passed through—everything you are passing through—everything you shall pass through. "All things!" What! is there not a single thing, however minute, however comparatively unimportant, that is not for my good, if I love God? No! Not one! If there were a single thing which befalls me, which is not working together for my good, if I am a child of God, I say it with reverence—that this verse would be a lie in God's book. And yet, when we consider the variety of things that affect us—to believe that all of them are working together for our good—how must we admire the wonderful wisdom, and power, and government of God! Are we tried in our circumstances? This is according to God's divine appointment. Is it the Lord's will and pleasure to bring us down in the world, by sorrows and adversities in providence? This is still according to God's divine appointment. Have we afflictions in the family? It is still according to God's divine appointment. It comes from Him. Nothing can happen in body—in property—in family—that does not spring from God's divine appointment. Are children taken away? They are taken by the hand of God! The Lord gives—and the Lord takes away! Is wife or husband afflicted? The hand of God is in it. Is the body brought down with sickness? It comes from God. Is the mind tried with a thousand perplexities, anxieties, and cares? It is still the hand of God. All these matters spring from His divine appointment! Nothing can take place, either in providence or in grace—except as God in His infinite wisdom has decreed to perform—or decreed to allow!

Saved!

"He will come and save you." Isaiah 35:3 To be saved! Who can fathom the depth of that word? Only in eternity will it be known what is implied in the word saved! For the glorified spirit must look down from the battlements of heaven into the dreadful pit of hell, before it can comprehend a millionth part of what is contained in the word saved. Saved from hell—saved from the pouring out

of God’s terrible wrath through countless ages—saved from eternal punishment with devils and lost spirits—and saved into that heaven which knows no end, but is ever opening up with richer manifestations of glory and bliss!

Merit?

Merit? I know of only one merit that we have—hell. If salvation were of human merit—not a soul could be saved!

Applied with a divine power to the heart

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up." Acts 20:32

We are not built up—by fleshly holiness—by creature piety—by long and loud prayers—by the doings and duties of the flesh—nor even by sound doctrines floating in our brain. But we are built up by ’the word of God’s grace,’ applied with a divine power to the heart. In other words, by the sweet manifestation—unctuous application—and divine revelation of the gospel of the grace of God. Have you suffered from temptation—and been delivered out of it? It was ’the word of God’s grace’ that built you up. Have you been in severe trial—and the Lord has blessed you in it, and brought you out of it? It was ’the word of God’s grace’ that built you up. Have you been entangled in some error—and the Lord snatched you out of that error by applying some portion of His truth to your soul? It was ’the word of God’s grace’ that built you up. Have you been entangled in the lusts of the flesh—or cast down by some snare of the devil—and the Lord has delivered you out of it? It was ’the word of His grace’ that built you up.

If we deny Him "If we deny Him, He also will deny us." 2 Timothy 2:12

Sometimes we deny Jesus our affections. The world gets hold of us; those whom we love entwine themselves around our hearts—the things of time and sense begin to be pleasant and sweet to us—we gradually get carnal, cold, and dead. Then He will deny us—that is, He will not drop His love into a soul that is preoccupied with an idol. If we are cold to Him, He will be shy with us—and if we are negligent of His favor and His grace, He will requite us by withholding them. A continual snare to us

We feel the world, with all its charms—its attractions—its habits—its temptations—to be a continual snare to us. Our eyes are caught with every passing vanity. The glare and blaze of the things of time and sense attract our eyes. And as the moth flits around the candle until it burns its wings—so are we continually flitting around the glare and blaze of the world—and get often sadly singed!

We ask the Lord, then, that He would—separate us from the world, deliver us from these snares—lead us up into some sweet communion with Himself—bring us out of this carnal frame—and favor us with some blessed enlargement of soul. We ask the Lord that He would enable us to—look to Him—embrace Him in our affections—and love Him with a pure heart fervently. The Lord condescends to answer the prayer—but in a way that we little dream of.

Instead of answering it by bringing in some sweet manifestation of Christ—He lays guilt upon our consciences. Fresh temptations bring us into a state of conflict, until we are forced to cast

ourselves at the foot of the cross—as guilty, filthy rebels. Now, when the Lord has brought the soul there, and enables it by faith to get sight of a crucified Savior—there is a power communicated which separates the heart from this world and all its vanities! And getting separated in affection from the world—there is a new and inexpressible pleasure, sweetness, and blessedness felt, in pouring out the heart before Him—which the world with all its vain charms never can produce within. When he is, in any measure, indulged with a sight of a dying Lord—when he gets, by faith, a view of Christ's cross—and faith, hope, and love, tenderness, sorrow, and contrition begin to rise up in his bosom—sin becomes hated—temptation is weakened—spirituality of mind produced—and the carnal mind for a while is deadened to those base desires which before were uppermost! The heavenly runner

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Hebrews 12:1-2 The heavenly runner looks wholly to the incarnate Son of God. Jesus draws him onward with His invincible grace—and as he runs and looks—and looks and runs—every fresh look gives renewed strength! And every time we view His beauty and glory we see more to believe, to admire, and to love Him. Every glance at His beauteous Person renews the flame of holy love! And every touch of His sacred finger melts the heart into conformity to His suffering image. This is the life of a Christian—daily to be running a race for eternity—and, as speeding onward to a heavenly goal, by continually breathing forth the yearnings of his soul after divine realities, and to be pressing forward more and more toward the Lord Jesus Christ as giving him a heavenly crown when he has finished his course with joy. But as he runs he is bowed down with weights—many trials and sorrows—many cares and wearying anxieties—many powerful temptations—many bosom sins—many inward idols—many doubts and fears—many sinkings and tremblings—many hindrances from his felt coldness and darkness—hang upon him and press him down—so that at times he is utterly unable to move a single foot forward. But in spite of hindrances from without and within, every now and then he sees Jesus at the end of the race holding out the crown—and seeing Him, he is encouraged and enabled once more to run looking unto Him—that he may derive strength and virtue out of His fullness.

He cannot run the race with any hope of success but as he looks unto Jesus—and derives supplies of strength and power out of His fullness. Though faint, be still pursuing. Run on and run through every difficulty. The blessed Jesus, who is drawing you on by looks of love, will never let you go—nor cease His gracious work upon your heart! He will maintain the faith and hope He has given to you—and will never allow you to fall out of the race—but will certainly bring you off a winner, and crown you with eternal victory!

Comfort your hearts

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts." 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Let this be ever borne in mind—that whatever affliction befalls the children of God, it is laid upon them by the hand of God—and that for the express purpose of putting them into a situation and making them capable of receiving those comforts which God only can bestow. All our trials and afflictions, whether temporal or spiritual, pave the way for what the apostle prays for so earnestly

in our text—that the Lord Himself would comfort your hearts.

Observe that Paul makes no mention of earthly comfort. "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father. . . .comfort your hearts." O none but Jesus Himself and the Father can comfort a truly afflicted heart! But He can and does from time to time comfort His dear people—by a sense of His presence—by a word of power from His gracious lips—by the light of His countenance—by the balm of His atoning blood and dying love—by the work and witness of the Spirit within. And as they receive this consolation from the mouth of God—their hearts are comforted. The hypocrite's hope "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." Job 8:13 The hope of the hypocrite is any hope based upon self—whatever shape or form self may assume. The hope of the hypocrite is—any expectation that God will reward you for your good works—any hope that He will be merciful to you because you have not been so bad as others—any hope that by the exertion of your own strength and wisdom you may some day be in a better position to die than you are now—any hope based upon a mere profession of truth without a feeling experience of its power—any hope that stands upon the good opinion of others, and does not rest upon the testimony of the Spirit of God within. In a word, every hope which is not lodged by the breath of God in the heart, is the hope of the hypocrite.

Going to heaven?

"That those who don't see may see; and that those who see may become blind." John 9:39

Many who think themselves going to heaven—are going to hell. And many who fear they are going to hell—are going to heaven. Many who think themselves wise and in the light—are in ignorance and darkness; while many who feel themselves ignorant and foolish—have true knowledge and wisdom.

It was sovereign grace The sovereignty of God is a great mystery—a mystery so profound as to be absolutely unfathomable by the human intellect. Unable, therefore, or unwilling to believe what they cannot comprehend—men have denied the sovereignty of God, and sought, with feeble hands, to wrest the scepter of omnipotence out of the grasp of the mighty Lord of heaven and earth—the great and glorious Arbiter of all events, and Disposer of all circumstances. But the child of grace, who is under divine teaching, whatever may have been his strong prejudices against, or his violent opposition to scripture truth in the days of his ignorance—is brought sooner or later to see and acknowledge the sovereignty of God. And when he is led into the mystery, he receives it as a most blessed truth. As his eye is opened to see the sovereign hand of God in fixing and determining the circumstances of his earthly being—he sees how all was arranged by infinite wisdom and executed by infinite power. And when he comes to the department of grace, and can with believing eye trace out the dealings of God with his soul, then, in a more conspicuous manner still, does the sovereignty of God beam upon his heart. For well he knows that 'free will' had no place there—and that it was not of him who wills, or of him who runs—but of God who shows mercy. How plainly he sees and feels that it was sovereign grace—which first arrested him on his downward course—which made him feel the burden of sin—which put a cry and a sigh into his soul—which brought him to the footstool of mercy—which revealed the Savior—and applied the message of mercy and peace to his heart. Thus what some deny and others dispute—he is brought to receive in the simplicity of faith, as most glorifying to God and suitable to man—and as he receives it, he admires it, adores it, and submits to it!

Planted by Satan "The tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil." Matthew 13:38-39 The Church is overrun with nominal professors, who are destitute of the fear of God, and who have nothing of the grace of God in their souls. They have been planted by Satan into the Church with a 'profession of religion,' while their hearts are utterly devoid of the power of vital godliness. This high, towering, lofty, soaring, presumptuous professor has his head thoroughly stored with the doctrines of grace, but he is destitute of the feeling power of vital godliness in his soul. He has never felt the powerful hand of God upon him to crush him into the dust—he has never fallen down before the throne of God's majesty and mercy as a ruined wretch without hope or help—he has never been brought in guilty before the Lord—he has never been reduced to complete beggary, poverty, and insolvency in self. He is but a 'natural man in a profession of religion,' and has experienced nothing of the sovereign teachings and Divine operations of God the Holy Spirit in his conscience.

Know nothing, have nothing, be nothing In the beginning of my experience in the things of God, which is now more than twenty-nine years ago, I had this truth impressed upon my conscience, as I have reason to believe, very powerfully and very distinctly, by the finger of God—that I could know nothing—but by divine teaching; have nothing—but by divine giving; and be nothing—but by divine making.

There are many idols in the heart

There are many idols in the heart—many earthly joys, bosom toys, vile lusts, and creature things—all which take great hold upon our affections. These have to be torn asunder, and nothing short of the power of God can do it effectually. With hell are we at agreement

"Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." Isaiah 28:15

How the Lord here lays bare the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of a religion which stands in creature righteousness, putting as it were into the mouths of its professors His own view of it. This then is their language, "We have made a covenant with death—and we have shaken hands, and are thorough good friends. Why need we fear it then as an enemy? We have a religion to die by. And with hell are we at agreement. Why then need we fear hell? Our religion will surely deliver us from going down to the pit; and our own righteousness will surely give us an entrance into the gate of heaven. Yes, though God Himself declares it to be a lying refuge, yet having once taken shelter in it we are well satisfied with it, and do not want to be driven out of it. And though under falsehood we have hidden ourselves, yet we would sooner take our chance and live and die in it than suffer the pain and annoyance to be beaten out of it."

Such is man, such the wisdom of the flesh—such all creature religion—such the pride and obstinacy of the human heart—such the deadly enmity of the carnal mind against salvation by grace—that it would sooner die and be damned in its own way—than live and be saved in God's way. The joy of his heart & the theme of his tongue

Paul preached a free-grace gospel. The sovereign, free, superabounding grace of God, as revealed in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, was the joy of his heart and the theme of his tongue. And against nothing did the holy zeal that burned in his bosom flame forth more

vehemently than against any perversion or adulteration of this pure gospel. It was with this gospel in his heart, and with this gospel in his mouth, that he went forth into different places, as he was led by the blessed Spirit, preaching Jesus Christ and salvation through His blood and righteousness. God owned his testimony—the Holy Spirit acc

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He is a poor man "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3 This spiritual poverty no man possesses by nature. But like the Laodicean church, every man thinks himself rich and increased in goods, and in need of nothing. But when God teaches him that he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," then he is brought to feel himself really poor—that is, completely empty, totally destitute of all that deserves the name of riches. For he now learns that in God’s account nothing deserves the name of riches but that which makes a soul rich for eternity—the treasures that are in Christ for the poor and needy—and that he who is not possessed of these riches, in God’s sight is nothing, and has nothing but poverty and rags.

As, then, the Lord the Spirit works upon a sinner’s conscience, He—opens up to him his evil heart—shows him his exceeding transgressions—lays bare the depths of iniquity that are in his corrupt nature—discovers to him what God requires in His holy law—and thus makes him feel how completely empty and destitute he is by nature of all good. Now, when a man is brought to see himself a poor, vile, lost, undone wretch, having nothing, and being nothing but a mass of filth and corruption, completely destitute of everything that God can look down upon with acceptance—he comes under the expression in the text—he is a poor man spiritually. He is now brought down—he is effectually laid low—he is made to feel real poverty of spirit before God. Be merciful to me "Look upon me, and be merciful to me." Psalms 119:132

Wherever there is any true love to the Lord—wherever there is any breathing of affection after Jesus—there always will be mixed with it, the deepest sense of our own undeservedness, weakness, worthlessness, and wickedness.

Pity & power

"Like a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows how we are made. He remembers that we are dust." Psalms 103:13-14

God looks upon His people in pity. He looks down upon all His poor, laboring, struggling pilgrims here below—and views them with an eye of pity and compassion—out of His merciful and

compassionate heart. The Lord looks upon His people with all the love and affection that dwells in His bosom. His love is perpetually flowing forth to the objects of His love, choice, and mercy.

We know something of this naturally. Does not the fond wife look sometimes upon her husband with eyes of tender affection? Does not the mother sometimes look upon her infant, lying in the cradle or sleeping in her lap, with eyes of tender love? So it is with God. There is that love in the bosom of God towards the objects of His eternal favor, that when He looks down upon them from the heights of His sanctuary, He looks upon them with the tenderest affection. The God of heaven looks down upon His poor, tried family. Some He sees buffeted with sore temptations. Others, he sees plagued with an evil heart of unbelief. Others, he sees afflicted in circumstances. Others, wading amid deep temporal and providential trials. Others, mourning His absence. Others persecuted, cast out by men. Each heart knows its own bitterness, each has a tender spot that the eye of the Lord sees. And the Lord, as a God of grace, looks down upon them and pities them. When He sees them entangled in a snare—He pities them as being so entangled. When He sees them drawn aside by the idolatry and evil of their fallen nature—He pities them as wandering. When He views them assaulted and harassed by Satan—He looks upon them with compassion under his attacks.

Besides that, He looks down upon them in power—with a determination to render them help. The Lord has not only a mother's pity and a wife's love—but He has almighty power to relieve His poor suffering children, toiling and struggling through this vast howling wilderness. The Lord is merciful to His people. He knew—the painful experience—what hearts they carry in their bosoms—what temptations beset their path—what snares Satan is laying for their feet—their weakness—their wickedness. Yet how merciful He is to them—how He bears with their evil behavior in the wilderness—how He multiplies pardons—how He forgives their iniquities—how He blots out their sins—how He shows mercy and compassion upon those who were by nature the vilest of the vile!

God's teachings "Show me Your ways, O Lord. Teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth, and teach me." Psalms 25:4-5 In the spirit of childlike simplicity the Psalmist wanted God to be his teacher—for indeed none teaches like Him. All other teaching leaves us where it found us. I dare say from hearing me so often you have gained some instruction, some knowledge of doctrine or experience whereby your judgment has been informed. But all this you may have gained—and yet not have been taught of God. You may have gathered information or instruction from my lips, and become established in a sound creed—and yet not have been led into the truth of God by the Holy Spirit—nor been taught by Him who is the only wise Teacher. All teaching of man, severed from the teaching of God, is profitless and valueless. It gives no faith or repentance—does not make sin hateful—or Christ precious. It leaves us just where it found us—carnal, worldly, proud, covetous, self-righteous—in all our sin, filth, and guilt—destitute of that operation of God in the soul. But God's teachings humble, soften, melt, comfort, bless, and save.

Nothing but the power of God

Nothing but the power of God is able to bring a soul so completely out of the shell and crust of self-righteousness—and so to lay open its spiritual nakedness before Him. Whenever we see such a coming out of self—such a renunciation of our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness—such a putting aside of all creature religion—and such a real spirit of humility before God—we must receive it as something beyond and above nature.

Carried away by sin A child of God who has been carried away by sin, (I do not mean open, flagrant acts), but the daily workings of his heart—will go to the Lord sometimes with many sighs and tears, earnestly entreating Him that He would save him from the power of sin by putting His fear into his heart, and by making his conscience tender. And this the Lord answers sometimes by breathing a secret power into the soul, whereby He keeps the feet back from evil—sometimes by breaking down a temptation, so as to make it no longer a temptation—sometimes restraining him by His providence—and sometimes holding him back by His grace.

O how cruelly has sin reigned in the heart of man

How sin reigns in every worldly bosom! What little check is put upon thoughts or words or works, of whatever kind they be, by natural conscience. Or if it speaks, what little heed is paid to its voice! Whatever sin bids natural men do—they do it eagerly. Sin leads them captive at its will. They have no will of their own—but obey eagerly, obey submissively—whatever sin commands. Sin has but to issue the word, and they do what it bids. Sin has but to lead—and they follow in the path where it guides. Sin has but to show itself as king—and all knees bow before it. All hands are active to do its behests, and every foot is obedient to move in the directed path. O how cruelly has sin reigned in the heart of man! Hurrying him on to every vile abomination—plunging him into every depth of misery and crime—and then hurling him impenitent and unbelieving into an abyss of endless misery!

One of the greatest troubles a child of God can have A backsliding heart and an idolatrous nature is one of the greatest troubles a child of God can have. All his worldly trials, heavy as they may be—are light compared to this. That he should daily, and sometimes hourly, seek pleasure and gratification in the things of time and sense; and should perpetually turn away from all spiritual and heavenly things—gives him more trouble than all his other trials put together. But what good comes out of all this soul exercise? What spiritual profit springs from a sense of our diseased nature and depraved appetite? Such need the Physician! And the deeper they sink into soul sickness, and the more sensible they are of the plague of their hearts—the more do they prize and want to realize the healing remedies which this great and good Physician has to bestow.

Wherever we go, wherever we turn our eyes "But where sin abounded, grace did abound much more exceedingly." Romans 5:20

Wherever we go, wherever we turn our eyes, two objects meet our view—sin and misery. There is not a town—nor a village—nor a house—nor a family—no, nor a human heart—in which these two inseparable companions are not to be found. Sin the fountain—misery the stream. Sin the cause—misery the effect. Sin the parent—misery the offspring. But a question may arise, "How did sin and misery come into this world? What was the origin of sin?" That is a question I cannot answer. The origin of evil is a problem hidden from the eyes of man—and is probably unfathomable by human intellect. It is sufficient for us to know that sin is.

When, then, the deep-seated malady of sin is opened up to our view, and we begin to feel that there is no soundness in us, and nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores—then arises the anxious inquiry, "Is there a cure?" Now, through God’s unspeakable mercy, I can assure you, from His word and in His name—that there is a cure for the malady of sin—and that there is a remedy for the misery and distress which are the sure consequences of it! Yes, there is balm in

Gilead—there is a physician there! There is One who says of Himself—I am the Lord who heals you! One to whom the soul can say, when the healing balm of a Savior's blood is made effectually known—"Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits--who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion." To unfold the malady and discover the remedy, is the grand purpose of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. What sin is and what grace is, are there indeed clearly depicted by the Holy Spirit, written by His unerring pen as with a ray of light. And it is a blessing of blessings—a blessing beyond all value—that we know also there is a cure for it!

Every fresh discovery of our vile nature

We usually know but little of our dreadful depravity, when the Lord first takes us in hand. The fountains of the great deep are not then broken up. The desperate unbelief, enmity, rebellion, perverseness, pride, hypocrisy, uncleanness—and all the other vile corruptions of our heart—are not at first opened up and brought to light. But as the Lord leads the soul on, He opens up by degrees the desperate corruption and depravity of our nature—and unfolds the hidden evils of our heart, which before were covered from our view.

It is with us as it was with the prophet Ezekiel. The Lord led him into one chamber after another; and when his astonishment increased at what he saw there, He said unto him—"Turn yet again, and you shall see greater abominations than these!" But as the Lord leads us into a knowledge of our depravity, He makes us to feel sick at heart, and thus we come into the state of feeling described by the prophet Isaiah—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." And as we are led into a knowledge of our sinfulness—and groan under it—we feel more and more a burden of shame and sorrow on account of it. And the more deeply and daily that this is felt—the more deeply and daily do we find our need of the great Physician. All the Lord's dealings with our souls are that He may exalt His dear Son in our hearts—that we may have all the shame—and Jesus all the glory! And therefore, all this deep and daily discovery of our depravity, is eventually to bring greater glory to the Son of God. The deeper we sink into shame and guilt, under the knowledge of the depravity of our nature—the more do we seek unto, feel the power, and prize the love, blood, grace, and preciousness of the Lord Jesus. Every fresh discovery of our vile nature—when the Lord is pleased to bring the savor of Jesus' name, like the ointment poured forth, into the conscience—serves only instrumentally to increase our faith and affection towards Him. And thus the deeper we sink in self—the higher the Lord Jesus rises in our soul's admiration and adoration! And to make us more and more dependent upon Jesus, the Lord, by His teachings, usually leads us into a knowledge of our backsliding and idolatrous nature. And O, what a backsliding and idolatrous heart do we carry in our bosom—and how perpetually does it make us sigh and groan! Is there anything too vile for our depraved nature not to lust after? Is there anything too base which our hearts will not imagine? Are there any puddles, which, if God left us to ourselves, we would not grovel in? As we are brought more to feel the workings of this base backsliding heart, and have the burden of it more laid upon our conscience—the more sick are we at heart—and the more is the disease felt to be in the very vitals!

We sigh and groan because we are so vile—for we desire to be far otherwise. In our right mind, we would live in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and would never do a single thing inconsistent with the precepts of the gospel. We would never say a word that the Lord would disapprove of. We would always walk in faith, hope, and love. We would continually be spiritual and heavenly-minded. But alas, this is what we cannot attain unto. Our eye is caught by every passing vanity! Our carnal minds rove after forbidden things. And our vile heart will still commit villainy. And as the conscience is made tender—and as the soul is led into a deeper acquaintance with the spirituality of God's character and the purity of His nature—and as a deeper and clearer knowledge of Jesus in all His covenant relationship is gained—the more it is felt to be an evil and bitter thing to depart from the Fountain of living waters! Has He ever erred?

"To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." Jude 1:25

God is infinitely and unspeakably wise. Can He err? Has He ever erred? In all the multiplicity and variety of circumstances that have distressed the children of God—has the Lord ever taken a wrong step? Though He has baffled nature—though He has disconcerted reason—though He has turned our plans upside down—though perhaps He has done the thing that we most feared—and thwarted every natural purpose and inclination of our heart—can we say that He has erred? That He has made a mistake? That He has acted unwisely? That He has not done that which is for our spiritual good? Murmuring, rebellious, unbelieving heart—hold your peace! Shall man, foolish man, a worm of the earth, a creature of a day—lift up his puny voice and say that God can make a mistake? Your path is very dark, very intricate, very perplexed—you cannot see the hand of God in the trial that is now resting upon you—you cannot believe that it will work together for your good. But the time will come, when this dark path in which you are now walking, shall be seen full of radiancy and light—when you will prove the truth of those words—He brought "the blind by a way that they knew not." When we know God to be infinitely wise—that He cannot err—that all His dealings must be stamped with His own eternal wisdom—we are silenced, we hold our peace, we have nothing to say, we are where Aaron was. When his sons Nadab and Abihu were smitten by the Lord, Aaron knew that God could not err—he "held his peace." This is our right spot! If we know anything of the folly of the creature—if we know anything of the wisdom of God—this is our spot! When our dear Nadabs and Abihus are smitten before our face, our spot is to hold our peace, to put our mouth in the dust—for God is still accomplishing His object—in the face, and in spite of nature, sense, and reason!

Only one hand can ease the trouble "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Psalms 9:9 Do you not see how the scriptures always put together the malady and the remedy? How they unfold the promises as suitable to certain states and cases of soul? And how all the perfections of God are adapted to His people only so far as they are brought into peculiar circumstances? This vein runs through all the scripture. So here, the Lord is declared to be a refuge. But when? "In times of trouble." We do not need Him to be a refuge when there is no trouble. Shall I use the expression without irreverence—'We can do without Him then.' We can—love the world—amuse ourselves with the things of time and sense—let our heads go astray after the perishing, transitory vanities of a day—set up an idol in our heart—bow down before a 'golden god'—have our affections wholly fixed on those naturally dear to us—get up in the morning, pass through the day, and lie down at night—very well without God. But when times of

trouble come—when afflictions lie heavily upon us—when we are brought into those scenes of tribulation through which we must pass to arrive at the heavenly Canaan—then we need something more than flesh and blood—then we need something more than the perishing creature can unfold—then we need something more than this vain world can amuse us with! We then need God! We need the everlasting arms to be underneath our souls—we need His consolations—we need something from the Lord's own lips dropped with the Lord's own power into our hearts!

These times of 'soul trouble' make God's people know that the Lord is their refuge. If I am in soul trouble—if my heart is surcharged with guilt—if my conscience is lacerated with the pangs of inward remorse—can the creature give me relief? Can friends dry the briny tear? Can they still the convulsive sigh? Can they calm the troubled bosom? Can they pour oil and wine into the bleeding conscience? No! They are utterly powerless in the matter! They may increase our troubles, and they often, like Job's friends, do so. But they cannot alleviate it.

Only one hand can ease the trouble—the same hand that laid it on! Only one hand can heal the wound—the same that mercifully inflicted it! Now, in these times of soul trouble, if ever we have felt them—we shall make the Lord our refuge. There is no other to go to! We may try every arm but His—we may look every way but the right way—and we may lean upon every staff but the true one. But, sooner or later, we shall be brought to this spot—that none but the Lord God Almighty, who made heaven and earth, who brought our souls and bodies into being, who has kept and preserved us to the present hour, who is around our bed, and about our path, and spies out all our ways, and who has sent His dear Son to be a propitiation for our sin—that none but this eternal Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, who made and upholds heaven and earth—can speak peace, pardon, and consolation to our hearts!

How sweet it is in these times of trouble—to have a God to go to—to feel that there are everlasting arms to lean upon—that there is a gracious ear into which we may pour our afflictions—that there is a heart, a sympathizing heart, in the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, which feels for us—to know that there is a hand to relieve, and to experience, at times, relief from that Almighty and gracious hand!

Feeding upon this vile garbage? Who of us (with shame be it spoken), who of us has not secretly been indulging in trains of evil thoughts? Who has not been laying, in some manner, plans of sin? Who has not been feeding upon this vile garbage? Who has not felt the love of sin in the carnal mind in the secret cravings after it? And if God's grace did not powerfully work in the conscience—who of us would not have fallen headlong into some of those snares and baits and traps, by which we would have disgraced ourselves? And why? At times, God implants convictions in the conscience. He gives us discoveries of the evils of our heart—and of the pride, the hypocrisy, the self-righteousness, the carnality, and wickedness of our fallen nature. And why? Because through them we are made to look out of ourselves unto the Lord Jesus Christ, as able to save us unto the uttermost from every corruption of our fallen nature!

Promises "Whereby He has granted to us His precious and exceedingly great promises." 2 Peter 1:4

God's promises, as received into a broken heart and contrite spirit—bring sweet and blessed peace into the soul—melt the heart with a sense of God's unceasing goodness and mercy—make

our affections spiritual—lift us up out of trouble—bring us away from the world—and subdue the power of sin!

It is not our holiness

It is not our holiness, nor our purity, nor our piety which bring us near to the Lord—but our felt sinnership, our guilt, our filth, our condemnation, and our shame!

Oh that I knew where I might find Him!

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

I can picture to myself a consultation of ministers on Job's case, with the various opinions they would give, and the various remedies they would propose. Here is the poor patient, and he keeps crying out, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" The chief Rabbi of the Pharisees would say, "Kneel down Job, and say your prayers—is not that sufficient?" The Catholic clergyman would urge, "Hear the voice of the only true Church—attend daily upon her admirable Liturgy—come to the altar, and partake of the flesh and blood of the Lord." The Wesleyan minister would cry, "Up and be doing—try your best—exert your free will, and shake off this gloom and despondency." The general Evangelical minister would advise "cheerful and active piety, to subscribe to Societies, and exert himself in the Lord's cause." And the dry doctrinal Calvinistic minister, with a look of contempt, would say, "Away with your doubts and fears, Job—this living upon frames and feelings, and poring over yourself. Do not gloat over your corruptions—look to Jesus—you are complete in Him—why should you fear? You are quite safe." But the sick patient would still groan out, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" He would say, "You may all be very wise men, but to me you are physicians of no value! Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

What Job wanted "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3

What Job wanted was the sweet presence of the Lord in his soul—access unto Him by faith—some testimony from the Lord's lips—some sweet and precious discoveries of the Lord's grace, mercy and peace. But some might say, "Is there not a Bible to read! Can't you find Him there?" Another might say, "Is there not a mercy-seat! Can't you find Him there?" Another might say, "Is there not such and such a chapel! Can't you find Him there?" Another might say, "Is there not such a duty! Can't you find Him there?" Another might say, "Is there not such a doctrine! Can't you find Him there?" Another might say, "Is there not such an ordinance! Can't you find Him there?" Another might say, "Is there not such a gospel church! Can't you find Him there?" But the poor soul still groans out, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! For I have tried all these things; and I cannot find Him in these doctrines, duties, privileges, ordinances—in hearing, reading, or in talking."

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" says the poor sorrowing, groaning soul. "If I could but find the Lord in my heart and conscience, if I could but taste His blessed presence in my soul, I would want no more." That soul is safe which is here—for none ever breathed out these sighs, groanings and cries into the bosom of the Lord, and said, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" that did not find Him sooner or later, and embrace Him in the arms of faith and affection as the altogether lovely One!

What is repentance?

What is repentance? The conviction of sin produced by the operation of the Spirit upon the conscience—piercing and penetrating the soul with the guilt of transgression—and creating self-loathing and self-abhorrence on account of the manifested evils of our hearts, lips, and lives. Honest confessions of our sins at the footstool of mercy—a broken heart and a contrite spirit—a truly penitent soul, melted, dissolved, and laid low in tears of godly sorrow at the feet of Christ—will always accompany that repentance unto life, which is the gift of Jesus. A man’s greatest & worst enemy "My deadly enemies, who compass me about." Psalms 17:9

How often are we defeated by our enemies! You may have many enemies; but there is no enemy—so subtle—so dangerous—so unwearied—and ever so close at hand—as that which you carry in your own bosom! The greatest enemy that we have to cope with, is that enemy self. A man may do himself more injury in five minutes than all his enemies put together could do in fifty years! Self, therefore, is and ever must be a man’s greatest and worst enemy! And how often are we defeated by this enemy! Self gets the better of us—pride, covetousness, fleshly lusts, carnality, worldly-mindedness, unbelief—some indulged evil, some besetting sin for a time overcomes the soul, and we are defeated by this enemy!

Screwed into him by an Almighty hand The humble man has a solemn sense of God’s holiness—and of his own filthiness before Him. He who is really humble has had a true sight of himself—and carries about with him a deep and abiding sense of his vileness and filthiness. The base pride, presumption, and hypocrisy of his fallen nature, has been turned up by God’s plough in his conscience. He therefore loathes himself in his own sight as a monster of iniquity—and feels that he has sin enough in his heart to damn a thousand worlds! He sees and feels himself one of the most abominable, carnal, sensual, earthly, and vile wretches, that can crawl on God’s earth! He feels that he contains in himself the seeds and buddings of those crimes that have brought hundreds to the gallows! And these feelings he carries about with him—not as a theory floating in his brain—nor as a doctrine gathered from the Scriptures—but as a solemn reality, lodged and planted by God Himself in his soul—a conviction fastened and screwed into him by an Almighty hand. This is the way that a man learns humility—not as a cultivated religious duty—but as a lesson spiritually taught him. Now, he sees what a base, helpless, needy, naked wretch he really is. The furnace of affliction "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10 The Lord’s people are an afflicted people. The afflictions that the Lord’s people have to pass through are not meant to be light ones. The Lord lays no light burdens on His people’s shoulders. His purpose is to bring them to a certain point to work a certain work in their souls—to reduce them to that helplessness, weakness and powerlessness in which His strength is made manifest. The nominal professor of religion The children of God and the mere nominal professors hold the same truths—but they believe them in a different way. The nominal professor receives the doctrines because he sees them in God’s Word. The child of God receives them because they are taken out of God’s Word by the Holy Spirit—and are revealed with power to his soul. Thus the living family and the nominal professor of religion differ in the way they believe the truth. The one believing it spiritually—the other believing it naturally. The one believing it with his heart—the other believing it with his head. The one feeling it in his conscience—the other having it merely floating in his brain. A mere professor of religion may have the doctrines of grace in his head—but is devoid of the feeling power of truth in his soul.

We cannot help or deliver ourselves Could the loving heart of Jesus sympathize with and deliver us, unless He saw and knew all that passes within us—and had all power, as well as all compassion, to exert on our behalf? We are continually in circumstances where no man can do us the least good, and where we cannot help or deliver ourselves. We are in snares, and cannot break them. We are in temptations—and cannot deliver ourselves out of them. We are in trouble—and cannot comfort ourselves. We are wandering sheep—and cannot find the way back to the fold. We are continually roving after idols, and hewing out 'broken cisterns'—and cannot return to 'the fountain of living waters.' How suitable, then, and sweet it is, to those who are thus exercised, to see that there is a gracious Immanuel at the right hand of the Father—whose heart is filled with love—whose affections move with compassion—who has shed His own precious blood that we might live—who has wrought out a glorious righteousness—and is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

What is vital godliness?

What is vital godliness? To make myself good and holy? To make myself religious and serious, and a decidedly pious person? Such husks may satisfy swine—but they will not satisfy a living soul. What must I do, then, to make myself better? Nothing! Can I, by any exertion of creature-will or power, change my Ethiopian skin, or wash out my leopard spots? To feel day by day less and less in self—to become more foolish, weak, and powerless—and yet, as poor, needy, weak, and helpless, to be drawing supplies out of Christ's fullness, and to live a life of faith on the Son of God—to know something of this, is to know something of what true religion is. And to know a little of this, will make a man more outwardly and inwardly holy, than all the good works or pious resolutions in the world.

Backsliding Who that knows himself and the idolatry of his fallen nature dares deny that he backslides perpetually in heart, lip, or life? Can any of us here deny that we have—backslidden from our first love—backslidden from simplicity and godly sincerity—backslidden from reverence and godly fear—backslidden from spirituality and heavenly-mindedness—backslidden from the breathings of affection and pouring forth of the heart into the bosom of the Lord? And if we have not been allowed to backslide into open sin, if the Lord has kept us, and not allowed us to be cast down into the mire—yet have we not committed the twofold evil which the Lord charges upon His people—"For My people have done two evil things: They have forsaken Me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!" By the fall By the fall, human nature became—thoroughly depraved—alienated from the life of God—subservient to Satan—madly in love with sin—opposed to God—and hostile to Him at every point.

Divine light "The entrance of Your words gives light." Psalms 119:130 The entrance of divine light into the conscience is needed for a man to know himself. He must be experimentally taught and made to feel that he is a poor, needy, naked, guilty, filthy wretch—that he is a complete mass of disease, corruption, and pollution—that by nature he is nothing and has nothing spiritually good—that there is no one thing is his heart that God can look upon with acceptance—but that he is a vile fallen creature, who must be saved by sovereign grace. No man can know anything of the horrible nature of sin, of the black pollution that lurks in his bosom, of the dreadful condition of his most depraved, diseased nature—no man can know them so as to feel what they really are—no

man can shrink, as it were, into the very depths of self-abasement—except him into whose heart light has come—into whose soul there has been an 'entrance of God's words'—and into whose conscience the entrance of that word has communicated light as to who God is, and light as to what he himself is naturally, before Him. When that heavenly Teacher writes His lesson of convictions in the conscience, the living soul is brought to groan and sigh, to lament and mourn as a polluted sinner before God—as a deeply infected wretch, a vile leper who has to stand with his clothes torn, and his head bare, crying—Unclean, unclean! It is the entrance of God's words into his conscience, which has given him light upon this inward leprosy.

It is no easy smooth path The way to heaven is a rough and rugged road—encompassed with difficulties and beset with temptations. It is no easy smooth path—but one that requires a vigorous traveler, one strengthened and upheld by the power and grace of God to hold on to the end.

Overcome, beaten & defeated? No man ever gained the victory over self, or overcame sin—who depended upon himself or trusted to his own strength. But when, after repeated and aggravated failures, almost in an agony of despair, he falls down before God, overcome, beaten and defeated, and with longing eyes looks to Him who sits upon the throne, and begs of Him to undertake His cause—then that victory which was impossible to nature, now becomes possible to grace—and that which he could never have done for himself, the Lord does for him in the twinkling of an eye!

It levels this idol prostrate in the dust

"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." Matthew 11:25

It is God's glory—to pour contempt upon human wisdom, and to bring it to nothing—to take the wise in their own craftiness—to lay low in the dust all that man idolizes, that man exalts himself in, and that man loves and adores. If there is one thing in our day more idolized than another, it is the 'wisdom of the creature.' If there is one idol which the world lying in wickedness and the world lying in profession, worship more than another (always excepting Mammon—the great idol before whom all fall down and worship), it is creature-wisdom. But this text of Scripture makes a direct stab at the vitals of creature-wisdom—it levels this idol prostrate in the dust—and as Dagon could not stand before the ark of the covenant, so human wisdom must fall prostrate before this declaration from the mouth of the Son of God, and become a stump. All human knowledge, and all human wisdom leave man just where they found him—carnal, sensual, worldly, dead in trespasses and sins!

10.09. Volume 9

This internal warfare "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 The believer is heavily burdened with a daily conflict. This conflict between a body of sin and the holy, pure, and divine nature of which God's people are made partakers—lasts during the whole of our mortal span upon earth. Lasts, did I say? It increases in intensity. This internal warfare is more or less experienced by all God's family. But what a burden it is to have such a daily conflict with a body of sin! It is the greatest burden that we have on earth. We all have our trials—heavy trials. But of all the burdens that I am acquainted with—the daily conflict with the workings of my corrupt heart—my fallen and depraved nature perpetually lusting to evil entangling my eye, catching my affections, ensnaring my soul, dragging me, or drawing me into everything that is foul and filthy, base and vile, not externally, through mercy, but internally—forms the heaviest burden I have to carry. The conflict I daily and sometimes hourly feel with my wretched heart has been my trouble and grief continually.

Now when we are so laden with a body of sin and death—when we feel such vile sins perpetually struggling for the mastery—and such a depraved heart pouring forth its polluted streams—when we feel this common sewer of our depraved nature pouring forth this polluted stream—must it not make us grieve and groan? Yes, daily make a living soul grieve and groan—draw at times scalding tears from his eye—and force convulsive sobs from his burdened bosom—to feel that he is such a monster of depravity and iniquity—that though God keeps his feet so that he does not fall outwardly and manifestly—yet there is such a tide of iniquity flowing in his heart, polluting his conscience continually.

Jesus fixes His penetrating gaze, His sympathizing eye upon, and opens the tenderness and compassion of His loving bosom unto those who are weary and carry heavy burdens—to His poor, suffering, sorrowing, groaning, and mourning family—to those who have no one else to look to—those who are burdened in their consciences, troubled in their minds, and distressed in their souls. He says to such, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." Where else can I hide?

"For in the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle will He hide me; He will set me up upon a rock." Psalms 27:5

We have no refuge but Jesus where we can hide our guilty heads. Where else can I hide? In the law? That curses. In self? That is treacherous. In the world? That is under the curse of God. In my own righteousness? That is filthy rags. In my own strength? All is weakness. In my own resolutions of amendment? They will all issue in my falling more foully than before.

Take the lid off the boiling pot

All true sight and knowledge of our sinfulness flows from the teachings of the Spirit. As, therefore, we obtain light from on high, and feel spiritual life in our bosom, there is a deeper discovery of our own miserable state, until we are brought to see and feel, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no

good thing. Now this will ever be in a proportionate degree to the manifestation of the purity and holiness of the character of God, to the soul. This will effectually dispel all dreams of human purity and creature perfection. Let one ray of divine light shine into the soul out of the holiness of God—how it discovers and lays bare the hypocrisy and wickedness of the human heart! How it seems to take the lid off the boiling pot, and shows us human nature heaving, bubbling, boiling up with pride, unbelief, infidelity, enmity against God, peevishness, discontent—every hateful, foul, unclean lust—every base propensity and filthy desire. To know yourself, you must look below the lid to see how it steams, and hisses, and throws up its thick and filthy scum from the bottom of the cauldron. A calm may be on the face, but a boiling sea within.

It is this laying bare of our deep-seated malady that makes a soul under the first teachings of the Spirit feel itself lost. And oh, what a word! Lost! utterly lost! The purity of the divine image lost—and with it, utter loss of power to return to God. What a condition to be in! Without power, without will—an enemy and a rebel—by nature hating God and godliness—when we would do good, to find evil, horrid evil, present with us—to feel sin thrusting its hateful head into every thought, word, and action, so that when we would settle down and find rest in self, "all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" Isaiah 28:8. Where this is opened up in a man’s soul, and a corresponding sense of the purity and holiness of God is manifested, he will see and feel himself too the vilest of the vile—and he will be glad to put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. Now in this melancholy state, what can such a poor lost wretch do? Condemned by the law—hunted by Satan—pursued by conscience—alarmed by fear of death—troubled with a dread of eternal perdition—what can he do to save himself? When, in the depth of his soul, he knows himself "lost, lost, lost!" and feels the inability of the creature to save—this is the man, this is the spot, unto whom and into which the Savior and salvation comes—and he, and he alone, will welcome and drink in with greedy ears the joyful sound of salvation by grace. But oh, the tender mercy, heavenly grace, and sympathizing compassion of the Triune Jehovah! When man was sunk in the lowest depths of the fall—ruined and alienated from the life of God—that the Son of God should become the Son of Man, to suffer, bleed, and die for such wretches—and thus be a Mediator able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him! The greatest attainment in religion "But we glory in tribulations." Romans 5:3

What would you say was the greatest attainment in religion? If this question were put to different people, the answer might be different. One might say, "It is to be well established in the doctrines of the gospel—to be no longer a child tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine—but to be rooted and grounded in the truth as it is in Jesus." Another might answer, "It is to have much enjoyment of the Spirit, grace and presence of God in the soul—to have clear and blessed views of our interest in Jesus—and to experience a continual sense of that perfect love which casts out fear, and of that peace which passes all understanding." Another might reply, "It is to have a conscience very tender and alive to the evil of sin—to walk very humbly with God—to be kept very close at His footstool—and to be watchful and prayerful all the day long." Another might say, "It consists in having the mind and will of Christ stamped on the soul—in walking with the strictest regard to all the precepts of the gospel—and in having heart, lip and life perfectly conformed to the image and example of the Lord Jesus."

Now I do not say that all or any of these answers would be wrong—but I do say that none of them would precisely hit the mark. "Well, then," it may be asked, "what do you think to be the greatest

attainment in religion?" I answer, "to glory in tribulations." That was certainly the mind of the Apostle Paul. "But we glory in tribulations."

Sail down the stream of a dead profession

Now here a living soul differs from all others, whether dead in sin, or dead in a religious profession—the persuasion that in God alone is true happiness. The feeling of misery and dissatisfaction with everything else but the Lord, and everything short of His manifested presence—is that which stamps the reality of the life of God in a man's soul. Mere 'professors of religion' feel no misery, dissatisfaction, or wretchedness, if God does not shine upon them. So long as the world smiles, and they have all that heart can wish, so long as they are buoyed up by the hypocrite's hope, and lulled asleep by the soft breezes of flattery—they are well satisfied to sail down the stream of a dead profession. But it is not so with the living soul—he is at times panting after the smiles of God—he is thirsting after His manifested presence—he feels dissatisfied with the world, and all that it presents—if he cannot find the Lord, and does not enjoy the light of His countenance. Where this is experienced, it stamps a man as having the grace of God in his heart. Have you ever felt the love of God in your souls?

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." Romans 5:5 Have you ever felt the love of God in your souls? If you have felt it shed abroad there, I will tell you what it has done for you. It has made your soul burn with love to Him in return. It has drawn forth the affections of your heart to embrace Jesus as your all in all. It has deadened the world, and all that the world can offer, in your estimation. It has made you earnestly long to be with Christ, that you may bathe in His love, see Him as He is, and enjoy Him forever! That eternal line which separates The true believer can never be satisfied with 'doctrine in the mere letter'—nor can he ever rest until he has the manifestation and discovery of it with power to his heart by the Holy Spirit. And here is that eternal line which separates the living from the dead—here is that narrow, narrow path which distinguishes the heaven-born children, from those who are wrapped up in a nominal profession. The living family must have the power of the truth in their hearts—while others are satisfied with the mere form of truth in their heads. The living family must have heavenly teaching, while those who are dead in sin can be contented with seeing truth in the Scriptures—without a feeling application of it with dew and savor to their hearts.

Dipped in love "Blessed is the man whom You discipline, O Lord." Psalms 94:12

Until we are chastened, we make this present world our home—and a very pleasant paradise it is. Our children, friendships, pursuits, worldly ease, the many airy castles that we build up—are all very pleasant to us, until strokes of chastisement come, and the Lord begins to afflict us in body, in family, or in soul. Yet how kind it is, and all the kinder for being painful—for the Lord to chasten us back to our true home! He will not let us lie down in the green fields and flowery meadows, and sleep under the trees. His strokes are strokes dipped in love—and, however cutting to the flesh, if blessed by the Spirit, they are made instrumental in driving us home, bringing us to our right mind, and showing us where true rest is only to be found—in Christ, in His love, grace, and suitability—in all that He is and all that He has. What a wise and kind parent, then, He is to chasten us—though painful at the time! The difference between a believer & an unbeliever "Blessed is the man whom You discipline, O Lord." Psalms 94:12

Nothing comes to a child of God as a matter of accident or chance. It all proceeds from God—and all is dealt out in measure and for certain purposes. If the Lord touches our bodies—it is for our spiritual good. If He brings affliction through our children—it is for our spiritual good. If He afflicts us in our circumstances—it is for our spiritual good. When the eye is opened to see—the ear to hear—the heart to believe—and the conscience made tender to feel—we know and confess that these things are sent from God.

Here is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. The unbeliever says, 'it is chance!' for unbelief sees the hand of God in nothing. The believer says, 'it is the Lord!' for faith sees the hand of God in everything. There are many afflicted—but only few chastened. Many have abundance of worldly trouble—but only God's people are really chastened, so as to see and feel the hand of God in the rod, and submit to it as such. Here is all the difference between a believer and an unbeliever—between a child of God and an infidel.

Rods of different sizes "Blessed is the man whom You discipline, O Lord." Psalms 94:12 The Lord has various ways of chastising His people. But He generally selects such chastisement as is peculiarly adapted to the individual whom He chastens. What would be a very great chastisement for you—might not be so to me. And what on the other hand might be a very severe stroke to me—might not be so to you. Our dispositions, our constitutions, and our experiences may all differ—and therefore that chastening is selected which is suitable to the individual. It is as though the Lord has suspended in His heavenly closet, a number of rods of different sizes. And He takes out that very rod which is just adapted to the very child whom He intends to chastise—inflicting it in such a measure—at the precise time—and in such a way as is exactly fitted to the individual to be chastised. And here is the wisdom of God signally displayed. The Lord, for instance, sees fit to chasten some in body. It is in sickness and affliction, oftentimes, that the Lord is pleased to—manifest Himself to our souls—bless us with His presence—and stir up in us a spirit of prayer. I myself am a living witness of it. The greatest blessings I have ever had—the sweetest manifestations of the Lord to my soul—have been upon a sick bed. Illness is often very profitable. When the Lord is pleased to manifest Himself in them, bodily afflictions—separate us from the world—set our hearts upon heavenly things—and draw our affections from the things of time and sense!

Fleeting, fluctuating opinions of worms "Blessed is the man whom You discipline, O Lord." Psalms 94:12

What a different estimate men form of blessedness and happiness—from that which God has declared in His word to be such! If we listen to the opinions of men about happiness, would not their language be something like this, "Happiness consists in health and strength—in an abundance of the comforts, luxuries, and pleasures of life—in an amiable and affectionate partner—in children healthy, obedient, and well-provided for in the world—in a long and successful life, closed by an easy and tranquil death." I think a unsaved man would, if he did not use the very words, express his ideas of happiness pretty much in the substance of what I have just sketched out. But when we come to what the Lord God Almighty has declared to be happiness—when we turn aside from the opinions of men, to the expressed words and revealed ways of the Lord, what do we find 'blessedness' to consist in? Who are the people that the unerring God of truth has pronounced to be blessed? "Blessed are—the poor in spirit—those who mourn—the meek—those

who hunger and thirst after righteousness—the merciful—the pure in heart." And again, in the words of our text, "Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord." These are the unerring words of God—and by His words man will be tried. It is not the fleeting, fluctuating opinions of worms of the earth—but it is the unerring declaration of the only true God by which these matters are to be decided! The two characters in the temple

Look at the two characters in the temple. See the proud Pharisee buoyed up with his own righteousness! Was that man, as he thought, near to God? But what set him so far from the Lord? His self-righteousness—it was that which set him far from God—the pride which he took in his doings and duties! Now, look at the tax collector, who in his own feelings was indeed far from God, for he dared not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven. But which was nearer to God—the broken-hearted tax collector—or the self-righteous Pharisee? So when a man may think himself nearest to God by his doings and duties, by his obedience and consistency—by this very self-righteousness he thrusts himself away from God—for he secretly despises the gospel of Christ, makes himself his own savior—and, therefore, pours contempt on the blood and obedience of the Son of God. Thus, a poor guilty sinner, who in his own feelings is ready to perish, and but a miserable outcast, is brought near to God by the righteousness of the gospel—while the Pharisee is kept far from God by the wall of self-righteousness, which his own hands have built and plastered.

It is to the perishing and the outcast that the gospel makes such sweet melody. And why? Because it tells them the work of Christ is a finished work—that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin—because it assures them that His righteousness is upon all who believe—because it proclaims mercy for the miserable—pardon for the guilty—salvation for the lost—and that where sin has abounded, there grace does much more abound! The road to heaven "But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it." Matthew 7:14

Man cannot obtain eternal life by any wisdom, any strength, any righteousness, or any goodness of his own. We are very slow learners in this school. The pride of our heart, our ignorance, and our unbelief—all conspire to make us diminish the difficulties of the way. But the Lord has to teach us by painful experience that the road to heaven is so difficult that a man can only walk in it as he is put in and kept in it by an almighty hand.

Think for a moment "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." Matthew 12:20 When you think for a moment—how filthy and abominable your corruptions are—how strong and powerful your lusts and passions—how many and grievous your slips and falls—how carnal your mind—how cold and lifeless too often your frame—how wandering your prayers—how worldly your inclinations—how earthly and sensual your desires—is it not sometimes a wonder to you, that the Almighty God does not in righteous wrath put His foot upon you and crush you into hell, as we crush a spider? We deserve it every day that we live. I might almost say, that with well near every breath that we draw we deserve, deeply deserve—to be stamped out of life—and crushed into a never-ending hell. But herein is manifested the tender condescending mercy and grace of the compassionate Redeemer—that He will not quench the smoking flax—but will keep the flame alive which He Himself so mercifully in the first instance kindled. The hand that brought the spark must keep alive the flame—for as no man can quicken, so no man can keep alive his own soul. How it is kept alive is indeed most mysterious—but kept

alive it is. Does it not sometimes seem to you as though you had no life of God in your soul—not a spark of grace in your heart? Where is your religion? Where is your faith and hope and love? Where your spirituality and tenderness of heart, conscience, and affections? Where your breathings after God? Gone, gone, gone! And all would be utterly, irrecoverably gone—if it were in your own hands—and consigned to your own keeping. But it is in better hands and better keeping than yours! Christ's sheep shall never perish—and none shall pluck them out of His hand! And thus it comes to pass, that the "smoking flax" is never quenched.

O how quickly would Satan throw water upon it! He would soon, if permitted, pour forth the flood of his temptations, to extinguish the holy flame that smoulders within. How sin, also, again and again pours forth a whole flood of corruption to overcome and extinguish the life of God in the soul! The world without, and the worse world within—would soon drown it in his destruction and perdition—were the Lord to keep back His protecting hand! Have you not wondered sometimes, that when you have been so cold, so dead, so stupid, so hardened—as if you had not one spark of true religion or one grain of real grace—yet all of a sudden you have found your heart softened, melted, moved, stirred, watered, blessed—and you have felt an inward persuasion that in spite of all your corruptions and sins and sorrows—there is the life of God within?

It is thus that the blessed Lord keeps alive the holy flame which He Himself has kindled. Otherwise, it would soon go out—no, it must go out—unless He keeps it alive! O how Satan would triumph if any saint ever fell out of the embraces of the good Shepherd—if he could point his derisive finger up to heaven's gate and to its risen King, and say, 'Your blood was shed in vain for this wretch—he is mine—he is mine!' Such a boast would fill hell with a yell of triumph. But no, no! it never will be so! The blood which cleanses from all sin never was, never can be shed in vain! Though the flax "smokes," it will never be extinguished!

Temptation Is there one temptation that you can master? Is there any one sin that you can, without divine help, crucify? Is there one lust that you can, without special grace, subdue? We are total weakness in this matter!

There is nothing which makes us feel our weakness so much as an acquaintance with temptation. Temptation brings to light the evils of the heart. These are, for the most part, unnoticed and unknown until temptation discovers them. David's adulterous, murderous heart—Hezekiah's pride—Job's peevishness—Jonah's rebellion—Peter's cowardice—all lay hidden and concealed in their bosoms until temptation drew them forth. Temptation did not put them there—but found them there. Two effects are produced by temptations—

1. Pride, strength, and self-righteousness are more or less crushed.

2. The heart is bruised and made tender.

You perhaps get entangled in a sinful snare—you are overtaken by some stratagem of Satan—or some besetment from within. And what is the consequence? Guilt lies hard and heavy upon your conscience. This bruises it—makes it tender and sore—and often cuts deeply into it until it bleeds at well-near every pore! When I am weak "When I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:10 A child of God in himself is all weakness. Others may boast of their strength—but he has none—and he feels he has none. But it is one thing to subscribe to this truth as a matter of doctrine—and another to be acquainted with it as a matter of inward, personal experience. It must

be learned—painfully for the most part—inwardly learned under the teachings of the Spirit. Now it is this weakness—experimentally known and felt—that opens the way for a personal experience of the strength of Christ. For when Paul was groaning under the buffetings of Satan and the festering throbs of the thorn in the flesh, the Lord Himself said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." If, therefore, we do not experimentally know what weakness is—we cannot know experimentally what it is to have the strength of Christ made perfect in that weakness! A time to weep "A time to weep." Ecclesiastes 3:4 Does a man only weep once in his life? Does not the time of weeping run, more or less, throughout a Christian's life? Does not mourning run parallel with his existence in this tabernacle of clay? for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. True Christians will know many times to weep—they will have often to sigh and cry over their base hearts—to mourn with tears of godly sorrow their backslidings from God—to weep over their broken idols, faded hopes, and marred prospects—to weep at having so grieved the Spirit of God by their disobedience, carnality, and worldliness. But above all things will they have to weep over the inward idolatries of their filthy nature—to weep that they ever should have treated with such insult that God whom they desire to love and adore—that they should so neglect and turn their backs upon that Savior who crowns them with loving-kindness and tender mercies—and that they bear so little in mind, the instruction that has been communicated to them by the Holy Spirit.

Oh, how different is the weeping, chastened spirit of a living soul from the hardened, seared presumption of a proud professor! How different are the feelings of a broken-hearted child of God from the lightness, the frivolity, the emptiness, and the worldliness—of hundreds who stand in a profession of religion! How different is a mourning saint, weeping in his solitary corner over his base backslidings—from a reckless professor who justifies himself in every action, who thinks sin a light thing, and who, however inconsistently he acts—never feels conscience wounded thereby. A time to mourn "A time to mourn." Ecclesiastes 3:4

We need indeed to mourn over our wretched hearts—that we are so carnal, so stupid, and so earthly—that we have so little power to resist our evil passions. We need to mourn over our lightness—our frivolity—our emptiness—the things that drop from our lips—the unsteadiness of our walk in the strait and narrow path—our many declensions, backslidings, and secret departures from the Lord. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Matthew 5:4 The flesh "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3:6

There is no promise made that in this life, we shall be set free from the indwelling and the in-working of sin. Many think that their flesh is to become "progressively holier and holier"—that sin after sin is to be removed gradually out of the heart—until at last they are almost made perfect in the flesh. But this is an idle dream, and one which, sooner or later will be crudely and roughly broken to pieces. The flesh will ever remain the same—and we shall ever find that the flesh will lust against the Spirit. Our fleshly nature is corrupt to the very core. It cannot be mended. It cannot be sanctified. It is the same at the last, as it was at the first—inherently evil, and as such will never cease to be corrupt until we put off mortality—and with it the body of sin and death.

All we can hope for, long after, expect, and pray for—is that this evil fleshly nature may be subdued, kept down, mortified, crucified, and held in subjection under the power of grace. But as to any such change passing upon the flesh—or taking place in the flesh as to make it holy—it is

but a pharisaic delusion, which, promising a holiness in the flesh, leaves us still under the power of sin. The true sanctification of the new man of grace—which is wrought by a divine power—is utterly distinct from any imagined holiness in the flesh—or any vain dream of its progressive sanctification.

Bought with a price "For you are bought with a price." 1 Corinthians 6:20

How deep—how dreadful—of what dreadful magnitude—of how black a dye—of how ingrained a stamp must sin be—to need such an atonement—no less than the blood of the Son of God—to take it away! What a slave to sin and Satan—what a captive to the power of lust—how deeply sunk, how awfully degraded—how utterly lost and undone must guilty man be—to need a sacrifice like this! Have you ever felt your bondage to sin, Satan, and the world? Have you ever groaned, cried, grieved, sorrowed, and lamented under your miserable captivity to the power of sin? Has the iron ever entered into your soul? Have you ever clanked your fetters, and as you did so, and tried to burst them, they seemed to bind round about you with a weight scarcely endurable?

You were slaves of sin and Satan—you were shut up in the dark cell, where all was gloom and despondency—there was little hope in your soul of ever being saved. But there was an entrance of gospel light into your dungeon—there was a coming out of the house of bondage—there was a being brought into the light of God’s countenance, shining forth in His dear Son. Now, this is not only being bought with a price, but experiencing the blessed effects of it.

Laboring under temptations

Some of the Lord’s family are laboring under temptations. And these temptations are so suitable to their fallen nature—and they are so unable in their own strength to overcome them—that they are afraid lest one day they should be awfully carried away by them. The lusts of their flesh—the evils and corruptions of their wicked heart—the daily, hourly snares that Satan spreads for their feet—their own thorough helplessness—their own proneness to fall into these very snares—all contribute to distress their souls. And thus, sometimes, in an agony of soul, the tears rolling down their cheeks, and heaving sobs gushing from their bosom—they are importunate with the Lord—to deliver them from this temptation—to break this snare—to set their soul free from this besetting sin in which they are so cruelly and grievously entangled.

What does God see in you? Has it not sometimes surprised you that God ever heard your prayers? And what has been the reason of this surprise? Has it not been this? "My prayers are so polluted—my thoughts so wandering—my mind so carnal—my lusts so strong—my corruptions so powerful—my backslidings so innumerable! O, when I view these things I wonder that God can hear my prayers!" And well you may wonder—if you look at the matter in that way.

God does not hear your prayers because there is anything good in you! How could it be? What does God see in you? A mass of filth and folly! There is in you nothing else. Then why does God hear prayer—and answer it too? Only through Jesus. Prayer ascends through Jesus—and answers descend through Jesus. Groans through Jesus enter the ear of God Almighty—and through the same open gate of bleeding mercy, do answers drop into the soul. Our poor self-righteous hearts can hardly comprehend this—and we think we must have a good frame, or bring a good deed, or a good heart to make our prayers acceptable to God. Perish the thought! This is nothing but the spawn of self-righteousness!

He cannot find real pleasure in the world The human heart must be engaged upon something—its affections must be fixed upon some object—its thoughts and desires must be occupied with one thing or other. If his heart, then, is not set Godwards, if his affections are not fixed upon Christ, if his soul is not engaged on heavenly things—he may have the greatest profession of religion, but his heart is still worldly, his affections still earthly, and his soul still going out after idols. But where the Lord has really touched the conscience with His finger, and made Himself precious to the soul—however a man may seem for a time to be buried in the world, and his affections going out after forbidden objects—however he may be hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns which can hold no water—however he may secretly backslide from the Lord—still he cannot break the hold that eternal things have upon his heart—he cannot find real pleasure in the world, though he may often seek it. Nor can he bury himself contentedly in its pursuits. There will be a restless dissatisfaction with the things of time and sense—an aching void—and a turning again to the stronghold—a seeking the Lord, who alone can really satisfy the soul, and make it happy for time and eternity!

Natural conviction for sin

Godly sorrow for sin differs much from natural conviction for sin. Powerful natural convictions, I believe, for the most part are not felt more than once or twice in a man's life—and when they have passed away—the conscience is more seared than it was before—the world more eagerly grasped—and sin more impetuously plunged into. But 'godly sorrow' is produced by a supernatural work of grace on the heart. The eye of faith sees sin in the light of God's countenance—and thus the soul becomes alive to its dreadful evil and horrible character. The heart too is melted down into godly sorrow by beholding the Savior's sufferings—and viewing the Lord of life and glory as stooping and agonizing under the weight of sin—not only as imputed to Him—but as pressing Him down into anguish and distress. And thus, godly sorrow for sin is not a thing which a man feels once or twice in his life—but from time to time, as the Spirit works it in his heart, godly sorrow flows forth. If he has been—entangled in sin—overcome by temptation—slidden back into the world—or his heart has gone after idols—a living soul will not pass it by as a thing of no consequence. But, sooner or later, the Spirit touches his heart—godly sorrow flows out—and his soul is melted and moved by feeling what a base wretch he is in the sight of a holy God.

Objects of undeserved love

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Romans 9:15

God sooner or later brings every elect soul to this conclusion—that those who are saved are saved, because God will save them—that He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and on them alone—that He saves them not for any foreseen goodness in them, but of His own discriminating, sovereign grace—that He loves them freely, eternally and unchangeably—and that they are redeemed, justified, quickened, sanctified, preserved, and glorified—only because they are the objects of the undeserved love of a Triune Jehovah!

Humility

Humility springs from a knowledge of God and a knowledge of one's self. It consists—in a spiritual acquaintance with the deceit and wickedness of the heart—in esteeming others better than

ourselves—in feeling how little grace and real religion we possess—in confessions to God and man of our vileness—in sitting at Jesus' feet to be taught by Him—in taking the lowest room among the children of God—in feeling our helplessness, weakness, foolishness and nothingness!

Godly fear

Godly fear—realizes God's heart-searching presence—trembles at His frown—dreads His displeasure—is afraid of His judgments—feels His chastening hand—and seeks above all things His favor and the light of His countenance!

Conversion

Conversion consists in—a change of heart—a change of affections—a change of feelings—a turning from formality to spirituality—from free-will to free-grace—from self-righteousness to self-abhorrence—from hypocrisy to honesty—from self-justification to self-condemnation—from profession to power!

Found in hypocrites, apostates & reprobates

If, then, we are asked what it is which saves a soul, we answer that it is not works of righteousness which we have done or can do—nor the use of our free-will, which is only free to choose and love evil—nor watchfulness, prayer and fasting—nor self-denial, austerity and outward sanctification—nor any duties and forms—nor, in a word, any one thing singly, or multitude of things collectively, which depend on the natural wisdom and strength of man. Nor, again, is it head-knowledge—nor firm conviction of truth in the judgment—nor such workings of natural conscience as compel us to assent to a free grace salvation—nor a life outwardly consistent with the gospel—nor membership in a gospel church—nor natural attachment to the children and to the ministers of God—nor zeal for experimental religion—nor sacrifices made to support truth.

Nor, again, does salvation consist in doubts and fears, tribulations, temptations, workings of inward corruption, legal terrors, fits of gloomy despondency and heart-rending despair. All these things "accompany salvation," and are to be found in all the heirs of glory—but some of them or all may equally be found in hypocrites, apostates and reprobates. Neither does salvation consist in outward gifts, as preaching and praying, as a man may taste of the heavenly gift—and yet his end be to be burned. Saul prophesied—Judas preached—and the sons of Sceva cast out demons by the name of Jesus.

Salvation consists of three parts

Salvation consists of three parts—salvation past—salvation present—and salvation future. Salvation past consists in having our names written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. Salvation present consists in the manifestation of Jesus to the soul, whereby He betroths it to Himself. Salvation future consists in the eternal enjoyment of Christ, when the elect shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and be forever with the Lord.

Now, as none will ever enjoy salvation future who have no interest in salvation past—in other words, as none will ever be with Christ in eternal glory whose names were not written in the book of life from all eternity—so none will enjoy salvation future who live and die without enjoying salvation present. In other words, none will live forever with Christ in glory, who are not betrothed

to Him in this life by the manifestations of Himself to their soul.

Salvation as an internal reality

All doctrines, notions, forms, creeds, ordinances and ceremonies—short of experiential salvation—are as the dust in the balance, and as the driven stubble before the wind. What, for instance, is election—except it be revealed to my soul that I was elected before the foundation of the world? What is redemption to me—except the atoning blood of the Lamb be sprinkled on my conscience? What is the everlasting love of a Triune Jehovah—unless that eternal love be shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit? What is the final perseverance of the saints—unless there is a blessed enjoyment of it in the conscience as a personal reality? To see these things revealed in the Bible is nothing. To hear them preached by one of God's ministers is nothing. To receive the truth of these into our judgment, and to yield to them an unwavering assent is nothing. Thousands have done all this, who are blaspheming God in hell. But to have eternal election, personal redemption, imputed righteousness, unfailing love, and all the other blessed links of the golden chain let down into the soul from the throne of God—to have the beauty, glory and blessedness of salvation revealed to the heart and sealed upon the conscience—this is all in all. A man's soul must be damned or saved. And a man must have salvation as an internal reality—as a known, enjoyed, tasted, felt and handled possession—or he will never enter the kingdom of heaven. He may be Churchman or Dissenter, Calvinist or Arminian, Baptist or Independent, anything or everything—and yet all his profession is no more towards his salvation than the cut of his clothes, the height of his stature, or the color of his complexion. And thus all a man's—consistency of life—soundness of creed—walking in the ordinances—long and steady profession—and everything on which thousands are resting for salvation, of a merely external nature—can no more put away sin, satisfy the justice of God, and give the soul a title for heaven, than the lewd conversation of a harlot!

Man's religion

Man would teach religion as he teaches arithmetic or mathematics. This rule is to be learned—this sum is to be done—this problem is to be understood—this difficulty is to be overcome—and thus progress is to be made. Religion, according to the received creed—is something which a man must be urged into. He must be made religious somehow or other. He must either be—driven or drawn—wheedled or threatened—enticed or whipped into it—by human arguments or human persuasions. Religion is set before him as a river between his soul and heaven. Into this river he is persuaded, invited, exhorted, entreated to jump. He must leap in, or be pushed in. His feelings are wrought upon, and he takes the prescribed spring. He becomes a professor. He hears—he reads—he prays—he supports the cause—he attends the Sunday School—he models his garb according to the regimentals of the party to which he belongs—he furnishes his mind with the creed of the sect which he has joined. He talks as it talks—believes as it believes—and acts as it acts. And all this is called "conversion" and "decided piety," when all this time there is not—an atom of grace—a grain of spiritual faith—or a spark of divine life in the poor wretch's soul.

Man's religion is to put a stick here—and place a stone there—to fill up this corner with a brick and the other corner with a tile—and in this progressive way to build a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven! This ceaseless conflict

Temptations are a source of spiritual affliction to God’s people. They often, in passing through temptations, think themselves different from all others. They can scarcely believe that any other children of God are as tempted as they are—that such vile thoughts—such base desires—such carnal imaginations—such wicked lusts—should work in the minds of others, who appear to them to be holy and spiritual. They often write bitter things against themselves in consequence of these temptations—to infidelity—to blasphemy—to renounce the cause of God and truth—to commit the vilest sins painted in the imagination—to pride—to hypocrisy—to presumption—and despair. These various temptations lie heavy on a tender conscience, and cut deep just in proportion to the depth of godly fear within. The daily conflict that we have to maintain in our souls against the world, the flesh, and the devil—the struggle of grace against nature, and of nature against grace—the sinkings of the one, and the risings of the other, that are perpetually going on in the souls of God’s people—this ceaseless conflict is an affliction that the Lord’s people are all called on to pass through.

What mysterious arithmetic!

"Count it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds." James 1:2

See the transmuting effect of grace enabling the tried and tempted family of God to count it pure joy, whenever they face trials of many kinds. We have here a problem in arithmetic. Take all your trials and mark them down. Now add them up, and what is the sum total? "Joy!" What mysterious arithmetic! How unlike the addition taught in schools! How different from the sums and problems in the lesson books! How different, also, a result does the Lord bring out from your own calculations when you looked at them one by one, without adding up the whole sum! Then "count it pure joy" whenever you face trials of many kinds, knowing that their effect is—to wean you from the world—to endear Christ—to render His truth precious—and to make you fit for your eternal inheritance. Are you satisfied with the solution of the problem? Can you write down your own name at the bottom of the sum and say, "It is proved—I carry the proof in my own bosom?" The height of Christian maturity

What is the greatest height of grace to which the soul can arrive? To submit wholly to the will of God, and be lost and swallowed up in conformity to it—is the height of Christian maturity here below. There is more manifested grace in the heart of a child of God who, under trial, can say, "May Your will be done," and submit himself to the chastening rod of his Heavenly Father! Our coward flesh shrinks from the flame When the Lord puts us in the furnace, we go in kicking and rebelling. Our coward flesh shrinks from the flame! But when we have been some time in the furnace and find that we cannot kick ourselves out, and that our very struggling only makes the coals burn more fiercely—at last, by the grace of God working in us, we begin to lie still. It was so with Job. How he fought against God! How his carnal mind was stirred up in self-justification and rebellion until the Lord Himself appeared and spoke to his heart from heaven. Then he came to this point, "I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You."

Weighed, measured & timed by infinite love "The Lord tries the righteous." Psalms 11:5 The Lord appoints to every one of His children the peculiar path which he has to tread—and the number and weight of the burdens which he has to carry. Whatever trial, therefore, comes, it is of the Lord. The trials with which God Himself tries His people are not only numerous and various—but for the most part of a very painful and perplexing nature—yet all precisely adapted to the nature of the case

and exactly suited to the state of the person tried, as being planned by unerring wisdom—and weighed, measured and timed by infinite love!

Thus, as the God of providence—as the Maker of our bodies as well as the Creator of our souls—as the God of our families who gives and takes at will the fruit of the womb—some of His children He tries with poverty—others with sickness—others with taking away the desire of their eyes at a stroke—or cutting off the tender olive plants which have sprung up round about their table and entwined round every fiber of their heart.

How sudden also, how unexpected the trials! Heavy losses in business, a sweeping away of the little savings of a life—by some fraud or failure, trick or treachery, riches making themselves wings and flying away, and poverty and need coming in as an armed man to plunder the wreck! How suddenly do such strokes come! Sickness, also, and disease—how swift their attack! The saints of God are not exempt from their share in these afflictions—many are either themselves stretched on beds of languishing and pain—or are watching by the side of afflicted relatives and dying children. How suddenly, also, trials of various kinds come! In one day Job, "the greatest of all the men of the east," lost all the substance which God had given—and the father in the morning of ten living children sat in the evening in his lonely house childless and desolate! How labor pangs fell suddenly on Rachel, and the impatient mother who had cried out "Give me children or else I die," expired under the load of her coveted burden! The discovery of what we are "When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold." Job 23:10 The Lord tries the righteous by laying bare, and thus discovering to them the secret iniquities of the heart. So the Lord—to strip us of our own pride—to crush our vain confidence—to show us that all our strength is weakness, and that grace must freely sanctify as well as fully save, subdue sin as well as pardon it—often leaves us to the discovery of what we are. As, then, sin after sin becomes discovered—and the teaching of the Spirit making the heart soft and the conscience tender—the soul is painfully and acutely tried by seeing and feeling these inward abominations.

How markedly we see this in Job! In the furnace what a discovery was made of the corruptions of his heart—which before were to himself unsuspected and unknown! They had not escaped the searching eye of Omniscience—but they had much escaped the eye of the most perfect and upright man who then dwelt upon the earth. When, however this eminent saint of God was tried by afflictions and desertions—pain of body and agony of mind—then the deep and foul corruptions of his heart become manifest—and the most rebellious and unfitting expressions found vent through his lips. You may think harshly of Job—but the greatest saint, the most highly favored Christian put into the same furnace—would behave no better than he. If the Lord withdraws His presence, and leaves us to the workings of our corrupt heart—what can be the outcome but fretfulness, rebellion, murmuring thoughts, unbelief, and self-pity?

They shall walk and not faint "They shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31

Walking implies—a steady, progressive pace—a calm, steady progression in the things of God—a sober persuasion of the truth as it is in Jesus—a calm movement in the ways of the Lord—a living in peace with God, and in peace with His people—a walking in the commandments of the Lord blameless—a going onward in that humility, integrity, godly fear, tenderness of conscience, wariness, and uprightness of heart which befit the true believer.

Wait

"But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31 The very word wait implies perseverance and fixed determination in the soul—that to God alone will we look. The Lord by His mysterious dealings cuts us off from resting upon an arm of flesh. He will not allow us to lean upon any friend, however near or dear. He will not let us look to any one but Himself, for He is a jealous God—and therefore He keeps cutting off link after link, tie after tie, bond after bond—that not having any human comfort, we may seek consolation only in Him. The soaring soul "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." Isaiah 40:31

Sometimes we are so fastened down to this earth—this valley of tears—this waste-howling wilderness. We are so chained down to it, that we are like a bird with a broken wing, and cannot soar. We are swallowed up in the world—forgetting God and godliness. But are there not times and seasons when the soul is delivered from these chains and fetters—when earthly cares drop off from the mind—when the world and its temptations—sin and its snares—are left behind—and there is a sweet soaring up in the feelings of heavenly affection? The soaring soul never ceases to soar until it comes into the very presence of God! The religion of a dead professor

How different the religion of a living soul is—from the religion of a dead professor! The religion of a dead professor begins in self—and ends in self; begins in his own wisdom—and ends in his own folly; begins in his own strength—and ends in his own weakness; begins in his own righteousness—and ends in his own damnation! But the true child of God—though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens, and sorrows—yet when the Lord does show Himself, and renews his strength, he soars aloft, and never ceases to mount up on the wings of faith and love until he penetrates into the very sanctuary of the Most High!

All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, to—feel His presence—taste His love—enjoy His favor—see His glory—nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls!

He knows what is best for you!

Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Isaiah 40:27 The path in which the family of God were then walking was exceedingly perplexing. Their "way"—that is, the path they were taking—the mode of the Lord's dealing with their soul—was so perplexing and obscure—that they could not believe it was a right way. The Lord had hidden His face from them, and did not show them the nature or reason of His dealings with them. With respect to this intricate path in which you are walking, He adds, "there is no searching of his understanding."

He knows what is best for you! And though your present path is dark and obscure in your eyes, it is bright and clear in His. He would, therefore, urge this upon the conscience of His exercised and complaining child, 'Your part is to sit still, and wait until the deliverance appear. In due time, I will explain to you the nature and reason of these mysterious dealings.'

Great barriers to receiving Christ

Self-righteousness and fleshly-holiness are as great barriers to receiving Christ into the heart—as sin and profanity. The cause of all our misery

Now sin, horrible sin—this dreadful and damnable sin of ours—is the cause of all our misery! We not only inherited it from our first parents—but we have sinned ever since we came into being. Yes, we were conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity, and so ever since we came forth into this world until the present time, we have sinned in every thought, word and deed. Now when the Lord the Spirit begins His gracious work upon a sinner's heart and conscience, one of the first things He makes him to feel is that he is a captive to sin. He feels in a position from which he cannot extricate himself. He is tied and bound with the chain of his sins. Sin has cast around him a chain, from which he cannot extricate himself—and under the sense of sin he feels bound in captivity and bondage. How he hails the first gleam of light that shows him the way of escape out of his dungeon! The authors of our own misery

Ever since the fall, sorrow and disappointment have been the decreed lot of man—for on that sad and evil day when Adam sinned and fell, God cursed the ground for his sake, and declared that in sorrow he would eat of it all the days of his life. Thorns also and thistles—emblems of vexation and disappointment—the ground was to bring forth to him, and in the sweat of his face he was to eat bread, until he returned unto the ground from whence he was taken. Dust you are—and to the dust you will return! Therefore, by God's decree, sorrow and disappointment are the determined lot of man. No exertion of human skill—or subtle contrivance of earthly wisdom—can possibly avert them.

It will be our wisdom, however fair may be our present sky—to anticipate stormy winds and rough seas before we reach our destined harbor. But of all sorrows, the most cutting is that which we bring upon ourselves. And of all disappointments, the most keen is that of which we feel ourselves to be the main and miserable authors. There is not a more true nor a more stinging reproof from the mouth of God to one under His chastening hand than this, "Have you not procured this to yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God?" Jeremiah 2:17. There is no sorrow so keen—no disappointment so cutting—as to reflect that whatever we may suffer under God's chastening strokes—we ourselves have been the authors of our own misery!

If we are travelers Zionward

If we are travelers Zionward, we shall have our various evidences that mark us as children of God—the fear of God in a tender conscience—the spirit of grace and of supplications in their bosom—the cleaving to the people of God in warm affection—the love for the truth in its purity and power—the earnest desires—the budding hopes—the separation from the world—the humility, meekness, quietness—the general consistency of life. The religious professor

You may take away almost anything from a man but his religion! To pronounce his faith a delusion—his hope a falsehood—and to sift his profession until nothing is left but presumption or hypocrisy—to withstand his false confidence, and declare it to be worse than the faith of devils—to analyze his religion, beginning, middle, and end, as thoroughly and unreservedly as a chemist analyzes a case of suspected poisoning—and declare the whole rotten, root and branch—can this be done without giving deadly offence? To faithfully discriminate between taking the 'mere lamp of profession' in the hand—and the vital necessity of possessing the 'oil of God's grace in the heart' if

ever we are to enter heaven—will make one especially obnoxious to the professing religious world. The religious professor receives doctrines because he sees them in the Bible. The true believer not only sees them in the Book—but he feels them in his heart—put there by the Holy Spirit. He comes to the cross because he is guilty and there is nowhere else to go. Thus the religionist and the believer (however they may resemble one another) have an eternal distinction which the hand of God has drawn between the living and the dead.

We do not know what is to come "As your days, so shall your strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25 The year before our eyes may hold in its bosom events which may deeply concern us and affect us. We do not know what is to come. What personal trials—what family trials—what providential trials may await us—we do not know. Sickness may attack our bodies—death enter our families—difficulties beset our circumstances—trials and temptations exercise our minds—snares entangle our feet—and many dark and gloomy clouds, make our path one of heaviness and sorrow. Every year hitherto has brought its trials in its train—and how can we expect the coming year to be exempt? If, indeed, we are His, whatever our trials may be—His grace will be sufficient for us. He who has delivered—can and will deliver. And He who has brought us thus far on the road, who has so borne with our crooked manners in the wilderness, and never yet forsaken us, though we have so often forsaken Him—will still lead us along—will still guide and guard us, and be our God, our Father and our Friend—not only to the end of the next year, if spared to see it—but the end of our life.

Blessed with His presence—we need fear no evil. Favored with His smile—we need dread no foe. Upheld by His power—we need shrink from no trial. Strengthened by His grace—we need panic at no suffering. Knowing what we are and have been when left to ourselves—the slips that we have made—the snares that we have been entangled in—the shame and sorrow that we have procured to ourselves—well may we dread to go forth in the coming year alone. Well may we say—"If Your presence doesn’t go with me, don’t carry us up from here!" The only true commentator

"Temptation, prayer, and meditation," says Luther, "make a minister." These, also, we may add, make the only true Commentary upon the Word of God. By temptation and conflict, the experience of the Bible saints is entered into and realized. By prayer, and in answer to it, its spiritual meaning is opened up. And by meditation it is turned into sweet and solid nutriment. The heavenly wisdom—the unspeakable majesty and beauty—the divine savor and power—the richness and fullness—the certainty and faithfulness—the suitability and blessedness—that are stamped upon the Scripture—these prints of the hand of God can only be felt and recognized as the Holy Spirit shines upon the sacred page! He is the only true Commentator—for He alone can reach and melt the heart. And He is the only true Preacher—because He alone can seal the truth upon the soul.

We may see so much evil in ourselves

We may see so much evil in ourselves as to see nothing else. We have our eyes so fixed and riveted on the malady as to lose all view of the remedy. We dwell so much and so long on Zion’s sickness as to forget there is balm still in Gilead and a mighty Physician there! A line chalked out by a worm!

"But our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases." Psalms 115:3 Jehovah does not move in a line chalked out by a worm! The secret of all preaching

Many ministers preach gospel truths, but are not blessed. Why not? Because they have not preached them under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. Their thunders are mimic thunders—their preaching is rather 'acting' than preaching. The secret of all preaching is the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. If that is denied, the tongue is merely that of the actor on the stage!

Life is fast passing away

We see and feel how life is fast passing away—the things of time and sense slipping from under our feet—the world a scene of vanity and trouble—sin everywhere running down the streets like water—and, alas! what is worse, running through our own heart, ever grieving and defiling our conscience!

What a debt of gratitude

Take the Word of God out of our hands and heart, and we wander in shades of thickest night. What a debt of gratitude do we owe to the God of all grace for the gift of His holy Word—to be to us our light and guide! And how do we best show our appreciation of, our gratitude for, this divine gift? By binding it close to our heart—by searching it daily, as for hidden treasure—by studying it, and seeking to penetrate into its inmost mind and meaning, pith and marrow, spirit and power—not scuffling over it as a schoolboy over his task, or some drudge over her work—not reading it with a listless eye and wandering mind, glad enough to close its pages and put it back on the shelf. But feeding upon the milk and honey—the meat and marrow—and sipping the cheering wine with which the Lord of the house has furnished His table. The Word of God is written for a spiritually afflicted and poor people—and they alone understand it, believe it, feel it and realize it.

Allow it to embrace you

Entanglement in worldly matters beyond what is absolutely necessary, is one of the surest hindrances to the life of God in the soul. Some of the family of God are so circumstanced in business or in their daily employment that they must necessarily have much to do with the world. But this will be neither their temptation nor their sin, if they are not entangled in nor overcome by its spirit. Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, and Daniel who ruled over an empire, maintained not only their worldly position, but their divine grace. It is not then being IN the world, but OF the world in which the danger lies. Keep the world at arms length, and it will not hurt you. But if you allow it to embrace you—you will soon yield to its seductive influence!

One of the worst spots "You have left your first love." Revelation 2:4

We leave our first love when—our heart grows cold and dead in the things of God—sin revives and begins again to manifest its hideous power—the world attracts and allures—our feet get entangled in the snares spread for them by Satan on every side—we wander from the Lord, leaving the fountain of living waters, and hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water. This is one of the most dangerous and one of the worst spots into which a child of God can fall.

What a mine of heavenly instruction!

O what treasures of mercy and grace are lodged in the Scriptures! What a mine of heavenly instruction! What a storehouse of precious promises, encouraging invitations, glorious truths, holy

precepts, tender admonitions, wise counsels and loving directions! What a lamp to our feet and a light to our path! But O, how little we know, understand, believe, realize, feel and enjoy of the Word of life! For years have we read, studied, meditated and sought by faith to enter into the treasures of truth contained in the inspired Word. But O, how little do we understand it! How less do we believe and enjoy the heavenly mysteries—the treasures of grace and truth revealed in it! Only as our heart is brought not only unto, but into the Word of life, and only as faith feeds on the heavenly food there lodged by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God—can we be made fruitful in any good word or work.

We should seek, by the help and blessing of God—to drink more into the spirit of truth—to enter more deeply and vitally into the mind of Christ—to read the Word more under that same inspiration whereby it was written—to submit our heart more to its instruction—that it may drop like the rain and distill like the dew into the inmost depths of our soul, and thus, as it were, nourish the roots of our faith, and hope, and love.

True prayer

True prayer is something very different from—a custom of prayer—a form of prayer—or even a gift of prayer. These are merely the fleshly imitations of the interceding breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the saints of God and, therefore, may and do exist without it. But that secret lifting up of the heart unto the Lord—that panting after Him as the deer pants after the water-brooks—that pouring out of the soul before Him—that sighing and groaning for—a word of His grace—a look of His eye—a touch of His hand—a smile of His face—that sweet and heavenly communion with Him on the mercy-seat which marks the Spirit’s inward intercession—all this cannot be counterfeited. Such a close, private, inward, experimental work and walk is out of the reach and out of the taste of the most gifted professor. But in this path the Holy Spirit leads the living family of God—and as they walk in it under His teachings and anointings—they feel its sweetness and blessedness.

Throw it into the river! As to a religion that knows nothing of sighs, nor cries, nor breathings, nor groans, nor longings, nor languishings, nor meltings, nor softenings—that feels no contrition, no tenderness, no godly sorrow, no desire to please God, no fear to offend Him—away with it! Throw it into the river! Bury it in the first ash-heap you come to! The sooner it is got rid of, the better!

Religion—without heavenly teaching—without the Spirit’s secret operations—without a conscience made tender in the fear of the Lord—without the spirit of prayer in the bosom—without breathings after the Lord—without desires to experience His love, and enjoy a sense of His mercy and goodness—all such religion is a deception and a delusion! It begins in the flesh, and it will end in the flesh. So dreadful, so hateful & abhorrent

Sin is an evil so dreadful, so hateful and abhorrent to God’s righteous character—so provoking to His justice and holiness, that He could not pardon it unless an atonement were made adequate to its fearful magnitude. Thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil could not atone for sin! Did all men consent to give their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul—all could not suffice to outweigh the magnitude of sin. Nothing short of the blood of the Son of God could be an atonement of sufficient worth, of equivalent value. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death." Mark 14:34

What heart can conceive, what tongue express what His holy soul endured when the Father laid upon Him the iniquities of us all? In the Garden of Gethsemane—what a load of guilt—what a weight of sin—what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God—did that sacred humanity endure—until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall as sweat from His brow! The human nature in its weakness recoiled, as it were, from the cup of anguish put into His hand. His body could scarcely bear the load that pressed Him down. His soul, under the waves and billows of God's wrath, sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and came into deep waters where the floods overflowed Him. And how could it be otherwise when His sacred humanity was—enduring all the wrath of God—suffering the very pangs of hell—and wading in all the depths of guilt and terror? When the blessed Lord was made a sin offering for us, He endured in His ho

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He as the eternal Son of God, had lain in His bosom before all worlds, had known all the blessedness and happiness of the love and favor of the Father, His own Father, shining upon Him; for He was as one brought up with Him, and was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him. When, then, instead of love—He felt His displeasure; instead of the beams of His favor—He experienced the frowns and terrors of His wrath; instead of the light of His countenance—He tasted the gloom and darkness of desertion—what heart can conceive—what tongue express the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Substitute under this agonizing experience?

Let us ever bear in mind that the sufferings of the holy soul of Jesus were as really felt as the sufferings of His sacred body—and a thousand times more intense and intolerable! Though beyond description painful and agonizing, yet the sufferings of the body were light indeed compared with the sufferings of the soul. Surely never was there such a pang since the foundations of the earth were laid, as that which rent and tore the soul of the Redeemer when the last drop of agony was poured into the already overflowing cup, and He cried out—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

I admire and love the grace of God

"Among whom we also once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:3; Ephesians 2:8

View the jewels that grace has set in the Redeemer's crown—made out of the most depraved and abject materials! Who, for instance, were those Ephesians to whom Paul wrote that wonderful

epistle? The most foolish and besotted of idolaters—men debased with every lust—ripe and ready for every crime. How rich, how marvelous the grace that changed worshipers of Diana—into worshipers of Jehovah; magicians, full of sorcery and Satanic witchcraft—into saints of God! I admire and love the grace of God—and the longer I live, the more do I love and admire it. My sins—my corruptions—my infirmities—make me feel my deep and daily need of grace—and as its freeness, fullness, suitability and inexpressible blessedness are more and more opened up to my heart and conscience—so do I more and more cleave to and delight in it! In a lame state "The lame walk." Matthew 11:5 When the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, God's people are made sensible that they are in a lame state—that they are crippled, paralytic, bedridden—unable to lift up a leg or a finger. Man is dead in sin—his faculties are all crippled—he is utterly helpless in the things of God.

Born blind?

"The blind receive their sight." Matthew 11:5 In what state and condition are we by nature? Are we not—blind to our state as sinners before God? blind to the spirituality and condemning power of the law? blind to the majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity of God? blind to the beauty and preciousness of Immanuel? blind to the personality and operations of God the Spirit? And is not this blindness a feature that universally prevails? Are we not, in a spiritual sense, born blind? Do we not grow up in that blindness? And can any natural power remove it? Can any light in the judgment—can any doctrines received in the mind—can any profession of religion—can anything that nature has done or can do—remove that blindness? It cannot be removed by any power of man in himself.

It is the special work, the grand prerogative of the Son of God, to remove this blindness by communicating spiritual eyesight. And this is done in a moment. There was an instant, though we may not be enabled to recollect it, when divine light was brought into our dark minds—and the blind received sight. A child of God cannot understand how, or why it is—but he knows that he once was blind—but now he sees! There is in his soul an inward perception—and that this inward perception is attended with certain sensations—to which sensations he was a stranger in times past.

Whenever the blind receive sight, they see the purity and spirituality of God's character. Before the blind receive sight, they think that God is such a one as themselves. They have no idea of—no internal acquaintance with—the infinite purity, holiness, and spirituality of Jehovah. They therefore never bow down before Him—there is no trembling of heart at His great name—no bringing down of proud imaginations at His footstool—no inward shrinking into self before the loftiness of the Most High—no perception of His glory—no yielding up of the heart in subjection—no adoration nor admiration of His eternal Majesty! But wherever spiritual eyesight is given, and the purity and holiness of Jehovah are made known to the heart, there will be, as we find all through the Scripture—self-abasement. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." The purity, holiness, and spirituality of God's character, produced in the saints of old, this prostration of soul before Him. The Lord God Almighty reveals in the soul His purity, spirituality, and holiness—to bring guilt upon the soul—to drive it out

of every lying refuge—and beat out of its grasp every hope, but that which He Himself implants. He beats us out of every false refuge—strips us of every natural hope—and removes every creature prop from under our souls. He displays His dreadful majesty—sets our secret sins before our eyes—and searches the very bottom of our hearts—to bring us near the Son of His love—to draw us to the bosom of the Lord of life and glory—and make Him dear and precious to our souls!

Such a sight "We see Jesus." Hebrews 2:9 Did your eyes ever see Jesus? I do not mean your natural, your bodily eyes—but the eye of faith, the eye of the soul. I will tell you what you have felt—if you ever saw Jesus. Your heart was softened and melted—your affections drawn heavenward—your soul penetrated with thankfulness and praise—your mind lifted up above all earthly things to dwell and center in the bosom of the blessed Immanuel. Do you think, then, you have seen Jesus by the eye of faith? Then you have seen—the perfection of beauty—the consummation of pure loveliness—the image of the invisible God—all the perfections and glorious character of the Godhead shining forth in Him who was nailed to Calvary's tree! I am sure such a sight as that must melt the most obdurate heart—and draw tears from the most flinty eyes! Such a sight of the beauty and glory of the Son of God must kindle the warmest, holiest stream of tender affection. It might not have lasted long. These feelings are often very transitory. The world, sin, temptation, and unbelief soon work—infidelity soon assails all—the things of time and sense soon draw aside—but while it lasted, such, in a greater or less degree, were the sensations produced.

Genuine soul humility

We do not have any humility—except as the Lord is pleased to teach the soul to be humble. And how does He produce genuine soul humility? By showing us what we are—opening up the secrets of the heart—discovering the desperate wickedness of our fallen nature—and convincing us that sin is intermingled with every thought, word, look, and action! When the blessed Spirit takes us in hand "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8

We may, by observing the workings of the natural mind, come to some conclusion that we and all men are naturally—very selfish—very proud—and very worldly. But this knowledge does not produce any sense of godly sorrow—or any self-loathing on account of indwelling sin. But when the blessed Spirit takes us in hand—strips away the veil of delusion from our hearts—and opening up the depths of our fallen nature, discovers the secret recesses where everything that is filthy and loathsome hides itself—then we begin to see and feel that we are sinners indeed—inwardly as well as outwardly—in thought and imagination—as well as by habit and practice. If any of us have ever learned to loathe ourselves before God—it is by having some special discovery of the purity and holiness of God—contrasted with our own vileness and filthiness!

Happy "Happy are you, O Israel." Deuteronomy 33:29

What are the sources of the Christian's happiness? Are they such as the world accounts to be streams of perennial joy? No! The Lord for the most part dries up or embitters the streams of earthly happiness—that His people may not drink at them—and so forsake or neglect the fountain of living waters. The Lord, for His own gracious purposes, usually puts gall and wormwood into the streams of earthly happiness. So why are the people of God happy? Happy because God has chosen them unto salvation in the Person of His dear Son! Happy because He has loved them with an everlasting love—and sometimes enables them to love Him in return! Happy because He

has called them by His grace, that He may one day crown them with everlasting glory! Happy because mansions of eternal bliss are reserved for them in the skies—far beyond all the storms and waves of this troublous world! Happy because the Lord is their everlasting portion! Happy because God is their Father and friend—Jesus their Redeemer, husband, and elder brother—and the Holy Spirit their Comforter, teacher, and sanctifier.

Hard may be your lot here below, O suffering saints of the Most High, as regards external matters—painful may be the exercises which almost daily pass through the rebellion and desperate wickedness of your carnal mind—grievous temptations may be your continual portion—many a pricking thorn and sharp briar may lie in your path—and so rough and rugged may be the road, that at times you may feel yourself of all men to be the most miserable. And so indeed you would be—but for the grace of God in your heart now—and the glory prepared for you beyond the grave! Yet with it all, were your afflictions and sorrows a thousand times heavier, well may it be said of you, "Happy, thrice happy, are you, O Israel!" Whom upon earth would you envy—if you have the grace of God in your heart? With whom would you change places—if ever the love of God has visited your soul? Look around you—fix your eyes upon the man or woman who seems surrounded with the greatest amount of earthly happiness—and then ask your own conscience, "Would I change places with you—you butterfly of fashion? Or with you—you painted dragonfly, who merely lives your little day, sunning yourself for a few hours beneath the summer sun—and then sinking into the dark and dismal pool which awaits you at evening?"

Then with all your cares at home and abroad—with all your woes and trials—sunk under which you feel yourself at times one of the most miserable beings that can crawl along in this valley of tears—would you change places with anybody, however healthy, or rich, or favored with the largest amount of family prosperity—if at the same time destitute of the grace of God?

Happy are you, O Israel! And O, that we might be even now enabled to realize this blessing—instead of poring over our sins and sorrows, our temptations and trials! Which would you rather be?

"Who is like you, O people saved by the Lord!" Deuteronomy 33:29

Imagine yourself standing in the streets of Jerusalem, and looking into the banqueting hall of the rich man of whom the Lord speaks in the parable. Might you not say, "Who is like unto you, O man of wealth and substance? Who wears garments so deeply dyed in royal purple? Who is clothed in linen so white and so fine? Who has his table spread with such delicacies? Who has such rosy wine to flow in the cup in such abundance and of such flavor? Who is like unto you, O rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and dining sumptuously every day?" And then you might have turned and seen another sight—a beggar at his gate—and you might have said, "Who is like unto you, O Lazarus? You have not a friend to put a rag on your diseased back. You have not wife, child, or relative to bring plaster or poultice for your ulcerous sores—and have to thank the very dogs for licking the gory matter off your bleeding face. You have no one to feed you even with a piece of bread—and are glad to hold out your hand to catch the crumbs as they fall from the rich man’s table. Who is like unto you, rich man, in all your wealth and luxury? Who is like unto you, Lazarus, in all your poverty and sores?"

Let a few years pass—now look into the abyss beneath—what do you see there? The rich man in misery, crying in torment for a drop of water to cool his tongue! Who is like unto you, rich man, now, in the depths of hell—your tongue parched with flame and thirst, and an impassable gulf between you and Paradise? Turn away your eyes from this fearful sight—and look up into the courts of bliss. Who is like unto you now, poor beggar, whose sores the dogs once licked—who had not a friend on earth—and were thrust into your last resting place by the cold hand of grudging charity? You are in Paradise—enjoying the smiles of God—basking in the beams of the Sun of righteousness throughout an endless day! All this we see by the eye of faith. But how does the world look upon the rich man? It says, "O you great and noble rich man—who is like unto you? I kiss your feet! I admire your wealth and luxury! I worship your rank! I bow to your fashion! You are rich, respectable, noble! I cannot but envy you—for you have all my heart is longing after. But what are you doing here, you poor diseased beggar—a nuisance under the very nose of the honorable rich man? Take away your rags and your sores out of his noble sight! You spoil his appetite, and remind him of death and the grave!" Is not this the language of the world—still admiring those whom God abhors—and hating those whom God loves?

Look beyond the ways and thoughts of men to the ways and thoughts of the Lord. Let a few years pass—now view the scene with a spiritual eye. Where are all the butterflies gone? They are all passed away—for the world passes away and the lusts thereof—darkness has covered them all—and down they have sunk into the chambers of death. But where now are the lepers and beggars—the martyrs, the sufferers, the mourners in Zion—the poor afflicted ones who loved Jesus—and whom Jesus loved? In the bosom of their God! Then may we not say of, and to every believer in Jesus, however poor or despised, "Who is like unto you?" Which would you rather be? A poor, despised, persecuted, afflicted child of God—or one that enjoys all the pleasures and honors that the world could pour into his bosom? The grand delusion of our day The grand delusion of our day—is that some from ignorance, some from self-righteousness, some from hypocrisy, and some from presumption—claim the promises of Scripture as their own—without any internal mark of His grace being in their hearts. May the Lord keep us from walking on such perilous ground and treading such dangerous paths!

Pluck out the peacock feathers "There are many plans in a man’s heart; but the Lord’s counsel will prevail." Proverbs 19:21

"The counsel of the Lord" is that Christ should be all in all—that He should stand exalted upon the wreck and ruin of the creature. "The counsel of the Lord," then must stand, whatever be the devices in man’s heart. And this counsel is to bring the creature low, that He may exalt Jesus high—to strip the creature of all its attainments—to pluck out the peacock feathers—that it may be poor and needy and naked and empty and bare. "The counsel of the Lord" is that the creature should learn its weakness—that ’creature helplessness’ should not be a mere doctrine received into the judgment—but that it should be a solemn truth which is experienced in a man’s soul. This weakness a man can only learn by being placed in that position, where, when he would make use of his strength, he finds it is all gone, and has become total weakness. "The counsel of the Lord," is this—to exalt Christ upon the abasement of the creature—to make the strength of Christ perfect in our weakness—and the wisdom of Christ perfect in our folly—and to establish Christ’s righteousness upon the ruin of the creature’s righteousness. The God of all grace "The God of all grace." 1 Peter 5:10 As the Lord leads His people into a knowledge of themselves—as He

removes the veil of deceit from their heart—as He discovers to them more plainly the deep corruption that lurks and works in their bosom—He shows them more and more not only their need of grace—but opens up more and more to them what grace is. When the Lord first begins His work on the conscience, and brings us to know a measure of the truth—we are but learners in the school of grace. It is only after we have traveled some years in the way, and have had repeated discoveries of our baseness, and of God's superabounding mercy—that we begin to enter a little into what grace really is. We learn the words first—and the meaning of them afterwards. We usually receive the doctrine of grace as it stands in the letter of truth first—and then, as the Lord leads us, we get into the experience of grace in the power of it. Thus we gradually learn what grace is by feeling its complete suitability to our pressing needs.

When, for instance, we feel what numerous and aggravated sins we are daily and hourly committing—we need grace—and not merely grace, but "all grace," to pardon and blot them out. When we painfully feel how we daily backslide from God—and are perpetually roving after idols—how our hearts get entangled in the world—and how little our affections are fixed on Jesus—we need "all grace" to heal these backslidings, and to bring the soul into the enjoyment of the mercy and love of God. And when we see what base returns we make to the Lord for all His kindness towards us—when our rebelliousness, fretfulness, impatience, and ingratitude are charged home upon the conscience, and we feel what wretches we are—how we have requited the Lord for all His goodness towards us—we experience our need of "all grace" to forgive such base ingratitude. When we can scarcely bear ourselves—as if none were so vile—none so filthy—none so black as we—we are brought to see and feel it must be "all grace" that can bear with us! So that we see the sweetness and suitability of grace. Nothing, then, less than the God of all grace, could suit such vile wretches as we feel ourselves to be! None but the God of all grace could bear with us! None but He whose grace can never be exhausted—whose patience can never be worn out—whose lovingkindness can never be provoked beyond endurance—but who pardons all—loves through all, and is determined, in spite of all, to bring the objects of His love to the eternal enjoyment of Himself—none but the God of all grace could ever save such guilty and filthy wretches, as some of us see and feel ourselves to be! The fruits of suffering As the fruits and consequences of suffering, the believer is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature—into the conviction that the world is but a shadow—and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped—that of all things sin is most to be dreaded—and the favor of God above all things most to be coveted—that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified—that all things are passing away—and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity!

These are the fruits of suffering. They are not to be learned by reading them in the Word of God—or by hearing ministers preach about them. Nor are they to be obtained from books, or from any source, but the teaching of the Spirit of God in the soul. Where God then teaches, He "teaches to profit"—He writes His truth with the point of a diamond on the heart—and engraves them as with an iron pen into the rock forever.

Nothing but this can really break the sinner's heart To view mercy in its real character—we must go to Calvary. We must go by faith, under the secret teachings and leadings of the Holy Spirit, to see Immanuel, God with us—groveling in Gethsemane's garden. We must view Him naked upon

the cross, groaning, bleeding, agonizing, dying! We must view that wondrous spectacle of love and suffering—and feel our eyes flowing down in streams of sorrow, humility, and contrition at the sight—in order to enter a little into the depths of the tender mercy of God. Nothing but this can really break the sinner's heart. Law terrors, death and judgment, infinite purity, and eternal vengeance will not soften or break a sinner's heart. But if he is led to view a suffering Immanuel—and a sweet testimony is raised up in his conscience that those sufferings were for him—this, and this alone will break his heart all to pieces! That is idolatry, damnable idolatry!

How can I be saved? By making myself religious, becoming holy, subduing my lusts in my own strength? This sets me farther from God than I was before. This makes me a god to myself! If I am saved—by my own holiness—by my own strength—by my own righteousness—I worship myself. And in worshiping myself, I become my own god. That is idolatry, damnable idolatry! So that he who lives and dies in the worship of self—will live and die under the wrath of God as an idolater.

You cannot carry your own burdens "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you." Psalms 55:22

You cannot carry your own burdens without their breaking your back. But when you can cast your burden on the Lord, then you will surely find sweet relief!

He will subdue our iniquities "He will subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19

Sin subdued is the next greatest blessing to sin pardoned—and wherever God pardons sin, He subdues sin. For the same grace which saves sanctifies—the same grace which casts sin behind God's back, puts its foot upon the corruptions of the believer, and prevents iniquity from having dominion over him. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? "Because you are not under the law," which gives sin its strength and power, "but under grace," which is able to subdue its dominion. A child of God can never rest satisfied except by the subduing of his sins, as well as the pardoning of them. To have his unbelief, infidelity, worldly-mindedness, pride, and covetousness subdued by the grace of God—its power taken out of it—its dominion dethroned—its authority destroyed—and its strength weakened and diminished, that he may not be under the dominion of any lust, or carried away by the strength of any secret or open sin—but may walk before God in the light of His countenance, as desirous to know His will and do it—this is the desire and breathing of everyone that knows sin in its guilt, filth, and power. How gracious, then, is the promise—how sweet the favor—that the Lord has promised to subdue our iniquities by the same grace as that whereby He pardons them. So that we receive the grace of Christ to sanctify and renew the soul—and the strength of Christ to overcome all our inward and outward foes.

Why is flesh so weak?

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41

Why is flesh so weak? Because it is fallen—because it is sinful—because it has an alliance with the temptation which is presented to it. If we had—no inward lusting after evil—no pride—no rebelliousness—no fallen nature—no carnal mind—no vile affections—nothing in us earthly, sensual, or devilish—would we fear temptation? No! for then we would be armored against it—it would be like dipping a match in water. Here our weakness lies. If we could always resist—we would conquer. But we cannot resist—except by the special power of God. This is a lesson we all

need to learn. The weakness of the flesh manifests itself continually in compliance, in non-resistance, in giving way, in yielding, often almost without a struggle, no, sometimes in acting a worse and more wicked part still.

Thus we learn the weakness of the flesh—weak to believe—weak to hope—weak to love—weak to fight—weak to resist—weak to overcome—weak to watch—weak to pray—weak to stand—weak to everything good—strong to everything evil. The flesh indeed is weak. What are all resolutions, all promises, all desires, all endeavors, all strugglings, all strivings—except the soul is held up by the mighty power of God? The free grace of God!

"Where sin abounded, grace did abound much more exceedingly." Romans 5:20

What a balm—what a cordial—what a sweet reviving draught is the free grace of God! It is so pure, so free, and so superabounding over all the aboundings of sin, guilt, filth, and folly. If anything can—lift up a drooping sinner—restore a backslider—break a hard heart—soften a stony heart—draw forth songs of praise, and tears of contrition—produce repentance and godly sorrow for sin, and a humble mind and a tender conscience—it is a sweet experience of the superabounding grace of God. Can we then exalt it too much? No! Can we prize it too highly? No! Can we cleave to it too closely? No! In proportion as we feel our ruin and misery, we shall cleave to it with every desire of our soul—for it is all our salvation, as it is all our desire. The black cloud of our vileness

We cannot do anything of a spiritual nature to bring ourselves near to God. Let all the shame and guilt be ours—all the grace and glory are God’s. Every drop of felt mercy—every ray of gracious hope—every sweet application of truth to the heart—every sense of saving interest—every sweet indulgence—every heavenly smile—every tender desire—and every spiritual feeling—all, all are of God! If ever my heart is softened—if my spirit blessed—if my soul watered—if Christ is ever felt to be precious—it is all of His grace. It is all given freely, sovereignly—without money and without price. But can it be denied that by our carnality, inconsistency, worldly-mindedness, negligence, ingratitude, and forsaking and forgetting the God of our mercies—we are continually bringing leanness and barrenness—deadness and darkness into our own souls? Thus we are forced to plead "Guilty, guilty!"—to put our mouth in the dust, to acknowledge ourselves to be vile. Yet thus does God, in His mysterious dealings, open up a way for His sovereign grace and mercy to visit the soul. The more we feel ourselves condemned, cut off, gashed, and wounded by a sense of sin and folly, backslidings and wanderings from God—the lower we shall lie—the more we shall put our mouth in the dust—the more freely we shall confess our baseness before Him. And if the Lord should be pleased, in these solemn moments—to open our poor blind eyes to see something of the precious blood of the Lamb—to apply some sweet promise to the soul—or to bring to the heart a sense of His goodness and mercy—how sweet and suitable is that grace, as coming over all the mountains and hills of our sin and shame! Thus is the goodness of God, as it were, reflected on and by our baseness and vileness, as we see the sun sometimes shining on and reflected by a black cloud. The black cloud of our vileness but serves to heighten the glory of the rays of free grace, and the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness!

How does the Lord humble?

"The lofty looks of man will be brought low, the haughtiness of men will be bowed down, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day." Isaiah 2:11

How does the Lord humble? By discovering to man what he is—by opening up the depth of his fall—by making him feel what a vile and guilty wretch he is before the footstool of mercy—by breaking him to pieces—by slaughtering and laying him low—by making him abhor himself in dust and ashes. There are many who cannot bear to hear the malady touched upon. They cannot bear to hear the corruptions of the heart even hinted at. But what real humility can a man have—except through a knowledge of himself? How can I be humbled except I feel that in myself which covers me with shame and confusion of face, and makes me loathe and abhor myself before the eyes of a heart-searching God? Therefore the more the glorious majesty of heaven is pleased to unfold itself in all its divine purity in my conscience—and the deeper discovery I have of what I am as a fallen wretch, a guilty sinner—the more will my heart be humbled—the more shall I be lowly and abased—the more shall I loathe myself in dust and ashes! The steep hill "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." Psalms 84:11 But what is it to walk uprightly? Oh! here is the grand difficulty in religion. We may talk—we may preach—we may hear—we may seem to believe—but it is when we come to act, to walk, and carry out into daily and hourly practice what we profess—that the main difficulty is felt and found. "The soul of religion," says Bunyan, "is the practical part"—and it is when we come to this "practical part" that the daily, hourly cross commences. The walk, the conversation, the daily, hourly conduct is, after all, the main difficulty, as it is the all-important fruit of a Christian profession. To walk day after day, under all circumstances, and amid all the varied temptations that beset us, uprightly, tenderly, and sincerely in the fear of God—to feel continually that heart, lip, and life are all open before His all-penetrating eye—to do the things which He approves, and to flee from the things which He abhors—oh! this is the steep hill which it is such a struggle to climb! We can talk fast enough—but oh! to walk in the straight and narrow path—to be a Christian outwardly as well as inwardly, before God and man, before the Church and the world—and in all points to speak and act with undeviating consistency with our profession—this is what nature never has done, and what nature never can do. In thus acting, as much as in believing, do we need God’s power and grace to work in, and be made manifest in us. A more blessed appetite "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4 This is the grand lesson which we have to learn in our wilderness journey—that man does not live by bread alone—that is, by those providential supplies which relieve our natural necessities. God has determined that His people shall not live by bread alone. They shall be separated from the mass of men who live in this carnal way only—who have no care beyond earthly possessions—and the sum of whose thoughts and desires is—what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and with what they shall be clothed—who never look beyond the purse, the business, the daily occupation, the safe return, the profitable investment—and how to provide for themselves and their families.

God has planted in the bosom of His people a higher life—a nobler principle—a more blessed appetite than to live upon bread alone. We bless Him for His providence—but we love Him for His grace. We thank Him for daily food and clothing—but these mercies are but for time, perishing in their very use—and He has provided us with that which is for eternity.

What then does God mean the soul to live upon? Upon every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. But where do we find these words which proceed out of the mouth of God? In the

Scriptures, which is the food of the Church—and especially in Scripture as applied to the heart, in the words that God is pleased to drop into the soul by a divine power—which we receive from His gracious mouth, and lay hold of with a believing hand. That is the food and nutriment of our soul—the truth of God applied to our heart and made life and spirit to our souls by His own teaching. How this should both stimulate and encourage us—to search the Scriptures as for hidden treasure—to read them constantly—to meditate upon them—to seek to enter into the mind of God as revealed in them—and thus to find them to be the food of our soul. If we were fully persuaded that every word of the Scripture came out of God's mouth, and was meant to feed our soul—how much more we would prize it, read, and study it!

More and more dependent on Him When enabled, by the blessed Spirit's operations, to receive Jesus into our heart by faith—we are then taught to feel our need of continual supplies of grace and strength out of His fullness. For we have to learn something—of the depths of the fall—of the evils of our heart—of the temptations of Satan—of the strength of sin—of our own weakness and worthlessness. And as every fresh discovery of our helplessness and wretchedness makes a way for looking to and hanging upon Him—we become more and more dependent on Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption! The first spot The first spot to which the Holy Spirit takes the poor sinner, is the cross of Jesus! That is the first real saving view we get of the Lord of life and glory—the Holy Spirit taking the poor guilty sinner, laden with the weight of a thousand sins, to the foot of the cross—and opening his eyes to see the Son of God bleeding there as an atoning sacrifice for sin. To be brought there by the power of the Holy Spirit, and receive that blessed mystery of the bleeding, suffering, and agonizing Son of God into our hearts and consciences—is the first blessed discovery that God the Spirit favors us with. The regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible for a dead soul to believe in God, know God, or love God. It must be quickened into spiritual life before it can savingly know the only true God. And thus there lies at the very threshold, in the very heart and core of the case—the absolute necessity of the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit upon the soul. The very completeness and depth of the fall render the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as necessary—and as indispensable—as the redeeming work of the Son of God. A transforming effect A view of Christ's glory, and a foretaste of the bliss and blessedness it communicates, has a transforming effect upon the soul. We are naturally proud, covetous, worldly—grievously entangled in various lusts and passions—prone to evil—averse to good—easily elated by prosperity—soon dejected by adversity—peevish under trials—rebellious under heavy strokes—unthankful for daily mercies of food and clothing—and in other ways ever manifesting our vile nature. To be brought from under the power of these abounding evils, and be made fit for heaven, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, and conformed to the image of Christ.

10.10. Volume 10

The path may be rough "And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalms 107:7 When the Lord leads, we can follow. The path may be rough, but if the Lord upholds us, we can walk in it without stumbling. Whatever the Lord bids, we can do—if we have but His presence. Whatever He calls upon us to suffer, we can bear—if we have but His approving smile. Oh, the wonders of sovereign grace! The cross is no cross—if the Lord gives strength to bear it. Affliction is no affliction—if the Lord supports under it. Trial is no trial—if sweetened by His smile. Sorrow no grief—if lightened by His love.

It is our fretfulness, unbelief, carnal reasoning, rebellion, and self-pity which make the rough way, a wrong way. But grace in its all-conquering power, not only subdues every difficulty without, but what is its greater triumph, subdues every difficulty within. God's right way is to lead us forth—out of the world—out of sin—out of self—out of pride—out of self-righteousness—out of evil in every form—into everything which is good, holy, gracious, acceptable, saving, and sanctifying—into everything that can conform us to the image of Christ. And what is the end of all this leading and guiding? That they might go to that glorious city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. There we will dwell as citizens of that blessed city which is all of pure gold, like unto clear glass—a city which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. The Lord is leading forth each and all of His wilderness wanderers by the right way—that He may bring them into His eternal presence, and to the enjoyment of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore!

It has made him love sin & hate God As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no tongue can adequately express—the state of wretchedness and ruin into which sin has cast guilty, miserable man! In separating him from God, sin severed him from the only source of all happiness and holiness. Sin has ruined him body and soul. It has filled the body with sickness and disease! It has defaced and destroyed the image of God in the soul. It has made him love sin and hate God.

Indispensably necessary The following things are indispensably necessary to true salvation. A spiritual sense of our lost, ruined condition. A knowledge of Christ by a gracious discovery of His suitability, beauty, and blessedness. A faith in Him which—works by love—purifies the heart—overcomes the world—and delivers from death and hell. The least religion of their own

They are the wisest—in whom creature wisdom has most ceased. They are the strongest—who have learned most experimentally their own weakness. They are the holiest—who have known most of their own filthiness. They are the most spiritual in a true sense—who have the least religion of their own.

What vain toys

Compared with spiritual and eternal blessings, we see how vain and empty are all earthly things—what vain toys—what idle dreams—what passing shadows! We wonder at the folly of men in hunting after such vain shows, and spending time, health, money, life itself, in a pursuit of

nothing but misery and destruction. We care little for the opinion of men as to what is good or great—but much for what God has stamped His own approbation upon—such as—a tender conscience—a broken heart—a contrite spirit—a humble mind—a separation from the world and everything worldly—a submission to His holy will—a meek endurance of the cross—a conformity to Christ's suffering image—and a living to God's glory. The evils of their heart The Lord is pleased sometimes to show His dear people the evils of their heart—to remove that veil of pride and self-righteousness which hides so much of sinful SELF from our eyes—and to discover what is really in us—the deep corruptions which lurk in our depraved nature—the filth and folly which is part and parcel of ourselves—the unutterable baseness and vileness so involved in our very being.

Doctrines floating in the brain?

"He would have given you living water." John 4:10

How blessed a thing is vital godliness! That is the thing I always wish to contend for. Not for forms and ceremonies, or doctrines floating in the brain—but for the life of God in the soul. That is the only thing worth knowing—the only thing to live by—and the only thing to die by. How different is vital godliness received into the heart and conscience, by the operation of God the Spirit! How different is this fountain of living water from the 'stagnant, dead water' of lip service, formality, and hypocrisy! We cannot now be satisfied with lip religion, pharisaical religion, doctrinal religion, a name to live while dead, the form of godliness without the power. A living soul can no more satisfy his thirst with mere forms and ceremonies—than a man naturally thirsty can drink out of a pond of sand. He must have living water—something given by the Lord Himself, springing up in his soul.

True religion True religion consists in the teachings and operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. The race!

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1

None can run this race but the children of God, for the ground itself is holy ground—of which we read that no unclean beast is to be found there. None but the redeemed walk there—and none have ever won the prize but those who have run this heavenly race. Now no sooner do we see by faith the race set before us, than we begin to run from the City of Destruction—our steps being winged with fear and apprehension. All this, especially in the outset, implies energy, movement, activity, pressing forward—running, as it were, for our life—escaping, as Lot, to the mountain—or as the manslayer fled to the city of refuge from the avenger of blood.

As, then, the runner stretches forward hands, and feet, and head, intent only on being first to reach the goal—so in the spiritual race there is a stretching forth of the faculties of the newborn soul to win the heavenly prize. There is a stretching forth of the understanding to become possessed of clear views of heavenly truth. There is a stretching forth of the affections of the heart after Jesus. So that when you look at the word "race" as emblematic of a Christian's path—you see that it is an inward movement of the soul—or rather of the grace that God has lodged in your bosom—and to which are communicated spiritual faculties—whereby it moves forward in the ways of God, under the influences of the blessed Spirit. A divine power in my soul? Has the Holy Spirit wrought anything with a divine power in my soul? The faith I profess—is it of God? The hope I enjoy—do I

believe it came from the Lord Himself to support my soul in the trying storm? My repentance—is it genuine? My profession—is it sincere? My walk—is it consistent? My conscience—is it tender? My desires—are they spiritual? My prayers—are they fervent? My heart—is it honest? My soul—is it right before God? Do I hang all my hopes upon Christ as the Rock? Do I hang all my religion upon the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart?

Often sinking, often shaken, often cast down

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

If there were—no temptations to try—no sharp sorrows to grieve—no painful afflictions to distress them; or if, on the other hand, there were—no sensible weakness of soul—no sinking of heart—no despondency of spirit—no giving way of faith and hope—no doubt or fear in the mind—how could the souls of the disciples be strengthened? The souls of God's people are not made of cast iron, against which arrow after arrow may be discharged and leave no dent, make no impression. The Lords people, who carry in their bosom broken hearts and contrite spirits, are—often sinking—often shaken—often cast down through the many trials they have to encounter. It is for this reason that they need confirming, supporting, strengthening—and that the Lord Himself—would lay His everlasting arms underneath them—lift them into His bosom—and make His strength perfect in their weakness.

He showers them in rich profusion "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever." Psalms 89:1

We are surrounded with mercies. Mercies for the body—and mercies for the soul. There are indeed times and seasons when all the mercies of God, both in providence and grace, seem hidden from our eyes, when—with the workings of sin, rebellion, and unbelief—with a thorny path in the world—and a rough, trying road in the soul—we see little of the mercies of God, though surrounded by them. We cannot see them—and at the very moment when God is already showering mercies upon us. We are filled, perhaps, with murmuring and rebellion, and cry, "Is His mercy clean gone forever, will He be favorable no more?" This is our infirmity, our weakness—but it no more arrests the shower of God's mercies than the parched field arrests the falling rain. The mercies of God, like Himself, are infinite—and He showers them in rich profusion upon His people. They come freely—as the beams of the sun shining in the sky—as the breezes of the air we breathe—as the river that never ceases to flow. Everything testifies of the mercy of God—to those whose eyes are anointed to see it, and are interested in it. To them all things in nature, in providence, and in grace, proclaim with one united harmonious voice—The mercies of the Lord endure forever!

Now, as these mercies of God are sensibly felt in the soul—they soften, meeken, and subdue the spirit—melt it into the obedience of faith—and raise up in it the tenderness of love. Only let my soul be favored with a sweet discovery of the mercies of God—let them reach my heart—soften and subdue my spirit—then there is no cross too heavy to be taken up—no trial too hard to be endured—no path of suffering and sorrow in which we cannot patiently, if not gladly, walk.

What shall she know? The Church, speaking thus in the person of Ephraim, says, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Hosea 6:3 What shall she know? She shall know—that the Lord's hand supported her through all her temptations—that none of the devices of Satan against

her have prospered—that all her temporal trials have worked together for her good—that God has made use of the things that seemed most against her that they might be most for her—that He has overruled every dispensation so as to make it a dispensation of mercy—that He held her up when she must otherwise have utterly fallen—that God was the Author and the Finisher of her faith, the source of her hope, and the fountain of her love. She shall know—that she has not had one trial too heavy—nor shed one tear too much—nor put up one groan too many. She shall know that all these things have in a most mysterious and inexplicable manner worked together for her spiritual good.

Now, friends, until we know something experimentally of the Lord—we cannot know all this. Until we know more or less of Jesus by His own sweet manifestations—the cloud is not taken up from our religion. But when the Lord brings the soul into some sweet communion with Jesus, and He is made experimentally known—then it sees that the Lord has led it all these years in the wilderness—then it knows how kindly, and gently, and mercifully, and wisely He has dealt with it—then it feels as a matter of personal, individual, practical experience, that all things work together for good to those who love God!

Those who followed Him

One noticeable feature in the Lord’s ministry, is that He never sought to make proselytes by alluring the rich, the noble, or the learned to become His disciples—while concealing the difficulties of the way. He invariably set before all who professed any wish to follow Him, that it was a path of tribulation, self-denial, and crucifixion in which He walked—and that they, as His followers, must tread in the same footsteps. The Lord never allowed any to deceive themselves into a belief that they were His whole-hearted followers, when His all-seeing eye penetrated into the insincerity which reigned in them. Those who followed Him must take up the cross, and deny themselves. That one sin

"Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12

What an amount of sorrow and misery beyond all calculation, and indeed beyond all conception, there is in this wretched world—this valley of tears, in which our present earthly lot is cast! Sin is the source of all the evil which, is now, or ever has been in the world, for that one sin introduced every other sin with it. Sin brought in its train every iniquity that has ever been—conceived by the imagination—uttered by the lips—or perpetrated by the hands of man. In a moment man’s whole nature underwent a change—stricken down by sin as by palsy or leprosy. His understanding became darkened—his judgment corrupted—his conscience deadened—his affections alienated—and all that warm current of purity and innocency which once flowed in a clear stream towards God, became thickened and fouled with the sin that was poured into it from the mouth of Satan—and was thus diverted from its course of light, love, and life—to run into a channel of darkness, enmity, and death!

Thus the fountain was corrupted at its very source—and from this spring-head have all the streams of evil flowed which have made the world a very Aceldama—a field of blood. This is the fountain—whence have issued all that misery and wretchedness which in all ages and in all climates have pursued man from the cradle to the grave—which have wrung millions of hot tears

from human eyes—which have broken, literally broken, thousands of human hearts—which have desolated home after home—and struck grief and sadness into countless breasts!

But, Oh! this fountain of sin in the heart of man has done worse than this! It has peopled hell! It has swept and is still sweeping thousands and tens of thousands into eternal perdition!

What!

What human heart could have conceived such a thought—or what human tongue, if such a thought had been conceived, could have breathed the word up to the courts of bliss—"Let the Son of God come down and bleed for us vile polluted sinners!"

What! that God's equal and eternal Son—the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person—that He in whom the Father eternally delighted—He who was worshiped and adored by myriads of angels—that He should leave this glory, come down to earth, be treated as the vilest malefactor, have nails driven through His hands and feet—and expire on the cross in ignominy and shame! Could such a thought have entered angelic or human hearts? When God looks upon His elect When we look upon ourselves, we often see ourselves—the most stupid—the most ignorant—the most vile—the most unworthy—the most earthly and sensual wretches that God can permit to live! At least, that is the view we take of ourselves when we are really humbled in our own eyes. But when God looks upon His elect, He does not look upon them as they often look upon themselves—but as they stand in Christ—accepted in the beloved—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! He does not see His people as they often see themselves—full of wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores; but clothed in the perfection, beauty, and loveliness of their Head and Husband.

We love a smooth path

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." Isaiah 40:4

We all want ease. We love a smooth path. We would like—to be carried to heaven in a flowery bed of ease—to enjoy every comfort that earth can give or heart desire—and then, dying without a pang of body or mind, find ourselves safe in heaven! But that is not God's way. If in your road heavenward, no valley ever sank before you—if no mountain and hill ever rose up in sight—if you encountered no crooked path through the dense forest, and no rough places, with many large stones and many a thorny brier in the tangled forest—it would not seem that you were treading the way which the saints of God have ever trod—nor would it appear as if you needed special help from the Lord—or any peculiar power to be put forth for your help and deliverance. But being in this path, and that by God's own appointment, and finding right before your eyes—valleys of deep depression which you cannot raise up—mountains and hills of difficulty that you cannot lay low—crooked things which you cannot straighten—and rough places which you cannot make smooth—you are compelled, from felt necessity, to look for help from God. These perplexing difficulties, then, are the very things that make yours a case that the gospel of grace is thoroughly adapted. If you could at the present moment view these trials with spiritual eyes—and feel that they were all appointed by unerring wisdom and eternal love—and were designed for the good of your soul—you would rather bless God that your pathway was so planned, that you had—now a valley—now a mountain—now a crook—and now a thorn. These very difficulties in the road are all

productive of so many errands to the throne of grace. They all called upon you, as with so many speaking voices, to beg of the Lord that He would manifest Himself in love to your heart!

God’s purpose "That no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Corinthians 1:29

Man may glory in himself—but God has forever trampled man’s glory under foot. God’s purpose is to stain the pride of human glory. When Adam fell to the very depths of creature depravity, all his glory was forever lost—the pride of the creature was forever stained. No creature shall ever, in the sight of God, glory in itself! We must take the crown off of human pride—and set it upon the head of Him who alone is worthy to wear it! Not a grain! Not an atom!

What am I? What are you? Are we not filthy, polluted, and defiled? Do not we, more or less, daily feel altogether as an unclean thing? Is not every thought of our heart altogether vile? Am I not an unholy, depraved, filthy wretch? Does not corruption work in my heart? Am I not a poor captive, entangled—by Satan—by the world—and by my own evil heart? Does any holiness—any spirituality—any heavenly-mindedness—any purity—any resemblance to the divine image—dwell in our hearts by nature? Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one! Not a grain! not an atom! How then can I, a polluted sinner, ever see the face of a holy God? How can I, a worm of earth, corrupted within and without by indwelling and committed sin—ever hope to see a holy God without shrinking into destruction? When we view the pure and spotless holiness of Jesus imputed to His people, and view them—holy in Him—pure in Him—without spot in Him—how it does away with all the wrinkles of the creature, and makes them stand holy and spotless before God. I must see what I am. I must see what Christ is. I must feel that Christ is all this to me!

When, where & to whom it shall come

"Who covers the sky with clouds, who prepares the rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains." Psalms 147:8

How powerless we are—as regards the rain that falls from the sky! Who can go forth when the sun is shining in its brightness and bid the rain to fall? Or when rain is falling, who can go forth and restrain the bottles of heaven? He who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, also turns a fruitful land into barrenness.

Equally sovereign is the blessing that God gives to the preached gospel. He holds the blessing in His own hand—it is His to give, and His to withhold. If He blesses, it is because He has promised it—but when, where and to whom it shall come—is at His own sovereign disposal.

Painful vicissitudes & changes The children of God need strong consolation. Their afflictions are great—their trials heavy—their temptations numerous—their foes strong—and their fears often stronger than their foes. They have also, for the most part many painful vicissitudes and changes—reverses in providence—bereavements in family—afflictions in circumstances—trials of body—trials in the church—trials in the world. God often hides His face from them—Satan harasses them with his fiery darts—fears of death often bring them into bondage—besides all the guilt, which they bring upon their own consciences through their backslidings—and all the chastening strokes, which they procure for their own backs through their folly. Thus they need strong consolation that there may be—balm for their wounds—cordials to cheer their fainting spirits—wine to strengthen their heart—and oil to make them cheerful. God not only knows best

what we are—but knows best also what we need, for His wisdom and His goodness are alike infinite.

Upheld by the sustaining grace of God The one who feels the strength of his internal corruptions—and the overwhelming power of his lust, pride and covetousness—can only be upheld by the sustaining grace of God. The soundest doctrines in his head A man may have the soundest doctrines in his head—yet his life be worldly, inconsistent, and ungodly. A thousand different shapes & colors

False religion takes on a thousand different shapes and colors. All false religion, just in proportion as it seizes hold of the mind—blinds it to the truth—fills it with prejudice—sears the conscience—hardens the heart—inflames it with party zeal—and makes every faculty boil over with hatred, fury and bigotry against all who don't see as it sees!

Brain religion

There is a brain religion, or head knowledge, or tongue work, or that miserable, dry, barren, marrowless, moonlight acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, which—hardens the heart—sears the conscience—and lifts up the soul with presumption, to dash it down into the blackness of darkness forever. The road to heaven The road to heaven may be compared to a narrow path that lies between two hedges. On the outer side of each hedge is a bottomless ditch. One of these ditches is 'despair,' and the other is 'presumption.' The hedge that keeps the soul from falling into the pit of despair is that of the promises. And the hedge that keeps the soul from sinking into the abyss of presumption is that of warnings, precepts and threatenings. Without the spiritual application of the promises—the soul would lie down in despair. And without the spiritual application of the precepts and warnings—it would be swollen with arrogance, puffed up with pride, and ready to burst with presumption.

Until we view eternal purity The true child of God knows the inward feeling of guilt—and the sense of his exceeding vileness which always accompanies it. The same ray of divine light which manifests Jehovah to the soul, and raises up a spiritual fear of Him within—discovers to us also our inward depravity. Until we see heavenly light—we know not what darkness is. Until we view eternal purity—we are ignorant of our own vileness. Until we hear the voice of inflexible Justice—we feel no guilt. Until we behold a heart-searching God—we do not groan beneath our inward deceitfulness. Until we feel that He abhors evil—we do not abhor ourselves. A constant clog to the soul The body is slow and sluggish—a constant clog to the soul—chained down to the dull clods of clay among which it toils and labors—wearied with a few miles walk to chapel, or with sitting an hour on the same seat—with eyes, ears, mouth, all inlets and outlets to evil—tempting and tempted—galloping to evil—and crawling to good—with its shattered nerves, aching joints, panting lungs, throbbing head, and all the countless ills that flesh is heir to. What is this poor earthly body fit for—but to drop into the grave, and be buried out of sight until the glorious resurrection morn? Your paradise

You were looking for happiness in the things of time and sense. Some bosom idol—some bright prospect—some well-planned scheme—some dream of love or ambition—was to be your paradise. You looked with eager delight upon the scene of happiness that you imagined lay outstretched before you, promising yourself days of health, and wealth, and comfort in this world.

"You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away." Haggai 1:9 A poor bruised reed "A bruised reed shall He not break." Matthew 12:20

Here, then, is a bruised reed, a poor child of God, ready to give up all hope, to sink beneath the wave no more to rise, expecting that the next blow will sever the stem, or suffocate and bury him in his native mire and mud. But O how graciously, how tenderly and gently does the Redeemer deal with this timid, tried member of His mystical body! He deals with him neither according to his merits nor his fears. The bruised reed deserves to be broken again and again—and it fears it because it deserves it. But the gracious, tender-hearted Redeemer, so far from breaking—gently binds. And how He can in a moment bind up the bruised reed! By one word, one look, one touch, one smile, He can in a moment raise up the drooping head. This is His blessed office. His holiness, His purity, His hatred of sin, His zeal for the glory of His Father, would indeed all lead Him to break. But His mercy, grace, compassion, and love, all lead Him to bind.

You may perhaps feel yourself a poor bruised reed, bruised—by afflictions—by temptations—by guilt—by Satan—ready to perish—ready to give up all hope—and droop away and die! O remember that this blessed Man of Sorrows, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, can sympathize and support, and therefore will never, no, never break a bruised reed. If our poor soul is bruised—by affliction—by temptation—by doubt and fear—by Satan’s suggestions—be it known for our comfort and encouragement, that the condescending and tender-hearted Redeemer will never, no, never break that bruised reed—but will most graciously, in His own time and way, bind it up.

Moab at ease "Moab has been at ease from his youth." Jeremiah 48:11

Moab represents a professor in the church of God destitute of divine grace. Moab was always at ease—and that from his very youth. Nothing troubled him. Easy circumstances—good health—plenty of friends—and abundant prosperity—made him as happy as the day was long. Sin never troubled him—the world never opposed or persecuted him—and Satan never thrust hurtfully at him. He had, therefore everything to make him easy. He had no fears of God—no dread of hell—no trembling apprehensions of the wrath to come—no sense of the Majesty of the Almighty, against whom and before whom he had sinned—no tormenting, chilling convictions—no anxious thoughts. These Moabites are the very characters represented as proper and usual members of churches. They have got their religion they can scarcely tell how, scarcely tell when, scarcely tell where, and scarcely tell why. In the sweetest cup of the ungodly

Natural human joy can never rise very high—nor last very long. It is of the earth, earthly—and therefore can never rise high, nor long endure. It is always marred by some check or disappointment. In the sweetest cup of the ungodly there is something secret that embitters all. All their mirth is madness—for even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. God frowns upon all the worldling’s pleasure—conscience condemns it—and the weary heart is often sick of it, even unto death. It cannot bear inspection or reflection. It has perpetual disappointment stamped upon it here—and eternal sorrow hereafter. A solitary way "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Psalms 107:4

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way"—in a path in which each has to walk alone—a road where no company cheers him—and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark

peculiar to the child of God—that the path by which he travels is a solitary way. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with. The fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the wicked one are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced—the darkness of his soul—the unbelief and infidelity of his heart—and the workings of his powerful corruptions—are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself. To be without any comfort except what God gives—without any guidance but what the Lord affords—without any support but what springs from the everlasting arms laid underneath—in a word, to be in that state where the Lord alone must appear, and where He alone can deliver—is very painful. But it is the very painful nature of the path that makes it so profitable. We need to be cut off from resting upon an arm of flesh—to be completely divorced from all props to support our souls—except that Almighty prop which cannot fail. And the Lord will take care that His people shall deal only with Himself—that they shall have no real comfort but that which springs from His presence. His object is—to draw us away from the creature—to take us off from leaning on human pity and compassion—and to bring us to trust implicitly on Himself—to lean wholly and solely upon Him, who is full of pity, and of tender mercy.

Hopeless, helpless, houseless, refugeless "I will cry out to God Most High; to God who accomplishes my requests for me." Psalms 57:2

It is to "God most high" that prayers go up from broken hearts—in all parts of the world where the Lord has a saved people. "Unto God most high"—every eye is pointed—every heart is fixed—and every breath of living prayer flows. Jesus sits in glory as "God most high," hearing the sighs and cries of His broken-hearted family, where they dwell in the utmost corners of the earth. And He is not only sitting on high to hear their cries—but also to bestow upon them the blessings which He sees suitable to their case and state.

Now when shall we thus come "unto God most high?" When we are pleased and satisfied in SELF? When the world smiles? When all things are easy without and within? When we are in circumstances for which our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness are amply sufficient? We may, under such circumstances, appease our conscience by prayer, or rather its 'form'—but there is no "CRY unto God most high." Before there is a real, spiritual cry raised up, we must be brought to that spot, "Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." Here all the saints of old were brought—Job upon his ash-heap—Hezekiah upon his sick bed—Hannah by the temple gate. All were hopeless, helpless, houseless, refugeless—before they cried "unto God most high." And we must be equally refugeless and houseless before we can utter the same cry—and our prayers find entrance into the ears of the Lord Almighty. "Unto God who performs all things for me." If God did not perform some things for us; no, more—if God did not perform all things for us, it would be a mockery, a delusion to pray to Him at all. "The hope of Israel" would then be to us a dumb idol, like Ashtaroth or Baal, who could not hear the cries of His lancet-cutting worshipers—because He was asleep, and needed to be awakened. But the God of Israel is not like these dumb idols—these ash-heap gods—the work of men's hands—the figments of superstition and ignorance. The eternal Jehovah ever lives to hear and answer the prayers that His people offer up. The prospect of eternal glory

"Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may see My glory." John 17:24

It is the prospect of eternal glory which animates the Christian in all his battles against sin—and encourages him never to abandon the battle until victory crowns the strife. It nerves his heart in all the troubles and trials of this mortal state, still to press forward to win this immortal prize—that he may safely reach that land where tears are wiped from off all faces—and where the glory of God will be seen and enjoyed through the glorified humanity of Jesus without a cloud to dim its rays, or intercept its eternal luster.

Sufferings & sorrows of an incarnate God!

"Therefore He was obligated in all things to be made like His brothers, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest." Hebrews 2:17

What heart can conceive or tongue express, the infinite depths of the Redeemer's condescension in thus being made like unto His brethren—that the Son of God should assume a finite nature—that He should leave the bosom of His Father in which He had lain before all worlds—and should consent to become an inhabitant of this world of tears—to breathe earthly air—to share in human sorrows—to have before His eyes the daily spectacle of human sins—to be banished so long from His native home—to endure hunger, weariness, and thirst—to be subject to the persecutions of men, and the flight of all His disciples—not to hide His face from shame and spitting—but to be mocked, struck, buffeted, and scourged—and at last to die an agonizing death between two malefactors, amid scorn and infamy, and covered with disgrace! O what infinite condescension and mercy are displayed in these sufferings and sorrows of an incarnate God! The Lord give us faith to look to Him as suffering them for our sake! The eye of God "For His eyes are on the ways of man, and He sees all his goings." Job 34:21

Nothing escapes the eye of a just and holy God. He lays bare every secret thought—searches every hidden purpose—and scrutinizes every desire and every movement of the mind. He discovers and brings to light all the secret sins of the heart. Men in general take no notice of heart sins. If they can keep from overt sins in life—from open acts of immorality—they are satisfied. What passes in the secret chambers of imagery they neither see nor feel. Not so with the child of grace. He carries about with him the secret conviction that the eye of God reads every thought. Every inward movement of pride, self-righteousness, rebellion, discontent, peevishness, fretfulness lust, and extravagance, he inwardly feels that the eye of God reads all, marks all, condemns all—and because He is so intrinsically pure—hates and abhors all. He is indeed aware that many may have sinned more deeply and grossly as regards outward acts—but he feels that no one can have sinned inwardly more foully and continually than he—and this makes him say with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:5-6 A perfect saint "O wretched man that I am!" Romans 7:24

These feelings which the Apostle groaned under are experienced by all the quickened family. Blessed then be the name of God Almighty, that He inspired Paul to trace out and leave upon record his experience, that we might derive comfort and relief from it. What would we otherwise have thought? We would have reasoned thus—'Here is an apostle perfectly holy—perpetually heavenly-minded—having nothing but the image of Christ in him—continually living to the Lord's glory—and unceasingly enjoying communion with Him!' We would have viewed Paul as a perfect saint—if he had not told us what he was. And then, having viewed him as a perfect saint, we would

have turned our desponding eyes into our own bosom, and seen such a dreadful contrast, that we would despair of ever being saved at all! But seeing the soul conflict which the Apostle passed through—and feeling a measure of the same in our own bosom—it encourages, supports, and leads the soul on to believe that this is the way in which the saints are called to travel—however rough, rugged, and perplexing it may be to them.

Scanderbeg’s sword "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17

There is only one weapon whereby we can fight Satan to any purpose—and that is the word of God. But observe, that it must not be merely the ’letter of the word.’ It must be the sword of the Spirit—and therefore a spiritual sword—which can only be taken in hand when the word of God is applied with a divine power to your heart—and it is made ’life and spirit’ to your soul. It is of no use my bringing forward a text to resist a temptation of Satan—unless I can make that text my own. In other words, unless I can handle that sword as one who knows how to wield it. To take up a text and not know the sweetness and power of it, would be like a child taking up a warrior’s sword—without having the warrior’s arm. He might play with the sword, but what is the sword of a giant in the hand of a child? The sword of Scanderbeg, a famous Albanian warrior against the Turks, used to be shown at Vienna. A man who once looked at and handled it said, "Is this the sword which won so many victories? I see nothing in it—it is but a common sword." The answer was, "You should have seen the arm that wielded it!" So it is not merely taking a text—adopting scripture language—and quoting passages—which will beat back the fiery assaults of Satan. This is having Scanderbeg’s sword—without having Scanderbeg’s arm. But it is having the word of truth brought into our heart by the power of God—faith raised up to believe that God Himself speaks it to our heart—being thus enabled to wield it in the strength of the Spirit—and by the power of faith in living exercise, to resist every hellish thrust!

Love to Christ

Love to Christ can only spring from the teachings and operations of God upon the heart. Our carnal mind is enmity against God—nothing but implacable, irreconcilable enmity. But when the Lord is pleased to make Himself, in some measure, known to the soul—when He is pleased, in some degree, to unveil His lovely face, and to give a discovery of His grace and glory—immediately divine love springs up! He is so lovely an Object! As the Bride says, "He is altogether lovely." His beauty is so surpassing—His grace so rich—His mercy so free—all that He is and has is so unspeakably glorious—that no sooner does He unveil His lovely face, than He—wins over all the love of the heart—takes possession of the bosom—and draws every affection of the soul to center wholly and solely in Himself!

Behold Him

When, by faith, we can accompany the Man of Sorrows into the gloomy garden of Gethsemane—or behold Him groaning, bleeding, and dying on the cross—an object of ignominy and shame—O, what a view it gives us of the demerit and dreadful nature of SIN, that nothing short of the incarnation of God’s only begotten Son—nothing short of such a tremendous sacrifice could put away sin—and bring the elect back unto God! Thus a believing sight of the Lord Jesus hanging upon Calvary’s tree, not only shows us the dreadful nature of sin—but, also, how full, how complete, how glorious, and how effectual must that salvation be, of which the expiring Son of God

could say—It is finished! A living Savior The children of God need a living Savior, one who can—hear and answer prayer—deliver out of soul trouble—speak a word with power to the heart when bowed down with grief and sorrow—sympathize with them under powerful temptations—support them under the trials and afflictions of the way—maintain under a thousand discouragements His own life in their soul—sustain under bereavements the mourning widow, and be a father to her fatherless children—appear again and again in providence as a Friend that loves at all times and a Brother born for adversity—smile upon them in death—and comforting them with His rod and staff as they walk through the valley of its dark shadow, land them at last safely in a happy eternity!

Slaves

We by nature and practice are slaves to sin and Satan. We are the sport of the prince of the power of the air, who takes us captive at his will. We are held down also by many hurtful lusts. Or, if free from gross sin, are slaves to pride, covetousness, or self-righteousness. Perhaps some idol is set up in the chambers of imagery which defiles all the inner man. Or some snare of Satan entangles our feet, and we are slaves, without power to liberate ourselves from this cruel slavery. We groan under it, as the children of Israel under their burdens, but, like them, cannot deliver ourselves. "But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life."

He abhors that cruel tyrant

Every sincere child of God most earnestly longs to embrace Jesus—and be embraced by Him in the arms of love and affection. He hates sin, though it daily, hourly, momently works in him—and is ever seeking to regain its former mastery. He abhors that cruel tyrant who—set him to do his vilest drudgery—deceived and deluded him by a thousand lying promises—dragged him again and again into captivity—and but for sovereign grace would have sealed his eternal destruction!

Subdued by the scepter of mercy, he longs for the dominion of grace over every faculty of his soul and every member of his body. Thus, he who truly fears God looks to grace, and to grace alone—not merely to save, but to sanctify—not only to pardon sin, but to subdue it—not only to secure him an eternal inheritance, but to make him fit for it.

It is a mercy to be in the furnace

"And I will bring the third part through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire." Zechariah 13:9

It is a mercy to be in the furnace. Some metals indeed are so stubborn, and the dross is so deeply ingrained into them—that they seem to require a hotter fire than others. It may be a furnace of trial, temptation, sickness, family affliction—straits in providence—persecution—deep discoveries of sin—or the hidings of the Lord’s face—which seem to make up that trial. By these trials there is—a gradual weaning from the world—a humility, meekness, and brokenness of spirit—a greater simplicity and godly sincerity—a more willing obedience to the precepts of the gospel—a greater desire to know the will of God and do it.

What a wonder of wonders! As the Spirit unfolds the mystery of the glorious Person of Christ, and reveals His beauty—the more does He become the object of the soul’s admiration and adoration.

That the Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, should condescend to take upon Him our nature—that He might groan, suffer, bleed, and die for guilty wretches—who, if permitted, would have ruined their souls a thousand times a day—what a wonder of wonders! Has the Lord made sin your burden? Has the Lord made sin your burden? Has He ever made you feel guilty before Him? Has He ever pressed down your conscience with a sight and sense of—your iniquities—your sins—your backslidings? And does the Lord draw, from time to time, honest, sincere, unreserved confession of those sins out of your lips? What does the Holy Spirit say to you? What has the blessed Spirit recorded for your instruction, and for your consolation? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God pardons, forgives, and sweetly blots out every iniquity and every transgression of a confessing penitent!

Heaven will make amends for all!

"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" 2 Corinthians 4:17

O suffering saints of God! Are you tried, tempted, afflicted? It is your mercy! God does not deal so with everyone. It is because you are His children, that He lays on you His chastening hand. He means to conform you to the image of His Son in glory—and therefore He now conforms you to the image of His Son in suffering. All will end well with the people of God. Their life here is a life of temptation, of suffering and trial. But heaven will make amends for all!

Time of trouble

"O Lord, be gracious to us; we have waited for You: be our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." Isaiah 33:2 This time of trouble is when sin is laid as a heavy burden upon a man’s conscience—when guilt presses him down into the dust of death—when his iniquities stare him in the face, and seem more in number than the hairs of his head—when he fears he shall be cast forever into the bottomless pit of hell, and have his portion with the hypocrites. The only wise God deals out various measures of affliction to His people. All do not sink to the same depth—as all do not rise to the same height. All do not drink equally deep of the cup. Yet all, each in their measure, pass through this time of trouble, wherein—their fleshly religion is pulled to pieces—their self-righteousness marred—their presumptuous hopes crushed—and they brought into the state of the leper, to cry—Unclean, unclean! Until a man has passed through this time of trouble—until he has experienced more or less of these exercises of soul, and known guilt and condemnation in his conscience—until he has had his ’rags of creature righteousness’ torn away from him—he can know nothing experimentally of the efficacy of Jesus’ atoning blood.

Mere ’professors’ of religion The persuasion that in God alone is true happiness—the feeling of dissatisfaction with everything else but the Lord, and everything short of His manifested presence—is that which stamps the reality of the life of God in a man’s soul. Mere ’professors’ of religion feel no misery, dissatisfaction, or wretchedness—if God does not shine upon them. So long as the world smiles, and they have all that heart can wish—so long as they are buoyed up by the hypocrite’s hope, and lulled asleep by the soft breezes of flattery—they are well satisfied to sail down the stream of a dead profession. When He removes our rotten props Are there not seasons in our experience when we can lay down our souls before God, and say, "Let Christ be precious to

my soul—let Him come with power to my heart—let Him set up His throne as Lord and King—and let self be nothing before Him!" We utter these prayers in sincerity and simplicity—we desire their fulfillment. But oh, the struggle! the conflict!—when God answers these petitions! When our plans are frustrated—what a rebellion works up in the carnal mind! Self is a rebel, who has set up an idolatrous temple. When self is cast down—what a rising up of the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature! When the Lord does answer our prayers—when He strips off all false confidence—when He removes our rotten props—when He dashes to pieces our broken cisterns—what a storm!—what a conflict then takes place in the soul! My fear "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Jeremiah 32:40

If we examine the movements of godly fear in our hearts, we shall see that all its tendencies are—toward hatred of sin and love of holiness—toward a desire after the enjoyment of heavenly realities—toward a deadness to the things of time and sense—toward a knowledge of Christ in the manifestation of Himself—toward a longing to live more to His praise, to walk more in His footsteps, and to be more conformed to His suffering image.

Obeyed & lived The gospel must be obeyed and lived—as well as received and believed. There is a constraining power in the love of Christ under which we experience a holy and sacred pleasure in no longer living unto ourselves—but unto Him who died and rose again for us.

Pilgrims & strangers on this earthly ball "Pass the time of your living as strangers here in reverent fear." 1 Peter 1:17 Our life here is but a vapor. We are but pilgrims and strangers on this earthly ball—mere sojourners, without fixed or settled habitation—and passing through this world as not our home or resting place. Peter, therefore, bids us pass this time, whether long or short, of our earthly sojourn, under the influence and in the exercise of godly fear. We are surrounded with enemies, all seeking, as it were, our life—and therefore we are called upon to move with great caution—knowing how soon we may slip and fall, and thus bring upon ourselves a cloud of darkness which may long hover over our souls. Our life here below is not one of ease and quiet—but a warfare—a conflict—a race—a wrestling not with flesh and blood alone—but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to dread ourselves more than anything or anybody else—and to view our flesh as our greatest enemy! How needful, then, is it to pass the time of our sojourning here in the exercise of this godly, reverential fear! The same Jesus "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8 The eye of our faith must be ever fixed on Jesus. Is He not the same Jesus now in heaven—which He was when He was on earth? He is exalted, it is true, to an inconceivable height of glory. But He is the same Jesus now—as when He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as He wears the same human body—so He has the same tender, compassionate heart. All that He was upon earth as Jesus—He is in heaven still. All that tenderness and gentleness—all that pity to poor sensitive sinners—all that compassion on the ignorant and on those who are out of the way—all that grace and truth—all that bleeding, dying love—all that sympathy with the afflicted and tempted—all that power to heal—all that surpassing beauty and blessedness as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One—He retains in the highest heavens!

One drop of solid joy

If ever, as we pass through this wilderness, we feel one drop of solid joy—of true happiness—it must flow, it can flow only from one source—the manifestation of Christ to our souls. We can find

true joy and peace in Him alone. Sin, the world, the things of time and sense, business, amusement, pleasure so-called—afford no lasting joy. There is an aching void—a feeling of dreariness and misery connected with them. One smile from the Lord—one word from His lips—one gracious breaking in of the light of His countenance—does, while it lasts, communicate joy. And from no other quarter, from no other source can a moment's real joy be drawn.

Laid upon them by the hand of God "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

According to God's own testimony, it is through much tribulation that we are to enter into the kingdom—and therefore there is no entering into the kingdom of grace here, or the kingdom of glory hereafter, without it. But let this be ever borne in mind, that whatever affliction befalls the saints—it is laid upon them by the hand of God—and that for the express purpose of putting them into a situation and of making them capable of receiving those comforts which God alone can bestow. None but Jesus Himself can comfort a truly afflicted heart. And He can and does from time to time comfort His dear people—by a sense of His presence—by a word of power from His gracious lips—by the light of His countenance—by the balm of His atoning blood and dying love—and by the work and witness of the Spirit within. And as they receive this consolation from the mouth of God—their hearts are comforted. How good the Lord is of His own free grace to bestow such blessings upon His redeemed family! May He comfort our hearts as we journey through this valley of tears—and may our consolations be neither few nor small.

Until our eyes are divinely opened "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." Luke 24:31

What we know savingly, experimentally, feelingly—we know only by divine teaching. We cannot see Jesus until our eyes are divinely opened. The sun may shine in all its glory—does that communicate light to the eyes of the blind? or warm the corpse lying in the coffin? The blind see not—the dead hear not. The living, the living alone see and know the Son of God. When I am weak "When I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:10 The more wise and spiritual God's people become—the more foolish and carnal they appear in their own eyes. The stronger they are in the Lord and in the power of His might—the more sensibly do they feel the weakness of their flesh. The more they are enabled to walk closely with the Lord—the more they discover the wretched wanderings of their base and sinful hearts!

What we were "At that time you were without Christ. . . .having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12

Let us never forget what we were, before we were called by grace. Let the remembrance of our sins and of the whole bent and current of our lives be bitter to us—that we may all the more prize and admire the riches of that sovereign grace which stooped to us in our low and lost estate. The remembrance of 'Egyptian bondage' should ever accompany the enjoyment of gospel liberty. The ultimatum of gospel obedience The ultimatum of gospel obedience is, "to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His." Only then can we fully enter into the beauty and blessedness of gospel truth; here alone can we—submit to the weight of a daily cross—glory in tribulation—patiently endure afflictions—feel the sweetness of the promises—walk in obedience to the precepts—and tread the path that leads to endless glory! A remedy for every disease "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities." Micah 7:19

How does God heal the soul-diseases of His people? He heals them chiefly by subduing them—for in this life they are never thoroughly healed. To subdue them is to restrain their power. Thus He sees one suffering under the power of unbelief—He gives him faith, and this subdues his unbelief. Here is another poor languid patient, dying of exhaustion—He gives him strength. Here is a third mourning under his corruptions—He gives a drop of His blood to purge his conscience, and a taste of His love to warm his heart. He sees a fourth crying under the strong assaults of Satan—with one look from Him, Satan flies and the soul is set free. Thus with infinite wisdom blended with infinite love and power—He passes on from bed to bed of every sick patient—administering health wherever He goes. This blessed Physician has a remedy for every disease—and the remedy is always felt to be exactly suitable to the exigency of the case. It goes, so to speak—at once to the right spot. It heals the malady—wherever it is—and whatever it is—just in the right way—and just at the right time! O then how good it is to bring all our soul-diseases before the Lord! In a case of bodily sickness or painful illness, we uncover freely our malady to a physician whom we can trust—we tell him every circumstance and disclose every symptom. So should we go to the Lord with all our soul-diseases—tell Him all our complaints—unfold to Him all our sorrows—and fully and freely lay before Him everything that—burdens the conscience—pains the mind—and distresses the soul—looking and waiting until He speaks the word, and every malady is healed. To starve them in a waste-howling wilderness

"God is faithful, by whom you were called to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9 When God calls His people by His grace—it is to make them partakers of the highest bliss and the greatest glory. When the Lord calls His people out of earthly pleasures—is it for no other purpose than to lead them into paths of affliction and sorrow? Does He make them leave the fleshpots of Egypt—to starve them in a waste-howling wilderness? Does He take them from earthly delights—to abandon them to misery and despair? O no! He calls them to the greatest privilege and highest favor that His everlasting love could confer upon them—which is no less than "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"—that they may have union and communion with the Son of God by grace here—and be partakers of His glory hereafter!

Whatever you may have in this world

"To an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, and that doesn’t fade away, reserved in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:4

Whatever you may have in this world, be it much or little—you must leave! And if you have no other inheritance than earth gives—where will be your portion in death and to all eternity? We imagine sometimes how happy we would be—if we had this man’s fine estate—or that man’s large property. But do you think that these men are happy with all their possessions—and that you would be happier or better if you had them? These rich men have a canker which eats up all their happiness. With ’possession’ come all the anxieties and cares connected with it. But our eternal inheritance does not fade away! The sweetest flowers fade and are thrown away as they become nauseous to sight and smell. But there is—an abiding freshness—a constant verdure—a perpetual bloom—an unceasing fragrance—a permanent sweetness—in this eternal inheritance—so that it is never insipid or stale—but remains ever the same, or rather is ever increasing in beauty and blessedness—as it is more known, believed in, hoped unto, and loved.

How shall they reach the heavenly shore?

"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

Consider what heavenly blessings there are for those who have a living union with the Son of God. Everything is provided for them, that shall be for their salvation and their sanctification. Not a single blessing has God withheld that shall be for their eternal good. View them as foolish and ignorant—unable to see the way—puzzled and perplexed by a thousand difficulties—harassed by sin—tempted by Satan—far off upon the sea. How shall they reach the heavenly shore?

God, by an infinite act of sovereign love, has made His dear Son to be their "wisdom," so that none shall err so as to err fatally—none shall miss the road for lack of heavenly direction to find it or walk in it. Their glorious Head will bring them to their heavenly inheritance. He opens up His word to their heart—He sends down a ray of light into their bosom, illuminating the sacred page and guiding their feet into the way of truth and peace. If they wander—He brings them back. If they stumble—He raises them up. And whatever be the difficulties that beset their path, sooner or later some kind direction or heavenly admonition comes from His gracious Majesty. Thus his gracious Lord leads him safely along through every difficulty—until He sets him before His face in glory!

Then they have done you good

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28 Have your trials humbled you, and made you meek and lowly? Then they have done you good. Have they stirred up a spirit of prayer in your bosom, and made you sigh, cry, and groan for the Lord to appear, visit, or bless your soul? Then they have done you good. Have they opened up those parts of God’s word which are full of mercy and comfort to His afflicted people? Have they made you more sincere, more earnest, more spiritual, more heavenly-minded—more convinced that the Lord Jesus can alone bless and comfort your soul? Then they have done you good. Have they made the Bible more precious to you—the promises more sweet—the dealings of God with your soul more prized? Then they have done you good.

Divinely communicated "Then He opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

All our talk has been but vain babbling; our prayers—but lip service; our preaching—but wind and vanity; our profession—but hypocrisy; our knowledge—the worst kind of ignorance; and all our religion—but carnality or delusion—if they have not been divinely communicated.

God does not argue The Gospel of God’s grace is not a thing to be proved—but truth to be believed. It is not submitted to our reasoning powers as a subject for critical examination. The gospel is a message from God—addressed to the conscience, feelings, and affections. For this reason, men fond of argument and proving everything by strictly logical deduction generally make very poor preachers. In the Scriptures, God does not argue—He proclaims! His effectual instrument

It is by the power of God’s Word upon our heart, that the whole work of grace upon our soul is carried on from first to last—by its promises we are drawn—by its precepts we are guided—by its

warnings we are admonished—by its reproofs we are rebuked—by its rod we are chastened—by its support we are upheld—in its light we walk—by its teachings are made wise—by its revivings are renewed—and by its truth are sanctified. Under circumstances the most trying to flesh and blood, where nature stands aghast and reason fails—there the Word of God will come in as a counselor to drop in friendly advice—as a companion to cheer and support the mind by its tender sympathy—and as a friend to speak to the heart with a loving, affectionate voice.

We need not wonder, then, how the Word of God has been prized in all ages by the family of God. For it is written with such infinite wisdom, that it—meets every case—suits every circumstance—fills up every aching void—and is adapted to every condition of life, and every state both of body and soul. Not that the Word of God can of itself do all—or any—of these things in us and for us. But in the hands of the Spirit, who works in and by it as His effectual instrument—all these gracious operations are carried on in the soul.

O my soul "Why are you in despair, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me?" Psalms 42:11

Observe the tender and familiar way in which David converses with his own soul—as a tender and sympathizing 'bosom companion.' But how few, speaking comparatively, know that they have a soul which they can thus talk to? Indeed, I may say, that it is really a very great discovery when a man discovers, for the first time, that he has a soul in his bosom. The great bulk of mankind, all who are destitute of divine life—do not really and truly know that they have a soul. This may seem harsh doctrine—but at any rate they act as if they had none. We must judge men from their actions—and if they act as if they had no soul to be saved or lost—and as if there were no God who would bring them into judgment—we must conclude that they do not really believe they have a soul—though they may not boldly and positively deny it in lip. But a man never knows really and truly that he has a soul until there is spiritual life put into it—for a dead soul makes no movement in his bosom—and is therefore not known to be there. We never know really that we have a soul until it is made alive unto God and cries unto Him. Then we begin find for the first time, that we have a soul—by the cry of life. And then our soul becomes a matter of the deepest interest to us—for we find that, according to the word of God—it must either be eternally saved or lost. This becomes to us the most important thing that we have ever had to deal with. His omnipotent power can execute

"Having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His will." Ephesians 1:11

Next to a believing view of the purposes of God's grace, and a sweet persuasion of our interest in them—nothing is more strengthening and encouraging than a realizing apprehension of the power of God to carry them into full execution. As we behold—sovereign grace in His heart—and infinite wisdom in His mind—and almighty strength in His arm; we become sweetly persuaded that all which His loving heart feels—and His infinite wisdom directs—His omnipotent power can execute!

Continual supplies of His grace

"I the Lord am its keeper; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Isaiah 27:3 The Lord Jesus Christ has to send down supplies of His grace continually to keep your soul alive. Without your spiritual life being kept up and maintained by these continual supplies of His grace—you cannot pray, or read, or hear the word, or meditate with any feeling or profit. You

cannot love the Lord and His blessed ways—you cannot submit to His righteous dealings—or hear the rod and Him who appointed it. You may approach His throne—but your heart is cold, clouded, and unfeeling—your spirit sinks under the weight and burden of the trials and difficulties that are spread in your path. Nor are you able to do anything that satisfies yourself—or that you think can satisfy God. By these painful but profitable lessons—you are experimentally taught that you need Christ as an ever-living, ever-gracious, ever-glorious Mediator—to send down supplies of His love and power into your soul—as much as you needed Him to die upon the cross for your redemption!

Entangled

"Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17

If we are entangled in the love of the world—or fast bound and fettered with worldly anxieties—and the spirit of the world is rife in our bosom—all our profession will be vapid, if not worthless. We may use the language of prayer—but the heart is not in earnest. We may still manage to hold our head high in a profession of the truth—but its power and blessedness are neither known nor felt. To enjoy any measure of communion with the Lord—we must go forth from a world which is at enmity against Him. We must also go forth out of self—fo

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Sweet spirituality of mind "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6

Without this spirituality of mind, religion is but—a mere name—an empty mask—a delusion—a snare. Just in proportion as our heart and affections are engaged on heavenly objects—shall we feel a sweet savor of heaven resting upon our spirit. Preparedness for heaven much consists in that sweet spirituality of mind whereby heavenly things become our only happiness—and an inward delight is felt in them, that—enlarges the heart—ennobles the mind—softens the spirit—and lifts the whole soul, as it were, up into a holy atmosphere in which it bathes as its choice element! A secret yet sacred power

Wherever Jesus is graciously and experimentally manifested to the soul, and made known by any sweet revelation of His glorious Person, atoning blood, and finished work—a secret yet sacred power is put forth, whereby we are drawn unto Him—and every grace of the Spirit flows toward Him as towards its attractive center.

Friendly enemies Shall we quarrel with—these doubts and fears—these temptations and trials—these assaults from Satan—these workings-up of inward corruption—when they are, in God’s mercy and in God’s providence, such blessed helpers? If they drive us to a throne of grace—if by them we are brought out of lying refuges—if by them all false hopes are stripped off from us—if by them we are made honest and sincere before God—if by them we turn away from all human help, and come wholly and solely to the Lord—shall we quarrel with these things, which are, if I may use the expression—such friendly enemies—that are so changed from curses into blessings—that in God’s overruling providence are made so mysteriously to work for our good? Shall we not rather bless God—for every trial that brings us to His footstool—for every temptation that has stripped away creature righteousness—for every blow that has cut us off from the world—for every affliction that has embittered the things of time and sense—for everything, however painful to the flesh, which has brought us nearer to Himself—and made us feel more love towards Him, and more desire after Him? Surely, when we sum up God’s mercies, we must

include in the number—things painful to the flesh—and which at one time we could only look upon as miseries. No, in summing up the rich total, we must catalogue in the list—every pang of guilt—every stroke of conviction—every agonizing doubt—every painful fear—every secret temptation—everything that has most disturbed us. And could we assign a more prominent place to one of God's mercies—we would give the most distinguished place to the deepest trial. We would say, "Of all mercies, the greatest have been our troubles, trials, exercises, and temptations—for we now see that their blessed effect has been to cut us clean out of fleshly religion, and out of those delusions which, had we continued in them, would have been our destruction. These trials eventually brought us into more sweet and special communion with God Himself!" A fleshly religion "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13 The flesh, however high it may rise, can never rise above itself. It begins in hypocrisy—it goes on in hypocrisy—and it never can end but in hypocrisy. Whatever various shapes it puts on—a fleshly religion never can rise above itself. There is—no brokenness of heart—no contrition of spirit—no godly sorrow—no genuine humility—no living faith—no spiritual hope—no heavenly love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit—in those that are "born after the will of the flesh." No abasing views of self—no tender feelings of reverence towards God—no filial fear of His great name—no melting of heart—no softening of spirit—no deadness to the world—no sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory—ever dwelt in their bosoms! The flesh, with all its workings, and all its subtle deceit and hypocrisy—never sank so low as self abhorrence and godly sorrow—and never mounted so high as into communion with God. The depth of the one is too deep—and the height of the other too high for any but those who are "born of God." This birth by "the will of the flesh," leaves a man just where it found him—dead in sin—destitute of the fear of God—and utterly ignorant of that divine teaching, which alone can save his soul from eternal wrath.

Madly enamored with his own righteousness

One reason why people don't receive Christ is their self-righteousness. Until self-righteousness is in a measure broken down in a man's heart, he never can see any beauty nor loveliness in a bleeding Jesus. Being madly enamored with his own righteousness, and not seeing it in the light of God's countenance as "filthy rags," he has—no eyes to see—no ears to hear—no heart to receive that glorious robe of righteousness, which the Son of God wrought out, and which is imputed to all that believe on His name. This work of grace "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1

Until God by His Spirit quickens the soul into spiritual life, there must be a determined rejection of Christ. However a man may receive Him into his judgment, the inward bias of his heart and the secret speech of his soul is, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" If, then, there are any who do believe in Him, receive Him, love Him, and have a blessed union with Him—it all springs from the quickening Spirit of God working with power in their souls. Wherever the quickening power of God's Spirit has passed upon a man's conscience, he is invariably brought to see and feel himself to be a sinner. This inward sight of self cuts him off, sooner or later, from—all self-righteousness—all false refuges—and all vain confidences with which he may seek to prop up his soul. The Lord will convince all His people of their lost state before Him—and cast them as ruined wretches into the dust—without hope, strength, wisdom, help, or righteousness—except that which is given to them, as a free gift, by sovereign grace. This work of grace in the conscience, pulling down all a man's

false refuges, stripping him of every lying hope, and thrusting him down into self-abasement and self-abhorrence—is indispensable to a true reception of Christ. Whatever a man may have learned in his head, or however far he may be informed in his judgment—he never will receive Christ spiritually into his heart and affections, until he has been broken down by the hand of God in his soul, to be a ruined wretch. When a man is effectually brought here, the Lord is pleased, for the most part, to open up to his astonished view, and to bring into his soul, some saving knowledge of the Lord of life and glory. He casts into the mind a light, and He brings into the heart a power, whereby the glorious Person of Christ, His atoning blood, dying love, finished work, and justifying righteousness—are looked upon by spiritual eyes—touched by spiritual hands—and received into a spiritual and believing heart. A secret, soft, gentle going forth of love & affection

There will be from time to time, in saved souls, a flowing forth of affection towards Jesus. From time to time He gives the soul a glimpse of His Person—He shows Himself, as the Scripture speaks, "through the lattice"—passing, perhaps, hastily by, but giving such a transient glimpse of the beauty of His Person, the excellency of His finished work, dying love, and atoning blood—as ravishes the heart, and secretly draws forth the affections of the soul—so that there is a following hard after Him, and a going out of the desires of the soul towards Him. Thus, sometimes the Lord is pleased secretly to work in the heart, and there is a melting down at the feet of Jesus—or a secret, soft, gentle going forth of love and affection towards Him, whereby the soul prefers Him before thousands of gold and silver—and desires nothing so much as the inward manifestations of His love, grace, and blood. And thus a soul receives Christ—not merely as driven by necessity—but also as drawn by affection. He does not receive Christ merely as a way of escape from the wrath to come—merely as something to save a soul from the unquenchable fire and never-dying worm—but mingled with necessity, sweetly and powerfully combined with it, and intimately and intricately working with it—there is the flowing forth of genuine affection and sincere love, that goes out to Him as the only object really worthy of—our heart’s affection—our spirit’s worship—and our soul’s desire. This is a very different thing from receiving Christ merely into our judgment, or into our understanding in a doctrinal manner. Saving faith is to receive Him in the depths of a broken heart—as the only Savior for our guilty soul—as our only hope for eternity—as the only Lord of our heart’s worship—and the only object of our pure affection—so that in secret, when no eye sees but the eye of God, and only the ear of Jehovah hears the pantings of our pleading heart—there is the breathing out of the spirit after the enjoyment of His love, grace, and blood.

What a pretty looking thing! The man in the fable found a dead viper—at least dead to all appearance through the cold. What a pretty looking thing! He puts it into his bosom and warms it—then it revives and bites him! So it is with a man who plays with his lusts—indulging them—his carnal heart goes out after them—until at last, like the torpid viper, it turns to a living adder and stings him! The spider & the fly

See the spider watching a fly. The poor little fly has just been caught in the edge of the web—the spider lies in its hole. As soon as he sees the web shake, down he runs, and draws the threads around his victim, kills him, sucks his carcass, and leaves it. Thus the devil may be compared to the spider working in his web—waiting, lurking, in reality to suck the very bones and blood of a child of God and cast him into hell—and so he would, were it not for preserving grace.

Growth in grace No one who reads the Word of God with an enlightened eye can deny that there is contained in it such a doctrine as growth in grace. The very idea indeed of ’life’ implies advance, growth, progress, increase. Lambs grow up into sheep—vine buds into vine branches—sons into fathers. Their grand distinguishing mark of living things, is that they grow. And, therefore, absence of growth implies absence of life. Hypocrites, indeed, may grow in hypocrisy—Pharisees may grow in self-righteousness—Arminians may grow in fleshly performances—dead Calvinists may grow in head knowledge—proud professors may grow in presumption—self deceivers may grow in delusion—and the untried may grow in vain confidence. But the dead never grow in the divine life, for "the root of the matter" is not in them. A damnable thing

Sin is a damnable thing—and every one of God’s people is made, has been made, or will be made, to feel it so. And the more that they see of sin, know of sin, feel of sin—the more damnable will sin appear in their eyes—and with greater weight and power will its dreadful guilt and filth lie upon their conscience. Now there are but few, comparatively speaking, who have any clear sight or any deep feeling of what sin really is—and the reason, for the most part, is because they have such a slight, shallow, superficial knowledge of who and what God is. But let them once see the purity of God by the eye of faith—let them once have a manifestation of His justice and holiness, majesty and greatness to their soul—and let them have a corresponding sight and sense of the deep and desperate state in which they are as fallen children of a fallen parent—then will they no longer have slight, superficial feelings of the nature and evil of sin—but will so see and feel its hideous and damnable character as to make them cry out with Isaiah in the temple, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5

O what work does sin then make in the conscience, when it is opened up by the Spirit of God! Whatever superficial or shallow views we may have had of sin before, it is only as its desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit, that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality. It is this sword of the Spirit which cuts and wounds—it is this entrance of life and light that gashes the conscience—it is this divine work which lacerates the heart and inflicts those deep wounds, which nothing but the "balm in Gilead" can heal. But the voice soon comes

There are many times when it seems as if this present world could satisfy us—when we build up our earthly paradises, and seek as it were ease and rest here below. But the voice soon comes, "Arise, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted." Micah 2:10 Keep me from evil

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that. . . .You would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested." 1 Chronicles 4:10

Jabez was a poor burdened sinner who could not keep himself. If he could keep himself, this petition would be an idle mockery. He need not to have fallen outwardly to teach him this. There are inward falls—slips of the tongue—glances of the eye—filthy desires—roving imaginations—covetous projects—proud desires—idolatrous lustings—secret backslidings into carnality and worldliness. A blessing indeed "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that You would bless me indeed." 1 Chronicles 4:10 To be—weaned from idols—delivered from broken cisterns—separated in spirit and affection from the world—and have our heart fixed on things above—is a blessing indeed. To feel an appetite after God’s Word—to receive the truth in

the love of it—to have sweet and holy communion with Jehovah—and to live under the solemn anointings of the blessed Spirit—is a blessing indeed. That such a wretch and filthy monster of iniquity should have a smile from the great and holy Jehovah, seems a blessing too great—but would be a blessing indeed!

What makes them cry?

"Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Psalms 107:6 Not before, not after, but in it. When they were in the midst of it—when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah—when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it—when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind—when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed—then it was that they cried. But what makes them cry? It is this solemn feeling in their hearts—that they have no other refuge but God. The Lord brings all His people here—to have no other refuge but Himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintances—these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is—no refuge—nor shelter—nor harbor—nor home into which they can fly—except the Lord. Thus troubles bring us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much—and they drive out that 'notional experience' and 'dry profession' that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists—and they bring a man to this solemn spot—that he must have communications from God to support him under, and bring him out of his trouble.

If a man is not brought to this point by his troubles—they have done him no good. They have been like the clouds that have passed over the desert, and transmitted to it neither fertility nor fruitfulness—they have been like the rain that drops upon the pavement, and is evaporated by the sun, producing neither fruit nor flower. But the troubles that God sends into the hearts of His people are like the rain that falls upon the fertile soil—causing them to bring forth fruit, and every grace of the Spirit to deepen and fructify in their soul. The believer's path The believer's path is indeed a mysterious one—full of harmonious contradictions and heavenly paradoxes. He is never easy when at ease—nor without a burden when he has none. He is never satisfied without doing something—and yet is never satisfied with anything that he does. He is never so strong as when he sits still—never so fruitful as when he does nothing—and never so active as when he makes the least haste. He wins—pardon through guilt—hope through despair—deliverance through temptation—comfort through affliction—and a robe of righteousness through filthy rags. Though a worm and no man—he overcomes Omnipotence itself through violence. And though less than vanity and nothing—he takes heaven itself by force. Thus amid the strange contradictions which meet in a believing heart, he is—never so prayerful as when he says nothing—never so wise as when he is the greatest fool—never so much alone as when most in company—and never so much under the power of an inward religion as when most separated from an outward one. The burden may still remain "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you." Psalms 55:22 The burden may still remain—but strength is given to bear it. The trials may not be lessened—but power to endure them is increased. The evils of the heart are not removed—but grace is communicated to subdue them. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Chapter 157

11.00. The Authority & Power of the Word upon the Heart

The Authority & Power of the Word upon the Heart by J. C. Philpot

11.01. Chapter 1

Chapter 1

God is essentially invisible. "He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen, nor can see." (1 Timothy 6:16.) When, therefore, he would make himself known to the sons of men, it must be by his works or by his words. The first way of making his power and glory known is beautifully unfolded in Psalm 19—"The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or a word; their voice is silent in the skies; yet their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to all the world." This is the testimony which God gave of himself to the Gentile world, but which, through the depravity of man's heart, has been universally misunderstood, perverted and abused, as the Apostle speaks—"since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:19-21.) The secret spring whence this flows, and the eternal foundation on which this rests, is the incarnation of God's dear Son. He is "the Word"—the Word emphatically, originally, essentially; and so called not only because he is the express image of the Father, as the word is the image of the thought, but because he has declared or made him known, as our uttered word makes our thoughts known. John therefore bare witness of him—"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." Had there, then, been no incarnate Word, there would have been no revealed word; and had there been no revealed word, there would have been no written word; for all that was revealed was not necessarily written, as John was bidden to seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Revelation 10:4.) And as without the incarnate Word there would have been no revealed or written word—so the power of the written word is derived from the power of the incarnate Word.

God's witness by his works, then, being insufficient, and failing, so to speak, through the depravity of man's heart, he has revealed himself by and in his word—in those precious Scriptures which we hold in our hands, and the power of which some of us have felt in our hearts. It is, then, of this power of the written word that we have now to speak. But when we speak of the power of the word of God we do not mean thereby to convey the idea that it possesses any power of its own, any actual, original, innate force, which acts of itself on the heart and conscience. The word of God is but the instrument of a higher and distinct power, even the power of that Holy and eternal Spirit, the revealer and testifier of Jesus, by whose express and immediate inspiration it was written. The power of an instrument is the power of him who uses it. This is true literally. The strength of the sword is in the hand of him who wields it. A child may take up a warrior's sword, but can he use it as a warrior? If, then, the word of God is "quick (or living, as the word means) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," it is because he wields it of whom it is said, "You are the most

handsome of all. Gracious words stream from your lips. God himself has blessed you forever. Put on your sword, O mighty warrior! You are so glorious, so majestic!" (Psalms 45:2-3.) John, therefore, saw him in vision, as one "out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," (Revelation 1:16,) both to pierce the hearts of his people and to smite the nations. (Revelation 19:13.) So with the word which he wields. "Where the word of a king is there is power." (Ecclesiastes 8:4.) And why? Because it is the word of the king. Another may speak the word, but it has no power because he who speaks it has no power to execute it. When "the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as you have said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that you have spoken," (Esther 6:10,) it was done. The man whom the king delighted to honor was honored. (Esther 6:10-11.) When again the king said, "Hang him thereon," it was done—"So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." (Esther 7:9-10.) Here were life and death in the power of the tongue. (Proverbs 28:21.) Thus we ascribe no power to the word itself, but to the power of him who speaks it. The Apostle therefore says of his speech and preaching that it was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" (1 Corinthians 2:4;) and of his gospel, that is, the gospel which he knew, felt, and preached, that it came unto the Thessalonians "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." (1 Thessalonians 1:5.) Twice had David heard, that is on two solemn and special occasions, "that power belongs unto God." (Psalms 62:11.) To understand and explain this power passes our comprehension. It may be and is felt, and its effects seen and known, but "the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26:14.) When God said, "Let there be light," light burst forth at his creative fiat. But who can understand or explain how light came? Yet it could be seen when it filled the future creation with its bright effulgence. But now let us consider the exercise and display of this power in its first movements upon the heart. Man being dead in sin, needs an almighty power to make him alive unto God; for what communion can there be between a dead soul and a living God? This, then, is the first display of the power of the word of God in the hands of the eternal Spirit. "You has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1.) And how? By the word. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1:18.) So testifies Peter—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23.) What James calls "begetting" Peter terms "being born again;" and this corresponds with what the Lord himself declared to Nicodemus—"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) Almost similar is the language of John himself as taken, doubtless, from his divine Master—"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." (John 1:13.) So in his first epistle—"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loves him that begat loves him also that is begotten of him." (1 John 5:1.) We need not therefore enter into the controversy about the difference between begetting and being born again, as if the new birth exactly corresponded with the old, and as if the analogy could be precisely carried out between natural and spiritual generation. Figures (and this is a figure) must not be pressed home to all their logical consequences, or made to fit and correspond in all their parts and particulars. It is sufficient for us to know that the mighty change whereby a sinner passes from death unto life, (1 John 3:14,) is "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son," (Colossians 1:13,) is by the power of the word of God upon his soul. Nor shall we, as we wish to

avoid controversial topics, enter at any length into the question whether light or life first enters into the heart—"The entrance of your words gives light." (Psalms 119:130.) There it would seem that light came first. And so the passage—"To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light." (Acts 26:18.) So Saul at Damascus' gate saw and was struck down by the light before the quickening words came—"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4.) In grace, if not in nature, it would seem evident that we see before we feel; and thus the disciples "beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father," before they received the Son of God into their hearts and believed on his name. It will be seen from these hints that without entering into the controversy, or pronouncing any dogmatical opinion, our own view inclines to the point held by Mr. Huntington, that light precedes life. And yet, when we look back on our own experience, how difficult it is to determine whether we saw light before we felt life, or whether the same ray which brought light into the mind did not bring at the same moment life into the heart. At any rate we saw what we felt, and we felt what we saw. "In your light do we see light." To see this light is to be "enlightened with the light of the living." (Job 33:30.) And this our blessed Lord calls "the light of life." "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) So we will not put asunder what God has joined together—light and life. We know, however, the effect better than the cause; and need we wonder that we can neither understand nor explain the mystery of regeneration? Does not the Lord himself say—"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes and where it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) It is our mercy if we have seen light in God's light and felt the Spirit's quickening breath, if we cannot understand whence it came or where it goes, except to believe that it came from God and leads to God—it began in grace and will end in glory. The beginning of this work upon the soul is in Scripture frequently termed "a calling," as in the well-known passage—"But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (1 Corinthians 1:24-26.) And thus we find "calling" one of the links in that glorious chain which, reaching down to and stretching through time, is fastened at both ends to eternity—"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born 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." (Romans 8:29-30.) The very word "call" has a reference to something spoken or uttered, that is, a word addressed to the person called. If I call to a man, I speak to that man. My word to him is my call to him. Thus our Lord said to Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, "Follow me." Power attended the word. It fell upon Matthew's heart. Light and life entered into his soul. His understanding was enlightened, his will renewed, his heart changed. What was the instantaneous effect? "And he arose and followed him." (Mark 2:14.) Similar in cause and effect was the calling of Peter and Andrew, of James and John. (Matthew 4:18-22.) This calling is "by grace" or the pure favor of God; (Galatians 1:15;) a "heavenly calling," as coming from heaven and leading to heaven; (Hebrews 3:1;) a "holy calling," (2 Timothy 1:9,) not only holy in itself, but leading to and productive of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord;" (Hebrews 12:14;) and therefore a calling "to glory and virtue," or excellency, as the word means—excellency here, (Php 1:10; Php 4:8,) glory hereafter. It is also a calling out of the world,

as Abraham was called to "leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house;" and so we are bidden to "come out from among them and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing." (2 Corinthians 6:17.) It is "a high calling," and therefore free from everything low, groveling, and earthly; "into the grace of Christ;" (Galatians 1:6;) a calling "to the fellowship of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord;" (1 Corinthians 1:9;) a calling "to peace" with God and his dear people, and as far as lies in us with all men; (Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 7:15; Romans 12:18;) "to liberty," (Galatians 5:13,) to a "laying hold of eternal life," (1 Timothy 6:12,) and "to the obtaining of the eternal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 5:10; John 17:22-24.)

As, then, those who are thus called are called to the experimental enjoyment of these spiritual blessings, with all of which they were blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, it is plain that they must have a knowledge of them communicated to their soul; and as we know nothing of divine truth but through the written word and cannot by any wisdom of our own, even with that word in our hands, attain to a saving knowledge of these divine realities—it is equally plain that they must be revealed to us by a spiritual and supernatural power. This is clearly and beautifully unfolded by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16. We cannot quote the whole chapter, which, to be clearly understood, should be read in its full connection, but we cannot forbear citing a few verses as being so appropriate to, and casting such a light on our subject—No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us." (1 Corinthians 2:9-12.) The things which "God has prepared for those who love him" are the things which his people are called to know and enjoy; and that not merely as regards the future state of glory but the present state of grace—the things to be known on earth as well as the things to be enjoyed in heaven. This is plain from the words, "But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit,"—not will hereafter reveal and make them known in heaven above, but has already revealed them on earth below. And where, but in the heart of his people? For it is there that they receive "the Spirit which is of God," and this "that they might know the things that are freely given to them of God."

Knowledge, then, is clearly and evidently the first effect of that divine light of which we have spoken; and this corresponds with what the gracious Lord said in his intercessory prayer—"And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3.) The knowledge of the only true God must precede any fear of him, or any faith in him. While I am in nature's darkness and death, I do not know God, and, therefore, I neither can nor do fear him.

Some of our spiritual readers may feel surprised at our putting the knowledge of God as the first effect of the power of the word upon the heart; and some may tell us that we should put conviction of sin, and others might insist that we should place the fear of God first. But if they will bear with us for a few moments, we think we can show them that a true spiritual knowledge of the only true God must go before both right conviction of sin and before the right fear of the Lord.

1. First, then, what is conviction of sin but a conviction in our conscience of having sinned against and before a pure, holy, and just God? But where can be my conviction of having sinned against him, if I have no knowledge of him? In nature's darkness and death, I felt no conviction of sin, not only because my conscience was not awakened or divinely wrought upon, but because I knew nothing of him against whom I had sinned—nothing of his justice, nothing of his holiness, nothing of his power.

2. What is the fear of God but a trembling apprehension of his glorious majesty? But how can I have this apprehension of his glorious majesty if I am ignorant of his very existence, which I am—until he makes it known by a ray of light out of his own eternal fullness? Where do we see the fear of God more in exercise or more beautifully expressed than in Psalm 139? But how the whole of it is laid in the knowledge of the heart-searching presence of the Almighty—"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me." (Psalms 139:1-5.)

We can sometimes read past experience best in the light of present experience, as a traveler emerging from a dark and tangled forest sees from the hill-top the way by which he came far more clearly and better than when he was struggling among the thickets.

When, then, now do we seem most to see and feel the evil of sin? When do we now seem most to fear that Lord in whose presence we stand? Is it not in proportion to our knowledge of him, to our present realization of his majesty, power, and presence, and to that spiritual experimental acquaintance which we have gained of his dread perfections by the teaching, as we trust, of the Holy Spirit through the written word? And take the converse. When are our views and feelings of the evil of sin comparatively dim and cold, so that we do not seem to see and realize what a dreadful thing it is? Is it not when there is no sensible view nor present apprehension of the majesty, holiness, and presence of God?

Similarly with respect to godly fear. When does this fountain of life to depart from the snares of death run shallow and low, so as to be diminished, as by a summer drought, almost to a thin thread? When our present vital, experimental sight and sense, knowledge and apprehension of the majesty of the Lord are become dim and feeble, when the old veil seems to flap back over the heart, and like a half-closed shutter shuts out the light of day. If we read the early chapters of the book of Proverbs, we shall see how much is spoken in them of wisdom, instruction, knowledge, understanding, and the like, and how closely there the fear of the Lord is connected with the knowledge of the Lord—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7.) And, again—"My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:1-6.)

And, again—"When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto your soul; discretion shall preserve you, understanding shall keep you." (Proverbs 2:10-11.) So those that

perish, perish from lack of this knowledge and of this fear as its fruit—"For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Proverbs 1:29-31.) And more plainly and emphatically—"Fools die for lack of wisdom." (Proverbs 10:21.) Indeed, there is such a connection between true wisdom, which is "a knowledge of the holy," (Proverbs 30:3,) and the fear of the Lord, and such a connection between ignorance of the Lord and sin, that saved saints are called "wise," and lost sinners are called "fools," not only in the Old Testament, as continually in the Proverbs, but in the New.

Many of the Lord's people look with suspicion upon knowledge, from not seeing clearly the vast distinction between the spiritual, experimental knowledge for which we are now contending, and what is called "head knowledge." They see that a man may have a well-furnished head and a graceless heart, that he may understand "all mysteries" and all "knowledge" and yet be "nothing;" (1 Corinthians 13:2.) And as some of these all-knowing professors are the basest characters that can infest the churches, those who really fear the Lord stand not only in doubt of them, but of all the knowledge possessed by them. But put it in a different form; ask the people of God whether there is not such a divine reality, such a heavenly blessing, as being "taught of God;" (John 6:45;) having "an unction from above whereby we know all things;" (1 John 2:20;) knowing the truth for oneself and finding it makes free; (John 8:32;) whether there is not a "counting of all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," and a stretching forth of the desires of the soul to "know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings;" whether there is not "a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins;" (Luke 1:77;) "a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" (2 Corinthians 4:6;) a being "filled with the knowledge of his will," (Colossians 1:9,) an "increasing in the knowledge of God;" (Colossians 1:10;) "a growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 3:18,)—ask the living family of God whether there be not such a knowledge as this, and if this knowledge is not the very pith and marrow, the very sum and substance of vital godliness? and they will with one voice say, "It is!" By putting knowledge therefore, as the first effect of the word of truth upon the heart, we are not setting up, God forbid, that vain, empty, useless, deceptive thing, that delusion of the devil, "head knowledge"—but that divine, spiritual, gracious, and saving knowledge which is communicated to the soul and wrought into its very substance by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit. This knowledge embraces every truth which we learn by divine teaching in living experience, from the first sigh to the last song, from the earliest conviction to the last consolation, from the cry of despair to the shout of triumph, from the agonies of hell to the joys of heaven. Need any one wonder, therefore, that we put first what stands first, that we lay down the first stone which is the foundation stone, and draw the first line where the Holy Spirit makes his first impression?

If, then, this knowledge is communicated by the Holy Spirit to the heart through the written word, two things follow, and we believe that the experience of every child of God will bear testimony to what we now advance concerning them—

1. That the word of God comes into the heart and conscience in and by regeneration, with a new and hitherto unfelt power. How carelessly, how ignorantly, how formally, if we read it at all, did we read the word of God in the days of our unregeneracy. What little heed we paid to the word preached, if we heard it at all. What thorough darkness and death wrapped us up, so that nothing

of a spiritual, eternal nature touched, moved, or stirred us either with hope or fear. But at a certain, never-to-be-forgotten time, a power, we could not tell how or why, was put into the word and it fell upon our hearts, as a sound from heaven—as the very voice of God to our conscience. The word of God laid hold of us as the word of God; it was no longer the word of man, a dry, uninteresting, almost if not wholly hated book; but it got, we could not explain how, so into the very inside of us—armed with authority and power as a message from God. But here let us guard ourselves. It is not always the exact words, or indeed any word of Scripture which lays hold of the conscience; but it is in every case the truth contained in the Scriptures. Eternity, judgment to come, the justice of God, his all-searching eye, his almighty hand, his universal presence, from which there is no escape—these, and other similar truths which fall with such weight upon the quickened sinner's conscience, are all revealed in and only known by the Scripture. The truth of God is, therefore, the word of God, as the word of God is the truth of God. If, then, no particular word or words are applied to the conscience by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, the truth, which is the word, is applied to the heart, and it is this entrance of the truth as the word of God, which gives light. As a proof of this, no sooner do we receive the solemn truths of which we have spoken, into our conscience and feel their power, than we run to the Scriptures and find a light in and upon them hitherto unseen and unknown. The light, life, and power, which attended the truth as it fell upon the conscience gave the word a place in our hearts. And we shall always find that the place which the word has in the heart is in proportion to the light and power which attended its first entrance. Let us seek to explain this a little more fully and clearly. The heart by nature is closed, shut, barred against the entrance of light. The light may, so to speak, play around the heart, but does not enter, for there is a thick veil over it. Thus our Lord said of himself, "While I am in the world I am the light of the world." (John 9:5.) The light shone upon the world, but did not enter, for the "light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehended (that is apprehended or embraced) it not." (John 1:5.) "My word," said the Lord, "has no place in you." (John 8:37.) But when the word comes with power, it seizes hold of the heart and conscience. They give way before it and leave a place for it, where it sets up its throne and becomes their Lord and Master.

Here, then, we shall for the present pause, leaving the word of truth in possession of the heart.

11.02. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

However vital godliness, either in its inward experience or in its outward fruits, may be imitated by the craft of Satan or the deceptiveness of man's heart, there is as much real and essential difference between the work of grace on the soul, as begun and carried on by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit—and any base counterfeit—as between light and darkness, life and death, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell. It may indeed be exceedingly difficult for any man or minister clearly, to discern the distinction, or accurately describe the difference between grace in its lowest degree and nature in its highest—between a saint in his worst state and a hypocrite in his best—for there is not a fruit of the Spirit which cannot be imitated, not a heavenly feeling, divine sensation, or gracious movement which cannot be counterfeited. Who, with all his real or fancied discernment, can at all times and under all circumstances discover all the delusions of Satan as an angel of light, or detect all the turnings and windings of a self-deceptive, hypocritical heart? But of all the varied and intricate circumstances which puzzle the mind and perplex the judgment when we would try our own case or that of others, none seems to us more puzzling and perplexing than this—that every grace and fruit of the blessed Spirit has its corresponding counterpart in the natural mind. Thus is there an enlightening of the eyes of the understanding by the gift of the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? (Ephesians 1:17-18.) There is a corresponding enlightening of the natural mind to receive the knowledge of the truth. (Romans 6:4; Romans 10:26.) Is faith the gift of God and a fruit of the Spirit? (Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 5:22;) and does it come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God? (Romans 10:1.7.) There is a natural faith—a believing for a while, and in time of temptation falling away. (Luke 8:13; John 8:30; John 12:42-43.) Is there a conscience made tender in the fear of God, as a choice new covenant blessing? (Jeremiah 32:40; Acts 23:1; Acts 24:16.) There is a natural conscience bearing witness in a heathen mind in its accusing or excusing thoughts, and convicting a graceless hypocrite with a stone in his hand ready to hurl it at the open sinner. (Romans 2:15; John 8:9.) Is there a receiving of the love of the truth, so as to be saved and sanctified thereby? (2 Thessalonians 2:10; John 17:17.) There is a hearing of the word gladly by a Herod, (Mark 6:20,) and a receiving of it with joy by a stony-ground hearer. (Luke 8:13.) Is there "a good hope through grace," an "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil?" (2 Thessalonians 2:16; Hebrews 6:19.) There is the hope of the hypocrite that perishes, and a trust which is but a spider's web. (Job 8:13-14.) So might we run through the various fruits and graces of the Spirit, as repentance, and its natural counterpart in Ahab and Judas; (1 Kings 21:27; Matthew 27:3;) humility, and its imitation in Saul; (1 Samuel 10:21-22; 1 Samuel 10:27;) zeal, and its fleshly mimicry in Jehu (2 Kings 10:16), and in the false spirit of the sons of Zebedee; (Luke 9:54-55;) love of holiness, and its sanctimonious counterfeit in the murderers of the Lord who, for fear of defilement, would not enter into Pilate's judgment hall. (John 18:28.) But we need not enlarge on a point so evident, and of such every-day observation. Suffice it to remark that it is this counterpart of nature to grace, this correspondence of many if not most of the features of the old

man to many if not most of the features of the new, which so greatly perplexes our mind when we sit in judgment on our own case or on that of others.

When, then, we attempt to trace out the operation and effects of the word of truth on the heart of the saints of God, and to show the authority and power which in the hands of the Spirit it exercises on their conscience, we are met at the very outset by the perplexing difficulty of which we have just spoken—the counterpart of flesh to spirit, the fruits and effects of the word on the natural conscience, as resembling the fruits and effects of the word on the spiritual conscience.

Still, as there is a vital and essential difference between them, we will, with God's help and blessing, make the attempt to trace out that peculiar work and those peculiar effects which seem especially to distinguish the authority and power of the word of God on the heart and conscience of his people—from all its imitations and all its counterfeits. And we more particularly dwell on this point as being well convinced that in nothing is the true work of grace more distinguished from all counterfeits, than by the power which attends the word in the hands of the Spirit to the heart of the elect family of God. In our last paper we left the word in possession of the heart. At this point, therefore, we now resume our subject. In describing, however, this work, we drew rather a general sketch than worked out our subject in detail. We rather laid down the general truth, that light, life, and power attend the entrance of the word into the heart, than minutely described either the way in which they enter or the effects which they produce. To this more detailed description we now, therefore, come; for truth, it may be observed, is often lost, or if not altogether lost in, is much obscured by generalities. A map of a district to be of any real value must be minute. A child's map would be of little service to a bewildered traveler in a foreign land. Some friends of ours, many years ago, taking a walking tour in Switzerland lost their way on the mountains, and would probably have perished if one of the party had not had with him a most minute and accurate map of the country—by following which they soon arrived at a place of safety. To a wanderer on the mountains of Israel, a map Zionwards must be not only accurate, but detailed, that he may know, not only that he is in the way, but whereabouts in the way. May wisdom and grace be given to us to line out the map not only plainly but accurately. To make it more clear and simple we should go back a few steps, and take the vessel of mercy in his carnal, unregenerate state before the mighty work begins whereby he is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. To help our understanding on this point and establish our faith, the Scripture has given us a variety of figures, such as the quickening of the dead, (Ephesians 2:1,) the breathing of life upon the dry bones, (Ezekiel 37:1-28,) the taking up and rearing of the outcast child, (Ezekiel 16:1-63,) besides the more ordinary emblems of begetting or being born again, of a new creation, of a resurrection, etc. But we shall, for the sake of clearness, adopt the Lord's own figure of the strong man armed keeping this palace. (Luke 11:21-22.) View, then, the strong man, strong in his unregeneracy, in his palace and equipped is his armor. His palace is the heart; his armor his defense against the word of truth, the sword of the Spirit. How strong is his armor and how confident his trust in it. See him clothed from head to foot in his armor; and as every truth has its opposing error, and every grace and fruit of the Spirit its counterfeit, so the armor of the saint has its counterpart in the armor of the sinner. He stands, therefore, in the whole armor of sin and Satan. The belt of error, the breastplate of unrighteousness, the shoes of enmity, the shield of unbelief, the helmet of perdition, and the sword of the old man which is the word of carnal reason, equip him from head to foot as with armor of proof. And lest these be insufficient, he is firmly entrenched behind all such bulwarks

of his palace as the prayerlessness, carelessness, watchlessness, and slothfulness of the carnal mind. Who can overcome this strongman armed? None but the stronger than he, the mighty One, the strength of Israel. His goods are in peace. False peace and security wrap him in their folded arms, and he bids defiance to every fear and every foe. But Jesus comes upon him by the power of his word, assaults him in his castle, overcomes him, and takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, stripping it off, piece by piece. While this armor was on, no arrow of conviction could reach the heart, for it was at once met and turned off by the shield or breastplate. But when the armor is stripped away, then there lies a naked, exposed, defenseless soul—for the sword of the Spirit to enter. Did we not find, when eternal realities were first laid with weight on our mind, that something came over us which we could not describe, but which was sensibly felt? and that under this peculiar power there was a breaking up and a loosening of that ignorance, hardness, unbelief, prejudice, and carelessness which had hitherto held us locked up in carnal security? This was the coming upon us of the stronger than we, and this falling off of unbelief, hardness, ignorance, etc., was the stripping away of the armor in which we had stood encased, and to which we had trusted. But now let us move a step onward. We have seen how the soul lies naked and bare, all its armor gone. Now comes the sword of the Spirit. Its operation and execution are clearly and beautifully described by the Apostle—"For the word of God is living, 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." (Hebrews 4:12.) Before this entrance of the sword of the Spirit, the word of God was not living—but dead, for it did not communicate life; nor "powerful," for it was weak through the flesh; (Romans 8:3;) nor did it "pierce to any dividing asunder of soul and spirit, or of the joints and marrow," for it did not enter where soul and spirit, joints and marrow are; nor did it "discern the thoughts and intents of the heart," for all things were not yet made naked and opened before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. This sword has two edges, and therefore cuts as it goes, and cuts both ways at one and the same stroke. (Revelation 1:16; Revelation 2:12.) It is not sharp on one side and blunt on the other, like a table knife, which cuts but does not pierce, but it severs as it enters with both its edges at once, and thus effectually divides asunder soul and spirit, separating, as nothing else can, the natural religion, which is of the soul, from the spiritual religion which is of the Spirit.**

** If any consider this interpretation forced, let them consider the following points—Paul draws (1 Corinthians 2:14-15) a distinction between the "natural" man and the "spiritual" man. Now the word there translated, "natural," is literally, if we may coin an expression, "soulish;" that is, the man has a soul, but not a spirit, as not being born of the Spirit; for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." His religion, therefore, in this state is natural, its seat being not the new man of grace, but the mere intellectual, mental part of man—the soul as distinct from the body. So James, describing a carnal, earthly religion, says, it is "sensual," ("natural," margin,) or "soulish." Similarly Jude speaks of certain ungodly characters, and says of them that they are "sensual," using precisely the same word as is rendered "natural," 1 Corinthians 2:14, and "sensual," James 3:15. The word thus also becomes "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," laying the inmost movements of the mind, whether in imagination or intention, naked and bare before the eyes of the omniscient Majesty of heaven. Before this entrance of the sword of the Spirit, it was not known or felt that "the thought of foolishness is sin," (Proverbs 24:9,) and that "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.) Heart sins were not seen or regarded. As long as the outside of the cup and platter were made clean, the inward part might be full of ravening and

wickedness. (Luke 11:39.) As long as the whited sepulcher appeared beautiful outward, the dead men's bones and all uncleanness within were considered of little significance. But God searches the heart. And how? By his word. (Proverbs 20:27; Psalms 45:3-5; Psalms 139:1-2; Psalms 139:23-24; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25; Revelation 2:23.) This searching of the heart is effected by the entrance of the law into the conscience, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20.) This is the coming of the commandment in its spirituality and power, armed with all the authority of God, and discovering to the awakened conscience that to lust is to sin, because God has said, "You shall not covet." (Romans 7:7-9.) The light which attends this entrance of the word (Psalms 119:130; Ephesians 5:13) reveals his character as a just and holy, righteous and inflexible Judge; the life which accompanies it makes the conscience bow and bend like a bruised reed, or a tender plant beneath the stroke; the power which clothes it awes and impresses the mind with solemn and ineffaceable convictions that it is the voice of the mighty God who speaks, for his voice is now upon the waters of a troubled heart, and as such is powerful and full of majesty; (Isaiah 29:1-24, Isaiah 3:1-26, Isaiah 4:1-6;) and the knowledge of the only true God which it communicates (John 17:3) fills the soul with godly fear before him. (Habakkuk 3:16.)

It is in this way that the authority and power of the word become established as the lord of conscience. This is the grand point of the Spirit's first work—to make the word master of the heart. Before, it was rather the servant than the master, a book like other books, which we could neglect or despise or criticize at will; air it, perhaps, on the Sunday, and lay it on the shelf or lock it up in a drawer for the rest of the week. But no more neglect, no more cold arrogant treatment, no more secret if not open contempt, no more Pharisaical reading of it now. If we neglect it, it will not neglect us; if we struggle against the convictions it produces, and seek to draw away soul and spirit from the word, there it is firmly fixed; and the more we plunge, the more deeply it penetrates and sharply it cuts.

Satan may muster against it all his arts and arms—unbelief, infidelity, love of sin, unwillingness to part with idol lusts, fear of man—gloomy prospects of temporal loss and ruin, family ties, religious connections, a whole lifetime of schemes and projects, education and prospects toppling to their very base—if these things be true—all these and a thousand other obstacles and objections which array themselves against the power of the word, plead against it, but plead in vain. Where the word has no authority or power on the heart, or only what we may call common power, these, or similar hindrances, either prevent a profession, or induce the professor, after a longer or shorter time, to draw back unto perdition. We see this again and again in the gospels. Many felt the power and truth of the Lord's words with transient flashes of light in the understanding, and of conviction in the conscience, who became his persecutors and murderers.

It needs, therefore, a special, an uncommon, a spiritual, and a divine power to give the word that place in the heart and conscience which it is ever after to maintain as its lord and master. Until this power be felt, we do not really know that it is the word of the Lord. To establish, then, its authority and supremacy is the special work of the Holy Spirit. By this peculiar power it is effectually distinguished from the word of man. God himself gives this test—"The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:28-29.) The false prophets had their word; but it was the word of man, and therefore light as chaff, not heavy and weighty as wheat. It had no fire to burn,

as shut up in the bones; (Jeremiah 20:9;) nor was it a hammer, to break to pieces a stony heart.

All the killing, (1 Samuel 2:6,) slaughtering, (Ezekiel 21:9-10; Zechariah 11:7,) hewing and slaying, (Hosea 6:5,) stripping, (Hosea 2:3,) emptying, (Jeremiah 48:11-12,) bringing down, (Psalms 18:27; Psalms 107:12,) and laying low (Isaiah 26:5; James 1:10) of the soul before God are wrought by the power of the word. God speaks by and in it, as if by a voice from heaven; and what he speaks is listened to because he speaks it. We see this in the saints and prophets of old. The word of the Lord came to Noah, (Genesis 6:13,) to Abraham, (Genesis 12:1; Genesis 15:1,) to Isaac, (Genesis 26:2-5,) to Jacob, (Genesis 28:13; Genesis 35:1,) to Joseph, (Psalms 105:19,) to Moses, (Exodus 3:4,) to Joshua, (Joshua 1:1) to Gideon, (Judges 6:12-14,) to Samuel, and to all the prophets—and was known by them to be the word of the Lord, by the power which attended it and the effects it produced upon their heart. Surely these men of God knew who it was that spoke unto them, and what he said.

Sometimes it was "the burden of the Lord," (Jeremiah 23:33; Habakkuk 1:1,) or "the burden of the word of the Lord," (Zechariah 9:1,) implying the weight with which it pressed upon their minds; sometimes it was "the vision of the Lord;" (2 Samuel 7:17; Isaiah 1:1; Obadiah 1:1;) the word coming to them when their bodily senses were locked up, but their spiritual eyes open; (Numbers 24:4; Acts 10:10; Acts 22:17-18;) and sometimes God spoke to them in a dream in the hours of the night. (Genesis 31:10; Job 33:14-16; Matthew 1:20.) But however the mode differed—the power and the effect were the same. It was still the word of the Lord, and known by them to be such. In a similar manner the Scriptures are known by the people of God to be the word of the Lord now, by their power and their effects; for they are to us what the direct word of the Lord was to them; and though the same degree of power may not attend the word now as it attended it then, the power is the same and the effects are the same, though bearing each a proportion to the measure of influence put forth. Among these effects is trembling at the word; (Isaiah 66:2; Psalms 119:120; Habakkuk 3:16;) standing in awe of it; (Psalms 119:161;) hiding it in the heart, that we may not sin against God; (Psalms 119:11;) refraining the feet from every evil way, to keep it; (Psalms 119:101;) being afraid of God’s judgments; (Psalms 119:120;) receiving it as a lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path; (Psalms 119:105;) choosing the way of truth, and hating every false way. (Psalms 119:30; Psalms 119:104.) By this power of the word experimentally realized and felt—the conscience is made tender, the heart humble, and the spirit broken and contrite; and thus, like wax to the seal and clay to the potter, the soul is rendered susceptible of divine teachings and heavenly impressions. Pride and self-righteousness are brought down; human traditions and old ceremonial forms of religion lose their power and influence, and drop off the liberated hands and heart like chains and fetters from a loosened prisoner; an empty profession and a name to live are dreaded as awful delusions, and as stamped with the hateful impress of hypocrisy; all known sins are forsaken and repented of, with many bitter tears and sorrow of spirit; convictions are hugged, lest the guilt of sin should go off the wrong way, and not be purged by the blood of sprinkling; the world is forsaken, never to be returned to; retirement and solitude are sought, that far from human eye and ear the almost bursting spirit may pour itself forth in groans and sighs, prayers and tears before the Lord of heaven and earth, the heart-searching, thought-trying God. The word is thus received into an honest and good heart, (Luke 8:15,) made so by divine grace, where it takes root downward and bears fruit upward. Light attending the word in its first entrance, in that light the Scriptures are read; life accompanying the light, in that life the Scriptures are felt; knowledge being

the fruit of light and life, of divine teaching and testimony, in that knowledge the Scriptures are understood; and power clothing the word, by that power faith is raised up to believe what the Scriptures reveal and declare. By this power and influence the ear and heart are circumcised to discern truth from error; the veil of unbelief and ignorance is rent off; (2 Corinthians 3:16;) obedience to the word is produced; (1 Samuel 3:10; Acts 9:6; Romans 6:17; Romans 16:26; Hebrews 11:8;) the stony heart taken away and the heart of flesh given; (Ezekiel 36:26;) and the soul turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (Acts 26:18.)

Until the authority and power of the word are thus established in the heart—nothing real, nothing effectual is done for the soul. Look at this point as exemplified in the case of the professors of the day, who, acknowledging the Bible as the word of God, and compassing perhaps sea and land to distribute it, yet have never felt its killing, subduing, renewing and regenerating power in their own soul. What a halting in them between two opinions; what a sheltering themselves under the rags of their own righteousness; what a cleaving to forms and ceremonies, self-imposed rules or traditional duties; what blind attachment to buildings, whether of church or chapel; what love to the world and conformity to its ways, fashions, and opinions; what dread of the cross, of being an object of contempt and derision, or a mark for persecution; what unwillingness to make any sacrifice of money, respectability, or comfort for Christ's sake or his people's; in many what indulgence in secret sin; what dislike to separating truth, to the bold and faithful servants of Christ, and to the poor despised family of God.

Why all this, but because they have never felt the keen edge of the sword of the Spirit letting out the life-blood of a carnal, sensual, earthly religion? We can look back and see that such was once our own case; for what they are we, more or less, were; and we can see that it was nothing but the power of the word felt in our heart and conscience that pulled us out of their ranks, and put the Redeemer's yoke upon our necks!

It is the power of God's word which men and devils oppose and hate, as being the only weapon which they really dread. To them the mere 'letter of the word' is as straw—and a mere 'form of godliness' as rotten wood. Such darts are counted as stubble, and they laugh at the shaking of such a spear. (Job 41:27-28.) But they dread, though they hate, the 'power'—because it is the very voice of God. By the power of the word the dear Redeemer foiled and defeated the tempter in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-11.) By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony the ancient martyrs overcame the accuser of the brethren; and the remnant of the seed of the woman with whom the dragon made war, were such as kept the commandments of God, and had the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:11; Revelation 12:17.)

It is against the authority and power of the word that all infidels, unbelievers, and erroneous men set themselves. What are such infidels aiming at—but to destroy the authority and power of God's word, by undermining its authenticity and inspiration? If not authentic, if not inspired, it has no power; and if it has no power, it can have no authority. The two are proportionate. What gives authority to a magistrate? The power to execute his decisions. Strip him of this power, and his sentences are not decisions, but opinions. So with the word of God. Take away its power by denying its authenticity and inspiration, and its authority to bind and loose, condemn and justify—is gone at once. So again, what is Puseyism, or as it is now called, "Ritualism," but a setting up of traditions, forms and ceremonies, kneelings, bowings and intonings, vestments, buildings and

decorations in the place of the word of truth? Can a new Gothic window, or a purple velvet altar-cloth, or a pair of huge wax candles lighted or unlighted, or a long procession of ornamented priests and choristers, or all the sounds of the pealing organ point out the way of salvation to a lost sinner, bind up a broken heart, or purge a guilty conscience?

What, again, is all error but the setting up of carnal reasonings and natural deductions in the place of, or against a "Thus says the Lord?" And what do so many preachers and writers really intend when they set their bow against what they call "frames and feelings," but to aim an envenomed shaft against the power of the word of God on a believing heart? But does not all our daily and dear-bought experience convince us that in this power stands all our hope of eternal life? We have been hunted out of our false refuges by the power of the word, and brought to embrace the Son of God as revealed by the same divine power to our souls. We therefore know that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" and that our faith "stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 4:20.) The preaching of the cross was once to us foolishness; but it has been made to us the power of God; and Christ crucified has become to us both the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:24.)

After this power we are seeking and feeling, we may say, every day in our lives, and sometimes often through the day and the lonely hours of the night. By this power we live, and in this power we hope and desire to die, as being well assured that nothing but this power can rob death of its sting and the grave of its victory, and land us on that happy shore where ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands will forever sing, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

11.03. Chapter 3

Chapter 3 The main point which we endeavored to establish in our last paper was the way in which the word of God became lord and master of a believer’s conscience. Until this supremacy of the word of truth is established, nothing is really done. Long may be the struggle, for sense, nature, and reason die hard; and as in the case of the children of Israel becoming masters of the land of promise, these opposing nations may be driven out only "little by little," and even then the Canaanite will still dwell in the land. (Exodus 23:30; Joshua 17:12.) But as Jesus must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet, so will he by his Spirit and grace put down every enemy to the power and authority of his word upon the heart of his people. As by grace we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son; (Colossians 1:13;) as this kingdom is within us; (Luke 17:21;) and that not in word, but in power; (1 Corinthians 9:20;) seeing that it "is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," (Romans 14:17,) it necessarily embraces two distinct things—

1. The putting down of all other rule and all other authority and power. (1 Corinthians 15:24) 2. The setting up and enthroning of the Lord Jesus in the conscience, heart, and affections. This double work was beautifully symbolized in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar as interpreted by Daniel—"While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:34-35.) The stone that fell upon the feet of the image represents the Lord Jesus, the stone laid in Zion for a foundation, (Isaiah 27:16,) and its being "cut out, without hands" symbolizes his pure humanity as made of a woman without the help of man. (Mark 14:58; Hebrews 8:2.) The stone thus cut out without hands fell upon the toes of the image; for while the image stood upon its feet, the stone could not become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. So in grace. (We do not offer this as an interpretation so much as a spiritual application of the prophecy.) Until the image of sin, Satan, and self is broken to pieces, and the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, Christ in his grace and glory cannot fill the heart.

Hitherto, then, we have been considering the putting down of the rule, authority, and power of darkness, ignorance, and death—under the two figures of the stripping of the strong man of his armor—and the entrance of the two-edged sword of the word into the heart. By this effectual operation the word, as we have shown, becomes lord and master of conscience. This is the hardest part of the work, for until submission is produced, mercy is not manifested. "The arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies, whereby the people fall under you." (Psalms 45:5.) Where there is no falling under the power of the word, there is no real submission of heart to Jesus; no meek taking of his yoke upon the neck—for this is only for the laboring and heavy-laden; (Matthew 11:28-29;) no kissing the Son lest he be angry. (Psalms 2:12.) But when the heart is "brought down with labor so as to fall down, and there is none to help;" (Psalms 107:12;) when the

Lord sees of his servants that "their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left;" (Deuteronomy 32:36;) when there is a putting of the mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope; (Lamentations 3:29;) and there is no plea nor cry but, "Lord, save me," "God be merciful to me a sinner," then the scale turns; then it is found that "the Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him, and that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:25-26.) Being thus made "poor in spirit," a title is given to, an interest secured in the kingdom of heaven; (Matthew 5:3;) and as this poverty of spirit is attended with the docility and teachability of a little child there is an entrance into it; for "of such is the kingdom of God, and whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein." (Luke 18:16-17.)

If our readers have thus far, then, followed our train of thought, they will readily perceive that hitherto we have been directing our attention mainly to that first work of the law upon the conscience, whereby the soul is—slain, stripped, and emptied of all its self-strength, self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency—and brought into the dust of death. This is analogous to the falling of the stone upon the toes of the image, and corresponds to the first part of Jeremiah's commission—"See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down—to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:10.) There we see that the prophet, as having the words of the Lord put into his mouth, was commissioned "to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down"—as well as "to build and to plant." And so the Lord speaks elsewhere—"And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to afflict—so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 31:28.) Both are equally of God; and he as much watches over the soul to pluck and break down—as to build and plant. But as we have endeavored to show the one and first part of the work, so shall we now attempt to trace out the other; for if the Lord kills—he makes alive, if he brings down to the grave—he brings up; and he who makes poor—also raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the ash-heap, to set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory. (1 Samuel 2:6-8,) Let us see, then, how this gracious work is accomplished, and the effects that follow.

1. Poverty of spirit springing out of the stripping hand of God, as we have described it, brings the soul within the reach of all the invitations of the gospel. "To the poor, the gospel is preached," (Luke 7:22,) and for the poor is the gospel supper provided; (Luke 14:21;) To them, therefore, emphatically do the invitations of the gospel belong. The full soul loaths a honeycomb. What are all the invitations of the gospel to one who is "rich and increased with goods and has need of nothing?" (Revelation 3:17.) "Ho, every one who thirsts!" "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth." "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden," etc.

These and similar invitations are all addressed to the poor and needy sinner. There is now a place in his heart for them, as emptied of self; and, as they come home with some degree of sweetness and savor, power attends them, whereby faith is raised up to believe that God speaks in them. This is more especially felt when in some season of distress the invitation is applied, and is thus embraced and acted upon. How many a poor sinner has hung upon the invitations, embraced them, pleaded them, and acted upon them. "Ask and you shall receive." What an encouragement

to prayer.

"Look unto me." "Come unto me." How many a poor sensible sinner has, upon the strength of these words, looked unto Jesus and been lightened; (Psalms 34:5;) come to him and met with a kind reception. By the power which attends these invitations the heart is opened, as was the heart of Lydia, to attend unto the things spoken in the gospel. It is not put away as too holy for a poor polluted sinner to touch, nor is the Lord Jesus viewed as an angry Judge; but in these invitations—his clemency, tenderness, and compassion are seen and felt—and beams and rays of his mercy and grace both enlighten the understanding and soften and melt the heart. Thence spring confession of sin, self-loathing, renunciation of one's own righteousness, earnest desires and breathings after the Lord, and an embracing of the love of the truth so far as made known. And as all these effects—so different from the old dead Pharisaic religion—are produced by the power of the word upon the heart, the Bible becomes a new book, and is read and studied with attention and delight. The ears too being unstopped, as well as the eyes opened, if there be the opportunity of hearing the preached gospel, with what eagerness is it embraced, and what a sweetness there is found in it. All who have passed through these things will agree with us that there are no such hearing days as what Job calls "the days of our youth, when the secret of God is upon our tabernacle." (Job 29:4.)

2. This breaking up of the great image of sin and self by the falling of the stone cut without hands upon its feet prepares a way also for the entrance of the promises, as so many pledges and foretastes of that kingdom of God—which is peace, and righteousness, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is upon the promises that the new covenant stands, as the Apostle says—"But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." (Hebrews 8:6.) As, then, we are brought within the compass of the promises we are brought within the bonds of the covenant, according to the declaration—"And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Ezekiel 20:37.) As, then, the soul is brought within the compass of the promises, and thus put within the manifested bond of the covenant, these promises become—as they are made sweet and precious—so many breasts of consolation, feeding the new-born babe with the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby. (Isaiah 66:11; 1 Peter 2:2.)

Every promise that is made spirit and life to the soul, establishes the power of the word in the heart; for by the application of the promises (as Peter unfolds the mystery) "the divine nature," that is, the new man who, after the image of God, (Colossians 3:10,) is created in righteousness and true holiness, is brought forth. (Ephesians 4:24; 2 Peter 1:4.) This is a partaking of the divine nature, that is, what is communicable of the divine nature, as being a conformity to the image of God's dear Son, Christ in the heart the hope of glory. (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:27.) By being brought, then, within the compass of the promises we become children and heirs of them; (Galatians 4:28; Hebrews 6:17;) and as they are applied with power, they are all found to be "in Christ yes, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." (2 Corinthians 1:20.)

It was by thus believing the promise that our father Abraham was justified, as the Apostle declares—"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." (Romans 4:20-22.) In his steps his children

walk, and thus are blessed with him. (Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:9.) The promise comes, faith believes, hope expects, patience waits; and so through faith and patience they inherit the promises. (Romans 15:4; Hebrews 6:12; Hebrews 6:17-20.)

3. And as the promises are made sweet and precious, as pledges and foretastes of the gospel, and thus establish the power of the word upon the heart, so when the gospel itself is made "the power of God unto salvation," it beyond everything seals and ratifies this power and authority of the word. This is what the Apostle sets forth so clearly and blessedly in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6.) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13.)

It is the peculiar province of faith to believe the gospel; but this faith must "stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," (1 Corinthians 2:5,) that it may be a saving faith. When, then, the gospel comes "not in word only," as it does to thousands, "but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction"—as it only does to the elect of God, (1 Thessalonians 1:4,) by this power faith is raised up and drawn forth. By this faith the gospel is received, "not as the word of men," which might be weak and worthless, and is sure to be inoperative and inefficacious—but "as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works in those who believe."

How evidently does this show, not only the power of the word, but that the gospel is that power, and that it is, if we may use the expression, a working power effectually molding the heart, giving grace to the lips, and producing all holy obedience in the life. But as the gospel is a message from God, a proclamation of mercy and grace—the best news that ever reached a poor sensible sinner's ears, for it proclaims pardon and peace, reconciliation and acceptance, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, so it is but the herald of advance to announce the nearer coming of the Son of God himself. It is, as it were, the chariot in which he rides "paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem." (Song Song of Solomon 3:10.)

We do not wish to separate, except for the sake of distinctness, the gospel—from him who is the sum and substance of it, nor the belief of the gospel from the revelation of Christ in and by the gospel, as these are often made manifest at one and the same moment. But for the sake of obtaining clearer views of the subject, we shall make a distinction between believing the gospel and the personal manifestation of Christ. Thus the disciples evidently believed the gospel and received Christ's words; (John 15:3; John 16:30; John 17:8;) and still they were as yet unacquainted with the special manifestations of Christ, as is evident from the question of Judas, (not Iscariot), and the Lord's answer. (John 14:22-23.) So in many cases now, and we may add it was much our own experience, there is a believing the gospel—prior to the revelation of the Son of God with power to the soul.

4. When, then, the blessed Lord reveals himself to the soul in his glorious Person, finished work, atoning blood, and dying love—then it is with the willing heart almost as it was when the risen and

ascended King of Zion entered the courts of heavenly bliss—"Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!" (Psalms 24:7.) Surely the posts of the doors of the heart are moved at his appearance as of the King in his beauty. (Isaiah 6:4; Isaiah 33:17.) His eternal Deity and Sonship on the one hand, and his pure spotless humanity on the other, uniting to form his one glorious Person as Immanuel, God with us—are presented to the eye of faith. As he thus appears in his glory—the understanding is divinely illuminated, the conscience purged, the heart melted and broken, and the affections drawn forth to embrace this glorious Lord as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one! And as this revelation of Christ, though necessarily supernatural, has nothing in it visionary or enthusiastic, but is a most sober and substantial reality, so it is always attended with, or followed by the word of truth, either to communicate or confirm it. Sometimes it communicates it; that is, through the word applied and believed the Lord reveals himself to the soul, as very frequently, for instance, under the preached word—and often in private by the applied, without the medium of the preached word. Sometimes the word does not so much communicate it as it follows upon and confirms the inward revelation of the Son of God—"before I was aware, my soul became like the chariots of Amminadab," or "a willing people;" (Song of Solomon 6:12;) that is, the soul is unexpectedly, as it were, ravished with the appearance of the King in his beauty, without any particular word from his lips. But passages flow almost immediately in to explain, confirm, and settle what has been thus transacted between the Lord and the soul without the immediate instrumentality of the word itself. This is like a second feast, a sitting under the shadow of the Beloved with great delight, and finding his fruit sweet to the taste. (Song of Solomon 2:3.)

We thus see how the word of God is established in its power and authority in the heart, not only by its strength to pull down, but by its strength to build up; by its mission to heal, as well as by its mission to kill. If we may say of it what the Apostle declares of an earthly magistrate, that it "bears not the sword in vain," we may also add, it "is the minister of God for good." (Romans 13:4.) The word of a king would be spoiled of half of its authority if life as well as death, were not in the power of his tongue; (Proverbs 18:21;) and if he could not, as supreme, (1 Peter 2:13,) show mercy as well as judgment, pardon as well as punish. And so, is there not one supreme Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy? (James 4:12.) When David measured Moab with two lines, the one to put to death and the other to keep alive, (2 Samuel 8:2,) the line of life was as much the king’s line, and as much stretched by his authority as the line of death. The stretching of both these lines over the heart, of law and gospel, of the curse and the blessing, of the killing and the making alive, of the wrath of the king as the messenger of death and the light of his countenance as life and his favor as a cloud of the latter rain, (Proverbs 16:14-15,) makes the Lord at once both feared and loved. By the one the soul is preserved from presumption, and by the other from despair; and thus by the combined impressions of judgment and mercy, God is served acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28.) But this manifestation of Christ to the soul is attended with peculiar blessings which not only are in themselves exceedingly precious, and prove the revelation to be genuine—not "the child of fancy richly dressed," but "the living child," but still more fully confirm the power and authority of the word of the Lord.

1. First, this manifestation of Christ to the soul makes the word itself exceeding sweet and precious. Jeremiah knew this experimentally when he said, "Your words were found and I did eat them, and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;" (Jeremiah 15:16;) and so felt

the Psalmist—"How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." (Psalms 119:103.) Nor was Job without an experience of the same sweetness of the word when he said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:12.) Does not, then, this tasting of the sweetness of the word establish its power in the heart in the surest and most convincing way?

2. This manifestation of Christ to the soul sweeps away the unbelief and infidelity of the carnal reasoning mind. Perhaps few of his readers have been more tempted by unbelief and infidelity than the writer of these lines; but he knows from blessed experience how a revelation of the glorious Person of the Son of God to the soul sweeps away as with one stroke, at least for a time, all these armies of hell. Not a single doubt of the Deity, Sonship, and pure humanity of the Son of God can stand before the revelation of the glorious King of Zion; and if the unworthy author of these Meditations has been enabled in former papers to trace out the Deity and Sonship, and the spotless humanity of the blessed Redeemer with any degree of light and life in his own soul, or with any measure of instruction and edification to his readers, he must thankfully ascribe it to what he has been favored to see of these divine realities by the eye of faith in the person of the God-man.

3. This manifestation of Christ to the soul therefore harmonizes the whole word of God from first to last. As the incarnate Word was "set for the fall" as well as "the rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which should be spoken against," so it is with the written word; it is made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block "to those to whom God has given the spirit of slumber—eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear." (Luke 2:34; Romans 11:9.) This is the reason why men infidels stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. (1 Peter 2:8.) Ever on the watch for difficulties and objections, they easily find or make what they seek; and as quarrelsome people readily pick a quarrel, so do they in a moment quarrel with a straw if it seem to lie awry across their reasoning, counting, calculating path. But by so doing they only fall into their own nets, while the godly escape. (Psalms 141:10.)

Truly does Wisdom speak—"All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge." (Proverbs 8:8-9.) But being destitute of a heavenly mind and of that divine anointing which teaches of all things, and is truth and no lie, (1 John 2:27,) such men "speak evil of those things which they know not; and even what they know naturally," as arithmetic and logic, "in these things they corrupt themselves," (Jude 1:10,) abasing their very knowledge to attempt to prove God a liar.

4. This manifestation of Christ to the soul by faith, also produces submission to the will of God, a leaving of all things in his hand, and a laying at his feet a thousand difficult questions in providence and in grace, which at other times, the more they are thought of, the more do they rack and perplex the mind, both as regards ourselves and others. We cannot enlarge upon this point, but it is surprising to find what hard knots a believing view of Christ unties—what crooked things it makes straight—and what a complete answer it is to the sullen objections of our perverse spirit—bearing the soul, as it were, on a full wave into a harbor of peaceful rest—over those sunken rocks on which so many gallant ships sink.

5. Another effect which we must name as produced by the personal manifestation of Christ to the soul is the place which it gives the precept in the heart. All who study with any measure of divine

light and life the pages of the New Testament, and pay any attention to such portions of it as the sermon on the mount and the preceptive parts of the Epistles must clearly see and feel what an important place the precept occupies in the inspired word. Take, for instance, the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians, and it will be found that at least half of each of these epistles is occupied with the precept, blended it is true with doctrine and experience, but enforcing, in the plainest manner, practical obedience. But these holy, godly, practical precepts are in our day either wholly overlooked, or distorted into legal duties—the reason being that they have not that place in the heart which they have in the word of truth. And yet by this preceptive portion of the gospel are explained and enforced all that practical obedience, all that godliness of life, all that holiness of walk and conversation which mark the followers of the Lamb, and whereby their heavenly Father is glorified. But as this obedience must be spiritual not carnal—evangelical and not legal—of the heart and not of the lip—to the glory of God and not to the exaltation of self—it can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. As, therefore, the Lord Jesus, under the power and unction of the Holy Spirit, reveals himself to the soul, and takes his place as Lord of the heart, obedience to the precept is produced by the same power and influence as the faith, hope, and love by and in which he is received. The precept, therefore, under these divine influences, comes into its right, its scriptural, and spiritual position—occupying that place in the heart which it occupies in the word of truth—and is seen and felt to harmonize in the most gracious and blessed manner with every holy doctrine, every precious promise, and every sweet manifestation.

We would willingly enlarge here, and show how productive this is of all practical obedience in attending to the ordinances of God’s house—and how it embraces and extends itself to every relationship in life—and is as remote from all Antinomian carelessness and licentiousness as it is from legal service and Pharisaic righteousness. But as it is in our mind, the Lord enabling us, on some future occasion to make this point the subject of our Meditations, as being in our view, though much disregarded, yet full of profitable instruction, we shall content ourselves with thus briefly touching on one of the most important and, we must say, least understood points of our most holy faith.

6. Our limits warn us to close, and yet we cannot bring our subject to a conclusion without naming another point closely connected with the power and authority of the word of God on the heart as established by a believing view of the Son of God. It is this—A firm support is needed amid all the storms of temptation, seas of affliction, and seasons of desertion and distress which are the appointed lot of the mystical members of Christ, and whereby they are conformed to his suffering image. We see how our gracious Lord was supported and upheld by the word of God from the moment when he said, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is within my heart," (Psalms 40:7-8,) to his last expiring breath, when, with the word of truth in his mouth, he meekly said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (Psalms 31:5; Luke 23:46.) (To open and unfold this point is beyond our present scope, and to handle it properly would require much wisdom and grace; but that our blessed Lord was upheld by the power of the word is plain from the history of the temptation in the wilderness, from his words to Peter before his crucifixion, (Matthew 27:53-54,) to the disciples going to Emmaus, and to the rest of the disciples just before his ascension. (Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-47.) That the Scriptures should be fulfilled, and the will of God revealed in them be fully accomplished, held him up in his path of suffering obedience.) In a similar way the power of the word is needed to hold up

the soul in seasons of trial and temptation. Abraham’s case is full to the point. What but the promise that he should have a son by Sarah held him up for five-and-twenty years, in the very face of carnal reason and unbelief, against hope believing in hope, until after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise? (Romans 4:18; Hebrews 6:15.) And what but the word of the Lord strengthened him to offer up Isaac, when grown up, as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah? This hanging of the soul upon the word is beautifully unfolded in Psalms 119:1-176, in such expressions as, "Your word have I hid in my heart;" (Psalms 119:11;) "I trust in your word;" (Psalms 119:42;) "I have hoped, or I hope in your word;" (Psalms 119:74, Psalms 119:81, Psalms 119:114, Psalms 119:147) "I rejoice at your word;" (Psalms 119:162) Your word is true from the beginning;" (Psalms 119:160) "Concerning your testimonies, I have known of old that you have founded them forever." (Psalms 119:152)

All these and similar expressions with which the Psalm is filled show how the man of God hung upon the word as the prop of his soul in every trying hour. "When the enemy," we read, "shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19.) But how? Not in a visionary way—but by the word applied with power, and thus believed, pleaded, hung upon, and its fulfillment patiently expected. But we must draw our Meditations to a close—not that the subject is exhausted, but because our limits warn us to restrain our pen.

It is not our intention to pursue the subject, at least not under its present form, but to close it with the closing year. We have not been able, indeed, to carry out our expressed intention, to show the aspect which the word bears to the world as well as to the Church, and what it will be in the hands and in the mouth of the great Judge to all who have heard it, but disbelieved or disobeyed it. Let it be sufficient for the present to quote the Lord’s own words—"There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day." (John 12:48.) And now what remains but for us to commend our Meditations on "The Authority and Power of the Word of God" to his most gracious disposal, in the prayerful hope that he who has magnified his word above all his name (Psalms 138:2) will attend with the unction of his grace our feeble attempt to set it forth in the light of Scripture and experience. And should he kindly condescend to bless it to any of his dear family, to him writer and reader will gladly unite in ascribing all the praise.

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12.0.1. The Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ

The

True, Proper, and

Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ The Only Begotten Son of God

12.0.3. Copyright Information

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12.0.4. Author’s Preface

Author’s Preface When I was first led to advocate the true, proper and eternal Sonship of our most blessed Lord in the pages of the "Gospel Standard," and thus, as far as ability was given me, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," I little anticipated two consequences which have mainly sprung out of my attempt to set forth truth and to beat down error: 1. The long, angry, and widely-spread controversy to which it has given rise; 2. That I should publish my papers on the subject in their present form. On these two points, therefore, I wish to offer a few words of explanation, as my readers may be thus, perhaps, better prepared to enter upon the perusal of the following pages.

1. As regards, then, the first point—the controversy which has thence arisen in the churches—let us take, as far as we can, an impartial view of all the circumstances of the case, not a narrow, one-sided glance of a part, but a full and fair consideration of the whole. I know that there are some who are so for peace at any price, that they would sooner almost surrender truth itself than see the churches vexed with strife. How far such are "valiant for the truth upon earth" I must leave others of keener sight and sounder judgment than I possess to determine; but, as far as regards peace principles, and that they are to be paramount to every other consideration, I read that the Lord Himself has said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). And I am sure that if the good soldiers of Jesus Christ wield aright that indispensable part of the whole armour of God, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," it must needs cut, and that sharply too, both error and those who hold it; 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 (Hebrews 4:12); and if it be all this, it may well pierce even to the dividing asunder of churches, and be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of both members and ministers. Of what use is a sword which will neither pierce nor cut? A blade that has neither point nor edge may as well be kept in the scabbard. If, then, we take but a partial, one-sided view of the question, and letting the sword fall out of our hands, rather weep over the miseries of war than fight with holy zeal for the honour and glory of God, we may grieve that this controversy has harassed churches, divided ministers, and separated chief friends. I can make full allowance for the feeling, for with all my "acerbity of temper" and "bitter spirit," so freely and, I must say, so unjustly imputed to me, I frankly confess that when I saw the effects of the contention, and how it was disturbing the peace of a church in London to which I was much united, not to mention others, I did myself feel a measure of this grief. But that feeling has passed away, and I now rather rejoice that the controversy has arisen, for I fully believe that great and lasting good will come out of it. Before, then, we give way to what may prove to be mere fleshly feeling, should we not first ask ourselves as well as others, Has not a bold declaration of truth always produced contention and division? Has it not always caused confusion and strife? And can it ever be otherwise? Must truth never speak because error takes offence? The lovers of peace at any cost may say, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and

be still" (Jeremiah 47:6). But what must be the answer? "How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? There hath He appointed it" (Jeremiah 47:7). If the Lord, then, has given the sword a charge against error, how can it be quiet, or rest, and be still in the scabbard? Has there not been a cause for this controversy? I believe there has, and a strong one, too. This controversy has made it evident to me, and doubtless to many others besides myself, that a vast amount of error has been secretly covered up in the churches professing the doctrines of discriminating grace. "Baldness was come upon Gaza" (Jeremiah 47:5); "Gray hairs are here and there upon Ephraim, yet he knoweth it not " (Hosea 7:9); and this baldness, and these grey hairs, which before had escaped notice, have now been brought to light. I had been lone persuaded in my own mind from various indications which had come before my eyes, that there was much error in the churches professing the distinguishing doctrines of grace concealed from view; but I honestly confess, I was not prepared to find such an amount of it, that so many were tainted by it, or that it had taken such deep root in their minds. A storm is sometimes needed to clear the troubled sky, a hot furnace to separate the dross, and a sharp war to settle a lasting peace; and thus even a warm controversy may sometimes be beneficial to the church of God. In fact, the walls of our spiritual Zion have only been built as were in ancient days the walls of Jerusalem. "For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me" (Nehemiah 4:18). Had all the Lord’s servants been " fearful and afraid," like two-thirds of Gideon’s army (Judges 7:3), truth would have long ago been surrendered, without even a show of battle, into the hands of the Midianites. But whoever "being armed and carrying bows turn back in the day of battle" (Psalms 78:9), truth will suffer no defeat. Pure gold need fear no flame; thorough honesty need fear no detection, and heavenly truth need shrink from no examination. A doctrine which has stood more than 1,800 years, and withstood all the assaults of men and devils; a great and glorious truth which God has written as with a ray of light in the inspired Scriptures, and revealed by His Spirit and grace to thousands of believing hearts, is not likely to be overturned in these latter days by the tongue or pen of a few Baptist ministers, whatever natural ability they may possess, and however angrily they may preach or write. Neither their arguments nor their spirit will much move those who have received the love of the truth, and to whom Jesus has revealed Himself as God’s beloved Son, in whom He is ever well pleased. One of their leading men may call it "a figment" and "a piece of twaddle," and may pronounce it "effete and ready to vanish away"; but it will live when both he and they are in their graves, and be new and thriving when their very names are forgotten. What hosts of errors and heresies have passed away! but truth lives and flourishes in immortal youth. So will it be with this present controversy. When we shall all have passed away from this present scene; when the places where we have lived our little span of life, where we have preached, and written, and argued, and contended, shall know us no more, Jesus will still be what He ever was, the Son of the Father in truth and love, and will still have a people on earth who will believe in, and love Him as the only-begotten Son of God. But should a time ever come, which God in His infinite mercy forbid, when the churches of truth in this land shall abandon their faith in the eternal Sonship of Jesus, it needs no prophet to foretell their doom. Judgment will soon be at the door, for the salt will have lost its savour, and will be cast out to be trodden under foot of men, and the candlestick having ceased to shine will be removed out of its place.

2. And now for a few words why I send forth this little work. It is because I wish to leave on record my living and dying testimony to the true and real Sonship of Jesus, and that in a more convenient

and permanent form than could be the case were it confined to the pages in which it first appeared. It is a truth which has for many years been very precious to my soul, and one which I trust I can say the Lord Himself on one occasion sealed very powerfully on my heart. From the very first moment that I received the love of the truth into my heart, and cast anchor within the veil, I believed that Jesus was the true and real Son of God; but rather more than sixteen years ago God's own testimony to His Sonship was made a special blessing to me. It pleased the Lord in November, 1844, to lay me for three weeks on a bed of sickness. During the latter portion of this time I was much favoured in my soul. My heart was made soft, and my conscience tender. I read the Word with great sweetness, had much of a spirit of prayer, and was enabled to confess my sins with a measure of real penitence and contrition of spirit. One morning, about 10 o'clock, after reading, if I remember right, some of Dr. Owen's "Meditations on the Glory of Christ," which had been much blessed to me during that illness, I had a gracious manifestation of the Lord Jesus to my soul. I saw nothing by the bodily eye, but it was as if I could see the blessed Lord by the eye of faith just over the foot of my bed; and I saw in the vision of faith three things in Him which filled me with admiration and adoration: 1, His eternal Godhead; 2, His pure and holy Manhood; and 3, His glorious Person as God-Man. What I felt at the sight I leave those to judge who have ever had a view, by faith, of the Lord of life and glory, and they will know best what holy desires and tender love flowed forth, and how I begged of Him to come and take full possession of my heart. It did not last very long, but it left a blessed influence upon my soul; and if ever I felt that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace, it was as the fruit of that view by faith of the glorious Person of Christ, and as the effect of that manifestation. And now came that which makes me so firm a believer in the true and real Sonship of Jesus; for either on the same morning, or on the next—for I cannot now distinctly recollect which it was, but it was when my soul was under the same heavenly influence—I was reading the account of the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-27), and when I came to the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him," they were sealed with such power on my heart, and I had such a view of His being the true and real Son of God as I shall never forget. The last clause, "Hear ye Him," was especially sealed upon my soul, and faith and obedience sprang up in sweet response to the command. I did indeed want to "hear Him " as the Son of God, and that as such He might ever speak to my soul. Need anyone, therefore, who knows and loves the truth, and who has felt the power of God's Word upon his heart, wonder why I hold so firmly the true and real Sonship of the blessed Lord? and if God indeed bade me on that memorable morning "hear Him," what better authority can I want than God's own testimony, "This is My beloved Son"? For, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son." "He that thus believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself " (1 John 5:9-10). But if he has not this inward witness, and for the want of it listens to carnal reason, need we wonder if he make God a liar? Truly did the blessed Lord say in the days of His, flesh, "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" (Matthew 11:27). It has long been a settled point in my soul, "That a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27), and therefore, if the Son of God has never been revealed with power to their heart, how can they receive Him as such? Happy are they who can say by a sweet revelation of Him to their soul, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ.

This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). May I ever hear Him and Him only, and may He speak not only to me, but through me, to the hearts of His dear family; and as He has enabled me thus far to defend His dearest title and worthiest Name, may He now smile upon the attempt to give it a more enduring form; and to Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Israel’s Triune God, shall be all the glory.

J. C. PHILPOT.

12.01. Chapter I

Chapter I The language of complaint put by the Lord into the mouth of one of His prophets of old was, "Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter; yea, truth faileth" (Isaiah 59:14-15). May not the same or similar language issue from the lips of His faithful servants now when they look around and see the reception that truth for the most part meets within our day and generation? As regards the general mass of what is called "the religious world," may we not justly say "Truth is fallen in the street"—despised and trampled under foot as a worthless thing? And as regards churches and ministers of clearer views and a sounder creed, in too many instances "truth faileth," either in purity of doctrine, power of experience, or godliness of life. And yet, what possession can be so dear to the Church of God as the truth as it is in Jesus? To her it is committed by the Lord Himself as a most sacred and precious deposit (John 17:8; Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 4:11-16; Ephesians 5:25-27; Colossians 1:18-24; Colossians 2:6-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Timothy 3:15; Revelation 3:22). Her very standing, therefore, as a witness for God upon earth (Isaiah 43:10; Acts 1:8; Hebrews 12:1), as well as all her present and future blessedness, are involved in her maintenance of it. Men may despise the truth from ignorance of its worth and value, or may hate it from the natural enmity of the carnal mind, and from its arraying itself against their sins and errors; but it is the only really valuable thing on earth, since sin defaced the image of God in man. Lest, therefore, it be lost out of the earth, the Lord has lodged it in two safe repositories—the Scriptures of truth (Daniel 10:21; 2 Timothy 3:15-17) and the hearts of His saints. The Scriptures, it is true, are in the hands of well nigh every man; but to understand them, to believe them, to be saved and sanctified by them, is the peculiar privilege of the Church of God. Therefore her liberty, her sanctification, her position as the pure and unsullied bride of the Lord the Lamb, nay, her salvation itself, are all involved in her knowing and maintaining the truth as revealed externally in the Scriptures, and as revealed internally in the soul. Do we say this at a venture, or in harmony with the oracles of the living God? "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). Then without knowing the truth there is no gospel liberty. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Then without the application of the truth to the heart there can be no sanctification. "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). Then another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel than the truth corrupt the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ, seduce the bride from her rightful Head and Husband, and are as much the work of Satan as his beguiling Eve in Paradise (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Then without receiving the love of the truth there is no salvation. Thus we see that without a vital, experimental knowledge of the truth, there is no liberty of spirit, no sanctification of heart, no union with Christ, and no salvation of the soul. And what is a religion worth when all these blessings are taken from it? What the salt is worth

when it has lost its savour; what the chaff is worth when the grain is severed from it; what the tares are worth when the wheat is gathered into the garner. How necessary, then, it is for churches and ministers to hold the truth with a firm, unyielding hand, and to give no place to error, no, not for an hour! Remember this, churches and ministers, deacons and members, and all ye that fear God in the assemblies of the saints, that there can be no little errors; we mean as regards the vital, fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith. There may be differences of opinion on minor points, as on church government, the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, the restoration of the Jews, the nature of the Millennium, the interpretation of particular passages of scripture; but on such fundamental points as the blessed Trinity, the Person of Christ, the personality and work of the Holy Ghost, no deviation can be allowed from the straight and narrow line of divine truth. Error on any one of these vital points is from Satan; and he never introduces little errors; all, all are full of deadly poison. There was no great quantity of arsenic in the Bradford lozenges, not much strychnine in Palmer’s doses, but death and destruction were in both; or where not death, disease and suffering for life. Error in itself is deadly. In this sense, the tongue of error is "full of deadly poison" (James 3:8), and of all erroneous men we may say, "With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips" (Romans 3:13). "Their wine," with which they intoxicate themselves and others, "is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps" (Deuteronomy 32:33). The patient may vomit up the poison, but it is poison not the less. Do not, then, by reading erroneous books, hearing erroneous ministers, or associating with erroneous people try the strength of your faith, or presume upon the soundness of your constitution. When you have tested the error by the inspired word of truth, and by the inward teaching of the blessed Spirit in your own heart, label it POISON! and "touch not, taste not, handle it not," any more than you would arsenic or prussic acid.

We are grieved to see an old error now brought forward and, we fear, spreading. which, however speciously covered up, is really nothing less than denying the Son of God. The error we mean is the denial of the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Only-begotten of the Father before the foundation of the world. If the Lord has done anything for us by His Spirit and grace, He has wrought in our heart two things—a love to His truth and a love to His people. By both of these principles, therefore, we feel constrained to oppose this error to the utmost of our power, and to contend for what has been long commended to our conscience as the truth of God. This is no new question with us, no fresh doctrine which we have never before thought of or considered, but one the reality, power and sweetness of which we have for many years known and felt, for our very hope of eternal life hangs upon it. We do not expect, indeed, by any arguments to convince those who have deeply drunk into the spirit of error. It is a rare thing for any such to vomit up the sweet morsel which they have eaten in secret; and of most of them, we fear it may be said, as being entangled in the snares of the mystical harlot, "For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life" (Proverbs 2:18-19). We rather write for those who tremble at God’s Word, who have been made willing to receive the love of the truth that they may be saved thereby, and who dread above all things to be left to love and embrace a lie. And these often need instructing, for many of the saints of God are weak in judgment, and are thus laid open to the snares of Satan. They would not willingly, wilfully embrace error, but being simple, or not well rooted and established in the truth, they cannot discern false doctrine when speciously wrapped up in a cloud of words and backed with arguments and an array of texts, the meaning of which is, for the most part. perverted and

distorted. Some, too, are drawn aside by favourite ministers of more knowledge and greater experience, as they think, than themselves; and others view the whole question as a mere controversy of words, and that it is an obscure and abstruse doctrine which they heartily wish had never been brought forward to divide churches, perplex inquirers, and separate chief friends. But such arguments are always at hand when truth begins to speak with decided voice. God's servants are only His mouth as they "take forth the precious from the vile" (Jeremiah 15:19); and when they wield the sword of the Spirit it may well sever churches and wound individuals, for "it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow" (Hebrews 4:12). The policy of Satan has always been to cry out against the truth as causing confusion, disturbing the general peace of the church, and filling the world with division and strife. It was so in the days of Athanasius, when he, almost single-handed, fought against Arianism. It was so in the days of Luther, when he began to oppose Popery; and it was so with our Puritan ancestors, when they testified against the various corruptions in doctrine and life which prevailed in their day. Those who from self-interest, love of carnal ease, entanglement in error, or cowardice of spirit, wished things to remain quiet as they were, all lifted up their voice against the disturbers of the general peace. We would say, then, to all who are zealous for the truth on earth, Do not think that this is a matter of little import, that we are plunging into a controversy about mere words, and troubling the churches with tithes of mint, anise and cummin, and omitting the weightier matters of judgment, mercy and faith. Examine the Scriptures for yourselves, especially the First Epistle of John, and then say whether the true Sonship of Christ is a matter of little importance. And as we hope, with God's help and blessing, to examine the subject prayerfully and carefully, in the light of His teaching, and as revealed in the sacred Scripture, we call upon our spiritual readers, not merely to give a passing glance to the testimonies that we shall bring forward, but to weigh them well in the balance of the sanctuary, and see for themselves whether we are contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, or, laying aside the commandment of God, are holding the tradition of men. A few preliminary observations, however, may be desirable in order to lay down a clear track for us and our readers to walk in.

1. Our first rule must be that the Scriptures shall be our only standard of appeal, and these taken in their plain, literal meaning, without perverting or mystifying their evident signification. 2. All appeals to natural reasoning, as distinct from Scripture, and all carnal conclusions opposed to the word of truth must be discarded, and we must be content to receive the truth as little children in the simplicity of faith, without attempting to comprehend what is necessarily to our finite understanding incomprehensible. 3. Knowing our ignorance, and that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven, we should seek the promised teaching of the Holy Spirit, who alone can guide into all truth, but who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the soul, and communicates that sacred unction which "teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (See the following scriptures: Matthew 11:27; John 6:45; John 14:21; John 14:26; John 16:14; John 1:5; James 1:5; 1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27.) 4. We must also have a deep conviction that nothing is more precious than the truth as it is in Jesus, and be made willing to buy it at any price, and not to sell it for any consideration. Whatever we let go, friends, wife, children, house or lands, name, fame or character, we must never give up the truth of God. To do so would be to prove that we never received it from God's mouth (Proverbs 2:6), but were taught it by the precept of men (Isaiah 29:13).

We lay down, then, at the very outset, as a standing mark for every spiritual eye these two points: 1. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and 2. That a belief in Him as such is essential to salvation. A few scriptures will decide this; the main difficulty being, where there are so many, which to fix upon for that purpose; but let us examine carefully and prayerfully the following:— 1, The first shall be the noble testimony of Peter. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-16). Peter's confession embraced two things: 1, that Jesus was the Christ; 2, that He was the Son of the living God. By acknowledging the first, he declared his belief that He was the promised Messiah, the anointed One, whom all the prophets had spoken of, and whose coming at that period the saints of that day, such as Simeon, Anna, and those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem, were anxiously expecting (Luke 2:26; Luke 2:36; Luke 2:38). By the second he acknowledged that Jesus was not only the Christ, the expected, long-looked-for Messiah, but the true, actual, and real Son of God. It is evident from the confession of Peter, of Nathanael (John 1:49), and of Martha (John 11:27), as well as from the adjuration of the high priest (Matthew 26:63), and the preaching of Paul in the synagogues (Acts 9:20), that the Jews in our Lord's time identified the Christ, the promised Messiah, with the Son of God. It was most evidently the faith of the Jewish church that the Messiah was no less than God's own Son. The question, then, with them was not whether the Christ, the promised Messiah, was the true and proper Son of God or not, but whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ; for if He were the Christ they knew He must be the Son of God, and that in His divine nature. And what other idea could they attach to the Christ being the Son of God than that He was His real and actual Son? If not wholly impossible, it was most improbable that such ideas could have been entertained by them as that He was the Son of God by virtue of the covenant, or of His complex Person, or any of those evasions of the simplicity of truth whereby His real and proper Sonship is now denied. To understand, then, this testimony from the mouth of Peter a little more clearly, we offer the following considerations. The blessed Lord had sought, so to speak, to bring His disciples to a clear and decided recognition of His divine Sonship by asking them two pointed questions: 1. "Whom do men, not you, but men generally, say that I the Son of Man am?" He called Himself "the Son of man," that He might draw forth more clearly out of their bosom their confession that He was the Son of God, for as such they had seen His glory and received Him (John 1:12-14). The disciples told Him the various opinions which men entertained about Him. All saw and acknowledged that the Spirit of the prophet's was in Him, and therefore some said He was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Then, to put the matter home personally to themselves, the blessed Lord asked them another, and- a most searching question, "But whom say ye that I am? as though He should mean, "Never mind what others think and say, tell Me for yourselves what you, My own immediate disciples, think and say." How nobly, then, how boldly, how believingly did Peter at once answer in the name of all the rest, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Did the blessed Lord repel the confession, or rebuke the confessor? No; on the contrary, He pronounced him "blessed," and declared that "flesh and blood had not revealed it unto him but His Father which is in heaven." Do not these words of the blessed Lord clearly show that it was by divine revelation Peter knew and believed Jesus was the Son of the living God? And are not all blessed with faithful Peter, to whom the Father has revealed the

same divine mystery, who believe as he believed, and confess as he confessed? But if the Father has not revealed it to their heart, need we wonder that men neither know, believe, nor confess it, but stumble at the stumbling-stone laid in Zion? We shall have occasion to refer to this passage again, and shall, therefore, dwell upon it no longer, but pass on to another, our present object being not so much to open the texts which we bring forward as to show from the word of truth the solemn importance of a right faith on this fundamental point.

2. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:35-36). How clearly is believing on the Son of God made the test of life and salvation; how needful, then, to know who the Son of God is, that we may have a right faith in His divine Person, and not make a mistake in a matter of life and death. You may think that you believe on the Son of God, but may be deceiving yourself for want of a divine revelation of Him to your soul. You do not deny that He is the Son of God in your sense of the words, but may deny that He is the true, proper, real and only-begotten Son of God by His very mode of subsistence as a Person in the Trinity; or you may be looking to a name, a title, or an office instead of the Son of the Father in truth and love.

3. Take another testimony: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:23). Do you deny the eternal Sonship of Christ? Are you, as far as lies in your power, destroying that intimate and ineffable relationship which He bears to the Father as the only-begotten Son of God? O what dangerous ground are you treading! Beware lest you deny the Son, and so have not God as your Father and Friend, but fall into His hands as a consuming fire. Are not these testimonies enough?

4. But, to leave you without excuse on a matter of such importance, take as one more witness that most comprehensive of declarations proclaiming, as in a voice of thunder, those who have and those who have not life: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:9—12). But you may answer, ""We believe all this. We are as firm believers in the Son of God as you can be. This is not the point of dispute between us. Where we differ from you is this, that we do not believe He is the eternal Son of God; for as a father must exist before a son, it is a self-contradictory proposition to assert that He can be, as a Son, co-eternal with the Father." That it is not so we shall hereafter attempt to show, but for the present we will simply ask you this question: "Do you mean to receive nothing as divine truth which involves apparent contradictions?" We say apparent, for we cannot allow them to be real. If you answer, "I can receive nothing which I cannot understand and reconcile to my reasoning mind," then you had better be a Socinian at once, for that is just his very position. He says, "I cannot receive the doctrine of the Trinity, for it contradicts the Unity of God, which I receive as a fundamental truth; and to assert that three are one and one is three, is to contradict all my fundamental notions of number." And thus he stumbles at the stumbling-stone laid in Zion. You see his error and the fallaciousness of his reasoning, but his argument is only your own in another form. You say, "I cannot receive the doctrine that Jesus is the eternal Son of God because it denies His co-eternity

and co-equality with Him, for a father is necessarily prior to a son, and a father is necessarily superior to a son." Certainly, if we carry earthly reasonings into the courts of heaven, and measure the being and nature of God by the being and nature of man. But the very idea of eternity excludes priority and posteriority of time, and the very nature of God excludes superiority and inferiority. When, then, we say that Jesus is the eternal Son of God we declare His co-eternity, and when we say that He is the Son of God, as God the Son, we declare His co-equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost. But you and the Socinian really stand on the same ground—the ground of natural reason and carnal argument. He draws a natural conclusion that three cannot be one, and therefore rejects the Trinity; you draw a natural conclusion that a father must Exist before, and be superior to, his son, and as you believe the Lord Jesus to be a Person in the Godhead, you therefore reject on that ground the eternity of His Sonship. Thus, neither he nor you submit your mind to the Scriptures. You both really stand upon infidel ground, for both of you prefer your own reasonings and your preconceived notions to the truth as revealed in the Word of God. That speaks again and again of "the only-begotten Son of God," which, as we shall by-and-by show, refers to His divine nature, as in the following passage: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). It is evident from these words that there was a vital distinction between those who received Christ and those who received Him not; for "He came unto His own [literally, property or estate It is in the neuter in the original, literally, ‘‘His own things;" the second "His own" is in the masculine, i.e., "His own men."], and His own [people by profession and outward covenant] received Him not." But there were those who did receive Him, and they did so because they "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" for they " beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The blessed Lord is here most plainly declared to be "the only-begotten of the Father." You cannot, therefore, deny that He is the begotten of the Father in a way in which none else could be begotten, and that He has a peculiar glory as such. This cannot refer to His human nature, for we read, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). What do these words imply, then, but that whereas no man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son of God has seen Him, for He is, that is, from all eternity, as the eternal "I AM" in the bosom of the Father. The human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ was not in the bosom of the Father when the Lord spake, but the divine was, for the words imply union, and yet distinctness—the closest intimacy, and yet the relative personality of the Father and the Son. And so again the passage, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life " (John 3:16), as plainly declares that Christ was the only-begotten Son of God before He came into this world. When did God love the world? Surely before He gave "His only-begotten Son," for His love to the world moved Him to bestow that unspeakable gift. Then He was certainly His "only-begotten Son" before He was given and before He came; and how could He be this but in His divine nature? for His human did not then exist, except in the mind of God. How plain the testimony to a believing heart that the Lord Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God by His very mode of subsistence; and is it not greatly to be feared that those who reject His eternal Sonship fall under that solemn sentence, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God"? (John 3:18.) Though hidden from our finite understanding, surely the Lord knew the mystery of His own generation; and is it not more

consistent with the obedience of faith to believe the Lord's own testimony concerning Himself than to cavil, disbelieve, or explain it away, because such a doctrine contradicts the conclusions of your reasoning mind? You censure the Arminians for saying that they cannot receive election because it contradicts their first notions, their primary, fundamental principles, both of the justice and love of God; and yet you, on precisely similar grounds, reject the eternal Sonship of Christ, as contradicting your natural views of priority and posteriority. So the Jews rejected and crucified the Lord of life and glory, because His appearance in the flesh as a poor carpenter's son contradicted all their pre-conceived opinions of the dignity and glory of the promised Messiah; and in a similar way infidels reject miracles as contrary to their fundamental opinions of the laws of nature being unalterable. Thus to reject the eternal Sonship of the blessed Lord merely because it contradicts some of your preconceived opinions is most dangerous ground to take, and is to set up your authority against that of the Word of truth.

Any observations of ours would but weaken the force of the testimonies that we have brought forward from the Word of truth. You that "tremble at God's word" (Isaiah 66:2) and "hide it in your heart," that you may cleanse your way by taking heed thereto, and not sin against the Lord (Psalms 119:9; Psalms 119:11), weigh these scriptures well, for they are the faithful and true sayings of God (Revelation 22:6), the testimony of Him who cannot lie. But it will be said that we are drawing nice and needless distinctions, and that all who profess to believe in the Trinity, the Deity and atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and the other leading truths of the gospel, believe in and acknowledge the Sonship of Christ. Yes, in lip; for they dare not in so many words deny so cardinal and fundamental a doctrine; but many who think and call themselves believers in the Son of God do all they can to nullify and explain away that very Sonship which they profess to believe. But as it is necessary to point out and overthrow error before we can lay down and build up truth, we shall, as briefly as the subject allows, first show the different modes in which this fundamental doctrine of our most holy faith has been perverted or denied.

There are four leading ways in which erroneous men have, at different periods of the church's history, sought to nullify the vital doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Jesus : —

1. Some place the Sonship of Christ in His incarnation, as if He was not the Son of God before He assumed our nature in the womb of the Virgin. The main prop of this erroneous view is the language of the angel to the Virgin Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). As this text is much insisted upon by those who deny that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God prior to His incarnation, it demands an attentive consideration. All Trinitarians—and with them we have chiefly to do upon this point—allow the three following truths in common with us: 1. The union of two natures, the human and divine, in the Person of the Lord Jesus. 2. That the human nature of the Lord Jesus was formed of the flesh of the Virgin by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. 3. That He who was born at Bethlehem was called the Son of God. Thus far there is no difference between the opponents of Christ's eternal Sonship and ourselves. But now we come to a most important difference, in which lies the whole gist of the question, viz., whether He was the Son of God before His incarnation, or became such by it. Those who hold the latter view rest mainly on the text which we have just quoted. Let us, then, carefully and prayerfully examine the passage. The text asserts that "that Holy Thing which should be born" of the Virgin "should be called the Son of God." It does not say it should be

or become the Son of God, but should be called so. Now, was the human nature of the blessed Lord ever called the Son of God as distinct from the divine? As far as our reading of the Scripture extends, we think we can safely assert that His human nature never was called the Son of God, nor can a single passage of Holy Writ, we believe, be produced where the pure humanity of Jesus, as distinct from His divine nature, is spoken of under that name. We most fully admit that in His complex Person He is called again and again the Son of God, for the union of the two natures is so intimate that after His conception or birth the actings of the two natures, though separable, are not usually separated in the Word of truth. But the angel evidently meant that the Child to be born should be called the Son of God as His usual prevailing title. This, however, was not true of the human nature of our blessed Lord, which never was called the Son of God, as distinct from His divine, but was true of Him as uniting two natures in one divine Person. The angel, therefore, did not mean that His holy human nature, but that He who wore that nature should be called the Son of God. This pure humanity was called "that Holy Thing" for two reasons: 1. To show that it was intrinsically and essentially holy—not involved in the Fall of Adam, nor corrupted by the taint of original sin, but, though of the flesh of the Virgin, sanctified by the Holy Ghost at the moment of its conception, under His overshadowing operation and influence. These two natures are distinctly named and kept separate in that memorable passage of the great Apostle—that mighty bulwark against the floods of error and heresy: "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3-4). There Jesus Christ is declared to be "God's Son," and yet "made of the seed of David according to the flesh;" therefore the Son of God before so made, and not becoming so by being made, and "declared" [margin, "determined" The literal meaning of the Greek word is, "distinctly marked out," or "clearly defined."] "to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."

Besides which, were Jesus the Son of God by virtue of His miraculous conception, He might rather be called the Son of the Holy Ghost, which is a thought shocking to every spiritual mind.

It may, with God's help and blessing, tend to throw some light on the subject if we compare the passage in Luke (Luke 1:35) with the parallel place in Matthew (Matthew 1:23), where the evangelist quotes "what was spoken of the Lord by the prophet." The prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14), as quoted by the evangelist, was, "Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). The declaration to the Virgin (Luke 1:35), that "the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadow her," was to explain to her the mystery of her conception, and is therefore a passage strictly parallel to that just quoted from Matthew. The Son born of the virgin was according to Matthew (Matthew 1:23) to be called "Emmanuel, which being interpreted as, God with us," or God in our nature. "The Holy Thing," born of the Virgin, was, according to Luke, "to be called the Son of God." Now, in the same way as Christ was God before He was called Emmanuel, so was He the Son of God before, as being born of the Virgin, He was called the Son of God; and His being so born no more made Him the Son of God than His being so born made Him God. The Son of God could not be seen or known by the sons of men except as born of the Virgin; but His being so born did not constitute Him the Son of God. In the same way the resurrection of Christ is sometimes spoken of as "a begetting" Him to be the Son of God, as we find Paul speaking at Antioch. "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was

made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts 13:32-33). As this passage stands, taken in its literal, apparent signification, it would certainly seem to mean that Christ became the Son of God by His resurrection, for the Apostle applies the words of the second Psalm, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee," to the raising of Christ from the dead. But, as our opponents themselves will admit, the resurrection of Christ did not make Him the Son of God, for He was that before, as is evident from the confession of Peter, but it manifested Him to be such. The incarnation and the resurrection stand on the same footing as manifestations of the Son of God. By the incarnation He was manifested, by the resurrection He was declared to be the Son of God; but neither that by which lie was manifested, nor that by which He was declared, made Him the Son of God, for He was so before either manifestation or declaration. As far as we can understand the views of those that we are at present combating, they hold that the Lord Jesus Christ, before His incarnation in the womb of the Virgin, was the eternal Word, but not the eternal Son; but when He assumed flesh of the Virgin, then, for the first time, He became the Son of God. They therefore hold that He is the Son of God by virtue of His complex Person—in other words, that He is not the Son of God by virtue of His human nature, nor the Son of God by virtue of His divine nature, but the Son of God as uniting two natures in one glorious Person. But the mere fact of the Word taking flesh would not make Him the Son of God if He was not so before, for there is no connection between incarnation and Sonship. That by His incarnation He became the Son of man as scriptural and intelligible, but that by the same incarnation He became the Son of God is as unintelligible as it is unscriptural. Indeed, He is the Word because He is the Son, not the Son because He is the Word. The Son is the prior title and the foundation of the second. Why is Christ called the Word? Because by Him God the Father speaks. But why does the Father speak by Him? Because He is His only-begotten Son. Who so fit to speak for the Father as the Son? Who so knows His mind? Who is so "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person"? We see, then, that He did not become the Son by being first the Word, but is the Word because He is first the Son. But the clearest, plainest, and most decisive way of overthrowing this wild theory, this utterly unscriptural view, is to show from the Word of truth that Jesus was the Son of God before His incarnation. If this point can be proved from the Word of God, their error is at once cut from under them, and falls before the inspired testimony, as Dagon fell before the ark. To our mind nothing can be more plainly revealed in the Word of truth than that the Lord Jesus existed as the Son of God before His assuming flesh. But as this is the controverted point, let us examine some of these testimonies, they being so numerous and so plain that the difficulty is which to name and which to omit. But take the following from the Lord’s own lips, and examine carefully and weigh prayerfully the Lord’s own declaration concerning Himself: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. (John 3:16). God is here declared so to have loved the world that "He gave His only-begotten Son." Now must He not have existed as His Son before He gave Him? If I give a person a thing, my giving it does not change the nature of the object given, does not make it different from what it was before I gave it. So, if God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, He must surely have been His only-begotten Son before He gave Him. In fact, the truth proclaimed by the blessed Lord is this, the amazing love of God to the world, that it was so stupendously great that having an only-begotten Son He gave Him for the salvation of those in the world who should believe in His Name, that they might not otherwise perish. But His giving Him could not make Him His

only-begotten Son, because the wondrous love consisted in this, that though He was God's only-begotten Son, still He gave Him. Any other interpretation quite destroys the meaning and force of the passage.

Now look at another passage of almost similar character: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32.) The expression "spared not" is explained by the words which follow, "delivered Him up for us all," which are again fully explained by the Lord's own testimony before quoted, that God "gave His only-begotten Son." When, then, did God not spare His own Son? When He delivered Him up. When did He deliver Him up? When He gave Him. When did He give Him, but when He gave Him out of His own bosom to become incarnate? Thus by this connected chain it is most evidently shown that He was His Son before He delivered Him up; in other words, before He came into the world; which is the very point that we are seeking to establish. But observe, also, the words, "His only-begotten Son," literally, His peculiar, His proper Son; and observe, too, that He was His own, His peculiar, and proper Son before He spared Him not, but freely delivered Him. His delivering Him out of His bosom to become incarnate could not, and did not, make Him His Son any more than it made Him God. If words have meaning, He was His own true, real and proper Son before He was delivered up. And if so, was He not His own Son from all eternity, in other words, His eternal Son? the point of truth for which we are contending. But see how all the force and beauty of the passage are destroyed if the Lord Jesus were not the true and real Son of God before He was delivered up! The apostle wishes to show the certainty that God will freely give us all things. But why should we have this certainty that we may rest upon it as a most blessed and consoling, truth? It rests on this foundation, that God spared not His own [in the original "idiou," that is, His proper and peculiar] Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Here we have brought before our eyes the personal and peculiar love of a Father towards a Son. But though this love to Him as His own peculiar Son was so great, yet pitying our case, He did not spare to give Him up to sufferings for our sake. But if He were not the true and real Son of God, but became so by being incarnate, the whole argument falls to the ground in a moment. If Father, Son and Holy Ghost are mere names and titles, distinct from and independent of their very mode of subsistence, the Holy Ghost might have been the Father and sent the Son, or the Son might have been the Father and sent the Holy Ghost; for if the three Persons of the Trinity are three distinct subsistences, independent of each other, and have no such mutual and eternal relationship as these very names imply, there seems to be no reason why these titles might not have been interchanged. But take another passage of similar strength and purport: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). God is here declared to have "sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." If men were but willing to abide by the plain, positive declarations of the Holy Ghost, and not evade them by subtleties of their own reasoning mind, this passage would of itself fully decide the whole controversy. Several things in it will demand and abundantly repay our closest attention: 1. The love of God towards us. Was not this from all eternity? Are not His own words, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love"? (Jeremiah 31:2); 2. The manifestation, or proof, of that love, which was sending His only-begotten Son into the world; 3. The Person sent, which was no other than His only-begotten Son. Now was this love of God before or only just at the time when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us"? All must admit that it was before, for it was the moving cause which induced God to send His only-begotten Son. Then He could not become for the first time His

Son in the womb of the Virgin, but must have been His only-begotten Son before He was sent. The mere act of sending could not make Him to be His Son, if He was not so before. One would think that no elaborate train of reasoning was needful to prove this, and that simple faith in God's own testimony was amply sufficient. And so it would be were not men's minds so perverted by prejudice, and drugged and intoxicated by a spirit of error, that they obstinately refuse every argument, or even every scripture testimony that contradicts their pre-conceived views. But what unprejudiced mind does not see that sending a person to execute a certain task does not make him to be what he was not before? A master sends a servant to do a certain work; or a father bids a son to perform a certain errand; or a husband desires his wife to execute a certain commission which he has not time or opportunity to do himself; the servant does not cease to be a servant, the son to be a son, nor the wife to be a wife by being so sent. You might as well argue that if I send my maid-servant upon an errand, my sending her makes her to be my daughter; or if I send my daughter it makes her my maid-servant. My daughter for the time becomes my servant, as the Lord Jesus became His Father's servant; but the relationship of father and daughter, as of Father and Son, existed prior to, and independent of, any act of service. But to put this in a still clearer light, if indeed so plain and simple a point needs further elucidation, consider the parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). We need not go all through the parable, but may confine ourselves to the last and simple point of the householder sending his son to receive of the fruits of the vineyard. "Having yet therefore one Son, His well-beloved, He sent Him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence My Son" (Mark 12:6). What can be more plain all through the parable than that the husbandmen represent the Jews, the servants the prophets, and the son of the householder the blessed Lord? But the point which we wish chiefly to dwell upon is the sending of the Son. We read of the Lord of the vineyard, which is God, "Having yet therefore one Son, His well-beloved Son, He sent Him also last." Now surely He was the "one Son, the well-beloved Son," before He sent Him, or the whole drift and beauty of the parable fall to the ground. The idea conveyed by the parable is evidently this: The Lord of the vineyard, which is God the Father, lived in a far country, at a long distance from the vineyard, viz., heaven, His dwelling-place. With Him there was His one Son, and therefore His only-begotten Son, His well-beloved Son (Luke 20:13), dwelling in the same abode with Himself, and therefore His Son before He sent Him, and quite independent of His being so sent. The husband-men having refused to send the fruits of the vineyard by the servants, and having most cruelly treated them, the Lord of the vineyard makes, as it were, a last experiment. Then said the Lord of the vineyard, "What shall I do?" as if He took counsel with Himself how He should act. He then comes to a decision in His own mind, I will send My beloved Son; it may be they will reverence Him." Now surely when the Father thus consulted and thus determined, His Son must have already existed as His Son, been already at home with Him before the counsel could be taken or the resolution executed. If then the parallel has any force, or indeed any meaning—and it would be sacrilege to say it has not—God the Father must have had a Son in heaven with Him before He sent Him. If so, and we cannot, see how the force of the argument can be evaded, the Lord Jesus Christ existed as the Son of God before He was sent by the Father; and if so, as we cannot conceive a time when He was not a Son, He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. But we have other testimonies in the inspired record to the same import. Thus we read of God "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3), and of His "sending forth His Son made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). There must surely be some meaning attached to the expression, "His own Son,"

analogous to a similar earthly relationship. If I were to write a letter to a friend, and say in it, " I send my own son with this," he surely would not understand me to mean that he was not my own son until I sent him, or that the bare circumstance of my sending him made him my son. And if I were to write to him afterwards an explanatory letter to say that I did not mean in my former note that the bearer was really and truly my own son, but only that he became my son by bringing the note, would he not at once reply, "What could be plainer than the declaration in your first letter that he was your own son; what other meaning could I attach to your words? And if I have misunderstood them, I shall not be able for the future to understand your plainest, simplest language." Apply this argument to the passages before us, wherein God is said "to have sent His own Son." We may well say, If the meaning of these passages be that the Lord Jesus Christ was not God's Son before He sent Him, but became His Son by being sent, we must for the future give up all hope of understanding the Scriptures in their plain, simple meaning. And surely those who assert that the Lord Jesus Christ was not the Son of God before He was sent, but became God's own Son by being sent, are bound to explain the connection between being sent and becoming a Son, and to give some reason more valid than a preconceived prejudice against the eternal Sonship of Jesus. But take another testimony of almost similar purport. "The life which I live in the flesh," says the apostle, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Now, when did the Son of God love Paul? Before He gave Himself for him or after? It was because He loved him that. He gave Himself for him, and therefore He must evidently have been the Son of God before He gave Himself for him. And when did He give Himself? When He came forth from His Father's bosom, and assumed flesh in the womb of the Virgin. If, then, the Son of God loved Paul before He came into the world, He must have been the Son of God before He came into the world. As the eternal Son of God He loved Paul, and as the eternal Son of God Paul believed in and loved Him.

One more testimony may for the present suffice. "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3-4). First look at the words: "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." The Son of God is here declared to have been "made of the seed of David according to the flesh;" therefore He existed as the Son of God before made of the seed of David; for all will admit that it is His humanity here spoken of as made. "We grant," say the opponents of Christ's eternal Sonship, "that He existed before His incarnation, but not as the eternal Son of God." How, then, did He exist, and what was His title? "The Word," they answer, according to the declaration, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

According, then, to your own showing, the Lord Jesus Christ existed as the Word before He was made flesh. "Undoubtedly," you reply. Now, what is the difference between the two expressions, "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh," and "The Word was made flesh"? for by parity of reasoning, if "the Word" existed as "the Word" before He was "made flesh," the Son of God existed as the Son of God before "He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." The two texts stand on precisely the same grounds. Both speak of the Deity and of the humanity of the blessed Lord; and as no change can take place in His glorious Deity, we justly infer that as He was the Word in His divine nature before He was made flesh, so He was the Son of God in His divine nature before He was made of the seed of David. Do not all

these scripture testimonies prove as with one unanimous voice that the Lord Jesus Christ was the only-begotten Son of God before God sent Him into the world? Sending Him into the world no more made Him God’s Son than, to speak with all reverence, my sending my son to school makes him my son.

2. Another error on this important point is that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. The main prop of this view is what we read in Acts 13:32-33 : "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." But the meaning of the apostle is abundantly clear from the passage already quoted (Romans 1:4). His resurrection did not make Him, but manifest Him to be the Son of God. Did not the Father, before the resurrection, twice with a voice from heaven proclaim, "This is My beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). Will any man then lift, up his voice against the Majesty of heaven, and say that Christ was not the Son of God before His resurrection, which He clearly was not, if the resurrection made Him such? Why, the Roman centurion, who stood at the cross, had a better faith than this when he said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). Nay, the very devils themselves were forced to cry out before His sufferings and death. "Thou art Christ the Son of God" (Luke 4:41). We may be sure, therefore, that none but a heretic of the deepest dye could assert that the blessed Lord was not the Son of God till made so by the resurrection.

3. Another erroneous view of the Sonship of Christ is that He is so by virtue of His exaltation to the right hand of God. This view is founded on a mistaken interpretation of Hebrews 1:4 : "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Christ was made so much better than the angels, not as the Son of God, because as that He was better than they already, being indeed their Maker and Creator (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Nor did He become God’s Son by being "appointed heir of all things," and "obtaining by inheritance a more excellent name" than all the angelic host. If I have an only son, and he inherits my property, his being my heir does not make him my son, but his being my son makes him my heir. So the blessed Jesus is God’s heir. But the beauty and blessedness, the grace and glory, the joy and consolation of His being "the heir of all things," lie in this, that He is such in our nature—that the same blessed Immanuel who groaned and wept, suffered and bled here below, is now at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest, Mediator, Advocate, Representative, and Intercessor; that all power is given unto Him in heaven and earth as the God-man (Matthew 28:18); and that the Father hath "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:20-21). But He has all this pre-eminence and glory not to make Him the Son of God, but because He who, as the Son of God, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess. that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:7-11). The joy of heaven above, the delight of the saints here below, their only hope and help, strength and wisdom, spring from

this, that the Son of God is exalted to the right hand of the Father in the very nature which He assumed in the womb of the virgin. But if He were made the Son of God by this exaltation, it sinks His Deity by merging it into His humanity, and constitutes Him a made God—which is not God at all, but an idol. In fact, these three views which we have endeavoured to strip bare out of their party-coloured dress are all of them either open or disguised Socinianism, and their whole object and aim are to overthrow the Deity of the Lord Jesus by overthrowing His divine Sonship. The enemies of the Lord Jesus know well that the Scriptures declare beyond all doubt and controversy that He is the Son of God. This mountain of brass they may kick at, but can never kick down. But they know also that if they can by any means nullify and explain away His Sonship, they have taken a great stride to nullify and explain away His Deity. Beware, then, simple-hearted child of God, lest any of these men entangle your feet in their net. Hold by this as your sheet-anchor, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God in His divine nature, as His eternal and only-begotten Son. Faith in Him as such will enable you to ride through many a storm, and bear you up amidst the terrible indignation which will fall upon His enemies, when He shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

4. But there is another way in which erroneous men seek to explain, and by explaining deny, the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus, and that is, by asserting that He is a Son by office. These men do not deny His essential and eternal Deity, nor do they seek to overthrow the Trinity. On these points they are professedly sound—we say "professedly," for we fully believe that the Deity of Christ and the very doctrine of the Trinity Itself are so involved in the eternal Sonship of Jesus, that they stand or fall with it. This, however, they do not, or will not, see, and call themselves believers in the Trinity of Persons and the Unity of essence in the great and glorious self-existent Jehovah. But they do not believe that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are necessarily and eternally such, and neither are, were, or could be otherwise, but that they are covenant offices and titles which They have assumed, and by which They have made Themselves known to the sons of men. Thus they do not believe that Christ is the Son of the Father by eternal generation, His only-begotten Son, His Son in truth and love, but that the Three distinct Persons in the Trinity covenanted among Themselves, the Father to be the Father, the Son to be the Son, and the Holy Ghost to be the Holy Ghost, and that chiefly for man’s redemption.

Monstrous figment! God-dishonouring error! which needs only to be stated to be reprobated by every believer in the Son of God as a deadly blow against each Person in the Trinity, and destroying that eternal intercommunication of nature, without which They are Three distinct Gods, and not Three distinct Persons in One undivided Godhead. Truly Satan introduces no little errors into the church; truly all his machinations are to overthrow vital truths, and to poison the spring at the very fountain head.

We bless God that there is a Covenant—a covenant of grace, "ordered in all things and sure;" we adore His gracious Majesty that in this everlasting Covenant the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost sustain certain relationships to the church of God; but we most thoroughly deny that these relationships made Them to be Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and that separate from them the Father is not really and truly Father to the Son, nor the Son really and truly Son to the Father, but only nominally so. For who does not see that if this be true, the Father might have been the Son, and the Son might have been the Father, and the Holy Ghost either the Father or the Son? for certainly if They are so, not by nature but by office, and are three equal, independent Persons, at

liberty to choose Their several titles, there appears to be no reason why They should not have chosen otherwise than They did. We see, therefore, into what confusion men get when they forsake the simple statements of Scripture, and what perilous weapons they hold in their hands when they directly or indirectly sap the very throne of the Most High. But to clear up this point a little further, let us illustrate it by a simple figure. Suppose, then, that three friends, of equal rank and station, were to go on a journey, say a foreign tour; they might say to one another before they started, "Let us severally choose the three departments to which we shall each attend, I will take this part, if you and you will take that and that." Now, why might they not, as three friends, of equal station, without any tie of kindred, choose different departments from what they actually selected, for there was no anterior binding necessity that they should have chosen the exact offices which they fulfil? The same reasoning applies to the Three co-equal Persons of the Trinity, if Father, Son and Holy Ghost be but mere covenant names, titles, and offices, and not their very mode of existence. But it will be said by such men, "You carnalise the subject by your figure." Not so; we have too much reverence, we trust, for the things of God to carnalise them; but we use the figure to meet you on your own ground, and to show you by a simple argument the absurdity and folly, not to say the impiety of your views. We admit, nay more, we rejoice to believe that Father, Son and Holy Ghost sustain each distinct Their relationships in the eternal Covenant; but these relationships are not arbitrary offices, which They might or might not have severally chosen, but are intrinsically and necessarily connected with, and flow out of Their very subsistence, Their very mode of existence. So that to talk, as some have done, that "the Three Persons in the Alehim" (to use their barbarous Hebrew), "covenanted among Themselves to be Father, Son and Holy Ghost," is an abominable error, and tantamount to declaring that but for the Covenant, the Father would not have been the Father, nor the Son the Son, nor the Holy Ghost the Holy Ghost. Where is there one scripture for such an assertion? When the blessed Jesus, in that sacred, heart-moving prayer, "lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John 17:1), was there no other relationship, no more intimate and eternal tie than being His Son by assuming an office? We cannot express what we have seen and felt in that most blessed and sacred chapter, perhaps the most solemn in the whole Word of God; but there is that tender intimacy, that holy, filial communion with His heavenly Father breathing through it which conveys to a believing heart the fullest assurance that He is the eternal Son of God as being the only-begotten of the Father. But as we cannot convey to erroneous men our faith, we must meet them on the solid ground of scriptural argument. Nothing then can be more evident than that the one great and glorious Jehovah existed in a Trinity of Persons before the Covenant. What then were those Three Persons before the Covenant was entered into? Did that Covenant alter Their mutual relationship to Each other so as to introduce a new affinity between Them? You might just as well say that the Covenant made Them a Trinity of Persons, or called Them into being, as to say that the Covenant made Them Father, Son and Holy Ghost; for if these be but Covenant titles, had there been no Covenant, They most certainly, according to your own showing, would not have been Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This is indeed overthrowing the Trinity with a witness, and making the distinct, eternal subsistence of Three Persons in the Godhead depend upon a Covenant made on behalf of man. For remember this, that you cannot touch one Person of the Godhead without touching all; and if you say that the Son of God is a Son only by office, you say with the same breath that the Father is only a Father by office, and the Holy Ghost only a Holy Ghost by office. But let us further ask, What do you mean by saying that the Son of God is so only

by office, or as a name or title? Has the Son of God, His only-begotten Son no more real, intimate, and necessary relationship to His Father than calling Himself His Son, when He is not really His Son, but only so by office? Do you think you clearly understand what it is to be a Son by office? for persons often use words of which they have never accurately examined the meaning. The Lord Jesus, by becoming man, became the Father's servant by office, but if you make Him a Son by office, you strip Him of all His glory. His glory is this, that though He was a Son by nature, He became a servant by office, as the Apostle says, "Though He were (not 'became') a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). In this we see His unparalleled condescension, His infinite love, and boundless depths of grace, that though by nature the eternal Son of God, and as such co-equal with the Father, He stooped to become a servant. But apart from all Scripture revelation, it is an absurdity, an insult to common sense, to make the Lord Jesus Christ a Son by office. There are but two ways by which anyone can become a son: 1, by generation; 2, by adoption. In the first case he is the father's son, his true, proper and real son; in the other, his made or adopted son. No office or service, no law or title, no covenant or agreement, can make a son if he be not a real or an adopted one. A servant by office may become a son by adoption, as Abram complained that "one born in his house (as a servant) was his heir," and as Moses became the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:10); and a son by nature may become a servant by office, but a son by office is an absurdity, both in nature and grace.

Now do look at the weight of these plain and united testimonies. Would God deceive us by telling us again and again that He had a Son, an own, a proper, a peculiar, an only-begotten Son, if He had not? Where in all these passages is there the faintest intimation that the Sonship of Christ was not a true and real Sonship, but only a name, a title, a word, that might or might not have been, and but for the creation of man never would have been? To make the mutual eternal relationship which subsists between the Father and the Son depend upon a covenant made on behalf of man, is to destroy the very eternal being of both Father and Son Surely, when the Father spoke Himself from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him," He meant that He was really and truly His beloved Son, that He was His most loving Father, and that we were to hear, believe in, and obey Him as such.

12.02. Chapter II

Chapter II

There are two things which every child of God has the greatest reason to dread; the one is evil, the other is error. Both are originally from Satan; both have a congenial home in the human mind; both are in their nature deadly and destructive; both have slain their thousands and tens of thousands; and under one or the other, or under both combined, all everlastingly perish but the redeemed family of God. Evil—by which we mean sin in its more open and gross forms—is, in some respects, less to be dreaded than error, that is, error on vital, fundamental points; and for the following reason. The unmistakable voice of conscience, the universal testimony of God's children, the expressed reprobation of the world itself, all bear a loud witness against gross acts of immorality. Thus, though the carnal mind is ever lusting after evil, thorns and briers much hedge up the road toward its actual commission; and if, by the power of sin and temptation, they be unhappily broken through, the return into the narrow path, though difficult, is not wholly shut out. David, Peter, and the incestuous Corinthian fell into open evil, but they never fell into deadly error, and were not only recoverable, but by superabounding grace were recovered. But error upon the grand, fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith is not only in its nature destructive, but usually destroys all who embrace it.

As, however, we wish to move cautiously upon this tender ground, let us carefully distinguish between what we may perhaps call voluntary and involuntary error. To explain our meaning more distinctly, take the two following cases of involuntary error by way of illustration. A person may be born of Socinian parents, and may have imbibed their views from the force of birth and education. Is this person irrecoverable? Certainly not. The grace of God may reach his heart and deliver him from his errors, just as much as it may touch the conscience of a man living in all manner of iniquity, and save him from his sins. Or a child of God, one manifestly so by regenerating grace, may be tempted by the seducing spirit of error breathed into his carnal mind by a heretic or by an erroneous book, and may for a time be so stupefied by the smoke of the bottomless pit as to reel and stagger on the very brink, and yet not fall in. Most of us have known something of these blasts of hell, so that we could say with Asaph, "My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped;" but they have only rooted us more firmly in the truth. These are cases of what we call involuntary error. But there is voluntary error when a man wilfully and deliberately turns away from truth to embrace falsehood; when he is given up to strong delusions to believe a lie; when he gives heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and seeks to spread and propagate them with all his power. These cases are usually irrecoverable, for such men generally wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; error so blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts, that they cannot or will not see anything but what seems to favour their views, and at last they either sink into a general state of unbelief and infidelity or die confirmed in their deceptions. It is scarcely possible to read the Epistles of the New Testament, especially those of Paul to Timothy and Titus, and those of Peter, John and Jude, without being struck by the strong denunciations which those inspired men of God launched as so many burning thunderbolts against error and erroneous men. Any

approach to their strong language, even in opposing the most deadly errors, would in our day be considered positively unbearable, and be called the grossest want of charity. It is with most an unpardonable offence to draw any strong and marked lines between sinner and saint, professor and possessor, error and truth. The ancient landmarks which the word of truth has set up have almost by general consent been removed, and a religious right of common has become established, by means of which truth and error have been thrown into one wide field, where any may roam and feed at will, and still be considered as sheep of Christ. It was not so in the days of Luther, of John Knox, and of Rutherford; but in our day there is such a general laxity of principle as regards truth and falsehood, that the corruption of the world seems to have tainted the church. There was a time in this country when, if there was roguery in the market, it was not tolerated in the counting-house; if there was blasphemy in the street, it was not allowed in the senate; if there was infidelity in the debating-room, it was not suffered in the pulpit. But now bankers and merchants cheat and lie like costermongers; Jew, Papist, and infidel sit side by side in the House of Commons; and negative theology and German divinity are enthroned in Independent chapels. It would almost seem that Paul, Peter, John and Jude were needlessly harsh and severe in their denunciations of error and erroneous men, that Luther, John Knox, and Rutherford were narrow-minded bigots, and that it matters little what a man believes if he be "a truly pious" man, a member of a church, a preacher, or a professor. Old Mrs. Bigotry is dead and buried; her funeral sermon has been preached to a crowded congregation; and this is the inscription put, by general consent, upon her tombstone:

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight

He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right." But if to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints be bigotry, let us be bigots still; and if it be a bad spirit to condemn error, then let us bear the reproach rather than call evil good and good evil, put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Here, then, we resume our subject, hoping, with God’s help and blessing, whilst we contend earnestly for the truth as it is in Jesus, to advance nothing that may be in the least inconsistent with His sacred Word, and desiring His glory and the good of His people. But as Abraham, when he went up the mount with Isaac, left the young men and the ass at the foot; as Moses put off his shoes, at God’s command, when he stood on holy ground; so must we leave carnal reasoning at the foot of the mount where the Lord is seen (Genesis 22:14), and lay aside the shoes of sense and nature when we look at the bush burning with fire and not consumed. Four things are absolutely necessary to be experimentally known and felt before we can arrive at any saving or sanctifying knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus: 1. Divine light in the understanding; 2. Spiritual faith in the heart; 3. Godly fear in the conscience; 4. Heavenly love in the affections. Without light we cannot see; without faith we cannot believe; without godly fear we cannot reverentially adore; without love we cannot embrace Him who is "the Truth," as well as "the Way, and the Life." Here all heretics and erroneous men stumble and fall. The mysteries of our most holy faith are not to be apprehended by uninspired men. Spiritual truths are for spiritual men; as the apostle beautifully says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). It is, therefore, utterly impossible for men who are sensual, having not the Spirit to understand any

branch of saving truth, much more the deep mysteries of godliness. We must be taught of God, and receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, or we shall never enter therein; and it is for those who have been so led and taught that we mainly write.

We have already attempted to show the various ways in which erroneous men have sought at different times to overthrow the eternal Sonship of Jesus. If we have succeeded, with God's help and blessing, in refuting what is false, we have advanced a good way in proving what is true; for in grace, as in nature, the conviction of falsehood is the establishment of truth. Before, then, we proceed any further, let us fix our foot firmly on the ground that we have thus far made good, and not run backwards and forwards in confusion as though we had proved nothing. What is proved is proved; and as each successive step in an argument is clearly and firmly laid, it forms, as in a building, a basis to support a fresh layer of proof. These points, then, we consider to have been already fully established by us from the Word of truth: 1, that Jesus is the Son of God; 2, that He is not the Son of God by the assumption of human nature, or by the resurrection, or by sitting at God's right hand, or by virtue of any covenant name, title, or office; 3, that He was the Son of God before He came into the world; and 4, that consequently He is the Son of God in His divine nature. The pre-existerian dreams and delusions we need not say we utterly discard as full of deadly error, and therefore need not stop to show that He is not the Son of God by virtue of a human soul created before all time, and united to His body in the womb of the Virgin at the incarnation. Here, then, we take our firm stand, that Jesus is the Son of God in His divine nature; and if that divine nature is truly and properly God, as the words necessarily imply, and as such is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, then He must be the eternal Son of the Father. No sophistry can elude this conclusion. Forsaking the Scriptures and the guiding light of divine revelation, you may reason and argue on natural grounds, and cavil at the words, an "eternal Son" and "eternal generation," as expressing or implying ideas naturally inconsistent, not to say impossible. But we shall not follow you on such boggy ground. If you will do so, lose yourself there; and, led by the ignis fatuus of reason, flounder from swamp to swamp, till you sink to rise no more; but we shall, with the Lord's help, abide on the firm ground of God's own inspired testimony, and draw all our proofs from that sacred source of all knowledge and instruction. But though we shall confine ourselves to the inspired testimony in opening up this subject, we shall endeavour to proceed step by step, carefully and prayerfully, in the hope that our pen may move in strict harmony with the truth of God in a matter so mysterious and yet so blessed. Follow us, spiritual reader, with the Scriptures in your hand and with faith and love in your heart, that we, as taught and blessed of God, may be able to set our seal to those words, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." If we have not this, what witness have we worth possessing?

1. First, then, we lay it down as undeniable scripture truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God as God. This is the express testimony of the Father Himself: "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). Is it not clear from this express declaration from the Father's own lips, that the Son is God, and God as being the Son? How else is He "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person"? (Hebrews 1:3.) The human nature of Jesus was not "the brightness of God's glory," for how could a created, finite nature represent the brightness of the glory of the infinite, self-existent I AM? Nor could the nature assumed in the womb of the Virgin be "the express image of God's Person." The Person of God must necessarily be divine, and the express image of it must be necessarily divine also.

2. Secondly, we assert that when the Scripture speaks of Jesus as the only-begotten Son of God, it speaks of Him as such in His divine nature. Thus, when John says, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), that glory was the glory of Christ's divine nature; for how could His human nature, which was marred more than the sons of men, shine forth with the glory of His divine? This "glory of the Only-begotten of the Father" is most evidently the same glory as that of which Jesus speaks in those touching words: "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5). But this must be the glory of His divine nature, for His human nature He had not then assumed. Then "the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father" must be the same "glory as He had with Him before the world was," and that could be none other but His divine. Thus we are brought in the clearest and most indubitable manner to this point, that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God as God. The two passages that we have quoted bring us to this conclusion with all the clearness, force and distinctness of a mathematical problem. Examine one by one the links of this argument, and see if they are not firm and good. Jesus is the only-begotten of the Father; this is the first step. As the only-begotten of the Father He has a peculiar glory; this is the second step. This glory He had with the Father before the world was; this is the third step. As He could only possess this glory in His divine nature, for His human did not then exist, He is the only-begotten Son of God as God; this is the fourth step, and establishes the conclusion that He is the eternal Son of the Father, and that by eternal generation. You may object to the term "eternal generation," but how else can you explain the words, "the Only-begotten of the Father"? If you say that this refers to the human nature of Jesus, how can you interpret in that sense the passage, "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father"? (John 1:18.) Surely you will not say that the human nature of Jesus was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity. How was He ever in the bosom of the Father but as His only-begotten Son, and if He lay there from all eternity, what is this but eternal generation? But we have by no means exhausted our quiver. "Thine arrows," we read, "are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee" (Psalms 45:5). The Lord fill our quiver full of them; then shall we not be ashamed, but shall speak with His enemies in the gate. Look at the following testimony: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Does not Jesus Himself here declare that the Father "gave His only-begotten Son"? Was He not, then, His only-begotten Son before He gave Him? If language mean anything, the words positively declare that God had a Son, an only-begotten Son, and that He so loved poor, fallen man that He freely and voluntarily gave this only-begotten Son for his redemption. But when did God love the world? Before or after Jesus came in the flesh? Of course, before, for love moved Him to give His only-begotten Son. Where, then, was His only-begotten Son when God loved the world? In heaven, with God. And what was He in heaven with God? His only-begotten Son. Then He was His only-begotten Son in His divine nature, for His human nature never was in heaven till after the resurrection. And if His only-begotten Son in His divine nature, and if He existed as such from all eternity, what is this but eternal generation? Surely Jesus knew the mystery of His own generation; and if He call Himself God's only-begotten Son, is it not our wisdom and mercy to believe what He says, even if our reason cannot penetrate into so high and sublime a mystery?

"Where reason fails, with all her powers.

There faith prevails, and love adores."

3. But you will say, "We do not deny that Jesus is God’s only-begotten Son, for so the Scripture speaks, but He is so by virtue of the everlasting covenant." But how could a covenant beget Him? Begetting implies a being, not a compact; and to be begotten implies a nature, a mode of existence, not a covenant. The two ideas are essentially incompatible, for begetting implies a relationship independent of, and anterior to, a covenant, whereas a covenant implies the existence of the covenanting parties. But another may say, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but neither by virtue of His divine nor of His human nature viewed separately, but of His complex Person as God-man Mediator." But was His complex Person in heaven before the incarnation? Surely not. But that the Son of God was in heaven before His incarnation we have already abundantly proved. It is evident, then, that He is not the Son of God by virtue of His complex Person, for He was so before He took our nature into union with His divine. He must be the Son of God either as God or as man. We have shown over and over again that He is not the Son of God as man. What then remains but that He is the Son of God as God, and therefore previous to His assumption of our nature in the womb of the Virgin, and consequently anterior to His becoming God-Man? Has not the Lord Himself declared, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God"? Do you believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God? How can you if you deny that He is the eternal Son of the Father? For we have already proved from Scripture that He is the only-begotten Son of God in His divine nature; and he who denies that, most certainly believes not "in His Name," by which is meant His very Being and nature, Person and work, as revealed to the sons of men. But as the matter is so important, let us now examine another testimony: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). Carefully examine the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in this remarkable declaration, for it is well worth weighing word by word. "We know," says holy John, "that the Son of God is come." But how do we know that the Son of God is come? By the personal and experimental manifestation of Him as the Son of God to our soul (Galatians 1:16). But if not so manifested, not known. And who understand and "know Him that is true"? Those to whom "He hath given an understanding." Then where no such understanding is given, there "He that is true" is not understood or known. "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." Then if not in union with the Son, not in Him that is true, and therefore necessarily in him that is false. "This is the true God." Who? The Son. And why? Because He is the Son. "And eternal life." Then out of Him is eternal death. Why? Because only in union with Him is eternal life. Look at the chain as thus drawn out from beginning to end; weigh it well, link by link. "The Son of God is come." That is link the first. "We know that He is come." That is link the second. "He hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." That is link the third. "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." That is link the fourth. "This is the true God, and eternal life." That is link the fifth. And may we not, with holy John, add another link to close the chain? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;" and amongst them, from the idol of a Son by office, for such is not "the true God, nor eternal life."

4. But now let us advance a step further in our line of argument and show that Jesus is not only the Son of God in His divine nature, but as being "the only-begotten of the Father," is God’s own, proper, true and eternal Son - Take the following testimonies by way of proof of this assertion: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the

likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). Here the Holy Ghost declares that "God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Have you ever carefully weighed the meaning of the words, "His own Son"? If you are a father, does not your own son widely differ from an adopted son? The word means literally His "proper" and "peculiar" Son—His own, in a sense specially distinct from any other. But let us examine this passage a little more closely. A certain work was to be done which the law could not do, for "it was weak through the flesh." The law was strong in itself, for it had all the authority of God to back it; but it was weak through man's infirmity—the flesh not being able to keep or obey it. God, then, sent His own Son to do what the law could not do. If words have any meaning, if the blessed Spirit choose suitable expressions to convey instruction, what can we understand by the term, "God's own Son," but that Jesus is God's true and proper Son by His very mode of existence? This is the grand and blessed revelation of these last days, as made known to the apostles and prophets, and embodied in the inspired pages of the New Testament. What, for instance, is the foundation of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and indeed of the whole Epistle, but that the Son of God has a relation to the Father, not only of a dignity but of a nature which He alone possesses? How clear and emphatic the language in which the apostle opens that weighty epistle, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2). View the Son thus spoken of as a Son merely by office or by covenant title, and the whole force and beauty of the words are lost. But see in the Son the true and real Son of the Father, then the love and mercy of God, as speaking in and by Him in these last days, shine forth in all their unparalleled lustre. So, in the words just quoted from Romans 8:3, the whole foundation of redemption is laid on this rock, that God sent His own Son. Can language be more plain or more positive? If Jesus be not God's own Son, His true, real and proper Son, what do the word, mean? We say it with all reverence; that if Jesus, be a Son only by office, or merely by virtue of His complex Person, such words as "His own Son" would but mock and deceive us, and lead us to believe a lie. If I were to point to a son of mine, and say to a neighbour or a stranger, "This is my own son," and a few days after the person learnt that he was not my own son, but an adopted child, whom I was accustomed to call my son when he was no such relation, should I stand clear of deception in the matter? If God, then, declares that Jesus is "His own Son," am I to believe that He is His Son by nature, His only-begotten, and thus His true and proper Son, or to make Him a liar? It seems to us that holy John has already decided the matter: "He that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." This is just your case, if you say that Jesus is not God's own Son, which you must certainly do if you say that He is not His Son in His divine nature. You do not believe God because you believe not the record (or testimony) that God gave of His Son, when He said from heaven, "This is My beloved Son." And what is the consequence? "You make God a liar." And is not that an awful position for a worm of earth to stand in? But such is ever the result of listening to natural reasoning and argument instead of believing the testimony of God. But again, Have you ever looked at the word "sent" in the passage that we are now considering? There is a singular beauty and propriety in a Father sending a Son, which is completely lost if the Second Person is so far independent of the Father as to be a Son merely in name. As such He might certainly covenant to come, but could hardly covenant to be sent. But view Him as the Father's own Son, and then the love of the Father in sending Him, and His own love in consenting to come ("Lo! I come") are beautiful beyond

expression. But this is by no means the only passage in which Jesus is spoken of as God’s "own Son." Look at those words in the same blessed chapter (Romans 8 :), which has comforted thousands of sorrowful hearts, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Can words be more expressive, "He that spared not His own Son"? Believing soul, you that desire to know God’s truth for yourself, who would not hold error for a thousand worlds, and are looking up for that wisdom which cometh from God, consider well the words; they are full of truth and blessedness. Do not the words, then, clearly declare that the love of God was so great to the church that there being no other way by which she could be saved, God the Father spared not His own true and proper Son? Make Jesus a Son by office, and the whole force, not to say the meaning, of the passage is gone in a moment. It would be nothing less than plucking away the whole love of God to His people. If Jesus be not God’s own proper and true Son, where is the compassion of the Father’s heart overcoming, so to speak, all His reluctance to give Him up? Where the depth of the Father’s love in delivering Him up for us all? The moment that you deny the eternal Sonship of Jesus, you deny the Father’s love to Him as His own Son, and with that you deny also the peculiar love that God has to His people. Thus you destroy at a stroke the unutterable love and complacency that the Father has to the Son as His own Son, and the compassion and love displayed to the church in giving Him up as a sacrifice for her sins. The only foundation of our being sons of God (1 John 3:2) is that Jesus, our Head and Elder Brother, was the Son of God. Therefore He said to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). Why "your Father"? Because "My Father." Why "your God"? Because "My God." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Why sons? Because Christ is the Son of God. Why the Spirit of His Son? Because the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son as His mode of subsistence. In removing these ancient landmarks of truth, men little think what havoc they make, we were going to say, in heaven and in earth. In heaven, by destroying the very mode of existence of the Three Persons in the sacred Godhead; in earth, by destroying the foundations on which the church is built. If you destroy the peculiar and unutterable love of God to the church, what do you leave us? And this you must certainly destroy if you deny the eternal Sonship of Jesus, for the love of the Father to the church is the same as His love to the Son: "And hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John 17:23). O the depth of God’s love To carry out this love both Father and Son, in a sense, made a sacrifice. The sacrifice that the Father made, out of His love to the church, was that He gave out of His own bosom His darling Son, and spared Him not the sorrows and agonies of the cross, but delivered Him up to the curse of the law, the temptations of the devil, the malice of men, and the burning indignation of Justice arresting Him as a transgressor. The sacrifice that the Son made was to leave His Father’s bosom and be delivered up to a life of suffering and a death of agony. How much is contained in that expression, "He that spared not His own Son"?! But does not all its force and meaning consist in this, that Jesus is the true and real Son of God? But if you still are in doubt about the meaning of God’s "not sparing His own Son," look at an almost parallel expression, "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:17). In reading that passage, what meaning do you attach to the expression of "a man sparing his own son"? Is the own son spoken of there the man’s real, true and proper son, or an adopted one, or one calling himself so when he is not? You answer, and that well, "Why, the whole force of the passage depends on the person spared being the man’s own

son." Then why interpret this passage in that sense, which, indeed, you cannot help doing, and explain what is said about God's own Son in a manner quite different? But you say, "I cannot understand this eternal generation. It seems to me so inconsistent, so self-contradictory, that I cannot receive it." Do you mean, then, to receive nothing which you cannot understand, and which appears self-contradictory? Then you must on those grounds reject the two greatest mysteries of our most holy faith—the Trinity and the Incarnation. We do not call upon you to understand it. But if you love your own soul, we counsel you not to deny it, lest you be found amongst those who deny the Son, and so have not the Father (1 John 2:23). But again, if Jesus be not the true, proper and real Son of God, how can we understand the parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen, given us by three evangelists? We need not go over this ground again, for we have already done so; but we may simply ask, If Jesus be not the true, proper and real Son of God, what is the meaning of the parable? No one would accept this interpretation, that it was not the real son of the householder that was sent, but a neighbour or a friend who personated a son, who assumed the office and took the title when he was not his son at all. Do you not see, as a general rule of Scripture interpretation, that whilst you hold the truth all is simple and harmonious and different passages confirm and corroborate each other; but the moment that error is set up all is confusion, and you cannot by any possible means get one passage of Scripture to harmonise with the other? So it is with this parable as harmonising with the true and real Sonship of Jesus. The moment you see and believe that Jesus is the true Son of the Father, His only-begotten Son, the whole parable is full of exquisite truth, pathos, and beauty; but abandon that view, and the parable at once falls to the ground as devoid of all sense or significance.

It is with the eternal Sonship of Christ as with the Trinity, the Deity of Jesus, the Personality of the Holy Ghost, etc. It does not so much rest on isolated texts as on the general drift of God's inspired Word—what the apostle calls "the proportion (or analogy) of faith" (Romans 12:6). And it is an infinite mercy for the church of God that the Holy Spirit has so ordered it; for single texts, however clear, may be disputed, but the grand current of truth, like a mighty river, not only bears down all opposition, but flows on in a pure, perennial stream, to slake the thirst of the saints of the Most High. But take another testimony to the same grand truth, and that from God's own mouth. Twice did God Himself declare with an audible voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). Surely when God speaks from heaven those who fear His great name will by His grace listen, believe and obey. If Jesus "received from God the Father honour and glory, when that voice came to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17), we who desire to honour and glorify Him should feel a solemn pleasure in obeying the Father's voice, "Hear ye Him." Blessed Jesus, we do desire to hear Thee, for Thy sheep hear Thy voice, and Thy mouth is most sweet; yea, Thou art altogether lovely. When sin distresses our conscience, or error assails our mind, may we ever feel and say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). But if Jesus be the Son of God merely by office or covenant title, or by virtue of His complex Person, where is the blessedness of that voice from heaven proclaiming Him the beloved Son of the Father? It would but deceive and mislead us were it but a name, not a reality, a title implying a relationship which did not actually exist. If words so plain and so expressive mean anything (and who dare say that God's words mean nothing?), they most certainly declare an intimacy of divine relationship between the Father and the Son, peculiar and ineffable, deeply mysterious, but inexpressibly

blessed. No name or title can give a natural and necessary relationship. My son is called my son because he is my son; and if he were not so, no calling could make him so. In the same or an analogous manner, the covenant, however blessed, however ordered in all things and sure, could not make the Word to be the Son of God were He not so in reality. Besides which, if Jesus is not the Son of God by His very mode of subsistence, there would be, at least as far as we can see, no peculiar significancy in His becoming so by the covenant. It does not at all touch the efficacy of redemption, which depends on the Redeemer being God as well as man. If, then, the Second Person of the Trinity is not the Son of God anterior to and independent of the covenant of grace, there appears to be no reason why He should assume that particular title for the purpose of redemption rather than any other. As this, however, is a point involving many considerations, we shall not further press it, though it has a weight with our own mind.

Thus, in whatever point of view we examine it, we see error and confusion stamped upon every explanation of the Sonship of Jesus, but that which has always been the faith of the Church of God, that He is the Son of the Father in truth and love (2 John 1:3). As such we, in sweet union with prophets, apostles and martyrs, with the glorified spirits in heavenly bliss, and the suffering saints in this vale of tears, worship, adore and love Him, and crown Him Lord of all.

12.03. Chapter III

Chapter III

Whether we set forth truth or whether we expose error, and we can scarcely do the one without at the same time performing the other, the Word of God must ever be the grand armoury whence we take the weapons of our spiritual warfare. This is both apostolic precept and apostolic practice. "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). In this spirit, as obeying this precept, and walking after this example, have we thus far attempted to overthrow that grievous error of denying the eternal Sonship of Christ, and to set forth that vital, fundamental truth of His being the Son of the Father in truth and love, which has formed the subject of our two last chapters. But we frankly confess that we have little hope of convincing those who have drunk deeply into the spirit of error. The poison is already in their veins, vitiating in them all that once seemed like truth and simplicity. As infidelity, when once it has got full possession of the mind, rejects the clearest evidences from positive inability to credit them, so error, when once it has poisoned the heart, renders it for ever afterwards, in the great majority of instances, utterly incapable of receiving the truth. Against every text that may be brought forward in support of truth an objection is started, a false interpretation offered, a counter statement made, an opposing passage quoted— the object evidently being not to bow down to truth, but to make truth bow down to error; not to submit in faith to the Word of God, but to make the Word of God itself bend and yield to the determined obstinacy of a mind prejudiced to its lowest depths. O what a state of mind to be in I How careful, then, should we be, how watchful, how prayerful, lest we also, "being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from our own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17). A tender conscience, a believing heart, a prayerful spirit, a watchful eye, a wary ear, a guarded tongue, and a cautious foot, will, with God’s blessing, be great preservatives against error of every kind. But to see light in God’s light, to feel life in His life, to have sweet fellowship and sacred communion with the Father and the Son, to walk before God in the beams of His favour, to find His Word our meat and drink, and to be ever approaching Him through the Son of His love, pleading with Him for His promised teaching—this is the true and only way to learn His truth, to believe it, to love it, and to live it. No heretic, no erroneous man, no unbeliever ever stood on this holy ground. That childlike spirit, without which there is no entering into the kingdom of heaven; that godly jealousy for the Lord’s honour which makes error abhorred and truth beloved; that tender fear of His great and glorious Name which leads the soul to desire His approbation and to dread His displeasure; that holy liberty which an experimental knowledge of the truth communicates to a citizen of Zion; that enlargement of heart which draws up the affections to those things which are above, where Jesus sits at God’s right hand—these, and all such similar fruits of divine teaching as specially distinguish the living saint of God, are not to be found in that bosom where error has erected its throne of darkness and death. On the contrary, a vain-confident, self-righteous, contentious, quarrelsome spirit, breathing enmity and hatred against all who oppose their favourite dogmas,

and thrust down their darling idols, are usually marks stamped upon all who are deeply imbued with heresy and error. They may be very confident in the soundness of their views, or in the firmness of their own standing, but God rejects their "confidences, and they shall not prosper in them" (Jeremiah 2:37). In resuming, then, our subject, we cannot but express our conviction that as we are enabled to read the scriptures of the New Testament with a more enlightened understanding, and to receive them more feelingly into a believing heart, we become more and more forcibly struck with these two leading features in them:

1. The clear revelation made therein that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and 2. The amazing weight and importance attached by the Holy Ghost to a faith in Him as such, and to a profession corresponding to that faith. It is not one or two passages, however plain and clear, but the whole current of revelation that carries such a conviction to a believing heart. The eternal Sonship of Christ is, as it were, the central sun of the New Testament, to remove which is to blot out all light from the sky, and to cast the church into darkness and the shadow of death. The manifestation of the Son of God is the sum and substance of the whole wondrous scheme of love which has brought heaven down to earth in the incarnation of Christ, and taken earth up to heaven in His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, agreeably to that testimony of holy John, which may be called an epitome of the gospel: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through 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" (1 John 4:9-10). To believe in Him as the Son of God, and to confess Him as such before men—this, in the New Testament, is the distinguishing mark of the disciples of Jesus. That in believing Him to be the Son of God, they believed Him to be equal with God, which He could only be by being His true and eternal Son, is plain from the very language of the unbelieving Jews: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

We have already quoted two memorable instances of Peter’s faith and confession as witnessing to Jesus being "the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16; John 6:69). We will now, with God’s help and blessing. examine some others of a similar kind; and amongst them we will first take Paul’s belief in, and testimony unto, the same vital truth: "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Carefully examine, spiritual reader, and prayerfully consider the words that we have just quoted. What a marvel is here! We see the once persecuting Saul called by sovereign grace, made a believer in that Jesus whose name he had so abhorred, and whose people he would fain have swept off the face of the earth, and preaching Him boldly as the Son of God in the very synagogues where he intended, in his blind rage and headlong fury, to compel the saints at Damascus to blaspheme (Acts 26:11). What did his heart so firmly believe, what did his mouth so boldly preach, but this vital truth, that Jesus is the true and real Son of God? His simple, child-like, new-born faith knew nothing of those crafty perversions, those subtle distinctions whereby truth is now denied under the pretence of being explained. Rising up by power divine into a spiritual apprehension of, and a living faith in, the Son of God, whose voice he had heard and whose glory he had seen, he knew no such dishonouring views of God’s only-begotten Son as that He was not His Son by nature and eternal subsistence, but by office, by virtue of the covenant, by a pre-existing human soul, by His complex Person, or by any

such other fallacious interpretation as erroneous men have since invented to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and sully the pure revelation of God. When God revealed His Son in Paul's heart (Galatians 1:16), it was to show him His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and this glory was the glory in which He eternally subsisted as the true and real Son of God. Paul, therefore, from the revelation that he had of Him in his own soul, believed that He was the Son of God in His divine nature and eternal subsistence, that true and real Son of the Father in whom the Old Testament church believed as the promised Messiah, and for whose advent it had been so long waiting in faith and hope. A few words upon the faith of the Old Testament saints may not be here, perhaps, out of place; for it may explain why Nathanael, Paul, the Eunuch, and others so implicitly and instantaneously received Jesus as the Son of God when once they believed in Him as the promised Messiah. There was no doubt in the mind of the believing Israelite that the true, real and proper Son of God was to come. The clear language of the second Psalm and the express declaration of prophecy (Isaiah 9:6) had already firmly laid that as the foundation of the faith of the Old Testament church. The question with the elect remnant when Christ came in the flesh was, whether Jesus of Nazareth were He. Immediately, therefore, that Jesus was revealed to a God-fearing Jew as the promised Messiah, faith flowed out toward Him as the Son of God, for whose coming he was looking. Such believing Israelites were Simeon, Anna, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Nathanael, and other godly men and women "who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). In a similar way, the high priest "adjured Jesus by the living God to tell them whether He was the Christ, the Son of God." The very chief priests and elders, and all the council, did not doubt that the true and real Son of God was to come, for that was the faith of the Old Testament church; but they disbelieved that Jesus who stood before them was He; and they crucified Him as a blasphemer, not as doubting that when the Messiah did come He would be the eternal Son of God, but as rejecting the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be such. Thus not only believers, but unbelievers concur in exposing the ignorance and refuting the errors of those who in our day deny the eternal Sonship of Jesus. But now look with the same spiritual eye at the faith and confession of the Eunuch (Acts 8:37). Philip, who had preached unto him Jesus, and no doubt in so doing had declared to him His true and proper Sonship, refused to baptise him till he was assured of his faith. In answer to that appeal, what was his confession? "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:35-37). Now, can we for a moment think that this new-born believer in the Son of God viewed Him as such by office, or by covenant, or by any such crafty invention of subsequent days as erroneous men have sought out whereby to obscure truth too bright, too dazzling for their dim eyes? Or do we not rather believe that his faith rose up at once to embrace the sublime mystery that Jesus of Nazareth whom Philip preached was the true and real Son of God? It is a sound and safe rule of interpretation that the simple, literal meaning of a passage is that which the Holy Ghost intends. Apply that rule to those passages where Jesus is spoken of as the Son of God, and it at once follows that His true and literal Sonship is meant by the expression. The Scriptures are written for the plain, simple-hearted, believing family of God, who receive the truth from His lips in the same unreasoning faith as a child listens to the teaching of its mother (Psalms 129:2; Isaiah 28:9). Now, where would be the childlike faith of all these simple-hearted believers if the blessed Jesus was not really and truly the Son of God, but only so by some mysterious explanation which denies the plain letter of truth? Spiritual reader, avoid mystical, forced, fanciful, strained explanations, and receive in the simplicity of faith the plain language of the Holy Ghost. It will preserve thy feet from the traps and snares spread for them by

crafty men, who by fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. Seek rather to know and feel the power of truth in thy own soul, and to experience that inward blessedness and sacred liberty which the Son of God gives to those who believe in His Name, according to His own words—words of solemn import against the servants of sin and error, but full of blessedness to those who kiss the Son in faith and affection (Psalms 2:12). "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:35-36).

Having viewed the testimony borne to the Sonship of Christ by individuals, we will now, though not in strict chronological order, look at the united voice of the disciples. We read that after witnessing the miracle of Peter's walking on the sea, and the ceasing of the wind when Jesus came into the ship, "then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). It was nor that they did not so believe before, but they were so over-whelmed with the greatness of the miracle, and so awed by the power and presence of the Lord then in their midst, that their hearts bowed down before Him in holy adoration and believing love, as the very Son of the eternal Father, and as such possessed of all the power and glory of the Godhead. Can we suppose that their minds were taken up with speculations such as daring men have since invented to deny and dishonour both Father and Son; or did not rather their simple, childlike, and divinely-inspired faith at once embrace the blessedness of the mystery that the Jesus whom they saw, and at whose feet they fell, was the Son of the Father in truth and love? But it is needless to multiply testimonies of this nature. It must be evident to all who read the New Testament with an enlightened eye that faith in the Son of God is put forward again and again as the grand distinctive feature of those who are born and taught of God.

We shall therefore now pass on to show the way in which this blessed truth is intimately and inseparably connected with the experience of every living soul, for that is the grand mark and test of a doctrine being of God; and in so doing we shall, as before, keep as closely as possible to the Scriptures of truth. The eternal Sonship of Christ is no dry doctrine, but a fountain of life to the church of God; and as its vital streams flow into the soul they become springs of happiness and holiness, purging the conscience from dead works and purifying the heart from idols, and giving and maintaining communion with God.

1. A life of faith is the grand distinguishing mark of a saint of God here below. But this faith must have a living Object, and such a one as can maintain it in daily exercise. "Because I live, ye shall live also," was the Lord's own most gracious promise (John 14:19). Now let us see what was Paul's experience on this point: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The life which Paul lived in the flesh was "by the faith of the Son of God." This was his life of faith, looking unto, believing in, hanging upon the Son of God, and receiving out of His fulness supplies for all his need (John 1:16; Php 4:13; Php 4:19). Now, how is it possible for any man to live a similar life of faith unless he believe in the same way in the Son of God? And how can he believe that He is the Son of God if he deny His true and real Sonship? His grace and glory, His Person and work, His blood and righteousness, His suitability and all-sufficiency, His beauty and blessedness, His love and sympathy, His headship and dominion, His advocacy and intercession as the great Priest over the house of God—in the knowledge, faith and experience of which the very life of a believer is bound up, are all so

intimately connected with, all so directly and immediately flow from, His true Sonship, that they cannot be separated from it. Thus, if there be no faith in the Sonship of Christ, there can be no true faith in the Son of God; and if there be no true faith in the Son of God, what is a man, with all his profession, but one who has a name to live and is dead?

2. Communion with God, that rich, that unspeakable blessing, whereby a worm of earth is admitted into holy converse with the Three-in-One Jehovah, is intimately, indeed necessarily, connected with the life of faith of which we have just been treating. But there can be no communion with the Father and the Son where there is no "acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Colossians 2:2). In other words, there must be a living faith in, and a sincere confession of the Son as the Son, before there can be any sacred fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is John's testimony: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). How, then, can any have fellowship (that is, communion) with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ if they deny both Father and Son, which they most certainly do if they reject the real Sonship of Jesus? Well may God say to such, "If I be a Father, where is Mine honour?" (Malachi 1:6.) You may call Me your Father. I reject your claim, for you deny My dear Son, and "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:23). There may be a notional Christ presented to the imagination, a letter Christ conceived by the natural understanding, a Christ upon the cross, as in pictures and on the Romish crucifix, painted upon the eye of sense; and by a strong effort of the mind there may be, with all these representations, a something like faith and feeling which may be thought by poor, deceived, deluded creatures a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. But if there be no spiritual faith in His Sonship, there can be no spiritual communion with Him. It is only as the soul is blessed and favoured with discoveries of Him as the Son of God that faith goes out upon Him, hope anchors in Him, and love flows forth toward Him; and where these three graces of the Spirit are, there and there only is there a saving knowledge of His Person, a blessed experience of His grace, and a sacred fellowship of His presence.

3. Nor can there be, as it appears to us from John's testimony, any walking in time light of God's countenance, any fellowship with the family of God here below, or any saving knowledge of the cleansing blood of the Lamb where Christ's real Sonship is denied. And what is religion worth when these three blessings are revered from it? Consider, in the light of the Spirit, the following testimony: "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Look at the three blessings spoken of in this verse: 1. Walking in the light as God is in the light; 2. Having fellowship one with another; 3. An experience of the blood of Jesus Christ His Son as cleansing from all sin. And observe how the whole stress of the verse lies upon the words, "Jesus Christ His Son." Take away His true and real Sonship—for light there is darkness, for fellowship with the saints there is separation from them, and for the cleansing blood there is a guilty conscience and a sin -avenging God.

4. As there is no communion with Father and Son without a living faith in the true Sonship of Jesus, and no knowledge of atoning blood, so there is no indwelling of God without such a faith and confession. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). To be a saving confession there must first be a believing heart (Romans

10:10), and wherever the one precedes, the other certainly follows (2 Corinthians 4:13). If, then, there be no true faith, there can be no true confession; but a heart which believes aright will ever manifest itself by a confessing tongue. It is for this reason that John pronounces such a blessing on "whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God." But do those confess Him who deny His true and proper Sonship? No; he only confesses Him whose eyes have been anointed to see His beauty and glory as the only-begotten of the Father, and whose faith embraces Him as having been eternally such. In his happy soul "God dwelleth" by His Spirit and grace, for in receiving the Son of God as such into his heart, he has received the Father also (1 John 2:23); and "he dwelleth in God," for by dwelling by faith in the Son of His love he dwelleth also in the Father. Then how can he who denies the true and real Sonship of Jesus have any part or lot in a blessing like this?

5. Another rich blessing connected with faith in the true and proper Sonship of Christ is victory over the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5.) A man must either overcome the world, or be overcome by it. To overcome the world is to be saved; to be overcome by it is to be lost. He, then, who does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God does not, and cannot, overcome the world, for he has not the faith of God’s elect; he is not born of God; there is no divine life in his soul; and he has therefore no power to resist the allurements, endure the scorn, or rise superior to the frowns and smiles of the world, but is entangled, carried captive, and destroyed by it. Where the world is loved the heart is necessarily overcome by it, for in the love of the world, as in the love of sin, is all the strength of the world. Now unless the love of Christ in the soul be stronger than the love of the world, the weaker must give way to the stronger. Unbelief, heresy and error cannot overcome the world, for such are utter strangers to the faith which purifies the heart from the lust of it, to the hope which rises above it, and to the love which lifts up the soul beyond it.

6. Again, it cannot be doubted that of all the blessings which God can bestow in living experience few surpass a knowledge of the possession of eternal life. But this rich blessing is intimately connected with faith in the Sonship of Jesus. This is John’s testimony: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). To whom does John write? To those that "believe on the Name of the Son of God." They alone can receive and believe his testimony, for they alone possess the inward teaching and witness of the blessed Spirit to the truth of his word. He does not write to heretics, to erroneous men, to disbelievers in, to deniers of the true Sonship of Jesus. As these have not the Son of God, they have not life (1 John 5:12), and John writes not to the dead, but the living. For their sakes, and to confirm their faith and hope, he writes that, from the witness of the Spirit, they may know in their own hearts and consciences that they have eternal life; and this they have because they have the Son. If this be true, none can know that they have eternal life but those who believe in the Name of the Son of God. And how can we think that those believe in that Name who deny His true and real Sonship, to set up in its place an idol, a figment of their own vain mind? And because they cannot understand the mystery of an eternal Son, or make it square with their natural ideas of generation, renounce it altogether, or explain it utterly away?

Nor, as it appears to us, can the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity be maintained except by holding the eternal Sonship of Christ. There are two errors of an opposite nature as regards the doctrine of the Trinity:

1. One is Tritheism, or setting up three distinct Gods; the other, 2. Sabellianism, which holds that there is but one God under three different names. Each of these errors destroys the Trinity in Unity, the first by denying the Unity of the Essence, the second by denying the Trinity of the Persons. The true and scriptural doctrine of the Trinity steers between these two erroneous extremes, and holds a Trinity of Persons in a Unit of Essence. Now, the Lord Jesus, as the eternal Son of the Father, is distinct from Him as His Son, and yet necessarily one with Him as partaking of the same Essence; and the Holy Ghost, as proceeding from the Father and the Son, is distinct also from those Persons of the Trinity, and yet, as eternally proceeding from both, partakes of their Essence likewise. Thus we have a Trinity of Persons, but a Unity of Essence—One God, but eternally subsisting as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Eternal Sonship gives to the Son a Unity of Essence with the Father, and yet a distinctness of Person; thus, as the Son He is one with the Father (John 10:30), and yet as the Son He is distinct from the Father. So eternal procession from the Father and the Son gives to the Holy Ghost Unity of Essence with the Father and the Son, and yet a distinct Personality. Upon this firm basis the Trinity stands. But if you remove the eternal Sonship of Christ, you also must take away the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost; and by so doing you destroy the Unity of Essence and inter-communion of Nature of Israel’s Triune God. If the denial of the eternal Sonship of Jesus involve such consequences, well may we tremble at such an error as removes the very foundations of revealed truth. All other views of the Sonship of Christ lower His essential and eternal dignity and, however craftily disguised, tend to, and usually end in, Arianism. If His Sonship be not His eternal mode of subsistence, it must, in some way or other, be created Sonship, and what is this but Arian doctrine in its very root and essence? How the Son can be eternally begotten, and how the Holy Ghost can eternally proceed, is a mystery which we cannot understand, much less explain; but we receive it by faith, in the same way as we receive the "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." If once we begin to reason on these matters, we are lost at the very threshold of our inquiry. To believe, not to speculate; to receive the testimony that God has given of His Son, not to doubt, argue and cavil, is the only sure path, as well as the peculiar blessedness of a child of God.

12.04. Chapter IV

Chapter IV As one stronghold of the opponents of the true and proper Sonship of the blessed Lord consists in the various objections, raised for the most part by carnal reasoning, which have been urged by various preachers and writers against it, and as some of these objections are very subtle and, at first sight, of some weight, we have felt that it might be desirable to notice those of any importance, and, as far as we can, to remove them out of the way, for they are often sad stumbling-blocks even to some who believe and love the truth. But before we take them up severally one by one, it may be necessary to premise a few observations on the nature of objections generally, for it is a subject often not sufficiently understood either by those who employ them, or by those who are influenced by them. It is a common idea, that if a strong objection be started against a doctrine, and that objection cannot be fully or satisfactorily answered, it is like laying an axe to the root of a tree, which at once effectually and for ever overthrows it. But there cannot be a greater fallacy, as will be in a moment evident from the following considerations: 1. The objection may be capable of an answer, though you may not be able to answer it; or 2. It may arise from the objector misunderstanding or taking a false view of the question; or 3. The whole subject may lie beyond the reach of our reasoning faculties ; or 4. Compared with the weight of testimony in favour of the point in hand, the objection may be absolutely of no real weight. To make our meaning a little plainer, apply these considerations to the subject of miracles, and see how they bear upon the point of objections raised against their truth as narrated in the Old and New Testaments. Infidels, such as Hume and others, have brought the most powerful objections against miracles, as being not only contrary to all our present experience, but as opposed to the very course and fixed laws of nature, as to gravitation, for instance, when the iron axe-head was made to swim (2 Kings 6:6.), or when the Lord walked upon the water. Now, 1. You might not be able to answer these objections were they put to you personally by a clever infidel. But another person, who had considered the subject more deeply than you, might be able to do what you could not. Or, 2. The infidel objection might arise from the objector taking a false view of the whole subject of miracles as not understanding their necessity to establish revelation, or from his setting aside the power of God who made the laws of nature temporarily to suspend them. Or 3. The explanation how water, for instance, was miraculously turned into wine, or a few barley loaves and fishes at once so multiplied as to feed thousands, may be wholly beyond the reach of our present faculties. Or 4. The objection drawn from natural reasons may not be worth a straw against the weight of the testimony on the other side, say of the five thousand men who ate of the loaves and fishes. Objections, therefore, even if they cannot be fully or satisfactorily answered, so far from cutting the tree down against which they are directed, may not even lop off a bough from the stem. Be not, therefore, discouraged or tempted to give up the truth of Christ’s eternal Sonship because strong objections may be brought against it. But in addition to the considerations which we have offered upon objections generally, bear in mind as regards heavenly mysteries: 1. That there is not a single truth of revelation against which strong objections may not be raised; 2. That divine truth is a matter of faith, and thus out of the reach and beyond the province of reason, and that we are therefore called upon not to argue, but to believe; 3. That there is no more common device of

Satan than to suggest objections against every sacred mystery; and 4. That if these objections be listened to, and obtain any firm hold over the mind, their almost inevitable effect is either to close it altogether against the truth, or to fill it with suspicions, or even infidel suggestions, which may cast it down into the greatest distress and perplexity. Anyone may find this to be the case who has watched the power of objections on his own mind, and felt how they have robbed and spoiled him of his strength and comfort in the hour of temptation. But let us also bear steadfastly in mind that there is not a single revealed truth against which strong objections may not be alleged. He who denies or is ignorant of this has a very shallow knowledge either of the points themselves, or of the opposition that has been raised in all ages against them. Prophecy, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the resurrection of the body, the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the doctrines of grace, and numberless other vital truths have ever had to encounter the greatest objections, and objections of such a nature that reason is utterly unable to answer them. I fairly confess for myself, as the result of more than thirty years' experience of the power of objections on the mind, that if I had listened to them, or rather if they had not been subdued by the Spirit and grace of God, I should long ago have renounced every divine truth, and become a confirmed infidel. Thus I am neither a stranger to objections, nor to the way—the only way—in which they can be met. And I no less plainly see in the case of those unhappy men whose minds are prepossessed with the objections which have been raised against the eternal Sonship of Christ, that they are held so fast in them that they cannot believe it, nor can they receive the strongest and clearest testimonies of Scripture in its favour.

Now, to bring these observations to a head, apply them to the various objections raised against the true, proper and eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord. When brought to the test, they will be found either to be misconceptions, or misrepresentations, or false deductions, or mere natural arguments, and therefore to stand on precisely the same ground as objections to miracles, because they are contrary to certain fixed laws of nature; or to the resurrection, because we see the body reduced to dust, and cannot understand how the same identical body can rise again; or even to the Bible itself, as containing many statements apparently inconsistent with the discoveries of modern science. It is, then, a most hazardous thing for a person who desires to know and believe the truth savingly for himself to listen to objections against it, and to give them a place in his mind. Let him rather seek the promised teaching of the Spirit, and say to all objections which would wrest the truth out of his hand, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those which be of men."

We must also bear carefully in mind that on such mysterious subjects as that before us it is impossible for us, with our present faculties, to comprehend them, and that therefore carnal reason can always suggest objections to them which cannot be met on similar grounds. What finite intelligence can grasp infinity? "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out" (Job 37:23). "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Job 11:7-9). May we not, then, truly add, with Zophar, of those who object to divine mysteries because apparently contradictory to human reason, "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt"? (Job 11:12.) But let me now address myself to some of the objections which have been made to the true and proper Son-ship of our blessed Lord.

1. The first objection that I shall notice is that "we thereby make the Lord Jesus Christ to be a begotten God." The irreverence of this expression is quite in keeping with the usual way in which the opponents of truth seek to throw discredit on the views of their adversaries. Not content with drawing their own false deductions from the views which they oppose, they dress up these conclusions in a garb of their own manufacture in order to make them ridiculous or contemptible. Had they common fairness they would not impute to us so degrading, so irreverent a doctrine as a begotten God. The expression implies that we are Tritheists; that is, hold that there are three distinct Gods (not three distinct Persons), and that of these three Gods one is the God who begets, the second the God who is begotten, and the third is the God who proceeds from the two other Gods. But this is not Trinitarianism, nor even Christianity under any form, but Hindooism. We are Trinitarians; that is, we believe there is but one God, who exists in a Trinity of Persons. If we held, as they impute to us, a begotten God, it would make us deny not only the Unity of the divine Essence, but the very self-existence of the only true God. We therefore repel the charge to the utmost of our power, and deny that our doctrine leads to any such conclusion. It is a mere natural deduction of their own. But do they not know that in heavenly mysteries we cannot, and must not, draw natural conclusions, especially if they clash with or contradict revealed truths? Is not revealed truth altogether out of the reach and beyond the grasp of the natural mind, and not amenable to logical argument? If reason be allowed to tread heavenly ground, and draw at its pleasure logical conclusions from Scripture truths, we must soon abandon the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the doctrines of grace, for strict logical conclusions would go far to overthrow them all. This is the very stronghold of German rationalism and English infidelity, and cannot be too much reprobated by a believer in revealed truth. But as this objection was considered at some length in the Review of Mr. Crowther’s sermon ("Gospel Standard," June. 1860), I will content myself with reproducing what was there advanced upon that point. The adversaries of the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord often throw into our teeth that we hold what they are pleased to call (for there is a sad want of holy reverence in their language) "a begotten God." Thus the author of the above sermon says, "There is not one particle of evidence from Genesis to Revelation that the Deity of Christ is a derived, a begotten, a generated, and thus an originated and not an original Deity;" and again (p. 9), "However much assertions may be made about ‘eternal Sonship,’ ‘eternal generation,’ or ‘begotten God,’ those assertions being totally at variance with both the letter and the spirit of the word, are not entitled to any weight." Mr. Crowther and others may have deduced such a conclusion, but they must be sadly ignorant of divine truth not to know that in such sacred mysteries as the Trinity, and truths of a similar kind, it is not permissible to deduce logical conclusions from given premises, as in mere natural reasoning. But where can they find such an expression as "a begotten God" used by any writer or preacher who advocates the eternal Sonship of the blessed Lord? It is an expression highly derogatory to the blessed Jesus, and intended only to cast contempt on the doctrine of His eternal Sonship. A few words, therefore, upon this point may not be out of place. We draw a distinction, then, between the Essence of God and the subsistence of the Three Persons of the Godhead in that Essence. God "is" (Hebrews 11:6). His great and glorious Name as the one Jehovah is, "I AM," or "I AM that I AM." This is His Essence, which is necessarily self-existent; and this self-existent Essence is common to the Three Persons in the Godhead. Were it not so, Jehovah would not be one Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4). But in this self-existent Essence there are Three Persons, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father, not in His Essence, which is self-existent, but in His Personality, or

that by which He subsists as a Person in the Godhead. No writer to our mind has handled this point with greater clearness and ability than Dr. Gill, and as his words will justly and necessarily have more force and weight than any of our own, we will give an extract from his Body of Divinity on the subject. And first let us see what the Doctor says about the Essence of God:—

There is a nature that belongs to every creature which is difficult to understand; and so to God the Creator, which is most difficult of all. That Nature may be predicated of God, is what the apostle suggests where he says, the Galatians before conversion served them who 'by nature were no gods' (Galatians 4:8), which implies that though those they had worshipped were not, yet there was One that was, by nature, GOD; otherwise there would be no impropriety in denying it of them. . . . Essence, which is the same thing with nature, is ascribed to God; He is said to be excellent, in essence (Isaiah 28:29), for so the words may be rendered; that is, He has the most excellent Essence or Being. This is contained in His names, Jehovah and I AM THAT I AM, which are expressive of His Essence or Being, as has been observed; and we are required to believe that 'He is,' that He has a Being or Essence, and does exist (Hebrews 11:6); and essence is that by which a person or thing is what it is, that is, its nature.

This nature is common to the Three Persons in God, but not communicated from one to another; They each of Them partake of it, and possess it as one undivided nature; They all enjoy it; it is not a part of it that is enjoyed by one, and a part of it by another, but the whole by each; as "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ," so in the Holy Spirit; and of the Father there will be no doubt; these equally subsist in the unity of the divine Essence, and that without any derivation or communication of it from one to another. I know it is represented by some who otherwise are sound in the doctrine of the Trinity, that the divine nature is communicated from the Father to the Son and Spirit, and that He is fons Deitatis, 'the fountain of Deity,' which I think are unsafe phrases, since they seem to imply a priority in the Father to the other Two Persons; for He that communicates must, at least, in order of nature and according to our conception of things, be prior to whom the communication is made; and that He has a superabundant plenitude of Deity in Him, previous to this communication. It is better to say that They are self-existent, and exist together in the same undivided Essence; and jointly, equally, and as early one as the other, possess the same nature. Body of Divinity, Book I., Chap. iv [There is an excellent summary of the Doctor's views on these points in the Memoir of Dr. Gill, prefixed to Mr. Doudney's edition of his Commentary on the Old Testament. vol. 1:, p. 26.] The Essence of God, then, as thus ably and clearly explained, is that by which He exists; and as there can be but one God, and He is necessarily self-existent, His Essence is clearly distinct from the modes of subsistence of the Three Persons in the Godhead. The adversaries of the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord, we will not say designedly, but probably through misconception, would represent our views somewhat in the following light, which, however, we put forward with considerable reluctance, as on a subject so holy and sacred we dare not to think, much more to speak in any way derogatory to the glory of a Triune Jehovah. They would represent us, then, as holding that first there existed the Father alone; that He begat another God, whom we call the Son; and that from the Father and Son there proceeded another God, whom we call the Holy Ghost. But this perversion of truth is not our doctrine, nor can any such conclusion be legitimately deduced from our views. It may serve their purpose to seek to overthrow the scriptural doctrine of the eternal Sonship of the adorable Redeemer, by dressing up our views in a garb of their own manufacturing, or passing off their

illegitimate progeny as our true-born offspring; but we refuse the dress which they would put upon their back, and disavow the children which they would lay at our door. It does not follow because the Lord Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God in His divine nature, that He is "a begotten God."

How, then, it may be asked, do we sustain our doctrine of eternal generation and at the same time obviate such a conclusion? We sustain it thus. We have already shown that there is a distinction between the Essence of God, which is one and self-existent, and the Personality of the Three Persons in the Godhead, which is threefold, and thus intercommunicative, and so far dependent. We have to lament the inadequacy of language, or at least of our own language, to set such sublime mysteries forth; but the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity can only be so defended. The Unity of God implies self-existence; the Trinity in Unity implies relationship. Thus as regards the Unity of Essence Christ is self-existent; but as regards the Trinity He is begotten. He is therefore not a begotten God, though He is a begotten Son. This explanation may be called mystical and obscure; but on such deep and incomprehensible subjects all thought fails and all language falters. Yet as we are sometimes called upon to state or defend our views of divine truth, it is desirable to have clear views of what we believe, and to express them as plainly as possible. We believe, then, that there are Three Persons in the Godhead, and that these are distinguished from each other by certain personal relationships, and that these personal relationships are not covenant titles, names, or offices, but are distinctive and eternal modes of existence. We are thus preserved from Sabellianism on the one hand, which holds that there is but one God with three different names; and Tritheism on the other, which makes three distinct Gods. But believing in a Trinity of Persons, in the Unity of the divine Essence, we say that the Father is a Father as begetting; the Son is a Son as begotten; the Holy Ghost is a Spirit as proceeding. If, as imputed to us, we were to say that the Son is "a begotten God," we should deny Him self-existence in His Essence, as One with the Father and the Holy Ghost; as if we should say that He is a Son by office or by His incarnation, we should deny, as Mr. Crowther does, His true, proper and actual Sonship. To sum up the whole in a few words, it is in His Person, not in His Essence, that He is the only-begotten Son of God. Dr. Gill has opened up this distinction with his usual clearness and ability in the following extract from his Body of Divinity. When I say it is by necessity of nature, I do not mean that the divine nature, in which the divine Persons subsist, distinguishes Them; for that nature is one and common to Them all. The nature of the Son is the same with that of the Father; and the nature of the Spirit the same with that of the Father and the Son; and this nature, which They in common partake of, is undivided; it is not parted between Them, so that one has one part, and another a second, and another a third; nor that one has a greater and another a lesser part, which might distinguish Them, but the whole fulness of the Godhead is in each.

To come to the point: it is the personal relations or distinctive relative properties which belong to each Person which distinguish Them from one another; as paternity in the First Person, filiation in the Second, and spiration in the Third; or, more plainly, it is begetting (Psalms 2:7) which peculiarly belongs to the First, and is never ascribed to the Second and Third, which distinguishes Him from Them both, and gives Him, with great propriety, the Name of the Father; and it is being begotten, that is the personal relation, or relative property of the Second Person, hence called ‘the only-begotten of the Father’ (John 1:14), which distinguishes Him from the First and Third, and gives Him the name of the Son; and the relative property, or personal relation of the Third Person

is, that He is breathed by the First and Second Persons, hence called the breath of the Almighty, the breath of the mouth of Jehovah the Father, and the breath of the mouth of Christ the Lord, and which is never said of the other Two Persons, and so distinguishes Him from Them, and very pertinently gives Him the name of the Spirit, or breath" (Job 33:4; Psalms 33:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:8).—Body of Divinity, Book I., ch. 28:

It will be seen from these extracts that a distinction is drawn between Essence and Person; but as some of my readers may feel a difficulty in gathering up the distinction between the two, I submit the following idea as an illustration, but, be it remembered, only as an illustration. Human nature is distinct, or at least distinguishable, from the individual men and women who in common possess that nature. Thus we may say that human nature is common to all men and women, and yet that men and women are distinct from one another as individuals. So, in a high and mysterious sense, the Essence of Deity, which is self-existent, may be distinguished from the Persons in the Deity, who sustain to each other a peculiar and eternal relationship. In Their Essence They are One, in Their Personality They are Three; in Their Essence They are self-existent, in Their Personality They subsist, the Father as Father to the Son, the Son as Son to the Father, the Holy Ghost to both as proceeding from the Father and the Son. Thus we establish a Trinity in Unity. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." There is the Unity of the divine Essence. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." There we have the Trinity of Persons in the divine Essence, for "these Three are One" (1 John 5:7).

2. Another objection brought forward against the eternal Sonship of the blessed Lord is, that it denies His co-eternity and co-equality with the Father. For this is their carnal deduction from the doctrine of Christ's true and proper Sonship, that as a father necessarily exists before a son, if Christ be the true and proper Son of God, He must have come into being subsequently to the Father, and consequently cannot be co-eternal with Him. But to this we answer: 1. We must not carry ideas borrowed from earth and time into heaven and eternity, and weigh and measure the nature and being of God by the nature and being of man. But, 2, even on natural grounds, so far from a father necessarily existing before a son, it is not true, for though a father exists as a man before he has a son, yet he is not a father before he has a son. Father and son, therefore, even in time, only co-exist at the same instant, for the mutual relationship commences at the same moment. But, 3, the very expression, "the eternal Son," declares His co-eternity with the Father. For are there two eternities? If the Father exist from all eternity as the Father, and the Son exist from all eternity as the Son, is not this co-eternity? In asserting, therefore. His eternity we assert His co-eternity. So with His coequality. As giving Him all the perfections of Deity, as making Him one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the Unity of the divine Essence, we assert His equality, and if His equality, His co-equality; for as there are not two eternities, so there are not two equalities. If our blessed Lord is the eternal Son, He is necessarily the co-eternal Son; if He is the equal of the Father, He is His co-equal. Indeed, it is as His Son that He is co-equal with the Father; for as a Son He partakes of His nature, is the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person. He therefore said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:9.) And again, "I and My Father are One." In Deity there can be no inequality, in eternity no priority or posteriority. It is because men will persist in carrying earthly ideas into heavenly things that they thus stumble and fall at the foundation which God has laid in

Zion.

3. Another objection made to the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord is founded on the term, "eternal generation," which divines have made use of in order to express it. This expression seems especially to move their spleen; and the language which some of the opponents of the true and proper Sonship of Jesus have permitted themselves to use against it is truly awful to a spiritual mind, which has ever seen or felt the blessedness of that heavenly truth. It has been called even lately "a piece of twaddle," "a metaphysical conceit," " a self-contradiction," "an impossibility in the nature of things," "carnal and contrary to the Scriptures," "a fable," "a figment," " an error which has seen its day, which is now dying out, becoming effete, waxing old and vanishing away," as if the true and proper Sonship of Jesus, as the only-begotten of the Father, were a lying tale, a vain, absurd tradition, which the growing intelligence of the age was fast exploding. Nay, the same writer has gone so far as to declare in print that "he solemnly believes the eternal generation doctrine to be from beneath," and "to be intended by the enemy to lower and lessen the absolute Divinity and Godhead of Christ." Whence his "solemn belief" comes it is not for us to pronounce, but we are sure it is not from the same source as the faith which made Peter say, "And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). To one who knows and loves the truth it is indeed truly grievous to read such declarations, and to witness the bold effrontery with which men and ministers, of whom better things might have been hoped, thus assail the blessed truth of our Lord’s being "the only-begotten of the Father;" for though they may point their arrows chiefly against the expression, "eternal generation," yet it is the doctrine proclaimed by the term, not the bare term itself, against which they bend their bow. One of their complaints against the term is that "it is not an expression to be found in the Scriptures," just as if we were so tied to every exact Bible word as not to be allowed to use any other. The precise language of the Holy Ghost is, beyond all doubt, the very best, and no terms should be used which are not in full accordance with that inspired Word; but we are not so bound to the exact words of Scripture as to be debarred all others. If thus tied to exact Scripture terms, we ought strictly to use no language but the original Greek and Hebrew, or if allowed to employ the words of our English translation, we should always observe their exact order. But if the doctrine be there, what reasonable objection can there be to a term as long as it expresses that doctrine clearly and correctly? It is necessary sometimes to use condensed expressions as conveying in a few words a doctrine or truth which otherwise would require a long sentence fully to express it. Thus we use the words, "Trinity," "the Ordinance," as applied to the Lord’s Supper, "the doctrines of grace," "particular redemption," "effectual calling," "final perseverance," none of which terms are to be found totidem verbis, that is, in so many precise words, in the Scriptures, but are yet all blessed Bible truths, and could not be so well expressed by other terms. If, too, we object to the words "eternal generation," not only as not being scriptural, but as implying a contradiction, why should we not, on similar grounds, object to the words, "eternal union," "eternal counsels," "eternal decrees," "eternal fixtures," "eternal purposes," "eternal justification"? And yet these expressions are continually made use of by the very persons who so object to the term, "eternal generation." But not only is it an unobjectionable term, and one which has been sanctioned by our greatest divines, as Owen, Goodwin, Bunyan, Gill, etc., but it expresses what could not be so well or so clearly conveyed by any other. Those who so strenuously object to it, may not, perhaps, be altogether aware either of the time of its introduction or of the reason why it was first introduced. It is, then, not only one of those concise and convenient expressions which divines in all ages have

employed to communicate scriptural truth in a clear, definite form, but was first used for this very purpose by the ancient Fathers. The necessity for the use of clear and definite terms soon arose in the Christian church; for as errors and heresies sprang up at a very early period as so many tares sown by the enemy of souls among the wheat, men of God felt themselves compelled to meet the subtle wiles of the adversaries of truth by proofs drawn from the Word of God. But besides adducing exact scripture language, it was found necessary, as error assumed a bolder front, to adopt specific terms, in order to define the truth more clearly; for it was soon discovered that erroneous men sheltered their heresies under scripture phraseology, assigning to it all the while a meaning of their own distinct from its true and received acceptation. When, then, Anus in the fourth century broached his doctrine of the Son's being generated of the Father before time, but not from all eternity, and that, therefore, there was a period when the Son was not, [Arius thus speaks, "If the Father begat the Son, He that is he-gotten must have a beginning of His existence, from whence it is manifest that there was a time when the Son was not; and therefore it necessarily follows that He had His subsistence from things that are not," or was brought out of a state of non-existence into a state of existence.] the ancient Fathers made choice of the term "eternal generation," to distinguish the proper and eternal filiation of Jesus from His generation in the sense of Anus, who admitted the generation of the Son, but not His eternal generation, and craftily used generation in the sense of making or forming, not begetting. He thus denied that the Son was co-equal, co-eternal and con-substantial (of the same substance) with the Father. It must be either great ignorance or gross disingenuousness to impute to the advocates of the eternal Sonship of Jesus that they deny His co-eternity and co-equality with the Father, when the term, "eternal generation" was first used against the Arians, who held that heresy, and for the very purpose of declaring that as being the eternal Son of the eternal Father, the Son was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. To oppose, then, this fearful heresy, which was, in fact, a denial of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and degrading Him to a mere creature, the early Fathers employed the term "eternal generation" to express concisely what is stated more largely in the Nicene Creed, "Begotten of His Father before all worlds," "begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father"—"begotten before all worlds," in opposition to the Arian doctrine of a "begetting which was not eternal;" "begotten, not made," in opposition to the interpretation of begetting as a being made; and "of one substance with the Father," in opposition to the Arian heresy that He was not of the same, but only of similar substance. Basil, who was a great champion for the truth against the Arians, about the year A.D. 330, thus expresses himself: "As there is one God the Father, always remaining the Father, and who is for ever what He is; so there is one Son, born by an eternal generation, who is the true Son of God, who always is what He is, God the Word and Lord; and one Holy Spirit, truly the Holy Spirit."

Having thus seen the origin and reason of the expression, and that it was especially directed against the Arian heresy, let us now examine a little more closely its meaning, for we may be sure that the ancient Fathers meant something by it. The great leaders of the Council of Nice, at which the Arian heresy was condemned, such as Athanasius, etc., knew what they were about, for they had to contend with men of the most daring audacity and the subtlest intellect, backed by an army of adherents all over the then known world, and at one period with the whole temporal power against them. It was, therefore, a common saying at that time, "Athanasius against all the world, and all the world against Athanasius." Now, if these mighty champions for the truth adopted the term "eternal generation, to express the true filiation of Jesus, we may be sure that they had some

good grounds for its adoption. By it, therefore, they meant this great and glorious truth, that Jesus is "the Son of the Father in truth and love" (2 John 1:3); "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18); "His own Son" (Romans 8:32); "His only-begotten Son" (John 3:16); that He was this from all eternity; and that, not by virtue of any compact, or covenant, or foreview, or constitution of His complex Person as God-man, but by His very mode of subsistence as a Person in the Trinity. They did not attempt to explain the mystery of His eternal generation, for "who shall declare His generation?" (Isaiah 53:8.) And they might well say to those who would fain bring such a deep, incomprehensible subject to be tried and judged at the bar of human reason, "Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30:4). Neither His name, nor His Son's name, that is, neither the being and perfections of the Father, nor the being and perfections of His dear Son, can be comprehended by human intellect any more than a man can gather the winds in his fists, or wrap up the Atlantic in his cloak. They were content to believe and declare the truth, without venturing to comprehend, much less explain the mystery.

Milner, in his Church History, treats this point with great clearness. Speaking of the Council of Nice, he says, "But it soon appeared that, without some explanatory terms, decisively pointing out what the Scriptures had revealed, it was impossible to guard against the subtilties of the Arians. Did the Trinitarians assert that Christ was God? The Arians allowed it, but in the same sense as holy men and angels are styled gods in Scripture. Did they affirm that He was truly God? The others allowed that He was made so by God. Did they affirm that the Son was naturally of God? It was granted, 'For even we,' said they, 'are of God, of whom are all things.' Was it affirmed that the Son was the power, wisdom and image of the Father? 'We admit it,' replied the others; 'for we also are said to be the image and glory of God.' Such is the account which Athanasius gives of the disputations. He was at that time deacon of the church of Alexandria, and supported his bishop with so much accuracy and strength of argument as to lay the foundation of that fame which he afterwards acquired by his zeal in this controversy. What could the Trinitarians do in this situation? To leave the matter undecided was to do nothing; to confine themselves merely to Scripture terms was to suffer the Arians to explain the doctrine in their own way, and to reply nothing. Undoubtedly they had a right to comment according to their own judgment as well as the Arians; and they did so in the following manner. They collected together the passages of Scripture which represent the divinity of the Son of God, and observed that taken together, they amounted to a proof of His being of the same substance with the Father, that creatures were indeed said to be of God, because not existing of themselves, they had their beginning from Him, but that the Son was peculiarly of the Father, being of His substance as begotten of Him.

It behoves every one who is desirous of knowing simply the mind of God from His own Word, to determine for himself how far this interpretation of Scripture was true. The Council, however, was, by the majority before stated, convinced that this was a fair explanation, and that the Arian use of the term, God, true God, and the like, was a mere deception, because they affixed to them ideas which the Scriptures would by no means admit. But to censure the Council for introducing a new term when all that was meant by it was to express their interpretation of the Scriptures, appears unreasonable in the last degree, however fashionable. To say that they ought to have confined themselves to the very words of Scripture, when the Arians had first introduced their own gloss,

seems much the same as to say that the Trinitarians had not the same right with the Arians to express their own interpretation of Scripture and in their own language. — Milner’s Church History, Vol. 2:, p. 58. The Arians might argue that it was "a contradiction," an "impossibility," "an absurdity," for these are not new charges against the true and real Sonship of our blessed Lord, but their strong, yet simple, faith was not moved by such arguments, for it stood not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, and firmly rested in the sure testimony of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and in the inward witness of the blessed Spirit as sealing that testimony with a divine power upon their heart. This was their sufficient, their only and all-sufficient answer to all the cavilling arguments and subtle reasonings of the adversaries of truth. Milner well says of them, "To believe, to suffer, and to love—not to write" (and we might add, "not to argue")—"was the primitive taste;" for they were of that martyr band of whom we read that "they overcame" Satan and his accusations "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11). "Not a few of the Nicene fathers bore on their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Paul, bishop of Neocæsarea, on the banks of the Euphrates, had been debilitated by the application of hot iron to both his hands; others appeared there deprived of their right eyes, others deprived of their legs. A crowd of martyrs, in truth, were seen collected into one body." — Milner’s Church History, Vol. 2:, p. 61.

Here, and here alone, do I, too, as desiring to walk in these footsteps of the flock, find any rest for my own soul. I have seen and felt an indescribable grace and glory, an inexpressible beauty and blessedness in the true and real Sonship of Jesus, to give up which would be to renounce all my hope of eternal life. Thus, it is not with me a matter of argument, still less of theory and speculation, but a truth on which the whole weight of my soul hangs for eternity. With these views and feelings, then, and in the exercise of this faith, and hope, and love, in which I believe hundreds of the Lord’s family share with me, I may well be excused if I have earnestly contended for a truth which has been made so precious to my soul. I should be sorry if I had contended for it unfairly, bitterly, or angrily, for besides wounding my own conscience by using such unhallowed weapons, I should have injured the cause which lies so near to my heart; for I am bidden to put away "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking" (Ephesians 4:31); and I am assured by infallible authority that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). I may not be able, it is true, to answer fully and satisfactorily every objection which carnal reason may urge against it, or explain the mystery of an only-begotten Son. But can I explain how the Creator of the world lay in the Virgin’s womb? Can I solve the mystery how Joshua bade the sun stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon? (Joshua 10:12), or can I unravel the miracle how the three children were cast into the burning fiery furnace, and yet that the very smell of fire did not pass on them? (Daniel 3:27.) The Son of God, I read, was with them in the furnace, and I know that He was not there in His complex Person, for He had not then assumed the flesh and blood of the children; but I can no more explain how He was there than I can explain His eternal generation. But I can believe what I cannot comprehend, and realise a sacred blessedness in a mystery which I cannot explain. Nor do I rest my faith upon one or two isolated texts. I see the true and proper Sonship of our blessed Lord shining as with a ray of sacred light all through the New Testament. I see in it the love of God so tenderly and graciously revealed as when realised by faith melts the heart into gratitude and affection. I see in it such an ineffable and eternal relationship, intimacy and intercommunion between the Father and the Son, and between the Son and the Father, of which we get a feeble glimpse in John 17:1-26, as, when

felt, penetrates the soul with holy wonder and admiration. I see in it, too, the only title which the saints possess to become "sons of God," and as such to be made "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17), for if He be no Son, then are they no sons, but because God is His Father, He is, therefore, their Father (John 20:17). I see also in it a bond of eternal union between the Church and the Son, and through the Son with the Father, as expressed by the blessed Lord Himself (John 17:21), which, as apprehended by faith, opens to the believing heart a view which fills it with astonishment and adoration. I see in it a security for the salvation of the elect of God, for it fixes it on the eternal love of the Father to His Son, as loving them with the same love as that wherewith He loved Him (John 17:23); and lastly, I see in it that the very state of ultimate and eternal glory to which all the saints of God will be brought is that they may behold that glory which the Father has given to Jesus in that He loved Him as His only-begotten Son before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). I see, also, that it is absolutely essential to the maintenance of the Trinity, as, if once we set aside the eternal and intimate intercommunion of the Three Persons in the sacred Trinity, we destroy the Unity of the Godhead, for we make Them three distinct Gods without any such necessary or natural relationship as gives Them that Unity by which, though They are Three distinct Persons, yet They are but One God. How, then, can I give up so choice, so blessed a truth? I had better part with my life, knowing that if I lose my life for Christ’s sake, I shall surely find it; but that if I deny Him, He will as certainly deny me. My opponents may revile and deride me, may call me "a pope," "a fool," and "an ass," as they have already done. They may preach against me their abusive sermons, or write against me their abusive books, and I have already had no small share of both; but I will take them upon my shoulder as my ornament, and bind them as a crown to me (Job 31:35-36), for I know that such treatment has ever been the lot of those who are "valiant for the truth upon the earth." It is little to me what those may say and do who fight against the true and proper Sonship of the Lord of life and glory. It is not against us who seek to exalt His worthy Name that they fight, but against Him whom the Father has set as King upon His holy hill of Zion, and to whom He has said, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalms 2:6-7). It would be their mercy if they could obey the heavenly warning "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry." But whether so or not, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalms 2:12).

13.00. The Ministry of the Gospel

The Ministry of the Gospel by J. C. Philpot, 1866

Contents:

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13.01. Chapter 1

Introduction

Among the various subjects of divine truth which at different times have come before our mind, and more or less occupied our thoughts, that of 'the Christian ministry' has not been the least frequent or the least important. As we have ourselves been engaged in the ministry of the gospel for more than thirty years, and have thus known something experimentally of its cares and anxieties—as well as of its blessings and benefits, we may hope, with the Lord's help and blessing, to examine the subject not only as presented to our view in the Scriptures of truth, but be able to bring some lengthened experience to bear upon its consideration, and thus handle it not as a mere question of doctrine or speculation—but as a matter of personal interest and practical knowledge and possession. We have felt inclined, therefore, to bring the subject before our readers as a part of those Meditations which we have ventured, in the strength of the Lord, for some little time past, to cast as our mite into his treasury.

It is indeed a most difficult and delicate subject to handle rightly—and a feeling sense of this difficulty and of our own inability to treat it with that clearness and fullness, that faithfulness and decision, that authority and power, which it demands and deserves—would have almost deterred us even now from making the attempt, had we not hoped to experience the same gracious help from the Lord in unfolding it which, we trust, has been given to us upon the other branches of divine truth which we have thus far brought before our readers, and the same kind consideration and patient indulgence from them. We shall, therefore, venture forthwith to launch our little bark, freighted with many cares as well as many treasures, and spread our sail to waft it over a not altogether unknown sea; and though we may meet storms and cross currents, strong winds and threatening gales by the way, may the gracious Lord guide us with his eye and direct us by his word. May our eye be single to his glory and his people's good; may the Scriptures be our chart, and a personal, experimental knowledge of the truth our compass; may no seductive breezes, or a desire to sail in smoother waters divert us from our course; and, above all, may the blessed Spirit grant a favorable gale, that we may reach the desired haven—the approbation of God in our own conscience, and a place for his truth in the consciences of our gracious readers. In handling any subject, especially when it is both long and difficult, some degree of order seems requisite. Order is to a subject what it is to our books, letters, papers, and even the commonest implements of the factory or the forge and the furniture of the parlour or the kitchen, not to say the accounts of the merchant or the goods of the tradesman. "Order," says the poet, "is heaven's first law;" and a higher authority than he, viewing with enlightened eye the order of God as displayed in creation, and speaking with inspired tongue, has declared—"You established the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve your plans." (Psalms 119:90-91.) But though we intend to lay down, and hope to preserve, some such orderly arrangement of our subject as may preserve us from confusion and repetition, yet we do not mean thereby to tie ourselves rigorously down to a certain fixed path. A marked-out, definite road is necessary to reach safely and comfortably the end of a journey; but it need not be as straight and as level as a railway, still less

so hard and so confined—the way so rigid, the transit so rapid. It may wind through a forest, or slip through shady hedges where the flowers bloom and the birds sing; it may stretch over the breezy heath where the lark soars and the sheep-bell tinkles, and may yield quiet resting-places during sun or shower, or even for a night's abode, without hurrying us on, amid clouds of steam and smoke, to our destination.

Pardon this little sportive spurt. It may have a deeper meaning than you may attach to it; it may be an emblem of our journeying together, and the incidents of the way in our present subject of meditation. Our gracious Lord has not disdained such figurative language in the invitation given to his beloved bride—"Come, my love, let us go out into the fields and spend the night among the wild-flowers. Let us get up early and go out to the vineyards. Let us see whether the vines have budded, whether the blossoms have opened, and whether the pomegranates are in flower. And there I will give you my love." (Song Song of Solomon 7:11-12.) We shall, therefore, hope to consider our subject under these five points of view.

I. The FOUNDATION of the gospel ministry.

II. The NATURE and CHARACTER of the gospel ministry.

III. The ENDS for which the gospel ministry was established.

IV. The promised BLESSINGS which accompany of the gospel ministry.

V. The TRIALS, EXERCISES, COMFORTS and ENCOURAGEMENTS of the gospel ministry.

Before, however, we launch our ship, it may be as well to dispose of an objection which may present itself to some of our readers—the comparative narrowness of the question. They may say, "Such a subject as you now propose to handle is limited to a few, comparatively, of the Lord's people. None are interested in it but ministers, who, however highly we may esteem them in love for their work's sake, form but a small part of your readers. Why do you not take some subject of a wider range, in which we shall all feel a general interest?" With your leave, kind objector, the matter does not stand exactly as you have put it. The subject is of wider interest than may at first sight appear. It is true that the ministers of experimental truth are few, and, sad to say, getting fewer and fewer every day, and their hearers many. But have not their hearers an equal if not a greater interest in the ministry than the ministers themselves? If you were a pauper, and depended on charity for a supply of bread, would the nature, quality, and quantity of the loaves which were given, be of no interest to you? Who would have the greater interest in the bread distribution—the bread distributor or the bread eater?

So, as in some measure dependent on the ministry for a supply of the bread of life, is it nothing to you whether you get a loaf--or a stone? Sound, solid, nourishing bread--or an indigestible lump which hunger itself can scarcely persuade you to touch or taste? Thus the hearer has really quite as much an interest in the subject of the ministry as the minister himself; for if he has no personal experience of the exercises and blessings of the preacher, he has of the exercises of a soul when starved under it, and of the blessings of a soul when under it comforted and fed.

We shall now, therefore, without further preface, address ourselves to our subject, "The Ministry of the Gospel;" and our first point shall be to show—the foundation on which it rests.

13.02. Chapter 2

The FOUNDATION of the gospel ministry The most prominent feature of the gospel ministry is, that it is peculiarly an institution and an ordinance of the New Testament.

Instruction in the truth was always requisite for its preservation on earth. That it might not die with the individual or the generation to which it was first revealed, it was absolutely necessary that the father should hand it down to the son. This patriarchal mode was, in consequence, the earliest, as it was the simplest. We find, therefore, the Lord thus speaking of Abraham—"Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the Lord asked. "For Abraham will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord and do what is right and just. Then I will do for him all that I have promised." (Genesis 18:17-19.) One of the main purposes of God in the call of Abraham was to make known in him and by him his truth, and by giving him a godly seed, in whom it might be maintained, as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, to preserve it from that loss and corruption which it had suffered since the time of Noah, through the rise and prevalence of idolatry involving the descendants of Shem, and even the immediate ancestors of Abraham. (Genesis 31:30; Joshua 24:2.) This patriarchal method was preserved down to the time of the Exodus from Egypt, when the Lord made a covenant at Sinai with the children of Israel, and a new mode of divine instruction was instituted and inaugurated. A written word was given; sacrifices and priesthood were, not indeed for the first time instituted, but put upon a new foundation; a tabernacle set up, and daily ministrations in it prescribed, and an order of men specially set apart to teach the people, as the Lord speaks by Malachi—"Then at last you will know it was I who sent you this warning so that my covenant with the Levites may continue. The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and this is what I gave them. This called for reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name. They passed on to the people all the truth they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin. The priests' lips should guard knowledge, and people should go to them for instruction, for the priests are the messengers of the Lord Almighty." (Malachi 2:4-7.) By this written code of laws, by these sacrifices, and by the Levitical priesthood, the people were instructed; and, as the Apostle speaks, had the gospel preached unto them—"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Hebrews 4:2.) Thus the children of Israel had, in a sense, a preached gospel given to them; and yet, as we shall see by-and-by, quite distinct from the ministry of the gospel now existing as a New Testament ordinance. After they had reached and been settled in the land of Canaan for a considerable time, as the priesthood had become corrupt, (1 Samuel 2:22-36,) and idolatry very prevalent, (Judges 2:11-13; Judges 2:17; Judges 3:6; Judges 17:3-4,) it pleased God to raise up a new order of men, commencing with Samuel, who continued to the close of the Old Testament canon, that is, the prophets, through whom the Lord himself specially spoke to the people. Then came the reading of the law and of the prophets in the synagogues, commenced by Ezra, which we find still carried on in the time of our Lord.

We have thus hastily sketched the mode of instruction under the Old dispensation, that it may help to throw a clearer, broader light on that instituted and enjoined in the New.

We have laid it down as a primary, fundamental element of the ministry of the gospel that it is purely an institution and an ordinance of the New Testament. In fact, there were no good tidings to preach until the promised Seed was come, and by his death and resurrection had finished the transgression and made an end of sin, had made reconciliation for iniquity, brought in everlasting righteousness, and sealed up (that is, by accomplishing, put an attesting seal upon) the vision and prophecy, and was anointed as the most holy by his exaltation to the right hand of God. (Daniel 9:24.) There was everything to prophesy, but nothing to preach. But when the work was finished which the Father had given him to do, when he had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, then there was room for a world-wide proclamation of the joyful tidings which Paul preached at Antioch in Pisidia—"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 who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39.) But before we proceed to prove the truth of our assertion by testimonies from the word of God, let us drop a few words as to the foundation itself, for that is the point in hand, and which, therefore, we desire to make as clear and firm as possible. The death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the blessed Lord, as they are the subject, so are they the foundation of the ministry of the gospel. A moment's consideration will show this. But for his death, there could have been no propitiation for sin; therefore no proclamation of reconciliation, pardon, and peace for those who believe in his name. But for his resurrection, there could have been no open, visible declaration that he was the Son of God with power, (Romans 1:4,) and no justification; (Romans 4:25;) therefore no preaching Jesus as the Son of the Father in truth and love, no testifying how a sinner is justified by his righteousness; for "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17.) But for his ascension, there could have been no intercession at the right hand of the Father; therefore no Mediator to be set forth between God and men, (1 Timothy 2:5,) and no message from, no access unto the Father. (Ephesians 2:18.) Unless he had been glorified, he would not have received the Spirit as a gift for us; (John 7:39; John 16:7; John 16:13-16;) therefore there would have been no power of the Holy Spirit to make the ministry of the gospel effectual to the calling of sinners or the comforting of saints. We see, therefore, how the foundation of the ministry of the gospel is laid in the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Lord Jesus. But you will, perhaps, say, "Was not the gospel preached before the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, not only typically and ceremonially, as you have pointed out under the Old Testament, but in the days of Christ, before his death and resurrection?" Yes; most certainly, both by the Lord himself and by his disciples; for we read—"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." (Matthew 4:23.) The Apostle, therefore, writes—"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard him?" (Hebrews 2:3.) So also the Lord sent forth the twelve apostles, at a very early period of his ministry, to "go and preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 10:7.) But all this was merely in a foreview of his death and resurrection, and as it were a preparation for it, and an intimation of its character and nature, as certain good news to be in due time brought. In this way it much resembled—resembled, we say, for it was not the same as, the ministry of John the Baptist, whose mission was to prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight, as the angel testified of him—"And he shall go before him

in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17.) So the Lord's ministry, and that of his disciples, until after his ascension, was a ministry of preparation. But a preparation for an event is not the same thing as the event itself, any more than the preparation for the last supper (Luke 22:7-13) was the same thing as Jesus sitting down and breaking bread to the disciples.

It was not, then, until after his resurrection that the ministry of the gospel was instituted as a permanent ordinance of the New Testament; and its gracious and glorious charter we may read in those memorable words which the Lord spoke unto his disciples just before his ascension into heaven—"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20.) This was the divine command, this the authoritative institution of the ministry of the gospel. And the attendant promise both testifies to its permanence and insures its blessing—"surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Almost similar is the language of Mark, recording the same commission—"And he said unto them, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16.) But it will be observed, that though this was the institution of the ministry of the gospel, yet it was not to commence at once. The parting words of the Lord, as recorded by Luke, clearly show this—"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:45-49.)

Thus, though the apostles were already divinely commissioned, the commission was not to take effect or be acted upon until the Holy Spirit, as a fruit of Christ's glorification, was poured out. We, therefore, read in that last interview with his disciples before his ascension, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles—"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:4-5.)

Having thus seen the foundation of the ministry of the gospel, first as laid in the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Lord Jesus, and secondly as instituted by the Lord himself after his resurrection, we shall perhaps be better prepared to consider some other scriptures which testify to the same purport. One of the most clear and striking is that of the Apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians 4:7-16. As we shall have occasion to dwell much upon that portion of the word, we merely quote a part of it for the present, as confirming what we have already advanced as the foundation of the Christian ministry—"When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people. Notice that it says "he ascended." This means that Christ first came down to the lowly world in which we live. The same one who came

down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that his rule might fill the entire universe. He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:8-12.) The Apostle here quotes Psalms 68:18, with a little verbal alteration which is of no consequence, as the meaning is the same, for the Lord received that he might give. Without these gifts of the Holy Spirit received by him and given to us, the ministry would have been merely in word, without efficacy or power; a barren, unprofitable proclamation; not in itself, but barren to the souls of men as too deaf to hear it, too blind to see it, too dead to feel it.

We thus see four leading points in connection with the source and origin of the gospel ministry—

1. Its foundation in the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Lord Jesus.

2. Its institution by the Lord just before his ascension.

3. Its permanence as a standing ordinance of the New Testament.

4. Its power as accompanied by the Holy Spirit to the souls of men.

We find, therefore, that the disciples, according to their Lord’s command, waited at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. They kept together as a little band, and "continued with one accord in prayer reed supplication," but did nothing except choose by lot a successor to Judas that he might take part of the ministry and apostleship from which that traitor by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. (Acts 1:14-26.) But now comes the setting up of the ministry of the gospel as a visible fact, a realization of the promise given to the disciples by their risen Lord—"On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus’ resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability." (Acts 2:1-4.) The sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, the cloven tongues of fire sitting upon each of them, their speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, were so many visible signs and marks that the Holy Spirit was come upon them. And what was the effect? The opening of the mouth to preach the word—"Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them," etc. This was the first gospel sermon preached upon earth. Then, for the first time, did a gospel minister stand forth as an ambassador of Christ divinely commissioned, spiritually equipped, and enabled to preach Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ exalted, Christ as having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, and having visibly shed him forth in his gifts and graces. And what was the effect of that first gospel sermon by a gospel minister? The call of three thousand souls! O what a testimony to the power of a preached gospel. What a demonstration that Jesus was at the right hand of the Father. What a visible fruit of his intercession and mediation. Before this day there was no preaching, in the New Testament sense of the word, but now there was good news to tell to poor perishing sinners, whether Jew or Gentile; for he who is our peace had made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition between them. Now the types were all fulfilled, the sacrifices of the law accomplished in the one great sacrifice, and therefore useless and virtually

abrogated; and the legal dispensation come to an end by the bringing in of a new and better covenant. There was now an open field in which to preach the glad tidings of salvation, for the door of mercy was set open to the Gentiles, as intimated by the gift of tongues, and in pursuance of the Lord's command to go and teach all nations. Poor Gentile sinners, who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world—were now made near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:12-13.) And those who were once alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works he had reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present them holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight. (Colossians 1:21-22.)

It is true that in harmony with all his dealings with Israel, after the flesh, to them the gospel was first preached, as Peter declared—"You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:25-26.) But they, except a remnant according to the election of grace, (Romans 11:5,) rejected the gospel, blasphemed its doctrines and divine Author, persecuted its preachers, and filling up the measure of their sins, soon brought upon themselves swift destruction. But O what a confirmation did God give to those who by grace received it, that the gospel was a message from himself. The miracles which the apostles wrought (Acts 3:1-8; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 9:36-41; Acts 14:8-10), the diverse languages with which they spoke; (1 Corinthians 14:18;) the sufferings which they endured with such holy joy; (Acts 5:40-41; Acts 16:24-25;) their undaunted boldness and faithfulness; (Acts 4:8-20; Acts 5:29-32;) and above all, the power and authority which attended their word; (Acts 6:10; Acts 8:5-8; Acts 11:21-24; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10;) all proved that the gospel which they preached was from God, and that he had commissioned and qualified them to preach it.

What they preached we shall see more clearly and fully when we come to our second point, the nature and character of the gospel. At present we are engaged with the foundation, which we desire to make as plain and clear as we can, not only as affording a strong and broad basis for the rest of the superstructure which we hope to build upon it—but for the comfort and encouragement of the servants of God, who are often cast down by the trials and temptations of the ministry, a sense of their inability, and the lack of that success in it which is the crown of all their labors. Now it may be good for them to consider, with the Lord's help and blessing, the foundation on which their ministry rests. And we would direct their attention to the four points which we have thus far brought forward.

1. First, let them consider that the foundation of their ministry is laid in the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Son of God. What strength and firmness are here. What an immoveable foundation; for let them bear in mind that the foundation of their ministry is the same as that which God has laid in Zion. For was not this the foundation of Paul's ministry? "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:10-11.) So it is of ours, if we preach Paul's gospel with any measure of Paul's grace. If we have been allowed by God to be put in trust with the gospel; (1 Thessalonians 2:4;) if God has committed unto us ("put in us," margin) the word of reconciliation; (2 Corinthians 5:19;) if he has in any measure separated us

unto the gospel of God, (Romans 1:1,) the foundation of our ministry is already laid for us. And O what a foundation. Nothing less than the Son of God, as crucified, as risen from the dead, as gone up on high, as even now at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

2. And consider also its institution. No command of man, no invention or institution of Pope or prince, no appointment of prime minister or bishop—have commissioned God's servants to preach the gospel. The Lord himself, the risen Jesus, the great Head of the Church has appointed that the gospel should be preached, that a proclamation might be made of his Person and work, blood and obedience, grace and glory, that those who believe might be saved.

3. Consider, further, the permanence of the gospel ministry, and the promise which ensures not only its continuance, but its ever-abiding blessing—"And lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The ministry of the gospel did not die with the apostles. Like the fire upon the brazen altar, like the light in the holy place, it was never to be quenched or put out, sink down for lack of fuel, or die out for lack of oil. "The end of the world" has not yet come. Until that time, then, God shall never lack a servant, Christ an ambassador, or the Church a minister. With a little change we may adopt the words of Berridge on the death of Whitefield:

"As one Elijah dies, True prophet of the Lord, Shall some Elisha rise, To blaze the gospel word." This is your strength, hope, and confidence, you servants of God—that the Lord is with you. What the angel of the Lord said to Gideon, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor," may be said to and of you. And if any, in the despondency of his heart say, "If the Lord is with me, why has all this befallen me, and where are all the miracles which our fathers told us?" may the gracious Lord look upon him in all the beauty, blessedness, and strength-giving light of his glorious countenance, and say, "Go in this my might. Have not I sent you?" (Judges 6:12-14.)

4. And lastly, may they bear in mind the power which the Lord has promised shall accompany his word—"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater—so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11.) The gospel still is "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes." (Romans 1:16.) And as we witness the power which attends it still to the souls of men, we may say with the Apostle—"For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth—the word of God, which effectually works also in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13.)

It is true that we have fallen on evil days, when little power for the most part attends the preached gospel. And yet there may be more good done than we are aware of, or are permitted to see. Much of the blessing that the word is made to the people of God is hidden, wisely hidden, from the servants of the Lord. Pride is so deep and so prolific a root that, to hide pride from man, many of the servants of God are not permitted to see the fruit of their own labors, or to harvest their own crop. O that those whom the Lord has himself taught, equipped, commissioned, and sent forth to preach his precious gospel may still go on holding forth the word of life, that they may rejoice in the day of Christ, that they have not run in vain, nor yet labored in vain. (Php 2:16.) May none of us be weary in well doing, whether we labor with tongue or pen; for in due season we shall reap if we

faint not. And may I not add, as a fellow-laborer and a fellow-helper, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58.)

We have attempted to show the foundation—the strong and broad foundation, on which the Ministry of the Gospel rests. To have clear views of, to be well established on, this foundation, is not only most desirable, but almost indispensable, both for minister and people—for the minister that, feeling the firmness of his standing, he may preach the gospel with authority and power, and for the people that they may receive the word from his lips in faith and love, as a message from God to their souls. To lose sight, then, of this foundation will ever bring with it loss both of power and of comfort; and it is hard to say which, in such a case, suffers most, the people or the minister.

Wherever man is, there is weakness; wherever the Lord is, there is power. Now, in the ministry of the word, above most other things, there is a continual temptation to look too much to man, and too little to the Lord. As poor wretched man is always in extremes, some of the Lord's people think too much, others too little of the minister; but whether too much or too little, the effect in both cases is much the same—to look to the man, and to lose sight of the Lord. You that are young may so admire, if not idolize, your minister as to think that he can scarcely speak anything that is wrong; you that are old may see so much infirmity in him that you can scarcely receive from him even what you know to be truth. Both of you are in grievous fault; and though you so widely differ, the cause of your fault is the same; it is from looking off the foundation—and looking at the ministry of the gospel more as a thing of man than of God. The minister also falls into weakness the moment that he loses sight of, or gets moved off this foundation. Nor is he less in extremes than the people. Some ministers think much too highly of themselves, feeding on their own gifts and the flattery of their admirers, often the weakest and least discerning of the flock, until, forgetting they have nothing that they have not received, they are full, they are rich, and reign as kings, able to bear no rival near their throne—and full of jealousy against the most honored of the Lord's servants, if they approach too near their own little dominion. (1 Corinthians 4:7-8.)

(There is a wonderful opening up and laying bare of this point in 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, 1 Corinthians 4:1-21, which will amply repay examination and meditation. We will just furnish the key-note to those of our readers who may desire to see the mind of the Spirit in these two chapters. It is the contrast which the Apostle draws between himself and the teachers who had supplanted him at Corinth, with the effects produced on the people by their ministry.)

Others, again, of the Lord's servants see and feel so much of their own inability, infirmities, shortcomings, and the inward stream of pollution which defiles every thought, word, and work—that their heart sinks, their hands droop, and they cannot stand before the people and deliver their message with that holy boldness and firm confidence which they should maintain as servants of the living God. They, too, are looking off the foundation, and looking at self in its weakness—just as the proud and puffed up look at self in its strength.

We see, therefore, even from these few hints, that the foundation of the ministry of the gospel is not a mere doctrinal speculation or theological theory, only fit to be discussed by divines in their studies, but a solemn truth of such practical influence, and living effect and operation, that without it the ministry is but an empty noise, of no more real value to the souls of men than a course of lectures at a Mechanics' Institute. It is for this reason that, in our last paper, we took so much pains

and devoted so much space to lay this foundation plainly and clearly before our readers' eyes; and as the whole of the superstructure which we hope, with God's help and blessing, to build up will rest on this foundation, we would affectionately suggest to those who are desirous or willing to receive any instruction from us, carefully to read again what we have written on this point, and compare it and all we shall advance in connection with it, with the word of truth, that we may have the sweet privilege of seeing eye to eye, and the blessed comfort of walking step by step, during the rest of our journey together.

We shall now, therefore, pass on to consider the second point that we proposed to examine—the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel.

13.03. Chapter 3

The NATURE and CHARACTER of the gospel ministry On all subjects connected with our most holy faith, it is most desirable to have clear views. Every point of divine truth is laid down with the greatest clearness and precision in the word of God. The darkness, the ignorance, the confusion which prevent us from seeing it are all in us. But as we search the Scriptures, (John 5:39,) as we meditate upon them, (1 Timothy 4:15,) as we by prayer and supplication draw light, life, and wisdom out of Him "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" (Proverbs 2:3-6; James 1:5; Colossians 2:3;) and, above all, as we mix faith with what we read, (Hebrews 4:2,) there is often, if not usually, a gradual breaking-in of light; and as we follow up its heavenly rays, it shines more clearly and broadly, and the truth stands out more fully and prominently before our eyes. This is the only way in which we can be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," (Colossians 1:9,) and thus be established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:7.) To understand the Scripture, to see in it the mind of the Holy Spirit, to be deeply penetrated with, and inwardly possessed of the heavenly wisdom, holy instruction, and gracious revelation of the counsels and will of God unfolded therein, demands much and continual patient and prayerful study. As in business, diligence and industry lead on to prosperity and success, and sloth and idleness are the sure road to ruin--so in the greatest, most serious, and important of all business, the concerns of the soul, there is a holy diligence, a heavenly industry, whereby it thrives and grows, and there is a slothful indolence whereby it becomes clothed with rags. (Proverbs 23:21.) No slothful member was ever a pillar or an ornament to a church; no slothful minister was ever a benefit or a blessing in a pulpit. In opening this part of our subject, we shall keep as closely as we can to the Scripture, not only that we may not darken counsel by words without knowledge, but that we may speak, as far as we know and understand it, after the mind of Christ, and according to the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit in the word and in the heart. The plainest, simplest idea of the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel is, that it is a service put into the hands, and committed to the trust of chosen men of God. We hope to show in due time what should be considered a call to the ministry of the word, but for the present let it suffice to say with the Apostle—"No man takes this honor unto himself, but he who is called of God, as was Aaron." (Hebrews 5:4.)

We shall assume, then, that the ministers of the gospel are men chosen of God, to this high and honorable employment, and by him especially qualified, commissioned, and sent to preach the word of life. By being thus chosen and set apart, they become servants of Christ and ministers of the New Testament. They are not the servants of men, (1 Corinthians 7:23,) though servants to the Church for Jesus' sake; (2 Corinthians 4:5;) yes, though free from all men, are willing to make themselves servants to all, that they may win souls to Christ. (1 Corinthians 9:19.) Still less are they servants of sin, for "to whom men yield themselves servants to obey, his servants they are to whom they obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." (Romans 6:16.) Their grand distinguishing mark, their highest honor, their dearest privilege, is to be servants of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. Such was Paul; (Romans 1:1; Php 1:1; Titus 1:1;) such was

Peter; (2 Peter 1:1;) such was Jude; (Jude 1:1;) and such was John; (Revelation 1:1;) and to show that this title and office were not confined to the apostles, we find that such were Timothy and Epaphras. (Php 1:1; 2 Timothy 2:24; Colossians 4:12.)

There is, however, a broad and marked distinction between being a servant of Christ and being a minister of Christ, which it may be worth while to notice. The term "servant" expresses and includes all that they are towards GOD; the term "minister" all that they are towards MAN. Let us more fully open this, as the distinction between the two terms may not have occurred to some of our readers, and yet important practical conclusions follow from it.

1. As "servants of Christ," he alone is their Master. It was he and he alone who chose them, qualified them, commissioned them, and sent them. To him and to him alone they look for direction, instruction, food, and maintenance. His will must be their will, his word their warrant, his guidance their path, his displeasure their dread, and his approbation their reward. In proportion as they believe, feel, and realize this, will they preach his word with holy boldness, and move on in their rough and rugged path in sweet liberty and gracious confidence. There is no service so bondaging, burdensome, and miserable (that to sin only excepted)--as service to man; there is no service so free, noble, and happy as service to God. Just in proportion, then, as we feel that we are servants of God, do we rise up above fear and bondage; and just in proportion as we become servants of man, do we sink down into darkness and chains.

2. But they are "ministers of Christ" as well as "servants of Christ." Observe the distinction between the two. As redeemed and called, (1 Corinthians 7:22-23,) as followers of Christ, (John 12:26,) as taking his yoke upon him, (Matthew 11:29,) as having the kingdom of God set up in their heart, (Romans 14:17-18,) as of that chosen seed which is accounted to the Lord for a generation, (Psalms 22:30,)--all the saints of God are his servants; (Revelation 2:20;) but all are not the servants of God in the higher sense of the term, as serving him in the gospel, and, therefore, not ministers. The word minister, as distinct from servant, means one to whom is committed a service for the use and benefit of others. This may, at first sight, seem to be a distinction without a difference; but it will be found not to be so when we look at its bearings and practical results. Thus, as regards their choice, commission, and qualification, the preachers of the gospel are servants of Christ; but as this service is committed to them for the benefit of the people of God, they are ministers of Christ. They are, therefore, servants to the Church, and for the Church, but not servants of the Church. They are Christ’s servants, not the Church’s servants, for as Christ alone called them, qualified them, commissioned, and sent them, it is nothing but anti-Christian tyranny and a vile usurpation for any church to claim and treat them as its servants, and therefore make them servants of men. But as this is a narrow point, and many churches here greatly err, considering, because they choose and pay their minister, they are as much his master as a banker is to a clerk, or a draper to an assistant, we shall treat it somewhat fully, and as fairly as we can for both sides, for a minister may as much err in claiming to be a lord over God’s heritage--as a church may err in degrading him into its servant. The Lord, then, by his grace, chooses and calls men to be his servants, that they may be employed in his service for the benefit of others. He is their sole and only Master, but he uses them to accomplish his gracious purposes. This is beautifully illustrated in the instance of Paul, who seems to have been selected as the pattern of a minister, as well as of the patience of Jesus Christ to those who would hereafter believe in him to life everlasting. (1 Timothy 1:16.) He received a ministry from the hands of the Lord, when he first

called him by his grace—"But rise, and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you." (Acts 26:16.) He therefore says of himself—"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood;" (Galatians 1:15-16;) and again—"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Ephesians 3:7-8.) No, so urgently was it laid upon him that he says—"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." (1 Corinthians 9:16-17.)

Now, we do not mean to say that we are all to have our call as clear as his, or our credentials as indisputable. We have instanced him as a pattern to show in the brightest and clearest light what is meant by a minister of the gospel, and that he is a servant of God for the use and benefit of his people. If we follow Paul from the first day when he preached Christ in the synagogues at Damascus that he is the Son of God, (Acts 9:20,) to his last testimony when, having fought a good fight and finished his course, his departure was at hand, and he was looking and longing for his crown, (2 Timothy 4:6-8,) his whole life and labors were for the good of others. He was ever the Lord's servant, ever "free," (1 Corinthians 9:1,) and to those who would bring him into bondage, he would give place by subjection, no, not for an hour. (Galatians 2:4-5.) With him it was a small thing to be judged of any man's judgment, (1 Corinthians 4:3,) and he ever stood fast in the liberty with which Christ had made him free; (Galatians 5:1;) and yet, though thus fully and blessedly free from all men, he made himself servant unto all, that he might gain the more. (1 Corinthians 9:19.) The more that Paul's life and labors, experience, example, and words are studied and meditated upon, the clearer will be our views of the ministry of the gospel, and the more distinctly shall we see the line which separates the true ministers of Christ from the false apostles, the deceitful workers, who transform themselves into the apostles of Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:13.) We see in Paul the union of the highest liberty with the lowest service; of the fullest freedom from man with the greatest devotedness to man; of the most glorious revelations of Christ with the most toilsome labors, severe sufferings, painful privations that could be endured for his name's sake; and though not a whit behind the very chief apostles, yet in his own eyes ever less than the least of all saints--and the chief of sinners. (2 Corinthians 11:5; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15.) The word "ministry," then, as we have pointed out, and conspicuously seen in him, implies a service for the benefit of others. It is now, therefore, necessary to show its nature and character. Its leading feature and grand distinguishing character is that it is the ministry of the New Testament; in other words, that it is a gracious means of communicating the blessings of the new covenant to the souls of men. In 2 Cor. 3 the Apostle, by contrasting in various points the law and the gospel, very clearly and beautifully unfolds what the nature and character of the ministry of the New Testament is. If we carefully examine this chapter, and trace out the line of argument contained in it, we shall see that the Apostle lays down seven points in which the ministry of the two covenants stands in broad contrast and visible distinction from each other. He prefaces this contrast by the words—"Who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament;" and closes it with—"Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." (2 Corinthians 4:1.) We have thought,

therefore, that we could not, in opening this part of our subject, better break ground than by tracing out the points of distinction laid down by the Apostle. The different points of contrast thus laid down are these—

1. One is letter—the other spirit.

2. One kills—the other gives life.

3. One ministers condemnation—the other righteousness.

4. The one genders to bondage—the other to freedom.

5. The one is veiled, as the face of Moses—the other unveiled, as the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

6. The one is done away—the other abides.

7. The one leaves the hearer dead in his sins—the other leads him on, step by step, from glory to glory.

Let us pursue the thread of argument as thus laid down.

1. The first distinctive feature of the ministry of the gospel is that it is "the ministration of the SPIRIT." This is its distinguishing glory. The law is but the letter, written and engraved in stones; but believers are "the epistle of Christ, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." (This word is sometimes quoted, and even printed in some Bibles "fleshly;" but in the original, as in our version, the words are distinct both in form and meaning. "Fleshy" signifies soft and tender—the heart of flesh as distinct from the heart of stone; (Ezekiel 36:26;) whereas "fleshly" means what is corrupt and evil, (2 Corinthians 1:12; Colossians 2:18; 1 Peter 2:11,) and is generally translated "carnal.")

There was indeed a glory of its own in the law, as typified by the glory of the face of Moses when he came down from the Mount; but this glory fades and grows pale by the side of the glory of the gospel. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" (2 Corinthians 3:7-8.) The Apostle, therefore, asks the Galatians, "This only would I learn of you, Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law--or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2.) "I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law of Moses? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ." (Galatians 3:5.) The "hearing of faith" means the gospel, as is plain from Romans 10:14-17. When Peter preached the gospel in the house of Cornelius, we read—"While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word." (Acts 10:44.) So was it at the memorable day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:38-39.) So under Paul’s preaching at Antioch in Pisidia; (Acts 13:52;) at Ephesus; (Acts 19:6;) at Thessalonica; (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6;) at Corinth. (2 Corinthians 11:4.) And though in those days there were extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which were gradually withdrawn as the canon of the Scripture was closing, yet the peculiar glory of the ministry is still the same as "the ministration of the Spirit." If the question be asked, "What is meant by the ministration of the Spirit?" we answer, the means whereby the Spirit is communicated to the souls

of men. And if it be further asked, "How does the gospel do this?" we reply, that the Holy Spirit uses it as a means of communicating his graces, operations, and influences--for he works in and by the word; and when he himself comes and dwells in the soul, making the body his temple, it is not in a visionary way, without the word, but through the gospel coming "in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." (1 Thessalonians 1:5.) This is beautifully opened up by the Apostle—"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14.)

He traces out four distinct and progressive steps—1. They heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation; 2. They believed in the Son of God, as preached in this gospel; 3. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; 4. he became, by his indwelling, the pledge of their inheritance. (Compare Romans 8:9; Romans 8:23.) It is thus that the preached gospel is "the ministration of the Spirit."

2. It is, therefore, also the ministration of LIFE; for "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6.) By the word "spirit" here is meant, not the Holy Spirit, but the gospel as being, as we have shown, the ministration of the Spirit; and by "the letter" is meant, not the letter of the gospel, but the law which was given in letters on the two tables of stone, and which is said to kill, as cursing and condemning all found under it, and slaying the soul that is brought under its inward sentence. The gospel, then, in the hands of the servants of God, is a ministration of life; for, as made life and spirit to the soul, one part of its work is to quicken dead sinners into spiritual life. God is said, therefore, "to beget us with the word of truth," (James 1:18,) and the regenerate are declared to "be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23.)

Jesus is the Life, (John 14:6,) and as such he quickens whom he will; (John 5:21;) but it is through his word that he quickens; for he has "the words of eternal life," and the words that he speaks, "they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63; John 6:68.) "In him was life" originally and eternally, (John 1:4,) and that life he communicates to those who are his, even that "eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began, but has in due time manifested his word through preaching." (Titus 1:2-3.) And as through the gospel this life is communicated, so it is through the gospel that it is maintained. How many a poor dying soul, condemned by law, condemned by conscience, has been brought out and up into the light, life, and liberty of the gospel by the preached word. How many a drooping head has been raised up; how many a backsliding heart recovered and healed; how many a cold, lifeless frame warmed into life and feeling; how many a hard, frozen soul, apparently impenetrable to love or fear, has in a moment, by one soft word spoken by a servant of God, been softened, melted, and dissolved into a flood of contrition, humility, and brokenness before the Lord, in which it was hard to say which most prevailed--love to Jesus, or hatred of self. We cannot enlarge on this point, but every servant of God will have his own thankful record, his own grateful Ebenezers, how the gospel has been made a ministration of life to him, and through him of life to others.

3. Another feature of the gospel, as a service committed to the trust of the servants of Christ, is that it is a ministration of RIGHTEOUSNESS. The law was a ministration of condemnation, and it

was given for that purpose, as the Apostle so cogently argues—"Now we know that whatever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before 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." (Romans 3:19-20.) And again "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Galatians 3:21-22.) As, then, the law is the ministration of condemnation, so the gospel is the ministration of righteousness, and the two are therefore contrasted by the Apostle in the chapter before us—"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." (2 Corinthians 3:9.) But in what sense is the gospel, and especially the preached gospel, "the ministration of righteousness?" In this, that it preaches, holds forth, and instrumentally brings near the righteousness of Christ as that by which, and by which alone, we are justified before God. The Apostle, therefore, says—"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:21-24.)

"The righteousness from God" here spoken of, is not God’s own personal, intrinsic righteousness, whereby he is eternally holy and just, but the way by which he justifies a sinner and accounts him righteous. Now this is "without the law," that is, distinct from and independent of the law, but is manifested—where? In and by the gospel, through which it is proclaimed and made openly known. He therefore adds—"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:25.) Where has God "set Christ forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood?" In and by the gospel, as he further adds—"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:26.) "To declare at this time his righteousness." What time? The time of the gospel. And how declare it? By the preached word. It is thus that "the gospel is made the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes;" for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and as faith believes what God declares, it receives justification from the mouth of God. To proclaim, reveal, and seal this upon the heart is the grand and effectual province and work of the gospel—"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 who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39.) As the gospel, then, when preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, (1 Peter 1:12,) is made a means of lodging this sentence of justification in the heart, it is emphatically "the ministration of righteousness." No one was ever justified--but by faith. And by faith in whom? In Jesus Christ. But how was this faith raised up in the heart? By the gospel which testifies of him reaching the heart as a word from God, for "with the heart man believes unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10.) The Lord says, "I bring near my righteousness." (Isaiah 46:13.) But how and where? In and by and through the gospel, for "therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17.) If, then, the gospel be, as thus explained, the ministration of righteousness, we may well ask, How can any man, be it in church or chapel, be a servant of God or a minister of Jesus Christ who does not

preach full and free justification by Christ and Christ alone, as the Lord our righteousness? (Jeremiah 23:6;) as "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" (1 Corinthians 1:30.)

4. The next distinguishing feature of the gospel as a ministration is, that it is a ministry of LIBERTY. "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17.) The law knows nothing and speaks nothing of liberty. On the contrary, it "genders to bondage," that is, begets in every one under its sensible spirit and influence a most miserable state of mind under which he becomes shut up as in a prison-house under its condemning sentence, aggravated by the accusations of a guilty conscience, the fear of death, the dread of judgment, and the temptations of the devil. Now, as opposed to and contrasted with this miserable ministry of bondage, the gospel proclaims and brings liberty. Thus the blessed Lord read and applied to himself the prophecy of Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of Nazareth—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19.) The same anointing which rested on him as the Head without measure, (John 3:34,) rests on his ministers according to their measure, for to every one of his servants is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, (Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11,) and they have an anointing which they have received of him, (1 John 2:27.)

As, then, he preached liberty to the captives, so do his ministering servants proclaim the opening of the prison to them that are bound, by holding forth the forgiveness of sins through his precious blood. As, then, they thus preach peace by Jesus Christ, (Acts 10:36,) and the Spirit attends their testimony with power, it comes with a blessed liberating influence, into the heart. Nothing can stand before the power of the gospel. Every lock, bar, and bolt must give way when "the Breaker comes up, and their King passes before them, and the Lord at the head of them," (Micah 2:13,) to break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. (Isaiah 45:2.) The gospel is "the perfect law of liberty," (James 1:25,) therefore the very perfection of liberty. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," is the pure language of the gospel; and if no condemnation, no bondage; for what brings the soul into bondage? The guilt of sin lying on a burdened conscience, with an evil heart of unbelief suggesting a thousand gloomy fears, and shutting out, as it were, the sweet voice of mercy. We often get, it is true, into bondage, but never through the gospel, but rather from not believing the gospel; nor can we be delivered from bondage but through the gospel, and by believing the glad tidings which it proclaims and brings.

As, then, the servants of Christ preach the gospel in its purity and power, and the blessed Spirit, by attending and accompanying their word to the heart, reveals the love, and blood, and grace of the Lord the Lamb, and faith is given to receive and believe it, the soul is brought forth, according to the strength of its faith, out of this miserable bondage into the liberty of truth, according to the Lord’s promise—"If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32.)

5. The next point of contrast is, that the law was a veiled dispensation; whereas the gospel is an UNVEILED one. That the law was what we have termed a ’veiled dispensation’ was plainly shown by the veil of the temple, and more especially, as the Apostle here argues, by the veil over the face

of Moses. But it was a veiled glory—veiled under a worldly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:1) and a multitude of rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices, and what the Apostle calls "carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation;" that is, the time of the gospel. (Hebrews 9:10.) But as opposed to and distinct from this, the gospel is an unveiled dispensation; for the old veil is done away in Christ. As the Ministry of the Gospel is, as we have already shown, an ordinance peculiar to the New Testament, it is very evident that unless we have clear views of the grand points of difference which distinguish the two Covenants, the Old and the New, from each other, we shall have but dim, confused conceptions of its true nature and character; and may thus run great risk either of misunderstanding it through ignorance, or legalizing it through self-righteousness. But to obtain these clear views, two things are needful—

1. An experience of these two covenants in our own bosom, that by feelingly and experimentally knowing both law and gospel in their separate spirit and power, we may discriminate between the two with all that peculiar keenness and nicety of insight into their distinctive character which nothing but such a personal, living acquaintance with each of them can produce; and,

2. An understanding heart in the word of God, that we may see clearly traced by the pen of the Holy Spirit in the Scripture what we have felt and known of these two covenants in our own soul. These two things mutually help each other. If there be no light within, there will be no light without; where there is a veil upon the heart, there will be a veil upon the word, as the Apostle speaks in the chapter we are now considering. (2 Corinthians 3:14-15.) Similarly, the same blessed Spirit, when he takes away the veil from off the heart, takes away the veil from off the word; and as what he writes in the heart (Jeremiah 31:33) is in harmony with what he has written in the word, the two correspond, like the wax to the seal, or the coin to the die. In the mouth of these two witnesses every truth becomes established; and the more closely and fitly they agree, the greater is the strength of their united testimony. In proportion, then, as we are so led and favored, we move on safe ground; and as the word of truth is thus made a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, under its guidance we step firmly and boldly forward, with an enlightened understanding, an established judgment, a willing mind, and an approving conscience. It is in this way and in this spirit that we commenced, and, with the Lord’s help and blessing, hope to pursue to the end the subject of our present Meditations. Our readers will doubtless remember that the part of our subject which we are now considering is to show the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel; and that taking for our text 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 we are opening the leading points of difference between the two dispensations—the law and the gospel. Some of these distinctive points of difference we have already considered, and need not refer to them. The point at which we abruptly broke off in our last section was to show that among the other distinctive differences between the law and the gospel, as traced out by the Apostle, one was that the law was a veiled dispensation, whereas the gospel is an unveiled one.

Here, then, we resume our subject; and to lay down this point of distinction more clearly, we shall quote the words of the Apostle which we shall endeavor to open—"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts." (2 Corinthians 3:12-15.)

If the chapter from which these words are quoted be carefully read, it will be plainly seen that the chief line and main force of the argument pursued therein are based upon this ground that, while each dispensation had a glory of its own, the glory of the gospel far outshone the glory of the law. But the question would naturally arise—"How do you prove the distinctive glory of these two dispensations; and what authority have you for your assertion that the glory of the former exceeds the glory of the latter?" "How," it might also be asked, "was the glory of the old dispensation visibly manifested?" To this last question the Apostle would answer, By the shining of the face of Moses, which was a reflection of the glory of God seen by him on Sinai's top. This shining of the face of Moses was, therefore, to the children of Israel a visible symbol that he had conversed with God, and as the typical mediator of that dispensation had brought down that glory with him. It was thus made plainly evident that there was a glory in that dispensation, if its very reflected image shone so brightly in the face of its typical mediator before assembled Israel. But now comes that peculiar transaction on which the Apostle lays so much stress, and on which he bases such a remarkable development of heavenly truth. Moses put a veil over his face. This the Apostle explains to have been a symbolical act, and that it represented that the dispensation of which he was the typical mediator was a veiled dispensation; whereas the gospel is an unveiled one. This veil symbolized, according to the Apostle, two things—

1. The veil over the dispensation itself.

2. The veil over the hearts of the children of Israel.

Now the effect of these two concurring circumstances was that "they could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished;" that is, Christ, who is "the end of the law." It would take us too far from our present subject to dwell upon these points at any length; but we shall require a little space clearly to lay open the distinctive character of the ministry of the gospel as an unveiled dispensation, for it is a point of great importance in showing its true nature and character.

All under the law was veiled. The ark of the covenant, where God dwelt between the cherubim, and which was the peculiar symbol of his visible presence, was hidden by a veil. All the Levitical rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices were representations of "good things to come;" (Hebrews 9:11;) that is, of Christ and the blessings and benefits that were to come through him; but they were veiled, partly by their own shadowy nature, (Hebrews 10:1,) and partly by the ignorance and unbelief of Israel, to whom they were given. But Christ being now come "a High Priest of good things to come," and having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, the veil between God and us is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, as the veil of the temple was when he yielded up the spirit, laying down, by a voluntary act, the life which he had taken. (Matthew 27:50-51; John 10:17-18.) He has thus consecrated for us a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, that we may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 9:11-12; Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 10:19-20.) Thus the veil was actually taken away by the sacrifice and blood shedding of Jesus on the cross. But there is the veil also upon the heart. This, too, must be taken away. But how? By "the Lord the Spirit," as the Apostle so clearly speaks—"Nevertheless, when it," that is, Israel, "shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit," that is, the Holy Spirit, by whom it is taken away. We thus see that one grand distinctive feature of the glory of the gospel is the removal of the veil—

1. Its actual removal from the face of God by the sacrifice, blood shedding, and death of his dear Son; and 2. Its removal from the face of our heart by the Lord the Spirit taking it away by an inward revelation of Christ.

Now what follows from this removal of the veil, both actually and experimentally? Two things. One known only to ourselves, the other known and seen by others.

1. The one known to ourselves is thus unfolded by the Apostle—"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18.) The word "open" should have been translated, as it is in the original "unveiled," for by the present rendering much of the force and beauty of the Apostle's words is lost. "But we all," that is, all we who believe, "with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." We, he would say, are not like Israel after the flesh, whose minds are blinded; the same veil remaining not taken away which now hides from them the glory of Christ, as the veil of old hid the glory of the face of Moses. This veil was actually done away in Christ, and this veil has been experimentally taken off our heart by the Spirit; and the blessed fruit and consequence of this removal is that we see as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are thereby changed into the image of Christ, and reflect his glory, as the face of Moses was changed to reflect the glory of God. But what is this glass? The gospel, which is a reflection of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and is therefore called "the glorious gospel of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:4.)

Now from this beholding with unveiled face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, there follow certain important fruits and consequences, all which determine the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel.

There is a being "changed into the same image." This is in analogy with the shining of the face of Moses. By looking on God, he caught the reflection of his glory. His very face was changed thereby, and a conformity wrought in it to the glory which he saw in his communion with God. So by beholding the glory of Christ, as shining forth in the gospel, there is a being changed into the same image—an internal reflection of his glory, a being "transformed in the renewing of the mind;" (Romans 12:2;) "a putting on of the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him;" (Colossians 3:10;) a putting on of Christ, as having been baptized into Christ; (Galatians 3:27;) a forming of Christ in the heart; (Galatians 4:19;) yes, Christ himself in it the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27.) And all this from glory to glory—each successive view of the glory of Christ in the gospel producing a corresponding glory in the soul; but all "by the Spirit of the Lord."

Now from this internal experimental renewing in the spirit of the mind, certain fruits spring, certain CONSEQUENCES flow–

1. A renouncing of the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness. (2 Corinthians 4:2.) An unveiled gospel is utterly opposed to dishonesty and craft; and a heart from which the veil has been taken away will not allow the mouth to speak, or the feet to walk in such accursed ways of hypocrisy and deceit. But while the veil is on the heart there is a veil on the gospel; and what is the consequence of this double veil? What we see all round us—universal dishonesty and craft in men who call themselves ministers of Christ, so that we can scarcely find anywhere a truly honest man;

that is, one honest to God, honest to himself, and honest to the souls of men.

2. Another fruit of this removal of the veil is "not handling the word of God deceitfully." (2 Corinthians 4:2.) All ministers fly to the word of God, and try to prove their views and doctrines from that infallible source of truth; as they well know that by that unerring standard every doctrine must be tried. But some through ignorance, and others through willfulness, handle it deceitfully. Not beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and not being changed into the same image, they have no internal perception of the glory that shines forth in the gospel as a revelation of the wisdom, grace, and love of God, and therefore they cannot understand its spiritual meaning. Not seeing the glory of Christ as its central sun, through the veil of ignorance and unbelief being on their mind, they must needs, as the Apostle speaks elsewhere, "corrupt the word of God." (2 Corinthians 2:17.) (The word "corrupt" means literally, deal with it as dishonest sellers of wine do with their wines; that is, dilute it with water, as our modern publicans do their beer and liquors.)

Now whether this corrupting and adulterating of the word of God be done through a spirit of willful enmity, love of filthy lucre, ambition, thirst for human applause, or spring from mental darkness, ignorance, and unbelief; the result, if not the sin, is the same—a poisoning of the wells of truth. But the servant of Christ, first from divine light, God having shone into his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; (2 Corinthians 4:6;) and, secondly, from divine life, producing and maintaining the fear of God in his bosom, cannot handle the word of God deceitfully, or corrupt and adulterate it. In his view and feelings, to handle the word of God deceitfully is one of the worst of sins—as gross, as grievous spiritually as for a servant to embezzle his master’s goods, a steward to falsify his employer’s accounts, a trustee to defraud the widow and the orphan of property entrusted to him on their behalf; no, in some respects worse, inasmuch as God is greater than man, the soul than the body, and eternity than time. The honor of God, the witness of conscience, the blood of souls, the joys of heaven, the horrors of hell, all, all as with one voice testify against a dishonest minister and a dishonest ministry. How can he then handle the word of God deceitfully?

3. From this internal work and witness, testifying against all deceit and dishonesty, springs another fruit—"great plainness or ’boldness’ (margin) of speech." (2 Corinthians 3:12.) If we carefully read the context we shall see how the Apostle contrasts this great plainness, or boldness of speech, with the veil over the face of Moses—"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." (2 Corinthians 3:12-13.) "And not as Moses." Why not? Because that was a veiled dispensation; and there was, therefore, a veil on the tongue, as a part of the face. The types and figures, rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of that dispensation spoke as with a veiled voice; therefore obscurely, not plainly; timidly, not boldly. But the gospel is an unveiled dispensation. The veil taken off the face removes the muffle from the tongue, (the veil worn in Eastern climates was a thick covering, completely hiding the features and muffling the voice.) and the servant of Christ speaks plainly. His speech and his preaching, like Paul’s, are "not with enticing words of man’s wisdom," wrapped up in, and obscured by high-flown expressions and flowery language, but "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" not "in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Corinthians 2:13.) They are thus the "words of the wise, which are as goads" to urge on and stimulate the sluggish soul, and "as nails fastened in the heart by the

masters of assemblies, as given them from one Shepherd." (Ecclesiastes 12:11.) And as they use great "plainness," so do they use great "boldness" of speech (margin). There was, in a certain sense, a timidity under the law. The law, indeed, itself did not speak timidly, for it spoke with thunders and lightnings, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; but it produced timidity in those who heard it. It engender to bondage. (Galatians 4:24.) Only once a year, and then not without blood, could the high priest enter into the holiest place. (Hebrews 9:7.) When given on Mount Sinai, bounds were set unto the people round about, and a caution given, "Take heed to yourselves that you go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it." When on the third day there were thunders and lightning, a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, all the people that were in the camp trembled; and, as recorded by the Apostle, "so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." (Exodus 19:16; Hebrews 12:21.) Its spirit was "the spirit of bondage to fear;" (Romans 8:15;) and its ministration, therefore, not only at first was in the same spirit, but this spirit of fear and bondage was ever kept up by displays of the justice and wrath of God against sin and disobedience, both in the wilderness and all through the history of that dispensation. But the gospel is a revelation of the full forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Lamb; a proclamation of mercy for the vilest and worst of transgressors; a message of reconciliation to enemies and aliens by wicked works; a declaration of free, sovereign, and superabounding grace, which, in its swelling tide, rises high above, and covers all the aboundings of sin of every name, shape, line, and magnitude. As then, this precious gospel is believed and received into the heart, it imparts and inspires a holy boldness, a gracious confidence, which manifests itself inwardly in the approaches of the soul to God, (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 10:22,) and, outwardly, by a bold, outspoken testimony. With what boldness did Peter and John speak, so that the rulers of the people and the elders of Israel marveled at it. Nothing daunted by all their threatenings, how they and their fellow-worshipers prayed that "with all boldness they might speak the word of God;" and how, in immediate answer to prayer, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:13; Acts 4:29; Acts 4:31.) So, no sooner was Christ revealed to the soul of Paul as the Son of God, than "he preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." (Acts 9:27.) A timid ministry is not the ministry of the gospel. Carnal boldness, presumptuous confidence, daring language, are, indeed, as foreign to its character and spirit, as sneaking cowardice or timid unfaithfulness; but a gracious, holy boldness, a fearless disregard of smiles or frowns, character or consequences, opposition or approbation, pay or popularity, will always distinguish the servant of Christ from the common word of self-seeking, men-pleasing ministers. (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6.)

4. But there is another fruit of beholding with unveiled face as in a glass the glory of the Lord; there is a being "changed into the same image." Those whom God "did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," (Romans 8:29,) his suffering image here, his glorified image hereafter. It is of the first image of Christ, his image when here below, into which an unveiled view of his glory changes the believing soul. In the gospel, as in a glass, is seen the image of Christ as he appeared in the flesh. His dying, bleeding love; his pity and compassion to the children of men; his meekness and lowliness; his gentleness and calmness, for he neither strived, nor cried, nor did any man hear his voice in the street; his holy wisdom; the warmth of his zeal, yet the tenderness of his heart; his submission to the will of God in all things; his forbearance with his disciples; his endurance of the contradiction of sinners against himself; his condescension

to all, his denial of help to none; his holiness without asceticism, and separation from the world without seclusion; his faithfulness without anger, and rebukes without bitterness; these, and other features of the image of Christ as beheld in the gospel, are, as it were, copied in the heart, and manifested by the words and actions of his servants. Has he not left us an example that we should follow his steps? (1 Peter 2:21;) and do we not read—"He who says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked?" (1 John 2:6.) Not that any one of his followers, whether private Christians or public ministers, can be so conformed to the image of Christ inwardly, or so reflect it outwardly as fully to carry out the words of the Apostle. But the Lord Jesus is the pattern set before us, which is to be looked at and into, as beaming, to a spiritual eye, with ineffable grace and glory. Nor let any one think that this can be effected by any will or wish, strength or wisdom of our own. This is far out of the sight of human eye, far beyond the reach of human hand. It is the especial work of the Holy Spirit to impress this image of Christ upon the heart; for the Apostle adds, "Even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is he who takes the veil off the heart; it is he who reveals Christ to the soul; it is he who manifests his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; (John 1:14;) it is he who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to his disciples; (John 16:15;) who testifies of him to them, and glorifies him in them; (John 15:26; John 16:14.) This possession of the Spirit of Christ, this conformity to the image of Christ, this knowledge of the mind of Christ, (1 Corinthians 2:16,) this walking after the example of Christ will always distinguish the servant of Christ from all others. It is true, lamentably and painfully true, that there is not one of them who does not fall short, woefully short, of this inward and outward image of Christ. But there are some faint glimmerings of this image in all his true servants; for why do we love them, respect them, receive them, or hear them? Is it not for the resemblance that they bear to their Lord, from the knowledge that they have of him, from his gracious words that they speak, and from his Spirit which they manifest? What other claim have they upon our notice or attention? The image of Christ which we see in their words, in their spirit, in their actions, may be very weak, and, as it were, broken, like the image of the sun in ruffled water, but it is there, or we have no warrant to receive them as his servants—for "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;" (Romans 8:9;) and if there comes any unto us and bring not the doctrine of Christ, to know and abide in which is to have both the Father and the Son, we are not to receive him into our house, or bid him God speed. (2 John 1:9-10.) This may seem hard doctrine, and to draw a very narrow line; but the question is, Is it scriptural truth? Is it according to the unerring standard of the word of God? And must we lower that standard because so few can come up to it, and, if rigidly adhered to, it seems to cut off so many from being true ministers of Christ? Every point that we have advanced, every step that we have taken, has been rigidly after the word of truth. We well knew when we undertook the task that our views would appear rigid, narrow, and exclusive; and simply for this reason, because they would strip so many of their claims and pretensions to be counted servants of God. But what other standard can we take than the word of God? And if we take that, we must take it in its purity, lest we do the very thing which we have been condemning—"corrupt the word of God," adulterate it either by lowering and watering away all its spirit and strength, or by drugging it with stupefying ingredients to please the palate and benumb the brain.

If a man brings with him neither the doctrine of Christ in his mouth, nor the Spirit of Christ in his heart, nor the example of Christ in his life--will any one kindly tell us what claim he has on our ears, our respect, or our affections? The question is not whether we are cutting off this or that minister,

but whether our standard of receiving any man whatever as a servant of Christ shall be the word of God or the word of man. For, be it observed, we have not set up a high standard. We have said nothing about a man's depth of experience, clearness of call to the work, ability in it, or blessing upon it. All we have done or wish to do is to set up a true standard, or rather to point out, from the word of God, the true nature and character of the ministry of the gospel; and upon this ground to urge that, unless a man come to us with those marks, be they strongly or faintly stamped upon him, we are not called upon to receive him as a servant of Christ. But it may be said, "Yes, we fully agree with you that the word of God must be our only standard; nor do we object to the chapter which you have taken to show from it the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel. But are we bound to take your exposition of it? You have labored hard to impress your views upon us; but we are not tied to your views or anybody else's. Do allow us to have an opinion and a judgment of our own." Unquestionably; we give as well as claim the right of private judgment. To refuse this is the very essence of Popery, and foreign alike to our intentions and spirit. We want no one to call us master, or believe anything because we believe or assert it. All that we can do, or wish to do, is to bring forward and open to the best of our ability the word of God. In reading the writings of good men, we have felt that we can receive nothing from them but what they show from the word of truth. Let us be read and judged by the same rule. Compare all that we advance with the Scriptures. Then let our views be received or rejected as each man's own judgment or conscience may approve or condemn. The two remaining points of the Apostle's comparison between the two dispensations we shall handle with great brevity, as they are, in fact, involved in that point of contrast which has formed the subject of our present article. These are, the one, that the law is done away, but the gospel abides; and the other, that the law leaves the hearer dead in his sins, while the gospel leads him on, step by step, from glory to glory.

6. The law is done away, but the gospel abides. The passing away of the old dispensation is a remarkable feature of its character. Whatever glory, therefore, it might have, it was transient and transitory. This the Apostle clearly states—"For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excels. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remains is glorious." (2 Corinthians 3:10-11.) It is "done away." It was symbolized when first given by a tent or tabernacle, as an emblem that it was not to be of stable endurance. It became in course of time old and worn out; not in itself, for, like its typical Mediator, as a revelation of the justice and anger of God against sin, its eye never becomes dim, nor its natural force abated; (Deuteronomy 34:7;) but "weak through the flesh," (Romans 8:3,) that is, of those to whom it was given. Therefore, as decaying and waxing old, when it had accomplished its purpose, and the Son of God had fulfilled it, it vanished away. (Hebrews 8:13.) But the gospel abides, and will abide to the end of the world. To mix, then, law and gospel, is to mix the decrepitude of old age with the vigor of ever-blooming youth, death with life, flesh with spirit, and beggarly elements with the Person and work of the Son of God. We cannot now enter fully on this point, but it is of vital importance, especially at this present time, when Popery, which is but a resuscitation of the old Levitical dispensation, in its priests, its sacrifice of the mass, its forms, vestments, and ceremonies, is knocking hard for admission into our high places.

7. The law leaves the hearer dead in his sins, while the gospel leads him on, step by step, from glory to glory. Equally brief must we be on the last point of contrast, the leading on "from glory to glory." This is intimated by the words, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory

of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18.) The words "from glory to glory" may mean either from one glory of Christ seen in him to a corresponding glory reflected in the soul--or from one degree of grace in the heart to another degree of grace. As both these interpretations are admissible, and indeed combine and coalesce in one, we shall take them both.

We have already shown that a view of the glory of Christ in the glass of the gospel has a transforming efficacy. There is indeed no other way of an inward conformity to his image. But he is so supremely, so ineffably and infinitely glorious, that only a few beams and rays of his glory strike the eye when the Spirit takes off the veil and manifests him to the heart. Yet each ray has a penetrating, enlightening, and transforming efficacy. Now the more that the glorious gospel is looked into, and the more that the glory of Christ is seen in it, the more there will be of this transforming by the renewing of the mind. (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23-24; Colossians 3:10.) For the most part we learn the knowledge of Christ by degrees and usually by slow degrees, for we are dull scholars, needing line upon line; and after all it is but here a little and there a little that we do know after many years of school discipline. (Isaiah 28:10.) But there is this peculiar feature in the gospel, as distinct from the law, that the more the law is looked into, the darker is the mind, the heavier the bondage, the more confused the thoughts, the stronger the corruptions of the flesh. You may look at and into the law until you sink into black despair; and the deeper you sink, the more will it press you down. But the more you look at and into the gospel, and the more that the Person and work, blood and righteousness, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus are seen in it, the more light you will have in your mind, the more life in your soul, the more stability in your thoughts, the more peace in your conscience, and the more love in your affections. But it is time for us to pause, though the subject would invite us on until we knew not where to stop. In our next section we hope to gather up our threads, and complete our sketch of the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel. In resuming our subject—the Nature and Character of the Ministry of the Gospel, we feel more and more, at each advancing step, the urgent necessity that is laid upon us of adhering as closely as possible to the word of truth in all that we bring forward upon a matter so difficult and yet so weighty. Let us name a few reasons which impose this necessity upon us.

1. As the ministry of the gospel is purely and wholly an ordinance of divine appointment, it is only from the word of God that its true nature and character can be clearly ascertained.

2. Our own views of the ministry, in its various bearings, have been, we hope we may say, all founded on the word of truth. We have found, from long experience, that in no other way could our mind be clearly instructed, our heart firmly established, or our conscience fully satisfied. We have in times past read upon this point, as on many others, the writings of men; but we have ever found that when we turned from the word of God to listen to the word of man, our mind got full of confusion, and, instead of obtaining light, peace, and satisfaction, we reaped little else but doubt, darkness, and uncertainty.

3. But thirdly. We have undertaken a task of no little difficulty, and yet of great importance. We have not only to satisfy our own mind, and enjoy the verdict of our own approving conscience, under the teaching and the testimony of the blessed Spirit, but we have to satisfy the judgment and commend ourselves to the conscience of a large circle of gracious readers, who can and will receive nothing from us or from any other man which is not fully proved from, and confirmed by the

word of God.

4. There are also "many adversaries," from whom we can expect little else but opposition and contradiction, and against whom our only defense must be the truth as our shield and shield.

5. But fifthly. The ministry is with us and many others not a mere matter of theory and speculation, but one of vital and practical importance, in which we require to be specially instructed, held up, and supported by the unerring word of God, that we may not be drawn aside by the craft and subtlety of man, or by the deceitfulness of our own hearts, but move and act according to his revealed will and the dictates of a tender and enlightened conscience. We are surrounded on every side by men professing to be ministers of the gospel; and we are thus often placed in circumstances where we must, as a practical matter, come to some decision in our own mind who are and who are not sent servants of Jesus Christ. Now unless we have, more or less, an instructed mind, an established judgment, and an approving conscience, we cannot walk uprightly and equitably either before God or man, when we have to act, and that decidedly, upon this important point. This takes a very wide sweep, and may embrace in its circle very many of our readers. Pastors, deacons, and members of churches are especially and vitally interested in this matter. Indeed, we may say that all who know and love the truth, all who desire to preach or hear the gospel preached in its purity and its power, all who are jealous of the Lord’s honor and glory, all who are seeking the good of their own soul and that of others, all who hate and abhor error and evil, all who feel a deep and warm interest in the cause of God and truth with which they are especially connected, all who grieve over the declension visible on every side, all who are anxious for the rising generation, and that they may hand down the gospel which they have received untainted and unadulterated—all such as these, and we trust we have many such among our readers, find and feel that it is with them not a light question to decide who are, and who are not, the true servants of Christ.

Indeed, it often becomes a matter of urgent practical necessity with those who wish to act in the fear of God. How can a church, for instance, choose a pastor, or procure a supply for a vacant pulpit--or how can members join or continue united with a church, without bringing this point to some practical conclusion? Is it not, in all those cases, of very great importance to know who are and who are not servants of Jesus Christ? It is also a matter which deeply concerns the conscience; for if to receive one of Christ’s servants is to receive Christ, and to despise one of Christ’s servants is to despise Christ, (Luke 10:16; John 13:20,) we may be much perplexed in mind, if we do not actually sin against the Lord, unless we have some spiritual judgment and discernment in this important matter. These considerations will amply show how necessary it is for us to move at every step in the fullest harmony with the word of truth.

13.03. Chapter 3 continued

The NATURE and CHARACTER of the gospel ministry

(Continued) With these prefatory remarks, which, we trust, will not be considered uncalled for or out of place, we now resume our subject.

We attempted to show in our last two sections, by an exposition of the Apostle's argument, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, the distinctive glories of the law and the gospel, and that in some particulars the glory of the new dispensation outshone that of the old. There are, of course, other points of contrast between them; but we dwelt particularly upon those which are brought forward in that chapter. But though we thus insisted upon the superior and surpassing glory of the gospel, let no one gather from that any idea that we think lightly of, or disparage, or set aside the glory of the law. The law, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, as applied to the conscience in its curse, spirituality, and condemnation, has a glory peculiarly its own, for in it the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness. It is the ministration of condemnation, and death; it brings the sinner in guilty before God; it stops his mouth, cuts to pieces all his righteousness, beats out of his hand all excuses, reaches to the thoughts and intents of his heart, and slays him as to any hope or help in self. There is a glory in this; for as God is glorious in his justice, his holiness, his anger against transgression and sin, the law is glorious as the revelation of his righteous displeasure, and the means, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, of making it feelingly and experimentally known. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20.)

"Where no law is, there is no transgression." (Romans 4:15.) But if there be no knowledge of sin, no conviction of it, no guilt under it, where can there be room for any manifested pardon of it, or any deliverance from its guilt, fear, burden, or bondage? The gospel, it is true, is more glorious, as revealing pardon, justification, reconciliation, and salvation, and especially as giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But the law, as revealing God's justice, holiness, majesty, and dreadful indignation against sin to the conscience by the Holy Spirit, has a glory of its own, only inferior to the glory of the gospel. "The Lord kills and makes alive; he brings low and lifts up." (1 Samuel 2:6-7.)

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Romans 7:12.) Is there no glory in this? The law is spiritual; by its spirituality the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart are brought to light and condemned; and by its curse falling upon every one who continues not in all things written in the law to do them, all hope of salvation by works is effectually cut away. It is needful to bear these things in mind, lest in setting forth the superior glory of the gospel, we should tacitly seem to set aside the glory of the law. These considerations are not, indeed, necessary for the clear statement of our present subject, and yet we have thought it best to make them, lest it should appear from our silence on the point that we had wholly passed them by. We now, then, advance a step further in our attempt to unfold the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel.

There is a necessary connection between the gospel and the 'ministry of the gospel'. If, then, the gospel be so glorious, the ministry of the gospel will be glorious also; for the gospel is reflected upon and made known by the ministry—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace." (Isaiah 52:7.) But why should his very feet be beautiful? Because of the beauty of the good tidings which he brings. We find, therefore, the Apostle immediately after he had said—"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," (2 Corinthians 3:18,) adds, "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." (2 Corinthians 4:1.) He thus connects the gospel with the ministry of the gospel. To all believers the gospel is the ministration of righteousness, liberty, etc.; for through it these blessings are communicated to their soul. But all believers are not privileged to minister in the gospel, nor to proclaim with authority, as servants of Christ, the good tidings which have gladdened their hearts. They are "the body of Christ, and members in particular." "But are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" No. God has set some in the Church to fulfill these offices; (1 Corinthians 12:27-29;) and those only who are "allowed, (or rather 'approved,') of God to be put in trust with the gospel," (1 Thessalonians 2:4,) can preach it with acceptance. The testimony of God in his word still stands good—"I sent them not nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:32.) But now comes an important question. How shall those trustees of the gospel be able to testify of the glory of the gospel so that power, unction, and savor may rest on their testimony? The Apostle shall answer this question. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6.) He compares here the shining of God into the heart of his servants, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, with that wondrous work in creation, when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." This brings us at once to this point, that unless a man has had the shining in of this light of the knowledge of the glory of God into his heart, he cannot know the gospel experimentally, and, therefore, cannot preach it experimentally. A minister is not only a servant of Jesus Christ, a trustee, and an ambassador, but also a witness. As none could be an Apostle but a witness of his resurrection, (Acts 1:22,) so none can be a minister of the gospel who has not seen by faith a risen Christ, and beheld his glory at the right hand of the Father. The Lord, therefore, said to Paul when he made him a minister, "But rise, and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you." (Acts 26:16.) He was to bear witness of the things which he had seen, and of those things in which the Lord would further appear unto him. This was confirmed by the words of Ananias—"And he said, The God of our fathers has chosen you, that you should know his will, and see that Just One, and should hear the voice of his mouth. For you shall be his witness unto all men of what you have seen and heard." (Acts 22:14-15.)

Similar is the language of Peter—"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32.) Of the false prophets we read that "they follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing." (Ezekiel 13:3.) Having, therefore, "seen nothing," that is, of the Person, work, grace, glory, bounty, and blessedness of the Lord—having seen nothing of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, they can witness of nothing. Thus their ministry is "a thing of nothing, and the deceit of their heart." (Jeremiah 14:14.)

How different from this is the language of John—"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:1-3.)

Now if we look at the Apostle's words in which he speaks of this divine shining into the heart, we shall see its connection with the gospel, and, therefore, the ministry of the gospel—"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." He calls it "our gospel," that is, the gospel which he and his fellow-apostles preached, and "the glorious gospel of Christ." When, therefore, God shines into the heart to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, it is in the light of the glorious gospel of Christ that this knowledge is given.

We have thus arrived, step by step, to this point–

1. That the gospel is a glorious dispensation, as containing in its bosom the gift of the Holy Spirit, the communication of divine life, justification by Christ's righteousness, liberty of spirit, a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, a perpetual permanency, and a transforming efficacy. These seven points have passed successively under our notice, and, therefore, need not be further dwelt upon.

2. That the ministry of the gospel is a proclamation, a preaching, a testifying of this glorious gospel, and is, in the hands of the Spirit, a blessed means of communicating to the souls of men the rich blessings which the gospel contains in its bosom.

3. That those only can truly testify of this glorious gospel into whose hearts God has shined, to give them the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

We are brought by these considerations to see something of the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel--that it consists in preaching Christ from an experimental knowledge of the glory of God as shining forth in his Person and work. The word "face," we may here remark, may be rendered "Person," for it is in the Person of Christ that the glory of God is seen, he being "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person." (Hebrews 1:3.) What was the grand subject of Paul's ministry? Christ! "Whom we preach." (Colossians 1:28.) But to preach Christ is to preach the whole of Christ—Christ as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" Christ as "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." It is to preach the Person of Christ, and therefore his Deity and eternal Sonship; his holy and pure humanity; his blood shedding, sacrifice, and death; his glorious resurrection and ascension; his present advocacy and mediation; his sovereign rule as King; his prevailing intercession as Priest; his wise and holy teaching as Prophet; his second coming without sin to salvation, and his judging of the world in righteousness. Christ, therefore, is the sum and substance, the object and subject, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of the gospel. All its glad tidings are tidings of him; its message of peace, its embassy of mercy, its proclamation of grace are from him; its power, its authority, its influence are by him. All its doctrines, all its promises, all its precepts, all its ordinances derive their

very being, and all their virtue and validity from him, and testify of him.

We see, then, how comprehensive the ministry of the gospel is, as embracing all that the Holy Spirit has revealed in the word of the Person, work, blood shedding, obedience, life, death, and resurrection, grace and glory, beauty and blessedness of Immanuel, God with us. All that he is as God and the Son of God, all that he is as man and the Son of man, all that he was, did, and suffered on earth, and all that he is and does in heaven, so far as it is revealed in the word of truth, is the gospel; for it is all full of precious news and happy tidings for the people of God.

Now, that the ministry of the gospel may be in full accordance with the gospel thus revealed and brought to light in the Person and work of the Son of God, and stored up in the Scriptures which testify of him, it must be a clear reflection of the grace and glory thus manifested. And not only so, but it must be penetrated and imbued with the Spirit and grace of the gospel. Besides which, it must exhibit the sanctifying, transforming influence of the gospel, as a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

These three points are closely connected with, and flow immediately from beholding with unveiled face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

Let us look at this a little more closely. Three things of the greatest importance in the ministry of the gospel are secured thereby—

1. Purity of doctrine. What room can there be for error, if we are privileged to see, with unveiled face, the glory of Christ? Such a view of his glory must chase away all darkness and all error. Lies and falsehood cannot live in a heart into which God has shone, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. Secondly, there is secured thereby a gracious, saving experience of the power of the gospel. What experience is to be compared with the blessed shining in of God into the heart? This chases away all airy notions and dim speculations, all mere letter knowledge and doctrinal theory, and becomes the well-spring of a life of faith in the Son of God.

3. Thirdly, the sanctifying, renewing, and transforming influence of this beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord secures vital holiness and practical godliness.

We thus see that the ministry of the gospel is not a mere preaching of Christ with the utmost soundness and clearness of doctrine, but embraces also an experimental knowledge of the grace and glory of Christ, that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, and a life, walk, conduct, and conversation corresponding thereto. Are we not thus brought to the good old division—doctrine, experience, and practice? We may have arrived at this point by a circuitous way; but we believe it has been step by step according to the word of truth. But what a wonderful field does this open for the servants of God to walk in. What room is here afforded for the exercise of every gift and every grace. Take the whole range of divine truth, from the glorious Trinity, the sovereignty of God, the everlasting covenant, the election of the vessels of mercy, down to the simplest statements which fell from the Lord’s lips in addressing the multitude. The ministry of the gospel embraces them all. Take the whole range of Christian experience, from the first sight of the convinced sinner to the last hallelujah of the expiring saint. The ministry of the gospel enters into each and all. Take the whole of vital, practical godliness; range through every precept of the New

Testament. The ministry of the gospel embraces and enforces every precept there revealed. What room is thus afforded for all the ability, all the gifts, all the wisdom, all the discernment, all the experience, all the power, and all the usefulness of all the true ministers of Jesus Christ. There need be no grudging here. The field is wide enough for thousands of ministers, were the Lord but pleased to send them, and raise up a people to hear and receive them. Whatever talent, learning, or education a man may have, here it may be put to a good use. Whatever gifts of utterance a man may possess, here is a wide, effectual door for it. A Peter, who had been on the mount of transfiguration; a Paul, who had been caught up into the third heaven; a Stephen "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit;" an Apollos, "an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures;" a Barnabas, the very son of consolation; a holy John, who had lain in the Lord's bosom, and many of less known name and fame found room in this field for the exercise of every gift and every grace bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit.

O, our unbelieving hearts; O, our narrow minds; O, our slender abilities, weak gifts, and feeble graces! Let none complain of the narrowness of the gospel field. Is the love of God in the gift of his dear Son a narrow love? Is the Person of Immanuel a narrow object of faith? Is his work, his blood, his righteousness, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and present intercession? Is his compassion, faithfulness, and tender mercy? Is his presence, Spirit, and ceaseless watchfulness and care? Is his second coming in the clouds of heaven—are these wondrous and divine realities, the present support and comfort, all the salvation and all the desire of thousands of poor and needy followers of the Lamb, narrow, limited, contracted? O shame be upon us if we think for a moment that the ministry of the gospel, whose high, holy, and happy privilege it is to testify of these divine and heavenly realities, is a narrow field. Let us rather, if engaged in it as servants of Christ, beg of the Lord to enlarge our hearts and open our mouths; and, if hearers, that he would bless their testimony to our soul, that we may see and feel more and more what a glorious gospel the gospel of Christ is. Indeed, it must be glorious, as revealing in a way beyond every other way, and illuminating, with a luster surpassing the brightness of the sun, the most glorious attributes of God.

1. Is God glorious in his HOLINESS? (Exodus 15:11.) The gospel reveals this holiness, sets it visibly forth, and brings it conspicuously before our eyes in the Person of "the Holy One of Israel," as he appeared on earth—in our blessed Lord, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." (Hebrews 7:26.) The gospel is declared to be the "holy commandment delivered unto us;" (2 Peter 2:21;) our calling by it is a "holy calling;" (2 Timothy 1:9;) our conversation in it a "holy conversation;" (2 Peter 3:11;) as the elect of God we are "holy and beloved;" (Colossians 3:12;) our very bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit should be presented "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God;" (1 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 12:1;) and the gracious Lord will, at the great day, present all his saints "faultless before the presence of his glory, holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight." (Colossians 1:22.)

2. Is God glorious in his WISDOM? The gospel is the greatest display of the wisdom of God, which he has ever afforded or ever will afford. It harmonizes all his attributes, reconciles his justice and mercy, pardons sin and yet condemns it, saves the sinner and sanctifies him, defeated Satan by the seed of the woman whom he had tempted, and by death destroyed him who had the power of death. Angels read in the gospel the wisdom of God; (Ephesians 3:10;) and while it outwits, destroys, and brings to nothing all the wisdom of this world, it is "the wisdom of God in a mystery,

even the hidden wisdom which he ordained before the world unto our glory." (1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 1 Corinthians 2:6-7.)

3. Is he glorious in POWER? The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16.) "The preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18.) The speech, therefore, and the preaching of the gospel, is "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that the faith of the hearers should not stand in the wisdom of men, but the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:4-5.)

4. Is he glorious in his LOVE? Where is there such a display of his love as in the gift of his dear Son, such a revelation of it as in the Person of Jesus Christ, such a proclamation of it as in the gospel? This is the very language of the gospel—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) And again—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.)

5. Is God glorified in having a people to love and obey him, and bring forth FRUIT? "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." (John 15:8.) But how can this fruit be brought forth, except by being dead to the law, and married to Christ in and by the gospel? "Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4.)

Thus in every way the gospel may well be called "the glorious gospel of Christ." And how blessed is it that the glory of God, which is, and must be the great end of all his works, should so harmonize with the salvation of our souls that God is more glorified in pardoning our sins than in punishing them, in saving our souls than in damning them, in taking us to heaven than in sending us to hell.

What glorious tidings are these for the servants of Christ to proclaim. Well might the Lord bid his disciples, "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Well might he bid them in the words of the prophet, "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." (Isaiah 35:3-4.) And again, "Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1-2.) What tidings to tell to poor guilty sinners, that mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; that God can be just, scrupulously and inflexibly just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus; that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; that none shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect; that all things work together for their good; and that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This then, is the gospel—this the nature and character of the ministry of the gospel. Happy they who from a sweet experience of its power preach this gospel; happy they who hear, believe, and obey this gospel; happy they who live this gospel, and happy they who die in the faith, hope, and love of this gospel!

We hope that we shall not weary our readers by dwelling at so great a length on the subject now before us. We would gladly indeed bring our "Meditations on the Ministry of the Gospel" into a shorter compass, but two things much hinder the fulfillment of this desire—

1. The wide extent and deep importance of the subject itself, which will therefore hardly admit of a brief and superficial treatment.

2. The character of our own mind, which cannot be satisfied except by entering thoroughly into every point of divine truth which presents itself to our view, so as not only fully to understand it ourselves, but to endeavor that our readers should fully understand it also. But to do this properly, space is required; and this, when readers are not deeply interested in the subject, or do not see the importance of the various points brought before them, often appears unnecessarily verbose.

Bear with us, then, kind readers, if we seem to protract our subject to any undue degree of wearisome length. Writers, like preachers, are not often fair and impartial judges of the length of their own compositions; and not being weary themselves, can hardly think they may weary their readers. We will do our best to condense our thoughts and avoid undue verbosity, but we cannot promise any such brevity as would impair the completeness of the subject, or leave any part obscure. But if, in our anxiety to do this, we should be a little, or more than a little tedious, you have this remedy against us, which you have not against the preacher—that you can read as much or as little as you like, and when and where you like, and are not tied to your seat until we have bestowed all our tediousness upon you.

13.04. Chapter 4

The ENDS for which the gospel ministry was established These ends we may conveniently divide into two–

1. Ultimate, and 2, Proximate. Let us explain the difference between them. An ultimate end is that for the sake of which anything is undertaken. A proximate end is that which, though not the primary object of the undertaking, yet is obtained at the same time in an intermediate way. Take the following illustration of the difference between them. In desiring to preach the gospel, the chief or ultimate end of one on whose mind the work of the ministry was laid would be the glory of God. To exalt, magnify, and set him on high who had done so great things for his soul would be his highest aim and object, and would be therefore his ultimate end. But seeing the misery of those who have no hope, and are without God in the world, or feeling an ardent love to the suffering saints of God, he might desire also to preach the gospel that he might be an instrument of good to the souls of men. This would be a proximate or intermediate end, as the glory of God would be his ultimate or final end.

These two ends generally meet together in the bosom of every servant of God, and their fulfillment crowns his ministry. He might have very little success in the work, and yet find his happiness in the glory of God. But if his ministry were blessed, it would much increase his joy. We have a beautiful example of this in the words of our great Exemplar, the blessed Lord himself, as prophetically addressed to his heavenly Father, when, foreseeing his rejection by the literal Israel, he thus rested in God—"Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." (Isaiah 49:4.) But the Father not only accepted his work, as done for his glory, but gave him, as his reward, to become a light to lighten the Gentiles, that he might be his salvation unto the ends of the earth. This simple illustration may give us a key to the ends for which the ministry of the gospel was established. They are, as we have already said, ultimate and proximate. The ultimate end was the glory of God; the proximate end was the benefit and blessing of the Church. We will consider these two ends separately.

1. The ULTIMATE end of the ministry—the glory of God. That all God’s counsels, all his ways, and all his works in creation, in providence, and in grace, are for the display of his own glory is a truth so firmly established in every believer’s heart that it is scarcely necessary to bring forward on its behalf, as might be easily done, any great amount of Scripture proof. And yet a few testimonies may be desirable, as we never wish to advance any point without a "Thus says the Lord" to establish it on a scriptural basis. Let it suffice, then, to quote two testimonies from the Old Testament and two from the New. Speaking to Pharaoh, God said—"And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16.) Why was this mighty king raised up and allowed to oppress the people of God? That the name of God might be declared—that is, glorified, in all the earth. And what said the Lord to Moses when he interceded for rebellious Israel? "And the Lord

said, I have pardoned, according to your word; but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numbers 14:20-21.) Whether, then, Pharaoh was hardened, or Israel forgiven, the glory of God was the ultimate end of each.

Now hear Paul's testimony as regards the dispensation of his grace, and see how the glory of God and the good pleasure of his will is the ultimate end of his predestinating purposes—"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, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:5-6.) And again—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Ephesians 1:11-12.) But the exaltation of his dear Son is so intimately connected with, so wrapped up and involved in the display of this glory of God that the ministry of the gospel can have for its ultimate end nothing less than the setting of the crown on the head of Jesus. On his head are many crowns, (Revelation 19:12,) and he deserves and will ever wear them all. But the crown which belongs to him as the Redeemer of the Church by his own blood is the crown of crowns. Now, that to set this crown upon his head is the great, the ultimate end of the ministry of the gospel none will deny who know what the gospel is; and cold and dead must be the heart which beats in a minister's bosom, which does not feel that the glory of Jesus is his highest aim and best reward.

It is beautiful to see the union between the glory of God and the exaltation of his dear Son. This is the decree which secures and harmonizes both—"I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalms 2:6.) And then follows the promise—"Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." (Psalms 2:8.) So in that memorable prayer, (John 17:1-26) our Lord said to his heavenly Father, "Glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you;" and again—"I have glorified you on the earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was." (John 17:4-5.) Similarly he prayed, on a previous occasion, "Father, glorify your name." And what an immediate answer! "Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." (John 12:28.) But we shall not dwell on these points, as their consideration would take us too far afield, and shall, therefore, come at once to the proximate or intermediate ends, for which the ministry of the gospel was established.

2. The PROXIMATE end of the ministry—the benefit and blessing of the Church of God. Yet we cannot forbear dwelling for a few moments on the blessed union of these two ends. As the glory of God, and the exaltation of his dear Son unite and harmonize, so is there a union and a harmony between the ultimate and proximate ends for which the ministry of the gospel was established. We showed in our illustration of the work of the ministry, as laid on a man's heart, the union of two ends, the ultimate and the proximate, the glory of God and the good of souls. But in a much higher sense do the ultimate and proximate ends for which the ministry of the gospel was established meet and harmonize in the bosom of God. The union of these two ends, the blessed harmony which exists between them, is even now, as realized by faith, a subject of thankful adoration, and will hereafter, when fully developed, be an eternal source of unutterable joy and praise. That God should establish his glory in the very heavens by taking into his blissful presence an innumerable multitude of redeemed sinners; that his highest justice and deepest mercy, his ineffable holiness

and surpassing grace should meet in the Person and work of his dear Son, and issue in the everlasting salvation of millions of sinners, sunk as low as sin and Satan combined could sink them; O, the depths of wisdom, love, and power, displayed in this mystery of godliness! That God should be glorified, as it is the ultimate end of all his ways and works, as it was the end which our gracious Lord had ever before his eyes when here below, so it is the delight and joy of heaven. Compared with this, redemption itself sinks into insignificance. Better that all should perish, better that earth with all its multitudes should sink forever into the bottomless pit, than that the glory of God should receive a tarnish or a stain. But that the salvation of the redeemed should redound to the glory of God; that there should be so blessed a union, so thorough and perfect a harmony between the glory of God and the salvation of sinners through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son; that, as he said to Moses when he revealed to him his glory, it was to "keep mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;" this will make the eternal anthem swell its highest notes of praise; this will be the highest joy of those who will see him as he is, without a veil between.

We come now, then, to the proximate or intermediate end, for which the ministry of the gospel was established—the benefit and blessing of the Church of God. This point is clearly and beautifully set forth in various parts of the Epistles of the New Testament, especially in what are called the pastoral Epistles, that is, those to Timothy and that to Titus. The counsels and exhortations given by the Apostle to these two servants of Christ, form and embody a complete code of ministerial instruction, and should be pondered over, and attended to, by every minister who desires to know the will of God and do it. But we think that in no part of the New Testament are the ends for which the ministry was established so fully and clearly laid down as in Ephesians 4:8-16. We shall, therefore, chiefly confine ourselves to the opening of this portion of the word of truth. Our blessed Lord in his last interview with his disciples, "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, says he, you have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:5.) This gift of the Holy Spirit we have already shown was necessary to make the ministry a living word to the souls of men. But the blessed Spirit thus given came down in diversities of gifts—"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11.) But though the gifts were different, yet the end was the same—"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12.) Three ends are here named. Let us examine them. i. The first is "for the perfecting of the saints." But before we enter upon this point it may be as well to define the meaning of both terms. What is meant, then, by "the saints?" Undoubtedly those who are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called;" (Jude 1:1;) who "by the will of God are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;" (Hebrews 10:10;) in a word, the members of the mystical body of Christ, "chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Ephesians 1:4.) By the word "perfecting" we may understand several things, but chiefly everything which relates to the calling, gathering in, and promoting the spiritual benefit of these members of the body of Christ. We will look at some of these benefits and blessings. The word translated "perfecting" means making a thing ready, putting it fully in order, and rendering it complete. It is so used of creation. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." (Hebrews 11:3.) It is, therefore, applied to the sacred body of Jesus in the words, "a body have you prepared me,"

margin, "fitted." (Hebrews 10:5.) So, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise;" (Matthew 21:16;) in the Hebrew, "founded." From this idea of preparing or framing, preparing in the mind, and forming by actual operation, comes that of putting together, so as to make a perfect and complete whole. We, therefore, find the word used as expressive of union of heart and judgment—"That you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10.) Thence springs a further idea of growth and development in beauty and completeness—"make you perfect;" (1 Peter 5:10;) "make you perfect in every good work." (Hebrews 13:21.)

Let us see whether we have now gained any clearer idea as to the meaning of the expression, "the perfecting of the saints." Take these three meanings into your consideration—1, that of framing, which is chiefly done by putting things together; 2, so putting them together that they may fit in well with each other; 3, so fitting together that, with this original framing and neat junction of the various parts, there may be a gradual growth and development of the whole into such perfection as it is susceptible of. To gather suitable materials; to put these materials neatly and nicely together; and to keep adding stone to stone and layer to layer, until the whole building be complete in all its parts—to do these three things thoroughly and well is "the perfecting of the saints."

Let us consider those three things somewhat more closely, as it may throw light upon the ends for which the ministry of the gospel was established.

1. The first step is the gathering of suitable materials. These are already prepared in the mind of God, yes, prepared before the foundation of the world. Paul, therefore, says, "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." (Romans 9:23.) But they are to be gathered, and usually one by one. (Isaiah 27:12.) The stones are still in the quarry of nature, and have to be gathered out thence that they may be "as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace." The ministry of the gospel is God’s appointed means of gathering these stones out. What a wonderful proof of this was afforded on the day of Pentecost, when under one sermon three thousand were not merely pierced, but pierced (as the word literally means, and should have been translated) in their heart, and thus quickened into life, and called out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. How clearly also this part of the work of the ministry was given to Paul in that memorable commission spoken to his inmost soul by the Lord himself, when he appeared to him in majesty and glory at Damascus gate—"But rise, and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness, both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:16-18.)

If proof were needed of the fulfillment of this commission to the very letter, and of the power of the ministry of the gospel to call sinners to repentance, we need only follow Paul from city to city, and from country to country, and see how almost everywhere the vilest and worst of sinners, sinners such as he so graphically describes 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, were by the words of his lips turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. God, indeed, may work upon a sinner’s conscience without the direct application of the word; (1 Peter 3:1;) but his usual

way is to call sinners by it, and especially by it as preached by his servants. Peter, therefore, says—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23.) And similar is the testimony of James—"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (James 1:18.)

We have, indeed, to lament that in our day there is so little of this conversion work going on, so few striking instances of the power of the preached word on the hearts of sinners, as we read of in the days of Bunyan, Whitefield, Huntington, etc. Nothing, indeed, more plainly shows the poverty and barrenness of the ministry of our day than the feebleness of its effects. We do not altogether lack men of truth, though from deaths and infirmities their number seems sadly diminishing; the gospel is preached with greater or less degree of clearness and faithfulness in various parts of the land; there is a spirit of hearing in many places, and a manifest hungering for a more powerful gospel, and more richly and ably furnished ministers; and yet, alas! judging from the effects, how rarely does it seem, as in days of old, preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

2. But now comes the second meaning, which we have pointed out as a part of "the perfecting of the saints." This we said was the fitting or joining of the stones, when gathered, neatly and nicely together. How then is this accomplished by the ministry of the gospel? Thus. As the Lord the Spirit makes it the power of God unto salvation; as by it faith is given, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" as Christ is revealed unto and embraced by faith thus given, and this faith works by love, a union is produced in the soul of the hearer thus blessed to the dear family of God. Thus, as the ministry first gathers out the stones, and, as we shall presently show, hacks and hews them into right form and shape, so it also brings together the living stones thus gathered and thus prepared, and unites them to the other living stones, and thus, as Peter speaks, they "are built up a spiritual house." This is a very essential part of the ministry of the word, and is intimately connected with the spiritual blessings which the gospel holds out and instrumentally communicates. The two works are distinct, as distinct in the ministry as calling and deliverance in the soul of the hearer. Some of God’s servants are more blessed in the first work, the calling of sinners, the quickening of them into divine life, the first gathering of the stones. Others are more blessed to the deliverance of souls in guilt and bondage. But both are parts of the ministry of the gospel. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. And yet he who planted and he who watered were one; for both were laborers together with God. (1 Corinthians 3:6-9.) So in the building of the spiritual house. Before the stones can be nicely fitted into the building, they have not only to be hewed out of the quarry, but cut and squared, the rough corners and angles chipped off, so as not to be mere rubble, or like the stones that we see in the rough stone walls of some of our counties, thrust in anyhow just as they are picked up out of the pit, the work of a farm laborer, not of a mason. There is, therefore, often a long interval between the first gathering and the nicely fitting; for these stones are not fit to be put into the spiritual building in their rough, unhewn state. But besides all this hacking and hewing, ("I have hewed them by the prophets," (Hosea 6:5,) squaring and paring, leveling and beveling, something else is needed of special and divine communication to make the stones neatly and nicely fit; for without this there will be rents in the building, unsightly gaps, and anything but that which shows the master’s hand. A man may be gathered for some considerable time, many are so for years, before he is so far humbled and broken inspirit, his pride, prejudice, and self-righteousness, these rough corners, chipped off, or

his soul so fully blessed and delivered as to be fully united in heart and spirit to the living family of God. He may love their company, and esteem them the excellent of the earth; but through doubt and fear, darkness, guilt, and bondage, not be united to them in the full feelings of his soul, or in church fellowship, as in the case of our gospel churches. He feels himself, perhaps, to be a poor isolated being, spoiled for the world, yet unfit for the Church; a kind of spiritual nondescript, with sufficient light in his mind and life in his conscience to bring and keep him out of the world, to make him sit at Zion's gates, listen, eagerly listen, to the preached word, but not blessed with that sweet assurance of faith whereby he can take hold of the blessings of the gospel as his own, or unite himself to the family of God without fear or bondage.

Now a large and important end of the ministry of the gospel is for the very purpose of delivering, comforting, and blessing such tried and exercised souls. "Comfort, comfort my people;" "Strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees; say to those who are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not;" "Cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people;" those are some of the special charges given to the servants of God for the perfecting of the saints. But there is "a set time to favor Zion;" and when this set time comes to favor a poor soul in guilt and bondage, when the word is blessed to his deliverance, and pardon and peace are revealed and sealed on his conscience, he is then not only gathered, hacked, hewed, chipped, squared, and leveled, but so molded into a felt sense of the love of God and his dear people, so beautifully and blessedly fitted for the fellowship of the saints, that he is constrained by every sweet constraint to be visibly and openly one with them and of them. He feels he cannot be happy unless he unites himself to the living family of God; and they, when they hear the good news, are as glad to receive him as he is to be received. To this part of the ministry, therefore, belongs the uniting of the living stones into church fellowship. This was the invariable practice of the Apostles. They did not leave the stones gathered by their preaching to lie about by themselves anywhere and everywhere, as must be the case where there is no church formed, and the ordinances of God's house are neglected. In such a congregation there may be a living ministry, and living stones gathered by that ministry; but where is the spiritual house, where the Church as in the days of the Apostles? Where is there church discipline and gospel order, or any visible fellowship of the saints? It is true there may be the visible form of a church without spiritual fellowship among the members; and seeing this has sometimes repelled godly people from joining any church, and made them prefer their present state of isolation. But the abuse of a thing does not overthrow its use, nor are we to reject church fellowship because in many cases it is but a fellowship in name and appearance. One thing is undeniable, that the Apostles instituted churches, and that the same day of Pentecost which witnessed the gathering of the stones, the three thousand first converts, witnessed also the ordinance of baptism and the formation of a gospel church—"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:41-42.) Here we have, most undeniably, a gospel church; for we read—"And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47.) We have thus presented to our view, set up by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a gospel Church, in which were administered the two standing ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, the latter called the "breaking of bread." With this Church the Apostles had fellowship and communion, both with each other and the members; for we read that those who were thus called and baptized "continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship." Blessed doctrine! for

Christ, a crucified and a risen Christ, was its sum and substance; and blessed fellowship when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." How beautifully and how blessedly were the living stones then fitted together; for they were all baptized into one body by the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as they were united in church fellowship by the ordinances of God's house. No error then tainted the purity of their doctrine, no division marred the closeness of their fellowship; and for a short space the Church "looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." (Song of Solomon 6:10.) Here, under the preaching of the Apostles and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, we have the brightest example and clearest pattern of what the ministry of the gospel can do for "the perfecting of the saints," both in effectually calling or gathering, and in building them together in spiritual union and communion inwardly, and in church fellowship outwardly.

3. And now comes the third meaning which we attached to the expression, "the perfecting of the saints"—the contributing to the growth, increase, and development of the people of God when thus brought together. We shall not dwell long upon this point, though one of great importance, for two reasons—1. Because we will not encroach at present too much on our pages; 2. Because this peculiar feature of the ministry will come more fully under our consideration when we have to open the verses which immediately follow the passage which we are now attempting to explain.

"Perfection," as used in the New Testament, is often misunderstood. Wesley's doctrine of perfection has much obscured its scriptural meaning, and that in two almost opposite ways—1. By persuading his ignorant followers that there is such an attainment as perfection in the flesh; and, 2. By prejudicing his opponents against the word itself, as being by him so grossly perverted. There is a remarkable tendency to ignore or quietly drop words which have been perverted to false meanings, and this from a jealous fear lest we should be suspected of holding erroneous sentiments if we made use of them. Thus the words "holy" and "holiness," as applied to a Christian walk, have been almost dropped in many pulpits, for fear lest their use should be suspected of encouraging progressive or fleshly sanctification. So the words "perfect" and "perfection" have dropped out of the established Calvinistic pulpit vocabulary, much through Wesley's perversion of their meaning. But it is a scriptural term, and, therefore, has a sense fully harmonizing with the analogy of faith and the grand doctrines of the gospel. We have often thought that there is one passage in particular which clearly explains what the New Testament means by perfection. It occurs Hebrews 5:14—"But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age," (margin, perfect.") Perfection, then, according to the Scripture, does not mean absolute moral perfection, a freedom from the corruption of our nature; a thorough purity of heart, lip, and life; but as distinguished from a state of spiritual childhood, a Christian ripeness, a full maturity of judgment, a capability of feeding upon and digesting strong meat; a having the senses, by reason of use and experience, exercised to discern both good and evil. A man fully grown, a mind well matured, a house completely built, a tree arrived to its full size and fruitfulness, are not perfect absolutely, but they are perfect relatively. The man will be no stronger, the mind no riper, the house not more finished, the tree not larger or more productive. This is the scriptural idea of perfection, implying, not a freedom from sin or infirmity—but a freedom from childish ignorance, weakness, indecision, and instability.

As, then, the ministry is for "the perfecting of the saints," it is the appointed instrument of communicating that sound instruction, that ripened and matured wisdom, that firm stability, that

clear judgment, that steadiness of mind, that decision in general character and action which distinguishes the man from the child. To produce this perfection, to be an instrument in the hands of the blessed Spirit thus to mature, ripen, and establish the saints of God, and build them up on their most holy faith, is a most important end of the ministry. What a blessing to a church, and especially to the older and more experienced members, is a sound, faithful, experimental ministry, a ministry of exercised, solid, weighty, established men, not of youths and novices. A church preached to by youths and ruled by women falls under that sentence—"As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." And what is the consequence? "O my people, they which lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." (Isaiah 3:12.) But what with the prevalent system of supplies, what with the lack of able, experienced, and faithful pastors, and what with the low state of things generally in the churches, we have lost almost the very idea of a sound, experienced, weighty, established ministry; and can now only faintly realize it by reading the writings of such men as Bunyan, Owen, Huntington, Bourne's Letters, etc.; and thus finding and feeling, from the weight and power of the words of such men, what a blessing it would be to sit under such a ministry; of course, not so gifted, for that would be desiring too much; but approaching it in its stability, and the weight of its instruction, guidance, consolation, and general edification. Our readers will perhaps remember that the point at which we have now arrived in our present Meditations, is the ends for which the Ministry of the Gospel was established, and that we divided these ends into two—ultimate and proximate; the ultimate being the glory of God in the exaltation of his dear Son; the proximate, the benefit and blessing of the Church. They will also call to mind that in examining the latter point—the proximate ends, we expressed our opinion that in no part of the New Testament were these ends so fully and clearly laid down as by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:8-16; and that we therefore purposed to confine ourselves to the opening of that portion of the word of truth, as the best and simplest way of elucidating the subject now before us. In pursuance of that plan—for some degree of order is requisite in examining every important subject, we attempted to unfold the meaning of Ephesians 4:12, in which the Apostle intimates that there were three special ends to be accomplished by the ministry of "the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers," whom the Lord sends, and whom he endues with power from on high. These three ends were "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ." One of these ends, "the perfecting of the saints," we have already examined.

2. We come now, therefore, to the second end laid down by the Apostle—"For the work of the ministry," which we shall endeavor in a similar way to unfold. The expression is of a more general character than the preceding, and seems to be purposely employed so by the Apostle, that it might take a more capacious grasp, and more fully embrace the whole of that wide and extensive service which is rendered to the Church by the ministry of the servants of God. Whatever ministerial work, therefore, is done by any or all of the servants of Christ for the benefit and blessing of the Church, whether much or little, whether performed by an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist, or a pastor, or a teacher, falls under this head, "the work of the ministry." Its two leading ideas are ministry and work, and these two combined in effective and sustained operation; not work simply, which might be uncalled for or misdirected, and therefore useless, if not positively mischievous, nor ministry simply, which might be office without service, a mere sinecure dignity without labor; but that union of proper qualification and actual work which makes a servant acceptable to his master and useful to all within the compass of his services. The idea is simple

and easily intelligible, and yet an illustration may set it in a clearer light. In a large establishment, say a wealthy nobleman's, there may be 50 or 60 servants, differing among themselves in rank, qualification, and situation; but each has his fixed place and appointed work. None has intruded himself into the situation which he occupies; all serve one master, who appoints each his work, and pairs each his wages; and not one is there but for the honor or service of his master, and the advantage, comfort, and well-being of the whole family. The figure, of course, is imperfect, as all figures necessarily must be; but it may serve as an illustration of what is intended by the expression, "the work of the ministry." The first idea is that of "work," and that sound, honest, often hard, and usually efficient work. We have no idea of a lazy, slothful, indolent minister, and are very sure that such men, and it is to be feared there is an abundance of them in every sect and denomination, find no sanction for their laziness in the word of truth, and no approbation in the conscience or affections of the people of God. It is true that health, opportunities, spheres of activity and usefulness, gifts, abilities, and acceptance, and other both internal and external circumstances widely differ, even among the true servants of God, and therefore preclude the application of a fixed or rigid standard. We cannot, therefore, measure the work for the man, as we cannot measure the man for the work; but work there must be done by every professing servant of God, if he would not fall under the terrible sentence pronounced by the Lord of the house against the slothful and unprofitable servant, Matthew 25:26-30. In this busy hive, work is the appointed lot of most; and work, when honest and not too fatiguing to body or mind, has its enjoyments as well as its profits. But no work is so honorable, so useful, so lasting, and so fruitful in consequences for time and eternity, as the work of the ministry. All other, however useful, excellent, or honorable, begins and ends with time; this alone, though it begins and is carried on in time, reaches into eternity. The second idea is that of "ministry." This we have already explained as a service for men, but not of men. Let no sent servant of God so degrade himself, let no churches or deacons so degrade a real minister of Christ as to make him or consider him their servant. Let the wealthy deacons and rich members of churches have their men-servants and their maid-servants, their grooms and gardeners; and let their business men have their clerks, assistants, porters, and errand-boys, whom they may take on or take off, whom they may hire and dismiss as they choose. The work of these is time-work, and their service time-service; but their minister, if he be a man of God, is neither their time-servant nor a time-server. He watches for their souls as one that must give account, and labors not for the food which perishes, but that which endures unto everlasting life. If a church be so highly favored as to have for its minister a man of God, let it esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake; and let him, on his side, not presume on his position, or attempt any other rule than the rule of love. To be a lord over God's heritage is as much out of place in him as to degrade him into their servant is out of place in them. Both are equally unscriptural; both will cause strife and division, and probably end in separation. The work to be done is both great and various. It requires, therefore, corresponding laborers. No one man can do equally well every part of the work. Each has his own work to do, and each man will do his own work best. These are simple truths—truths which in theory almost every one will assent to, and yet in practice how continually are they forgotten or departed from. What a monopoly of gifts, usefulness, and acceptability some men seem disposed to claim to themselves; how prone to surround themselves with a little knot of friends and admirers; how jealous or suspicious of other ministers; how ready to speak against them, especially if any of their people are disposed to favor them; and how they will treat, almost as personal enemies, the very best people if they cannot or do not receive their

ministry. Such conduct surely manifests great pride or great ignorance. Look at the greatness and variety of the work to be done, and then see whether any one man, or ten men, can arrogate to themselves such exclusive pretensions. Consider the wisdom, grace, love, and power of the great Head of the Church; view the wide extent and scattered character of his kingdom; think of the variety of cases which his people present; bear in mind their trials, temptations, afflictions, and varied circumstances, and then ask, Who or what must that man be who can minister to all these people, meet all these cases, and do all the work of the ministry? A variety of gifts is as needful as a certain number of laborers. Some are more qualified for the first work—calling sinners to repentance. Their work lies chiefly in pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan, showing man's state by nature before God, declaring the insufficiency of all creature worth or works, and proclaiming the necessity and nature of the new birth. Others are more qualified to build up the saints on their most holy faith by preaching clearly and experimentally the glorious doctrines of grace. Others can enter more fully and deeply into the experience of God's poor, tried, and afflicted family. Some are more searching and discriminating, and take forth in a bold, faithful, and separating ministry the precious from the vile; others are more for comforting the cast-down, and speaking a word in season to the soul that is weary. Some can enforce the precept without legality, others preach doctrines without dryness, and others handle experience without sameness. Each has his peculiar work to do, an appointed place to occupy, a people for whom he is specially adapted, and a field in which he alone can effectually labor.

We are apt to judge too much by outward appearances. Because this man has not the gifts or the abilities, or the experience or the peculiar line of that man, or even almost because he has not the manner, or the delivery, or the mode of our favorite minister, are we to cast him aside, and slight him and his communication? If we have good reason to believe that he is a partaker of the grace of God, preaches what he knows and has experienced, has a sufficient gift to lead us to believe that the Lord has opened his mouth, manifests by his life, conduct, and conversation that his eye is single to God's glory, and is in any measure owned and blessed in the work, we are bound to receive him as a servant of Christ, even if in many points his ministry may seem in our view defective, or not specially profitable or acceptable to ourselves. This exercise of Christian judgment, this willingness to lay aside narrow, prejudiced, and contracted views, this rising above party spirit, this free acting of that charity which hopes all things and believes all things, by no means implies that false charity which thinks well of every minister, or that superstitious credulity which believes every spirit. Nor does it preclude the exercise of our judgment as to the grace, gifts, abilities, and usefulness of the true servants of God.

There is a middle, though a narrow, path between prejudiced, bigoted exclusiveness and false charity, between party spirit and wide-armed reception, between the shutting up of ears and heart against all but two or three, and that foolish simplicity which believes every word that drops from the pulpit. (Proverbs 14:15.) "The ear tries words, as the mouth tastes food." (Job 34:3.) We are bidden to "try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world;" (1 John 4:1;) and yet we are "to know them which labor among us, and are over us in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.) We, therefore, need special grace in this matter to receive none whom the Lord rejects, and reject none whom the Lord receives, but be so guided by wisdom, and so influenced by love, that we may walk before God with the answer of a good conscience, and walk before men with meekness

of wisdom.

3. The third end is, "the edifying of the body of Christ." "To edify," we need scarcely remark, means to build up—"the body of Christ" is the Church which he has purchased with his own blood. The Holy Spirit here has united two figures to convey one idea. The Church of Christ is sometimes compared to a building, as in that beautiful passage—"So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22.) Peter uses the same figure, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." (1 Peter 2:4-5.)

We have already shown in our remarks upon "the perfecting of the saints," that the work of hewing the stones out of the quarry and squaring them into shape, and fitting them together into the spiritual house was an especial end of the ministry of the gospel. This, therefore, we need not repeat. The figure of a human body, as descriptive of the Church of Christ, is no less common than that of a house or temple. We shall see more of its beauty and propriety presently, but for the present, let us quote the Apostle’s words—"For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many." (1 Corinthians 12:12-14.) Now this body of Christ—his mystical, as distinguished from his actual and personal, body, has to be built up, that is, the various members are to be brought together, united to each other, and thus grow up in harmonious concord. Christ is the ever-living Head, (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 2:19,) who supplies out of his own fullness all the needs of the various members; but they have first to be brought together and then to grow together. It is for this reason that the two figures are blended into one. The natural figure of a body with its various members would not convey a right conception of the way in which the saints become partakers of the benefits and blessings of Christ as a covenant Head, because in the human body all the members are at once and at the same time in union with the head and each other. This indeed is true as regards the eternal union between Christ and his people, for they were all chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and united to him by an act of the Father’s sovereign good pleasure. But as they are brought into being successively in time, so they can only be vitally and spiritually united to him in their time state. For this reason, therefore, the figure of a building is chosen as indicative of the successive addition of stones to a temple. But as stones in a natural building, when brought together, do not grow as the members of a body grow from childhood to manhood, the Holy Spirit has blended the two figures—building implying successive additions of stones, a body implying a living growth, which members have, but stones have not. This short but perhaps not very clear explanation will perhaps throw light upon the expression, "the edifying of the body of Christ," as an end accomplished by the ministry of the word. The work of the ministry generally may be divided into two great branches—the calling of sinners, and the building up of saints. It is chiefly, though not exclusively, the latter which is intended by the expression, "the edifying of the body of Christ." But how is the body built up by the ministry?

1. These young converts have first to be INSTRUCTED. They are usually very ignorant, even of the first elements of our most holy faith; but if they are of the right stamp, and the work of conviction in their souls is genuine, they are generally very teachable. They are brought as it were into a new world. The word of truth may have been known by them in the letter, but its hidden spiritual and experimental meaning was altogether hidden from their eyes. Much self-righteousness and legality of spirit often cleave very closely to their skirts, and the very freeness of gospel grace, until the law has done its work upon their consciences, and burned up their wood, hay, and stubble, hinders its cordial reception. Now to souls thus exercised and distressed, full of guilt, bondage, and misery, and yet entangled in a legal, self-righteous spirit which only makes their chains heavier, what a blessing is a living, experimental, clear, enlightened ministry! What good hearers such burdened souls usually are; with what eagerness do they listen, with what an appetite do they feed, with what a memory do they retain the word of life as it falls from the pulpit. These are not like many old hearers, too proud to be taught, and though they have not the judgment and discernment of more established believers, yet they may well by their life, zeal, warmth, and earnestness put their elders to shame.

Every minister, therefore, who seeks to approve himself to God, and be made a blessing to his people, should consider instruction a very important part of his ministry, and should endeavor to put before the people the truths of the gospel in the clearest, plainest, and most consistent possible manner. He should, therefore, be continually reading and studying the Scriptures, mingling his reading with prayer and supplication for divine teaching, and be satisfied with nothing short of a gracious, feeling, experimental knowledge of the truth in his own soul, as he can then speak with authority and power; and where there is a clearness of views, there will generally be a corresponding clearness of statement. A minister of truth should also seek to have very clear ideas upon the grand doctrines of our most holy faith, based upon a living experience of them, such as the Trinity, the Deity and Sonship of the blessed Lord, the Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, the Person of Christ as God-man, his holy and sacred humanity, his blood shedding, obedience, and death, his resurrection, ascension, present intercession, and future coming—in a word, every point connected with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Unless he himself has clear, consistent views of the grand fundamental principles of truth, how can he either preach it clearly or defend it successfully? Under his confused, cloudy, perplexed and perplexing ministry, error will lie snug and undisturbed, even gracious living hearers be tossed about and unestablished, and little union felt or known with him or each other.

2. Secondly, the living family have to be FED.

We have remarked that there is a growth of the members of the mystical body of Christ, and that to conduce to and promote this growth is to edify or build up the body of Christ. As in the natural, so in the spiritual body, this growth much depends on the nature and quality of the food supplied to it. Let the food given to the natural body be thin, watery, deficient in those peculiar elements of nutrition which supply the continual wasting of the bodily tissues, and in consequence, will be emaciation of the whole frame. This is especially the case in childhood and youth, when the growth of the whole body and of its various members is going on, and the future man or woman is being built up. The difference at that period of life between scanty, insufficient, unnutritious food, and an ample supply of sound, wholesome, nourishing diet is a matter of illness or health, debility or vigor, and, in their consequences, of death and life. So in the building up of the mystical body of

Christ, the difference between a thin and watery, unnutritious ministry and one full of sound, solid, wholesome, nourishing food is immense. The word of God speaks of "milk" and "strong meat"—milk for babes, (Hebrews 5:14; 1 Peter 2:2,) and strong meat for men. (1 Corinthians 3:2.) Both these kinds of diet contain the largest portion of the elements of nutrition, and severally suit the digestive organs of infancy and manhood. Such, then, should be the ministry of the gospel, milk and meat; not London milk, weak and watery, but good, rich, new country milk, as it comes from the cow, full of cream and cheese, and meat sound and healthy, well bred and well fed; not Whitechapel beef, snatched by the butcher's knife from pleuro-pneumonia or the cattle plague. We do not want eloquence in the pulpit, but we do want food. Jael brought forth her milk and butter "in a lordly dish," for she was feeding the proud lord and master of 900 chariots of iron; but we can well dispense with "the lordly dish," if the bowl at one end of the table be filled with good milk for the babes, and the dish at the other, where the men sit, has on it a sound and juicy joint. But London milk in a porcelain bowl will starve the babe, and Whitechapel meat in a china dish will poison the man. Do we not love to see our children grow up stout and strong? But they need for this good food, and a good supply of it. O brother ministers, do you think sometimes about the food that you supply the children of God with? Has it nourished, is it nourishing your own soul? Can you say of what you preach, "These truths have fed, and do still feed my soul? Christ, his Person, his work, his blood, his righteousness, his dying love, his beauty, blessedness, and suitability; his mercy, pity, and compassion; what I have seen, felt, and known of him in his presence and power, as all my salvation and all my desire; this is all my life, all my hope, and all my happiness. I must, therefore, speak well of his name, exalt him to the utmost of my power, and commend him to every poor sensible sinner who is pining after him as the child after the bosom, or the starving man for food. 'Honey and milk are under his tongue; his flesh is food indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.' And having drunk his milk and wine, and eaten his meat, I can speak well of them both, and never wish to set any other provision before the dear family of God." This is the preaching which God will own and bless; and though it may be despised by the great bulk of professors, it will be prized by the poor and needy, hungering and thirsting children of God.

3. Another thing desirable, if not absolutely necessary, to edify the body of Christ is a suitable and seasonable VARIETY in the food supplied. The natural body requires for its due nourishment variety of food. The constituent elements of what is eaten remain the same, or it would not be nutritious; but, without some degree of variety, food, after a time, becomes rather loathed than loved. Our poor soldiers, under that red tape system which ties men up like a lawyer's brief, when not on foreign service, had boiled beef served to them at their mess day by day until their very stomachs loathed the sight and smell. The children of Israel ate quail in the wilderness until the meat came out of their nostrils and became loathsome unto them. (Numbers 11:20.) Should there not be some corresponding variety in the ministry of the word? What a variety there is in the Bible! Take the whole range from Genesis to Revelation. How consistent, how uniform in doctrine, but how varied in detail. It is thus uniform in conception, but multiform in expression. Without unity of thought there would be confusion, if not contradiction; without variety of expression there would be not only a wearisome sameness, but a deficiency of instruction. The amazing variety of the Bible is not only charming, as ever presenting some new feature of heavenly truth, but most instructive and edifying. So in the approved works of our most esteemed Christian writers, such as Bunyan, Owen, Huntington—what a fullness of abounding variety. Should not the ministry have a good measure of this? The food that it supplies may be varied, and yet be good food still. Milk can be

given to children in more ways than one; meat for men need not be always mutton, and least of all the same piece and the same exact mode of cooking. So in the ministry of the word, there may be, and should be, variety—not a variety of truth but a variety in truth.

Prayer is a part of the ministry; but how wearisome to hear the same prayer over and over and over again. We condemn forms of prayer; yet how does the same prayer repeated again and again differ from a mere printed form? The chief value of extemporaneous prayer is that it enables the minister to pour forth his whole soul before God, as the blessed Spirit helps his infirmities and gives him utterance. He thus, as mouth for his gracious hearers, expresses the desires of their souls, and they can silently and sweetly unite with him as he presents his own and their mutual supplications before the throne. But when they know beforehand almost every word of his prayer; when there is no enlargement of heart and mouth, no entering into the numerous and varied needs, feelings, exercises, and desires of their souls, his prayer becomes at length but a wearisome, burdensome, unprofitable formula—words, and nothing but words. And as this is true of the prayer, so is it true and more than true of the preaching. We want no novelty in doctrine or experience; we are well satisfied with the good old beaten way. We want no startling, still less no sensational preaching. We want no juggler with his cup and balls to astonish our weak minds with the wonderful interpretations which he can put upon God's word, and no clown to entertain us with jests and anecdotes. Nor do we want the eloquent orator, who perhaps may break down in one of his finest passages which he has well conned over and learned by heart; nor do we require a dry doctrinalist, or contentious disputer, or a personal railer. But we greatly want the sound, sober, well-taught man of God, whose grace we see in his heart and life, and whose gift we feel in the power and savor of his ministry. Our own belief is that whenever God sends a man to preach his word, he always furnishes him with a suitable gift; and that one mark of this gift is such a seasonable measure of variety as shall make his ministry from time to time a living word, springing out of and kept up by a living inward experience of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are never so safe as when we are on strict Scripture ground; indeed, off that ground we are never safe at all. It is for this reason that in our Meditations on the Ministry of the Gospel we have adhered so closely to the word of truth, and preferred bringing forward select passages in which the Holy Spirit has clearly unfolded its true nature and character, and opening, to the best of our ability, their spiritual meaning, to dealing with the subject in a wider and looser way by general observations of our own. But the letter of Scripture is one thing, and the interpretation of it is another. We might quote right passages, and yet give them a wrong interpretation. We believe, however, that we have not so erred. At least, we can declare with all holy boldness the inmost conviction of our conscience that, with the exception of such infirmities and defects of knowledge or expression as all are subject to, we have interpreted the word of the Spirit according to the mind of the Spirit. This may seem to some a bold assertion; but we will make a still bolder one in the expression of our conviction that whoever undertakes to instruct the Church of God must have the fullest certainty in his own mind that what he brings forward is in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, or he is utterly unfit either to stand up in a pulpit or to handle a pen in the cause of God and truth.

Carrying out, then, this plan, we are now engaged in opening the mind of the Spirit as expressed by the Apostle, Ephesians 4:11-16, and have advanced in our explanation as far as the end of Ephesians 4:12—"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of

the body of Christ." In the verses which immediately follow, and which we shall presently quote, the fruits and effects of the ministry are unfolded with equal clearness and beauty, as we hope to show by our exposition of them—"Until 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 fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:13-16.)

Several points here are worthy of our closest attention, and especially two as FRUITS OF THE MINISTRY—1. What peculiar evils we are instrumentally to be preserved from by it; 2. What eminent advantages we are to reap from it.

We will consider these two points separately.

1. Observe then, first, what we may call the negative side, the peculiar EVILS from which the gospel is intended to preserve or deliver us. The ministry of the gospel is intended to be our main safeguard against error—"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Ephesians 4:14)

Many, if not most, in a profession of religion are children all their days—not children in the best sense of the word, but children in the worst. In the Scripture we find the figure of a child used in two different senses, each being drawn from its natural character. In a child, as a child, there are two main, leading, salient features—what we may call its good side, and its bad side. Its docility, simplicity, sincerity, humility, artlessness, and what is usually termed its innocence, form its good side. This part of its character our Lord noticed when "he called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of the disciples, and said, Verily I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3-4.) But the child is also ignorant, unstable, undecided, pettish, soon moved to passion or to tears, caught by baubles and gewgaws, credulous, open to deception, fickle, and changeable. This forms its bad, or at least its weak side. The Apostle has beautifully hit off the difference between these two senses of the word in one verse—"Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be you children, but in understanding be men." (1 Corinthians 14:20.) To be a child in understanding is to be weak, ignorant, vacillating, undecided, ever halting between two opinions, deficient in every manly grace and gift; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. To be a child in spirit is to be simple, sincere, teachable, peaceable, affectionate, open; free from craft, hypocrisy, and deceit. To be the first is to be the least, to be the last is to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. In grace as in nature, there is a period when we are children; and such a state has its beauty in one as well as in the other. To be born a full-grown man would be a monster or a prodigy, as Hercules is fabled to have strangled two serpents in his cradle sent by the goddess Juno to kill him; or as King Richard III is said to have come into the world not only with a hump on his back, but with teeth in his head. Jerusalem, the mother of us all, bears no such

prodigies as infant giants, able when yet in arms to overcome the wicked one, or well toothed babes who cry out for strong meat instead of milk. The Scripture most plainly lays it down that the Church of God is made up of babes, children, young men, and fathers; and to hear a child talk like a father is almost worse than to hear a father talk like a child. In this sense we are to be "no more children." To have been a child once is enough. We are to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We are to grow up, as we shall by-and-by show, "unto him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ." There is a coming unto "a perfect," or adult man, "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Wherever there is life there is growth, and the more healthy the life, the more vigorous, the more marked is the growth. A lack of growth is, therefore, a sure mark of sickliness, or at least of a weak, unhealthy constitution. The Apostle, therefore, sharply reproves the Hebrew disciples as being always children—"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness." (Hebrews 5:12-13.)

We sometimes see children that never seem to grow, or able to run alone, or learn to talk. What a grief is this to their parents, who fear that they may turn out idiots. Should it not be a matter of equal grief to ministers to see their spiritual children showing, year after year, little else but the weakness, ignorance, and instability of childhood, and so little of the strength and firmness of youth or manhood? But there is something even worse than lack of growth. There is an old Latin proverb, "Not to go forward is to go backward." In the divine life there is no standing still. Not to go on is to go back; not to grow is to decay; not to fight is to flee; not to resist is to yield. But there are worse consequences of continual childhood even than this. There is a "being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." This is just the state of many in our churches. In the controversy about the true, proper, and eternal Sonship of our gracious Lord, how many, not merely members of the congregation, but members of the Church in various places of professed truth, were ever tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Just as the wind blew, they were driven. If they read a book or an article in its favor, then they thought that right; if the next day they met with a book or article against it, then they thought that right. Like the chameleon, they changed their color according to their book or their company—not so much from wickedness as from weakness, not so much from hypocrisy as from indecision, not so much from craft as from cowardice, not so much from willfulness in error as from instability in truth. But what was the consequence of all this childish weakness, ignorance, and instability? That they laid themselves open to, and became a prey of, "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive." The real heretics, the erroneous men, saw at a glance with whom they could, and with whom they could not succeed. It was these unstable ones whom they juggled by their sleight of hand, whom they cheated with their loaded dice. (The word translated "sleight" is literally "dicing," that is, cheating with loaded dice.)

It was these dwarfed, sickly, rickety children that they laid their crafty plans to deceive and entangle in error. These are their prey, whom they find out as instinctively as the London sharpers smell out a country bumpkin, with whom they are so willing to share a part of the large fortune which has just been left him by a dead uncle. Now to deliver the family of God from these sharpers is an important part of the gospel ministry. As the ministry is "for the perfecting of the saints," it is to bring them out of this childish state of ignorance and instability, through which, as carried about

with every wind of doctrine, they fall a prey to the arts of these designing men. Did you ever read any of their books or see any of their pieces? With what craft they write! How they commence with a show of truth as if they believed just the same doctrines as the Church of God has always held; but by little and little they bring forth their error, yet still so wrapped up in Scripture language that it almost requires an eagle's eye to see into their real meaning. We see the necessity, therefore, that the man of God should be well armed at all points against such errors and such men; should be thoroughly instructed himself into a clear experimental knowledge of the truth; should be furnished with a sufficient gift of utterance to unfold and enforce it clearly, and courage to defend it firmly, boldly, and faithfully.

13.04. Chapter 4 continued

The ENDS for which the gospel ministry was established

(Continued) A main part of the ministry is instruction. The character of the babe is that he is "unskillful in the word of righteousness." He, therefore, needs instruction—instruction from the word of truth, called "the word of righteousness," as unfolding and manifesting "the righteousness of God," that is, not God's intrinsic and eternal righteousness as a just and holy Jehovah, but his wondrous plan of saving sinners by the incarnation and mediation of his dear Son, so that "he might be just and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26.) Now if these weak and vacillating members had been but well instructed in "the word of righteousness;" if they had been favored with clear views of the Trinity, and seen how intimately and closely it was connected with the divine Sonship of Jesus; if they had been well grounded and established in an experimental knowledge of the Son of God by some gracious discovery of his glorious Person to their soul—would they have been tossed to and fro and carried about with these winds of erroneous doctrine?

We are not advocates for dry doctrine—far from it; but we are advocates, and warm ones too, for laying before the people the grand verities, the vital truths of our most holy faith, with every doctrine according to godliness, which we have ourselves tasted, felt, and handled as the food of our soul. We never loved so much, never more highly valued, never saw more beauty in, never felt the sweetness more of the grand doctrines of grace which we have professed so many years; and were never more fully, if so much, persuaded of the importance and indeed necessity that they should be the main staple of the ministry as setting forth the person and work of the Son of God. To be well established in the truth is a great blessing both for minister and people. It gives a firmness to the ministry and a satisfaction to the church and congregation. They feel that they can trust their man. He has fully proved, and therefore well knows his ground. He has felt the truth and power of what he preaches in his own soul. He is resting all the weight of his own personal salvation on the grand and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel, as all centering in the person of Christ. He has his sharp exercises, and may have his doubts and fears; but those touch not the foundation, do not affect the truths themselves, but only how far he may be deceived as to his personal interest in them. But his very exercises make him hold truth with a firmer hand. Lies, he well knows, cannot save him; errors, he is fully confident, cannot sanctify him. All his hope is in the truth; all his dependence is on Christ and his finished work. The enemies of the Son of God, of salvation by grace, of a living experience of the power of truth, are therefore his enemies, because they would dig up the foundations of the everlasting gospel, destroy his faith, and root out his very hope. He contends, therefore, for the truth in its purity and its power, not only from a sense of its sweetness, but from a sense of its necessity. It is with him not a mere Sunday sermon, the subject of a text neatly spun out into a discourse, but the one grand matter, the one thing needful, by which he must live and die. He therefore digs more and more deeply into its hidden treasures, that his own soul and the souls of his hearers may be enriched thereby; and he guards it with more holy zeal and indignant warmth against the thieves and robbers who would plunder himself and

them of their very hope of salvation.

2. But we now come to the positive side—the ADVANTAGES which we are to reap from the ministry of the gospel. These are contained in verse 13, of which 15 and 16 are but a fuller explanation—"Until 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 fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13.) We shall have to open and work out several points of truth here.

1. The leading idea is that of "coming unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The means of its attainment are "unity of faith and a knowledge of the Son of God."

We have already shown that growth is the grand mark of life. But this growth has both its object and its term. It is not a rapid, loose, shooting up, like that of a tall, lanky, over-grown boy, or of a tree which spindles with its one shoot on high, without thickening its stem or throwing out its side branches. The object or intention of the growth is "to grow up in all things into Christ;" the term or end of the growth is that of "a perfect" or adult man, or, as more fully expressed, "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Strictly speaking, as is evident from verse 16, the growth intended by the Apostle is that of the whole Church, as the mystical body of Christ; but the expression, "Until we all come," allows us to apply it to individuals. As this last is the simpler meaning, we shall consider it first.

Christ is the Head of every member individually, as he is the Head of the whole body collectively. Growth of the body, from babyhood to manhood, is the growth of individual members in the body. If, then, I am a member of the mystical body of Christ Jesus, I shall grow. My growth may be so slow and gradual as to be scarcely perceptible; but it will be growth still. If I have union with Christ, I shall be supplied, at least in some measure, out of his fullness. He is my life, and he has promised, because he lives, I shall live also; and if I live by him, I shall live upon and unto him. Paul could say, "The life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God;" and tells us, "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:15.) But this life and this growth are maintained by means, and the chief among them is the ministry of the gospel. By a sound gospel ministry our souls are fed. Christ is set before us in all the glories of his divine Person, in his Deity and Sonship, and in all the graces of his suffering humanity. His covenant characters and gracious relationships, his blood and righteousness, his death and resurrection, his ascension and glorification at the right hand of the Father, his present mediation and intercession, his sympathy as a once suffering but now exalted high Priest, and his ability to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him—are brought before us as the food of our faith; and as we taste that he is gracious, and feed upon him as the bread of life, there is a growth into him. We grow out of self, and it is to be hoped, in some measure, out of the love of the world and of sin; and we love and admire him all the more that we taste of his grace and see of his glory. The term or end of this growth is "perfection"—that is, not moral, legal, or fleshly perfection, but that adult state, that ripeness of judgment, that maturity of Christian stature, that establishment in the truth which distinguishes the grown-up man from the weak, ignorant, vacillating child. Paul’s "perfect man" means an adult, a grown-up man, not perfect as free from sin, defect, or infirmity, but as arrived at fullness of strength and stature. The word is therefore well translated, "of full age," (Hebrews 5:14,)

it being precisely the same word as is rendered "perfect" in the passage now before us. But this maturity, which it is the end of the ministry to accomplish, mainly depends on two things, which mark and test the soundness of the ministry and of the food furnished by it.

1. First it is "in the unity of the faith." There is, there can be but "one faith," as there is but "one God and one Lord." This faith is "the faith of God's elect," as opposed to the faith which is common to all men; "the gift of God," as opposed to the work of man; a fruit of the Spirit, as opposed to a fruit of the flesh. There is a unity or oneness of this faith in all the living members of the mystical body of Christ, so that, with all their seeming differences, their faith is really one and the same, and they the sole possessors of it. The object of their faith is one and the same—the Son of God; the ground of their faith is one and the same—the word of his grace; the author and finisher of their faith is one and the same—the Lord Jesus Christ; and the end of their faith is one and the same—the salvation of their soul. This faith has to grow, (2 Thessalonians 1:3,) and it grows as fed by the word of truth. Here then we see the benefit and blessing of the gospel ministry. It is intended to feed the faith of the Church by holding forth to it the word of life. (Php 2:16.) This therefore demands not only a truthful but a living ministry—not only soundness in the faith itself, not only life in the minister's own soul, two indispensable requisites, but life in the word which drops from his lips. The true servant of God is at a point in all that he advances. He can say therefore with Paul, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." (2 Corinthians 4:13.) This faith in his heart meets and unites with the faith in the heart of his gracious hearers. They are sure that he believes what he preaches, because his "speech and his preaching is in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And what is the effect? That both his faith and their faith stand not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5.) This is the unity or oneness of faith which, as working by love, knits and unites the heart of the people to the minister and of the minister to the people. They thus grow together, for as his faith becomes strengthened and enlarged, fresh fields of green pasturage are opened to him, and into these he leads his willing flock. But a wretched time-server, who has crept into the ministry to eat a piece of bread; or a puffed-up novice, who has a little smattering of doctrine in his head and a set of wheels to his tongue; or a crafty hypocrite, who is watching every turn of the wind nicely to shift his sails; or an erroneous man, who hides his error under the pulpit cushion until he can safely bring it forth; or a vacillating character, who, either from ignorance of the power of truth, or from false charity, or from a soft, pliant disposition, holds with all sides and is faithful to none—how can any such men as these feed the Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood? If I have a living faith in the Son of God, what union can there be between my faith and the faith of such men? It is not merely oneness of doctrine but oneness of faith, and that too neither dead nor drooping—but living, acting, and growing in minister and people—which binds them together.

2. But with that there is "the knowledge of the Son of God." If you will read the passage carefully, you will perceive the little word "of" before "the knowledge of the Son of God." This little word "of" refers to the unity just mentioned. Thus there is not only the unity or oneness of faith, but the unity or oneness of the knowledge of the Son of God. Our readers will bear in mind that the point now before us is the growth of the whole body generally, and of each individual member particularly, through the instrumentality of the ministry of the word. There is a oneness, therefore, of this knowledge both in the minister and in the people. He knows the Son of God for himself. He has

had that view, discovery, manifestation, or revelation of the Son of God, whereby he spiritually knows him as the Son of God. He can therefore preach him, and testify of him to the people. They, we of course mean the spiritual part of them, also know, or at least are panting to know the same eve-blessed Son of the Father in truth and love. Here they meet, not only in the unity of faith, but in the unity of knowledge—a sweet, experimental knowledge of the Son of God in his Person and work, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. Directly that Paul's mouth was opened he "preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." (Acts 9:20.) And how came he to know that he is the Son of God? Because God was pleased to "reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen." (Galatians 1:16.) As, then, the heaven-taught minister sets forth the Person and work of the Son of God, from a gracious, experimental knowledge of him, the blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the people through the ministry of the word. They receive Christ under the word of the truth of the gospel, which testifies of him, for it brings forth fruit in them; (Colossians 1:5-6; Colossians 2:6;) and they thus receive the love of the truth, and are saved thereby. (2 Thessalonians 2:10.) Now minister and hearer are as one—knit together in a oneness of knowledge, as well as a unity or oneness of faith. But this knowledge, both in him and them, is, for the most part, but weak, scanty, and imperfect. It is true, real, gracious, experimental, but necessarily imperfect, and will be so to the end of our life, for "now we see through a glass darkly." It therefore admits of growth. Even blessed Paul, who could say, "Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but rubbish, that I may win Christ," (Php 3:8,) was obliged to add, "that I may know him," as if he did not yet know him. So great and glorious was his Person, so complete his finished work, so broad, and long, and deep, and high was his love, so sympathizing his heart, so strong his hand, so sweet his mouth, so superabounding his grace, that all that Paul knew of him was but as a drop—compared to the boundless ocean! There is, then, a growth in this knowledge, both in minister and people. As he advances in this knowledge, they advance with him. Every fresh trial, temptation, and affliction which befalls him, leads him into a deeper and further knowledge of the Son of God. As this is brought forth before the people, it feeds their knowledge, and by it their faith, for "Faith is by knowledge fed;" and as the same Spirit teaches both minister and people, for as there is "one body," so there is "one Spirit," they move on together in this blessed path of an experimental knowledge of the Son of God. This is God's plan, as laid down in the word of his grace; this the fruit of the ministry of the gospel, as traced by the hand of the Holy Spirit. We are not yet done with our subject, as we have still to open Php 3:15-16; but, for the present, let this suffice. And now what are those voices which we hear in the distance? "You are cutting us off. You are setting up a fixed, arbitrary standard for the ministry, and if we cannot reach your standard you are at once cutting off our heads; or if you spare us as Christians, you cut us off as ministers." Not so, dear friends and brethren in the ministry—to you we speak who have any faith in, any knowledge of the Son of God, and testify to the people of that faith and of that knowledge as far as you possess it. It is not the strength of your faith, nor the depth of your knowledge, nor your gifts and ability in testifying of it that is the question. It is the reality of it. What we write, we write from the word of truth and our own experience as a Christian and as a minister. If we set up a high standard, we must cut ourselves off; but believing that we have a living faith, and a gracious knowledge of the Son of God, and this faith and this knowledge forming, as the Lord enables, the basis of our own ministry by tongue and pen, can we admit anything else, whomever it may touch? Would you have

us allow that an unbeliever in, or a denier of the Son of God is a true servant of Christ? Shall we set up unbelief in the place of faith, and ignorance or denial of the Son of God instead of a knowledge of him? "O dear, no!" you say; "we mean no such thing. God forbid that any one who desires to fear his name and preach his word faithfully should set forth any other way of salvation than faith in the Son of God. But, but"—well, what "but?" "Why, we do not like, and, indeed, we do not at all approve of your setting up a certain standard of faith and knowledge, and cutting off all ministers who do not exactly come up to your standard." But where have we done this, here or elsewhere? We have shown you, from the word of God, what the ministry of the gospel is, or should be. We have moved carefully and cautiously, step by step, with the express language of the Holy Spirit in the word of truth; and, we may add, with our own experience of the truth of God. If we preach faith, it is because we have some testimony that we possess it; if we preach the knowledge of the Son of God, it is because we have seen and known him in the light of his own gracious revelation. Our writings and sermons, such as they are, have been for years before the Church of God. Let them be our judge, whether we have ever set up any other way of salvation than a living faith in, a living knowledge of the Son of God. But we do not set up a fixed standard of this faith and this knowledge, still less a fixed standard of grace and gifts for the ministry of the gospel. If we cut off any, it is the hypocrites in Zion, the false preachers, the erroneous men, the deniers of the Son of God. But we never have touched (God forbid we should ever touch) the weakest of his saints, or the least of his servants. Would to God there were more ministers of the everlasting gospel. It would truly rejoice our heart to see men raised up, humble, simple, sincere, sound in faith, blessed with an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, and furnished with sufficient gifts of utterance as well as inward life and power to feed the Church of God. We much need them. The Lord is taking home, or laying aside by sickness or infirmity very many of his servants. And where shall we look to find their successors? It seems to us, at present, a gloomy prospect. We have plenty of preachers, whose worst feature is that, puffed up by a vain idea of their own gifts and abilities, and fawned upon by a tribe of admirers and flatterers, they have not light enough to see their own deficiencies, or life enough to feel their own shortcomings. How can men grow, or even desire to grow, who think themselves already arrived at full stature, and wonder that all do not admire them as much as they admire themselves? How can they approve themselves to the family of God, when they evidently are pushing themselves forward, as if they were qualified to stand in any pulpit, to preach to any congregation, and to take first and foremost rank among the servants of God? They will have to learn a different lesson before they find an abiding place in the confidence, the esteem, and the affections of the discerning family, however well they may stand in their own. "Before honor is humility." "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." The Lord bless you, you humble servant of the living God, who in simplicity and godly sincerity preach what God has taught you, and feed the people with the food with which he has fed you. We would not say a word to cast down or discourage your tried, exercised soul, weaken your hands, or cast a slight on your ministry. But you will not think our sword too sharp or words too cutting, for if our heart can read yours, you love all that is good, and hate every false way.

God has set before our eyes in his holy word—a model Church and a model ministry, and by so doing has displayed both his wisdom and his grace. From not seeing and from not following this inspired pattern have arisen almost all the errors and all the evils which have made havoc of both Church and ministry, and perverted some of God’s choicest gifts to the vilest purposes. As this

point has an important bearing on our present subject, and has not met with the attention which it deserves, we will devote to it a few moments' consideration.

Without a proper pattern to instruct his eye and guide his hand, no artist, no artisan, can properly execute any work. It is not supposed that he will ever come up to his model, for that is assumed to be perfect; but it is expected that he will do his best to imitate it. If he be so ignorant as not to understand, or so conceited as not to follow the pattern set before him, he will be all his days a poor bungling workman, the plague of his employer, and the spoiler of everything put into his hand which demands skill and execution. We see, therefore, a divine pattern laid down both in the Old Testament and the New. When God said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them," he added, "according to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it." (Exodus 25:9.) Not a pin of the tabernacle nor a vessel of service was left to the choice of Moses. Binding upon him and on the artificers employed by him was the injunction—"And look that you make them after their pattern which was showed you in the mount."

Similarly, the Lord has given in the New Testament a perfect pattern of the ministry of the word and a perfect pattern of a gospel Church. The pattern of the ministry may be found chiefly in the ministerial Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus; but there is no one passage where it is more clearly yet concisely laid down than in that which we have been unfolding and have not yet succeeded in finishing, that is, Ephesians 4:8-16. The perfect pattern of a gospel Church is given in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. But we find very beautiful and concise descriptions of what the Church at large is as the mystical body of Christ, Colossians 2:19, Ephesians 4:16, and Ephesians 5:25-32, all which demand much prayerful attention and consideration. As one of these passages, Ephesians 4:16, is in connection with our subject—the ministry of the gospel, we shall direct special attention to it. We have shown hitherto that one of the main objects of the ministry of the gospel is the edifying or building up, as the word means, of the body of Christ. By "the body of Christ," as applicable to the Church, we may understand two things—1, the Church of Christ as a whole; (Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 5:29-30;) 2, the Church of Christ, as represented visibly on earth by a gospel church. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Corinthians 12:27.) The difference between these two bodies is that the one is invisible, the other visible; the one perfect, the other imperfect; one the reality, the other the representation. But from their close connection and their resemblance, the Scripture often speaks of them as one, and transfers to the visible Church what is true in its fullest sense only in the invisible. Unless we see and understand this, we cannot enter into the spiritual meaning of such a chapter as 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. Now, God's idea, so to speak, and we may add, intention, are that this body is to "grow into a perfect" or matured "man;" and when this is attained unto, it is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." In the eye of him who sees all things from the beginning, the Church is already complete; but it is not so in present realization or visible manifestation. It has, therefore, to grow; and this growth has a measure or appointed standard, which is "the stature of the fullness of Christ." By turning to Ephesians 1:22-23, we shall see what this "fullness of Christ" is—"And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all." This fullness is not his fullness as God, (Colossians 2:9,) nor his fullness as God-man Mediator, (Colossians 1:19,) but the completeness of the mystical body of which he is the Head. The subject is somewhat difficult to understand; but as it contains much deep and

precious truth, and is closely connected with the ministry, we trust that our readers will give us their attention as we attempt to unfold it.

Growth is of three kinds—1. Growth in the whole body of Christ; 2. Growth in a church as a representation of this body; 3. Growth in each individual as a member of the body. And to each of these kinds of growth the term or limit is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." But of course this differs according to that which has to grow. We will view it in each of these three senses.

1. View first, then, the growth of the whole body. The body of Christ is ever growing. In this sense "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" will only be attained when the whole body is complete, and all his mystical members glorified in eternal union with the glorified Head. But it cannot be said that this body is yet complete, except in the mind of God, for many of his elect are yet unborn, many born who are not as yet born again. As, then, each member is quickened into divine life, the body grows by the continual development and accession of these living members, which will go on until the last elect is gathered in, and the body is complete. But now see the bearing which the ministry of the gospel has on this growth of the body of Christ. By the preached word the members of this body are quickened into spiritual life. Accessions are thus made continually to the body, for every soul quickened by the word becomes a manifested living member of Christ. What a permanent blessing is, then, couched in the ministry of the gospel, as the means appointed and owned of God to build up the body of Christ; and in this sense every sent servant of God is a laborer together with God. (1 Corinthians 3:1-23) As, then, the ministry of the word is the appointed means of thus edifying or building up the body of Christ, it will be maintained until this body is complete, and it has attained to the appointed "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

2. But, besides this growth of the body as a whole by the accession of successive members, there is also a growth of the visible body of Christ as represented in a gospel church. Does a gospel church always remain at the same stand? Is there no difference between a newly-formed church and one that has been established for many years? It is true that when we come to examine their actual, internal condition, many old established churches are sadly disappointing to a spiritual eye. They have lost the vigor of youth, without attaining to the wisdom and stability of old age. But most churches resemble the human body in its three periods—youth, manhood, and old age. When first formed, there is usually with them a period of warmth, activity, and zeal. To this succeeds the church’s best period, when its young members have become matured and ripened into steady, solid, well established believers. And then follows the third and worst stage, when it sinks into old age and all its attendant infirmities, when it has neither the active vigor of youth nor the solid strength of manhood; but the deadness, sloth, peevishness, and fretfulness of decrepitude.

Such was the Laodicean church, and such are many of our gospel churches now. Their best members, the pillars of the church, have died off; none of the younger members, taken in perhaps on a very slight experience, have succeeded to their place; peevishness and fretfulness, often issuing in strife and contention, mar all love and union; the old members are too self-willed and obstinate to heed counsel or admonition; the pastor, to whom all once looked, is removed by death, and the pulpit filled by a succession of ministers. Supplies, however, cannot have his authority or influence, and gradually the church sinks into senility and death. Such is the history of

many a gospel church, as too many can testify. The church itself, thus stricken with old age, may not see its own condition, and like some old men naturally, who cannot bear the thought of old age, and still affect to be young, may stoutly resist any imputation of decline. Ephraim had grey hairs here and there upon him—yet he knew it not. (Hosea 7:9.) But leaving this point, let us see what is God's idea, in the word of growth in a Christian Church. It is beautifully described by the Apostle—"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16.) There is also a very sweet and concise description of the same growth and by the same means in an almost parallel passage—"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God." (Colossians 2:19.) By putting these two passages together, we may, the Lord teaching and enabling us to understand them, arrive at a right conception of growth in a Christian Church. We may observe that it is dependent on two things as means and instruments of this growth; 1, the ministry of the word; 2, the mutual communion of the members with the Head and each other.

1. It is in the mystical body of Christ as in the human body. All the members are dependent on the head for life and growth, but much more in the mystical than in the natural body. Only as we are supplied out of his fullness, can there be any sensible life or manifest growth. By "holding the Head," that is, holding union and communion with the Head, "all the body, through its joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God;" that is, according to the will, purpose, and power of God. And as in the human body, the members grow together. Now, here comes in the benefit and blessedness of a sound and experimental gospel ministry. It feeds each separate member; at least, that is what it does or should do, according to the mind of God. Now, as each is thus fed, each grows. The eye grows clearer, stronger, and more discerning; the ear becomes more fine, delicate, and discriminating; the taste more refined and yet more sound, less fond of sugar-plums, and more relishing savory food; the hand stronger and more open and enlarged; and the foot more active and willing to run on errands of kindness and love. And as they grow together, so are they more firmly knit together. How well knit are the bones and joints of a man compared with those of a child. How compacted they become by use and exercise and advancing manhood. How strong their union, and how almost indissoluble they become. So in the mystical body of Christ. Indissolubly united to their living Head, the members are indissolubly united to each other; and, as thus united, they minister to each other's growth and edification. The whole body is "fitly joined together," for all the members "are baptized into one body," and "all have been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13.) God has thus mingled and tempered together the strong and the feeble, the lovely and the unlovely, the honorable and the less honorable, so that each contributes to the nourishment and growth of the other. The figure of the vine and the branches may help us to understand this. The sleeping, dormant bud in the stem may represent the members of the body of Christ before divine quickening. It is in the vine, but not developed into manifest life and growth. But at a certain period a power is put forth, which may be called manifest life; (for the bud in nature never was really dead;) sap flows into it from the stem; it shoots, it grows, it blooms, it bears fruit. Nor is it alone in life, growth and fruitfulness. Its fellow-buds grow with it into fellow branches, and the life of the one keeps pace with the life and growth of the other. So in the mystical body of Christ. The members

grow together. The strong arm has a fellow in the strong leg, and the health and strength of each member are the health and strength of all. As this growth is being carried on, there is a "growing up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ;" for it is out of his fullness and the supplies of his grace that all this growth comes. But there is also growth of the whole body by the union and communion of the members with each other. This is beautifully opened up by the Apostle—"From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part; makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:16.) Each member contributes to the welfare and benefit of the other. The eye does not see for itself, nor the ear hear for itself, nor the hand minister to itself, nor the foot walk for itself, but each individual member acts for the benefit of the others and the whole. We cannot enlarge on this subject, but it is set before us as God's pattern of a gospel church. But now observe its connection with the ministry of the gospel. The ministry feeds and strengthens each individual member. As then each member is thus fed and strengthened, it feeds and strengthens its fellow-members. The whole body is first "fitly joined together;" it then becomes "compacted," that is, firmly knit and strengthened, "by that which every joint supplies; and by the effectual working in the measure of every part, the whole body edifies itself in love." To open this subject, to explain how the members mutually contribute to each other's nourishment and growth, would not only take up too much space, but would divert us from the more immediate consideration of our subject. But it may easily be seen how the ministry of the gospel contributes to the mutual growth of the members. When, for instance, there is an addition to the church, and the candidates can speak of their being called or blessed under the ministry of the word, and give in a clear and sweet testimony to the work of grace on their soul—does not this kindle new life and feeling in the hearts of the members of the church? Or when any one member is signally favored and blessed, he does not eat his morsel alone; he is glad to communicate to others and share with them the blessing of God which has made him rich; and how this will often revive a drooping soul, and if it does no more, will draw forth prayer and desire for a similar blessing. No, if it even works jealousy, it does not work amiss, for these coals of fire which has a most vehement flame will often stir up the languid soul, and draw forth the wrestling cry, "I will not let you go except you bless me."

O what a blessing there is in a real, gracious, savory, experimental ministry. How a church flourishes under it, as member after member is by it edified and fed. How it promotes union and brotherly love; and as these are promoted, how the church edifies or builds itself up in love. But where there is a cold, barren, lifeless ministry, under it church and congregation sink into a dead, listless, lethargic state. No union or communion is felt among the members; they care little for each other's welfare, naturally or spiritually; they just meet, out of formality, on the Lord's day, and while a few poor, tried souls are secretly sighing and mourning their own carnal state and the dead state of the church generally, the talkative professors have it all their own way, insensible of their own death, and the death in the pulpit and pew; and strife and division, perhaps on the merest trifles, soon rend the already disunited members asunder.

We see, then, the connection between the ministry of the gospel and the growth and edification of the Church as the body of Christ. And what is true of the Church collectively is true of each member separately. The ministry of the word is God's appointed means to instruct, feed, and edify every member of the mystical body of Christ. Much, indeed, of this instruction and edification is conveyed so gradually as to be almost insensible. We are on the look-out for great signal

blessings, and, indeed, we are right in so doing; but we should bear in mind that it is with the soul often as the body. The food that we daily take feeds and nourishes our frames, and yet we are not always sensible of the benefit thus derived from it. So, in sitting under a sound, gracious, experimental ministry, there is a being fed and nourished by the word of life, as distinct from special seasons of signal blessing, which are rare events, though so highly prized when they do come.

Perhaps at your first deliverance, or afterwards, under some special trial, deep affliction, or powerful temptation, you were signally favored under a sermon; but how rare these seasons are, and what bright spots do they form in a believer's experience. But distinct from these special and rare seasons there is a feeding under the word, a revival of faith and hope and love, a being renewed in the spirit of the mind. Sometimes instruction is communicated by it to inform and establish the judgment; sometimes a light is cast on a dark path in providence or grace, to show us that the Lord is with us in it; sometimes our evidences are brightened, and doubts and fears dispelled; sometimes temptations, which we have thought peculiar to ourselves, have been so touched on that we see the servant of God is tempted as we are; sometimes we get such views and discoveries of the blessed Lord, as he is set forth in his Person and work, as draw forth faith upon him and love towards him, and he is felt to be near, dear, and precious; sometimes we can so travel almost step by step with the minister as to fully believe we are in the footsteps of the flock; and as he opens up and proves, point after point, by the word of truth, the work of grace in the heart is so shone upon by the blessed Spirit that we have no doubt of its genuineness and reality. Sometimes, again, our cold, sluggish, dead, and backward hearts are stirred up to take fresh hold of the mercy of God in Christ, of the faithfulness of a covenant God, of the fullness and freeness of rich, free, and superabounding grace; and as faith embraces these divine realities, the soul is melted and softened into contrition, humility, and love. Sometimes the fear of God is sensibly strengthened, the evil of sin more clearly seen and felt; prayers and desires are kindled to be kept from it, that it may not grieve us, and sorrow of heart experienced, with many inward confessions on account of past backslidings. Sometimes peculiar strength is communicated under a special trial, resignation given to the will of God, the rod submitted to and embraced, and the mercy acknowledged that he does not leave us to go into evil unchecked, without repenting of or forsaking it. Sometimes keen reproof enters the soul; we see that we have been entangled in a snare of Satan; we may almost fear the wound is incurable; but blood and love form a balm that well suits the bleeding conscience. Sometimes we are led to see how worldly, covetous, and carnally-minded we have been; how carking cares and business anxieties have, like locusts, eaten up every green thing, and how little we have really thought of, or done for the Lord during the week. The contrast between all this worldly din and dust, and the calm, still, spiritual services and worship of the sanctuary, strikes the mind; and while it conveys secret reproof to the conscience, yet, mingled with it, there springs up an earnest longing for deliverance from the pressure of the body of sin and death, and for more enjoyment of that sweet spirituality of mind which we know is life and peace. But now, in order to see how all this nutritious food, communicated to the soul by the ministry of the word, is connected with not only the growth of the individual members of the body, but how, by joints and bands, the nourishment is ministered, view the effects, such as we have just described, in connection with our fellow-members. Love to the Lord produces love to his people; union and communion with him create and cement union and communion with those who are manifestly his. As, then, one or another testifies to a blessing received under the word, there is

a spreading of the blessing, a diffusion of the warmth, a running down of the precious ointment upon the head and beard, down to the skirts of the garments. Heart becomes more closely and firmly knitted to heart, and soul to soul; and as the joints and bands are thus more compacted together, the nourishment flows more fully into them, and through them becomes diffused over the body. In every church there will be stiff joints, crooked fingers, lame legs, tender feet, arthritic shoulders and limbs, which, if not actually paralyzed, are full of old chronic complaints; and these are almost out of the reach of the nourishment spoken of, are little themselves benefited by it, and therefore cannot spread it on. But, in describing the mode in which the body has nourishment ministered by joints and bands, we are no more bound to set it all aside, or doubt and deny it on account of these crooked joints, than a lecturer on anatomy, in describing the human frame, is obliged to explain diseased structures or crippled limbs in the natural body. We do what the Scripture does—describe the body of Christ as it should be, not what it often is; we draw after God's model, not after man's; and for this simple reason, that God's pattern is inspired and perfect, but man's a perverted and base imitation.

All who have known and felt spiritual blessings, and have witnessed their effect upon the healthy members of a church, will bear witness to the truth of our description; and any exceptional case of a crooked or half-paralyzed member which neither receives nor communicates nourishment no more nullifies or impairs the accuracy of our statement than a diseased or defective joint in the human body sets aside a true representation of the natural frame. How blessed it is when the ministry of the word is thus owned of God, and answers the end of its divine institution. There is now no room for strife and contention, petty jealousies, evil surmises, unjust suspicions, cold looks, averted eyes, cutting expressions, harsh speeches to the face or behind the back, dwelling on past grievances, raking up buried injuries, and rubbing up old sores. The spirit now is that of love and union, humility, meekness, gentleness, and quietness; strife and division are shunned and abhorred by the soul thus favored and blessed; it would do anything or suffer anything rather than pain the feelings, grieve the mind, or wound the conscience of the dear children of God. This is, if we may use the expression, God's idea of the ministry, and of the way in which it ministers nourishment to the members of the mystical body of Christ. He has set a pattern before our eyes, that we may know what his mind and will are. But this cuts both ways. As you read what we have thus feebly and imperfectly traced out, a secret sigh springs up in your bosom. "I wish that our minister fed our souls as you describe; I wish that our church was as flourishing, as fruitful, as united, as loving, as mutually ministering to each other's comfort and profit as you have drawn. But it is not so with us. We are rather starved than fed; and the members of the church, or at least some of them, instead of ministering to each other's comfort, seem more ready to tear each other to pieces." Your complaint may or may not be just as regards your particular instance. The ministry may feed others, if it does not feed you; and you may yourself be one of those unpleasant, quarrelsome, disaffected members whose words and actions rather foment than allay strife. But this is a point on which we cannot now enter. We shall, therefore, conclude our present section with the expression of our belief that nearly all who fear God and have a right judgment in these matters will admit that Zion is low, in a low place, and will join with us in the expression of our desire and prayer that the Lord would graciously revive his work, and in justly-deserved wrath would remember mercy.

13.05. Chapter 5

The CALL and QUALIFICATIONS for the Gospel Ministry by J. C. Philpot

It is evident from observation and experience that a very wide and marked difference exists between ministers of truth, not only in the possession of grace and gifts—but in the amount of the blessing of God which rests on their ministry; and it being no less evident from the word of truth that unless expressly called and sent by God and furnished by him with needful qualifications for the work, they cannot profit his people—it can hardly be considered a serious or unfair digression from our subject if we here turn aside to consider two important points which not only much concern but must ever deeply interest every true servant of the Lord. These two points are closely connected with each other, and are—

1. What is meant or implied by a call to the ministry.

2. What are the needful qualifications for its exercise to the glory of God and the good of his people.

1. What is meant or implied by a CALL to the ministry. This call need not be so signal and special as that of the Old Testament prophets; or, we may add, of the Apostles under the New Testament, who occupy, as such, a peculiar position.

It is a very difficult and delicate point clearly to lay down what is a sufficient call to the ministry, for many of God's own sent servants, who have been most fully received by the living family as his commissioned ambassadors, have been much tried to make their calling to the work plain and clear to their own satisfaction, while some, if not many, who have spoken great swelling words of their call, are not commended to the consciences of God's own people as sent by him to preach his word at all, and have either been obliged to give up their preaching through positive failure of hearers, or from the thorough wearing out of what little gift they ever had for the work. Thus, when the trembling, exercised servant of the Lord has waxed stronger and stronger, and been more and more established in the hearts and affections of the family of God, these pretenders have become more and more manifest as led by a false spirit, and if not willful deceivers, at least themselves willingly deceived. When we say this, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we believe every sent servant of God will have, sooner or later, more or less, a witness in his own conscience that he is called to the work, for without some such inward testimony, he must soon faint under its burden, and always speak in fetters and shackles; but it may be some time before he is clearly established in his own mind. And besides this, he must have also a witness in the hearts and consciences of God's living people, who are often better judges of his call to the work than he himself can be, especially when he is under much trial and temptation.

What is thought to be a call to the ministry is more common than many people suppose. In saying this, we purposely set aside all those schemes of human contrivance by which religious young men are manufactured into ministers by the aggregate, and can be sent out to order, to suit any pulpit and any people; and we take as little account of those numerous instances where pride and

ignorance, vanity and self-conceit, love of ease, and aversion to hard and daily work, combine, with some natural ability of mind and readiness of speech, to persuade an aspiring youth, that a pulpit is the proper place for him to adorn, and for it to adorn him. Such man-made ministers, and such self admiring beauties, have no place in the Church of Christ, and no place in the consciences of those who know and love truth in its power. But take the case of one really called by grace in his youth, blessed with the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and possessed of a fair share of ability of mind, knowledge of the Scriptures, and utterance in prayer, private or public. Many if not most of such, in the warmth of their first love, in their liberty of access and freedom of utterance before the throne, in their zeal for the truth in its purity and power, in their strong affection to the family of God, and in their devotedness of heart and willingness to suffer for the Lord's sake, feel such impulses and movements on their spirit as make them long to testify to all who will hear what God has done for their soul, and to give themselves up to his service. But time and circumstances abundantly show them that this was not a call to the ministry, for as their first love declined, these movements towards the ministry declined with it, and they clearly saw that it was not the will of God that they should stand up in his name. It is not, therefore, any or every secret impulse or movement of the mind, even when honest and sincere, or any inward persuasion of the heart or desire for the work which will prove to be a call to the ministry, for many such blossoms drop off and are never matured into fruit. There must be, therefore, other things working together with the feelings and desires that we have named, to constitute a divine and sufficient call.

1. First, then, generally there is a great BACKWARDNESS to the work. We see this in Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, and if not expressly mentioned in the case of the other prophets, yet the words so often in their mouths, "The burden of the Lord," show the solemn weight with which the ministry pressed on their spirit. Those whom God calls to the work, he usually so strips and empties, so pulls down, humbles, and abases, so shows them what the ministry is, and their own unfitness for it—that they shrink back from so arduous and important a work, and can scarcely be persuaded that they are called to it. We need hardly remark how different this is from the forward, pushing, bold, if not presuming spirit which so many manifest in their ambitious aim almost to force their way into the pulpit.

2. Usually, too, there are strong and marked leadings in PROVIDENCE. A train of circumstances has been long at work, which, however obscure at the time, becomes cleared up when the moment arrives for unfolding the secret purposes of God. Hindrances of various kinds, such as business engagements, occupation or employment in life, fixed habitation where there was no door open for the work, opposition of wife or relations, repeated disappointments when the prospect seemed a little clearer, inability to move forward until the pillar and the cloud moved—these and similar hindrances are gradually or suddenly removed, and what was yesterday a mountain—becomes today a plain. All the difficulties are taken out of the way in so marked a manner, and the hand of the Lord so clearly seen, that what once seemed almost impossible is now accomplished in a moment.

3. Usually, too, it entails not only suffering, but SACRIFICE. The laborer is worthy of his hire, and those who sow spiritual things may lawfully reap material wages; but to go into the ministry for a piece of bread, to attain a respectable position in life, to feed a secret thirst for popularity and applause, to occupy a somewhat higher place in the church than a private Christian—to exchange

a wearisome, irksome employment for comparative idleness and ease, to have the pleasure of hearing himself talk, to shine as a light, and be a teacher and a preacher instead of being taught and preached to—all such base, unworthy motives stamp a man at once as a hireling. God may, after a season of suffering and sacrifice, honor his servants by giving them such a warm place in the hearts of his people, and such a high standing in the Church of Christ as shall elevate them above their original position.

Bunyan was raised from the tinker's barrow, and Huntington from the coal-barge, to an honored place in the Church of God; but we know through what sufferings, privations, and sacrifices these men of God passed in the first exercise of their ministry, and that though this honor followed, it was not their aim nor object in the first instance. Many, if not most of God's sent servants have had to come down before they went up, and to sacrifice good situations and employments, which, if not lucrative, were either likely to become so, or at any rate exceeded in value anything which they could expect from the ministry, especially in our connection, where the people are usually so poor, and the ministers so lowly paid.

4. Generally, too, where there is a call to the ministry, there will be some distinctive IMPRESSION fastened unexpectedly on the mind concerning it; or some secret, inward persuasion that it is the will of God he should stand up in his name; or some promise applied to the heart strongly looking that way; or some remarkable season experienced in prayer, when access was given to spread all his desires before the Lord, and there sprang up a humble petition to be made use of for his glory, which seemed to enter the ears of the Lord Almighty; or some intimation in hearing the word preached, or reading it in private, from the power which attended it, that a door would be opened to speak in the Lord's name; or some intense longing for the good of souls and earnest desire to be made useful to the Church of God, which seemed as if it would not fall to the ground unfulfilled.

These, and other similar impressions and intimations, are like the leaven in the meal which sets the whole mass to heave, ferment, and work. So through these peculiar impressions there will work almost day and night in the mind of one who has experienced them—exercises, desires, longings, cries, breathings, and petitions to the Lord; and mingled with them, there will be many fears of being deceived by false impressions, being deluded by Satan as an angel of light, or being impelled to so great and arduous a work by pride, ambition, lust of praise, and distinction, a name among men, or other equally base and carnal motives. But as these fears work, and the cry comes forth, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me," the soul is thus made increasingly honest and sincere, and willing to go or stay, speak or be silent, take up the burden of the Lord or leave it untouched, draw the sword in the vanguard or still tarry among the stuff in the rear.

It may be some years, perhaps, before the way is made sufficiently plain—years of anxious waiting and watching, years of delayed hope until the heart is made sick, years of disappointment and vexation, but all working to a determined end, and gradually preparing the man to become an able minister of the New Testament, and not enter the pulpit as a raw recruit, but as one who can endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered onto the saints. The Church, alas! is overrun with youths and novices who attempt to teach when they need to be taught; and if ever they learn anything or are ever of any use, learn their business as an ill-taught medical student learns at last a little of his profession—by

experimenting on men’s souls as he on their bodies, and making a hundred mistakes for one right or successful treatment.

5. There will also generally be, where the Lord has called a man to the work, an impression on the minds of the discerning part of God’s people—we say "discerning," for we take no account of the undiscerning and inexperienced who so abound in most churches—that he will one day stand up in his name. This arises sometimes from hearing his experience when he joins the church, sometimes from his peculiar gift in prayer, or his knowledge of and light upon the Scriptures, or his spirituality of mind in conversation, or his firmness in the truth, or his warmth and zeal in defending the cause of God, or his circumspect walk, his separation from the world and general devotedness of life; and all joined with that measure of mental ability which seems indispensable for a man who has to preach the word of God, to instruct the ignorant, edify the Church of Christ, and convince the gainsayer.

Perhaps none of the things which we have mentioned would be sufficient of itself, to be a call to the ministry—but the concurrence of some or many of them, like the flowing of many little rivulets to form one brook, make, by their combination, the purpose of God more plain and clear. Not that all who are truly called to the work can trace out with equal distinctness the marks and proofs of their call, but they can usually record some of those landmarks which have directed their path, and by which they have been led and encouraged to believe that it was by the hand of the Lord. But we fully believe that, besides these peculiar leadings, every true servant of God will have two witnesses to his call, without which he can never arrive at any real satisfaction that the Lord has himself appointed him to the work. These two witnesses are–

1. The witness in his own bosom.

2. The witness in the consciences of the people of God—with the blessing of God resting upon his ministry.

1. The witness in his own bosom. We lay this down, then, as necessary to a man’s being fully persuaded that God has called him to the work, that he will have, at times, the witness to it in his own bosom. The Lord will, at times, so enlarge his heart, and so open his mouth; he will find, at favored seasons, such a pouring in of gracious thoughts and feelings, and such a door of utterance to pour them out in words so suitable and so expressive, as if they were not his own, but were given him at the moment; such a power resting on his spirit to testify of what he has tasted, felt, and handled of the word of life; such a boldness to take forth the precious from the vile, that he may be as God’s mouth; such holy warmth in declaring all the counsel of God, and yet no strange fire in his censer, but coals from the brazen altar; such a firm, solemn, believing realization of the sacred truths which he is preaching, and such a sacred determination that, come what will, please or offend whom he may, he would sooner part with his life than part with the truth of God, as bring with them a sweet satisfaction that the Lord has called him to the work of the ministry. As these seasons are repeated, with greater or less power, and are contrasted by him with those, perhaps, more frequent times of darkness, when he is so shut up in his soul and the door of utterance so closed that he has scarcely a gracious thought, heavenly feeling, or suitable word—he gathers up an inward testimony that the Lord has, notwithstanding all his weakness and unworthiness, doubts and fears, called him to the work; and the very difference between himself and himself—between himself in the stocks and himself on the tower—himself shut up and himself able to come

forth—himself hacking and stammering and himself enlarged with the sweetest freedom of speech—himself full of bondage and misery and himself full of light, life, liberty, and love—this very contrast, which he so plainly feels, shows him only more clearly and distinctly when the Lord is with him and when he is not. And thus, by these very changes in his soul, these goings and comings of the Lord's presence and power on his spirit, he becomes satisfied that he is not warring at his own charges, but has been chosen to be a soldier to fight the Lord's battles. The way also in which texts are brought to his mind, opened up to his understanding, or applied to his heart; the light cast upon a passage when speaking from it, the suitable Scriptures which are brought to his memory to confirm his views upon it, and the sweet enjoyment which he has himself in or after the time of speaking from it; the secret prayer and meditation on the word which he has before he goes into the pulpit, and the holy savor which often rests on his spirit after the labors of the day; the sense which he has of the blessedness of the work, and his willingness to spend and be spent, labor and suffer, live and die in the Lord's service—these and similar experiences confirm him in the persuasion that the Lord has called him to the work, and is with him in it.

He is brought to see and feel that his very sermons are not his own, and that he cannot preach them again with that life, power, and utterance which were given him with his text; that though he may take the same passage, he cannot handle it in the same way again; that he cannot open it, or enlarge upon it, or enforce it as before; and that he cannot recover even the light which then shone through it, still less the savor which rested on his spirit in setting it forth. But we must not further enlarge on this point, though we could say much on both sides of the question, from our own long and diversified experience of it.

2. But, he must also have the witness in the hearts and consciences of the family of God. Without this testimony from others, his own will be of little avail, for "not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends." "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." (2 Corinthians 13:1.) The testimony in his own bosom is the one witness; the testimony in the consciences of others is the other; and the third, we may add, is the blessing of God resting upon his ministry.

This, therefore, we may next bring forward, as stamping a broad seal on his call to the work. Where a man is really called by God to the work of the ministry, his blessing will rest, more or less, manifestly upon the word; power will attend it to the heart of sinner and saint, and the Lord will not allow it to fall to the ground as the mere word of man. There will be, at various times, marked instances of some being called out of darkness into light, of others delivered from bondage into the liberty of the gospel, of others being brought out of temptation and soul distress into a wealthy place—of others specially favored when much cast down with trials and afflictions—and of others being encouraged and strengthened to persevere courageously in their conflict with unbelief, sin, and Satan.

Besides these special testimonies there will be also a general power and savor attending his word, which will gather and keep together a living people, few, perhaps, in number, but much united to him and his ministry, who highly esteem him in love and cleave to him for his work's sake. We do not speak here of partisans and flatterers—really a man's worst and most dangerous enemies, who cry him up as much as they cry all others down; nor of those weak and silly old women, of all ages and both sexes, who have no experience, judgment, or discernment in the things of God, and

can receive almost everything in the shape of a sermon, and everybody in the shape of a minister; nor of those young people, and especially the female part of them, who admire the charms of the man, almost as much as they admire the minister. But we mean the solid, well-taught, sober-minded, tried, experienced children of God, who know what they hear, and whom they hear, and can tell the difference between chaff and wheat—letter and spirit—word and power—the noxious stench of the creature and the sweet savor of Christ. We will not, indeed, say that every called servant of God will at first, perhaps, obtain this clear witness in the consciences of the Lord's people, or to the extent which we have traced out, for, knowing what man is, and how easy the best may be deceived, they are slow to receive any minister. But, sooner or later, the Lord will establish his testimony to the call of his servant by commending it to feeling hearts, discerning spirits, and living consciences.

2. And now for a few words on the QUALIFICATIONS for the work of the ministry. All must admit that if God calls a man to the work, he will fit him for it; and if he has no such qualifications, there is no reason to believe that God has sent him. But what do we understand by qualifications for the ministry of the word? We may cast them under two simple heads—

1. Grace.

2. Gifts.

1. And first, GRACE. Nothing is more evident than that a man without the grace of God in his heart has neither part nor lot in this matter. A man dead in sin, or dead in a profession, to stand up in the name of the living God to preach to a living people—what daring presumption, what a dreadful contradiction! And yet what troops of men there are, on every side and of every sect, party, and denomination, utterly destitute of the life of God, who call themselves ministers of Christ, and would resent, with the bitterest enmity, the slightest imputation or even suspicion that they are hypocrites or impostors! But all these, whoever they be, Churchmen or Dissenters, or whatever they be, high or low, we must at once set aside as only awful intruders into a work to which they were never called, and for which they were never qualified. But a man may have the grace of God in his soul—and yet have but little divine, spiritual knowledge of the truth—and little experience of its power. Now no one, who knows what the work of the ministry is, can say that such a 'beginner' is qualified to be a minister of the gospel, and go in and out before the exercised family of God, as a leader and a teacher. We cannot, indeed, say what use God might make of him to beginners, like himself; but one would think that he had better tarry at Jericho until his beard is grown, than go up to Jerusalem with only a little fluff on his chin. "A novice" ("one newly comes to the faith," margin) is expressly excluded from the work of the ministry. As "newly come to the faith," it is assumed that he has faith; but he is not old enough yet in the way to escape being lifted up with pride, or falling into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6.) And yet what beardless boys are now thrusting themselves everywhere into the ministry, and presume to teach mature grey-haired saints the way of salvation, who knew the Lord for themselves when these youths were in their newborn clothes; and, what seems worse, are hammered into shape and squared to pattern by a few lectures in Greek and grammar, or run into a mold by a course of what is termed theology, until they are stiffened into pride, and hardened in self-conceit, under what is called a preparation for the ministry. Alas! for any people when "children are their princes, and babes rule over them!" (Isaiah 3:4.)

What is needed as a gracious qualification for the ministry is, an experience of the things of God—a spiritual, saving knowledge of law and gospel, sin and salvation, self and Christ, affliction and consolation, bondage and liberty, temptation and deliverance, misery and mercy, the awful depths of the fall, the wondrous height of the recovery. How can a man preach Christ who knows nothing experimentally of his Person, work, blood, righteousness, death, and resurrection? of his beauty, blessedness, suitability, grace, and glory? of his love, and some measure of its breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and of the riches of his free, sovereign, and superabounding grace? And how can he enter into and experimentally describe the trials, afflictions, temptations, sufferings, and sorrows of the poor afflicted family of God, who is himself at ease in Zion, and knows only what he knows in mere theory, notion, and opinion? A minister attempting to preach without some good experience of the things of God, would be like a pilot taking charge of a ship coming up the Channel, who does not know one headland, lighthouse, buoy, or shoal from another; or like an engine-driver who should presume to drive an express train without knowing what handle to lift of his engine, or how to read aright the instruments. But enough of this. Let us pass on to consider what qualifications are needful in the way of gifts.

2. We consider, then, that wherever God calls a man to the work of the ministry, he will qualify him for it by furnishing him with a suitable and sufficient GIFT. We do not mean mere learning, or education, or great mental ability—though when these are sanctified to the service of the sanctuary they have their place in the work, and are not to be rejected or despised. But what we want is a door of utterance, such as Paul prayed for. (Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 4:3.) By this is meant not a mere flow of words, which is often but empty chatter, or that readiness and volubility of tongue which weary alike ear and heart—but that sober, solid, grave, sound speech which cannot be condemned, and by which "he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9; Titus 2:7-8.) A minister should be "apt to teach," (1 Timothy 3:2,) and, therefore, must have some teaching ability in him. But this requires at least such a clearness of thought and speech as shall preserve him and his hearers from being lost in a fog of confusion. The plainest, simplest language is the best; and that a man may have this in the highest degree and yet possess neither education nor learning, we have for witnesses Bunyan and Huntington—those masters of the English tongue in all its native simplicity, beauty, and strength. But he must also be well established in the truth, and he able to open it up; and, when occasion demands, defend it. Error abounds on every side; and though we do not advocate a controversial spirit in or out of the pulpit, yet a minister should be able to defend truth and expose error. And he should be able to do this in a way simple and yet forcible, so as not to weaken the force of truth, or even, as some do, make it contemptible by handling it in so confused and bungling a manner as to grieve its friends and gladden its foes. It is surprising what force and power there sometimes are in a few simple words, or even in the apt quotation of a text with but little comment upon it. What light will often shine to a hearer through it on the truth, and how before it error will fall as Dagon before the ark.

He should also have a good knowledge of the word, not only as dwelling in his memory—but in his heart and conscience, and be able to open it consistently and experimentally, that he may feed the souls of God’s people with milk and honey, meat and marrow, and give them to drink of the pure wine of the grape.

There should be also some order and variety in his ministry, which is best obtained by keeping close to his text, and seeking to open it through its breadth and length, which will much preserve him from unconnected rambling or dropping into the same round of experience, which, however good or sound in itself, becomes after a time wearisome from its very sameness and repetition.

But, above all things, there should be that flow of divine life into his soul, and that continual renewing and reviving of the power and presence of God in his heart which alone can give life to his gift, and make the wellspring of wisdom in him to be a flowing brook, watering, so to speak, both his soul and his ministry from that river of God which is full of water, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Without this water in him springing up into everlasting life, his gift would soon wither and decay. In his ministry there would be nothing new, nothing fresh, nothing sweet, savory, or acceptable to the family of God.

He may thump his Bible or the pulpit, and try by noise and bluster to make way for his word to the hearts of the people. But he can only give the head-ache, not the heart-ache—stun, weary, and confuse; but his doctrine will not drop as the rain, nor his speech distill as the dew, unless the precious things of heaven, and the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the bush comes as a blessing upon his soul. (Deuteronomy 32:2; Deuteronomy 33:13; Deuteronomy 33:16.) A small gift fed with the life and power of God will not only live and last when a great gift unfed with heavenly oil will wither and decay—but will thrive and grow by exercise and use, by prayer, reading, and meditation—until it shines brighter and brighter, and gives a wider and increasing light. But our limits warn us to stay our pen. The due qualifications for the ministry is a subject which has much and long exercised our thoughts, and on which we have formed in our own mind some definite conclusions; but we would need some large space to lay them before our readers, even if we should ever venture upon a field so difficult and so delicate. Let, then, these few feeble hints for the present suffice; and sorry indeed would we be if anything which we have dropped on the subject should discourage the feeblest of the sent servants of God, or add the least weight to that "burden of the Lord," which, as his ministers, it is their highest privilege, though often their heaviest trial, to bear for is name’s sake.

13.06. Chapter 6

The promised BLESSINGS which accompany of the gospel ministry

These, as we have before observed, are much included in the ends for which the ministry was instituted, and to the examination of which we have already devoted so large a space. Still, as they are so rich individually, and so abundant collectively, we shall so far give a little further consideration to them as may enable us to examine, in the light of Scripture and experience, a few of the most signal and prominent. But before we do this, we may remark that three points call for our special attention as connected with this part of our subject.

1. The Foundation on which all the promised blessings rest.

2. The Fountain out of which they all flow.

3. The Nature of the blessings themselves, as brought with a divine power into the heart.

1. The FOUNDATION on which all the promised blessings rest. The Foundation of the blessings communicated by the ministry of the gospel, as well, indeed, as of every other, is the good pleasure of God, who works all things after the counsel of his own will, that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace. (Ephesians 1:6; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 1:11.) This is an immutable and immovable foundation; and it would be well for us who are engaged in the ministry not only to be well instructed and fully established in the persuasion of the firmness of this basis, but from time to time to refresh our souls and gather up new strength for the work by fixing our eyes and hearts more frequently and believingly on its stability and breadth. When we can see and feel that our gospel, not only in its contents, tenor, and spirit is in harmony with the word of truth, but that in preaching it we are doing the will of God from the heart, it is surprising what a source of strength is thence opened to carry us on amid all our trials and discouragements from without and within. Paul could say of himself and his brethren in the ministry, "We are laborers together with God." How encouraging it is to believe that God himself is with us in the work; and, while to realize this solemn truth may well make us tremble at our own deficiencies, yet, at the same time, what singleness of eye, and what strength of heart it is calculated to communicate in giving us some inward persuasion that God and we are working together by the same means and to the same end. And yet though so highly honored as to be laborers together with God, yet is the work wholly his. It was this conviction which made the Apostle add, "You are God’s husbandry; you are God’s building." (1 Corinthians 3:9.) The labors, cares, and trials of the ministry are so great that the true servants of God need all the strength, help, and encouragement which they can obtain; and what can afford them more than to believe that they are doing the will of God, and thus instrumentally laboring with him in preaching his word? This will deliver them from many fears, and, above all, from the fear of man, which brings a snare. This will afford a quiet resting place for their weary souls, and often weary bodies, when on lying down at night they have the testimony of a good conscience that, according to the ability which God has given them, they have preached his word in faithfulness and affection. There is no truth more certain or more practical, both in individual and

ministerial experience, than that to fall back upon ourselves is to fall back on weakness, and to fall back upon the Lord is to fall back on strength. The work of the ministry demands also much patience and quiet endurance. As laborers, we are to be like "the husbandman who waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain." (James 5:7.) How much of the fruit of our labors is hidden from us—wisely hidden, lest we should be puffed up with pride. How continual the labor, how vexing the opposition, how scanty the crop, how slow its growth. What need, then, we have of patience, that is, endurance, as the word literally means, that after we have done the will of God we may receive the promise.

2. The FOUNTAIN on which all the promised blessings rest. Nor is the Fountain less full than the Foundation is sure. What a treasury of grace there is in the Lord Jesus Christ! What an ample supply for all our need. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is that "God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 1:3.) Every blessing, therefore, which the gospel contains, holds forth, and communicates we are already blessed with in him. All are lodged in his glorious Person, as he sits enthroned on high at the right hand of the Father. When, therefore, he sends any blessings down through the gospel, it is but the communication of them out of his all-glorious, his ever-flowing, overflowing fullness. How full, then, the Fountain, and how precious should be the gospel, which is the appointed means of communicating these blessings to the poor and needy family of God.

3. The NATURE of the blessings themselves. Must these not be equal to so firm a Foundation and so overflowing a Fountain?

1. The first all will agree in pronouncing to be effectual calling. How clearly and how gloriously was this manifested on that memorable day when the Holy Spirit at the feast of Pentecost called three thousand under one sermon! How active, living, and powerful was the word of God that day, when sharper than any two-edged sword, it pierced so many hearts and consciences as with one simultaneous stroke. It was as if the gracious Lord would not only manifest his risen power by sending down such a shower of blessings, but would thereby give a first-fruits as a sample of the harvest which was to be reaped by his laboring servants. Peter, therefore, said, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39.)

Though the Lord, therefore, does not confine himself to means, and can and does call some by his grace without the preached gospel, by applying his word privately to their heart, yet both Scripture and experience agree in testifying that the public ministry of the gospel is the more usual way. Thus the commission given to Paul was—"But rise, and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:16-18.) How he executed that commission, and the blessing with which the Lord attended it, we well know from the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles which he addressed to the churches. When the Lord sent forth his disciples just before his ascension to teach or make disciples among all nations, (margin,) baptizing them when thus made in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

he most graciously added, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Here, then, is at once our commission to go forth, and the blessing attached to it. We are to go forth, as Paul did, "testifying repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." And if we go forth in his Spirit, determined not to know anything among men, but Jesus Christ and him crucified, we shall find, each according to the blessing given to his labors, that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom, knows not God, yet it pleases him, by the foolishness of our preaching, (as men esteem it,) to save them that believe.

2. The next blessing admits of as little doubt or controversy as the first. It is the deliverance proclaimed by the gospel, and revealed and sealed by it on the hearts of the family of God.

What was the commission of the Lord himself when, as the anointed prophet of God, he preached the gospel? "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the Lord has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for his own glory." (Isaiah 61:1-3.) The "good news," or the gospel, which he preached were to the poor—those whose hearts were meekened and softened, and thus made poor in spirit. (Matthew 5:3; Luke 4:18.) The brokenhearted, the captives, the bound, the mourners in Zion, sitting in ashes and bowed down with the spirit of heaviness—these were the characters to whom the Lord himself proclaimed liberty, and to whom he himself, through his own word, as made spirit and life to their souls, gave beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. This, then, is our message, and this the blessing promised to attend it. Our word is not only to be a quickening, calling, regenerating, piercing, wounding word, whereby the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live; but a delivering, healing, comforting word to those of the family of God whose hearts are broken by the law, bruised by the guilt and weight of sin, shut up in heaviness and bondage through unbelief, doubt, and fear, harassed by temptations, plagued by Satan and the dreadful evils of a heart laid bare by the two-edged sword of the word, and naked and bleeding before a just, righteous, and holy God.

These are the poor to whom the gospel is preached, the flock of slaughter that wait upon the prophets, and know that it is the word of the Lord when it drops from their mouth with a divine liberating power into their hearts. (Luke 6:22; Zechariah 11:7-11.) This is the sweetest part of the ministry of the gospel, and one of the surest testimonies of a minister’s being sent of God. (We remember hearing our dear friend the late Mr. Warburton say in conversation that he believed men might be awakened under ministers of the letter, but that none were blessed and delivered except under God’s own sent servants.) To be the honored instrument of bringing pardon and peace to a poor burdened, distressed soul, to pour oil and wine into a bleeding conscience, to dispel the doubts and fears which gather so thickly over a heart troubled by sin, and thus be a means of setting at happy liberty some dear child of God—what a sweet consolation and blessed, encouragement is this to a servant of Christ, and what a confirmation to him that the Lord is with him in the work! What union, too, what love and affection it creates in the hearer thus favored and blessed to the servant of God through whom so great and often unexpected a blessing has come; and with what firmness he can testify that it was the word of the Lord, for nothing short of that could have loosed his bonds, as well as that he through whom it came is a man of God, and that

the word of the Lord in his mouth is truth. (1 Kings 17:24.)

3. And now what shall we say is a third blessing? What but the gracious renewals and revivals of the Lord's presence and power which KEEPS ALIVE his work upon the soul? There are few of the Lord's living family who have not to learn feelingly and experimentally what havoc sin has wrought in them, and what a thorough wreck and ruin they are through the Adam fall and their own personal transgressions. They thus learn that as no man can give spiritual life, so no man can keep alive his own soul. When, then, they are not favored with the Lord's presence and power, they sink into carnality and death. The fear of the Lord still abides in their soul, and is still a fountain of life that they do not depart from him; but the more active graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, and love, seem dormant or torpid, and, being cold and feeble in their operations, take little out and bring little in. From this coldness and deadness of spirit, as sensibly and painfully experienced by them, spring bondage, doubt, fear, misgivings, and exercises, as to the reality of the work of grace in their hearts.

"If I am the Lord's, if he has communicated divine life to my soul, if he has manifested himself to me and blessed me—why am I thus?" asks the tried child of God. Now, if help be delayed long, he begins to fret and fume, complain and rebel—especially if he see others favored and himself passed by. But this spirit of rebellion causes the Lord still more to hide his face, and this makes the load heavier, and the case seemingly more dark and desperate. Having lost his best Friend in the sensible light of his countenance and the power of his presence, sin begins to work with renewed strength; Satan, always on the watch to tempt or to accuse, allure or terrify, comes in with his baits or his charges, and under one or the other, the poor wandering sheep often falls.

Now how suitable for a case like this is an experimental ministry—the ministry of a man well taught and exercised in his own soul, who can trace out the path from—himself having walked in it; and how often the Lord is pleased to bless to those who thus sit in darkness and the shadow of death, his precious gospel in the mouth of a servant of his, who can thus speak a word in season to him that is weary. Burdened souls come up to the house of prayer, scarcely able to look up under the weight of their trials and temptations, scarcely daring to hope there can be anything for them, fearing rather that all they shall hear shall be to their condemnation.

Now, what can the general ministry of the day do for such poor tried tempted souls, of whom there are many among the living family of God? Can a free-will ministry do anything for them—or a dry doctrinal one—or a light, trifling, jesting one—or a mere superficial one, just skimming over the surface of truth in the letter, but never diving into the experience of its power? All such ministries weary and disgust them, and are felt to be lighter than vanity. But let a gracious, experienced man of God speak out of a feeling, believing, exercised heart, what life and power often attend his word. And how sometimes the Lord will be pleased to speak a word to their hearts, through his servant, which breaks their bonds asunder, and brings them up out of all their fears, once more to bless and praise his holy name.

What a blessing to the living family of God is a gracious, faithful, and experimental ministry, and yet how scarce! How few seem able to take up the stumbling-blocks that lie in the way, to trace out the work of grace in the soul, especially in its wilderness and more advanced stages, and to bring forward strong meat for men, as well as milk for babes. How few seem to feel for and sympathize with that portion of the family of God who know the plague of the heart, the trials and temptations

of the wilderness, the thorough helplessness and inability of the creature; and that none but the Lord himself, in the manifestations of his grace, can do them any good. "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs," was the Lord's injunction to Peter; and thus he bids his servants now feed all the flock, both the tender lambs—and the stronger and sturdier sheep.

4. As the servant of Christ is a minister of the word, he will, as the Lord gives him ability, bring out of the word all that is needful for the GUIDANCE of a flock committed to his charge. This, therefore, we may mention as a fourth blessing of the ministry of the gospel. A shepherd has to go before, not behind his flock, to lead and guide them; not to be led and guided by them. But how can he do this unless he himself be taught and led by the Spirit and be well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven? The Holy Spirit makes him an overseer over the flock to feed, or, as the word literally means, to shepherd the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28.) To do this well and properly, sometimes instruction will be needed. There is not a case or state, character or condition for which there is not some provision of this kind in the word of truth. How often is instruction needed, not only in the literal, but especially in the spiritual and experimental meaning of the Scriptures; and as the servant of God is enabled to open up this spiritual and experimental meaning, it will often cast a sweet and blessed light on the path in which his children are walking. Sometimes this word of instruction will discover to them secret snares, in which they have become unwarily entangled—or lay bare a temptation, on the edge of which they now find they are walking. Sometimes it will clear up a knotty and intricate path in providence, or throw light on some Scripture that meets their case. Sometimes, it will show them how they should act in a season of perplexity; sometimes it will strengthen their will to do what is right, and give power to make sacrifices, renounce bosom idols, and confirm a weak and wavering resolution to walk in the path of which God and conscience approve.

Sometimes the ministry of the word will sharply cut and keenly reprove, and will so lay bare the secrets of the heart, that the poor child of God will feel scarcely able to look up before God and man. The word thus handled is, indeed, "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and lays it naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12-13.)It is a great mistake to think that the ministry of the gospel is only to give comfort. There are states of soul, as there are states of body, when cordials would be poison. "Comfort us, comfort us, whatever be our state and case;" cry some to their ministers. "However worldly, carnal, covetous, and careless we have been through the week; however up to our neck in business; and with nothing in our heart, mouth, or hands to distinguish us from all around us, we expect the minister to preach comfort to us on the Lord's day. This is what we pay him to do, and we expect him therefore to preach to us our full security in Christ, and to assure us that all will be well with our souls, whatever we may think, say, or do."

These we may call religious dram-drinkers, who look for their Sunday drink—their drop of comfort before they go out of the chapel, as regularly as the man who steps into a gin-palace for his morning glass. Keen cutting reproofs, sharp rebukes, stern denunciations of all ungodliness, and no quarter given to sin, carnality, and worldliness, in any shape or form—such men have no relish for. "It is legal, it is legal," they cry, "to insist so much on the precept, and to cut so continually at all disobedience and inconsistency. We want to have Christ gloriously exalted—and to hear of nothing but covenant engagements, fixed decrees, the certainty of salvation to the elect—and that come what will we are safe for eternity." But we will not dwell further on these points, or show how

such men would willingly make even what they call a glorious Christ—a minister of sin, and under great swelling words hide their shame. We will only say, better were it for a man to break stones on the road—than stand up in a pulpit to deceive souls and be unfaithful alike to God and man. The more solemn the office, the greater the responsibility; the higher the post, the deeper the fall. Enough, then, enough of this. Time and space both admonish us that we should hasten to our fifth and last point.

13.07. Chapter 7

The TRIALS, EXERCISES, COMFORTS and ENCOURAGEMENTS of the gospel ministry

A. The TRIALS and EXERCISES of the ministry claim the first place. These we may roughly classify under two leading heads—

1. Those which spring from himself.

2. Those which spring from others.

1. The trials and exercises which spring from HIMSELF. Had a minister nothing else to try him but his own heart, he would have trouble and exercise enough to last him all his days. But, like Issachar, he has to crouch between two burdens—the burden of self—and the burden of the Lord; his burden as a Christian—and his burden as a minister. It is with the last only that we have now to do. A deep sense of his own incompetency for the work, and his continual miscarriages under it, will always try a man who has any right sight and sense of what a minister of Christ should be. Poor, ignorant, proud, puffed-up men in the ministry may see and feel in themselves no such inefficiency or deficiency. A sound scheme of doctrine, a tolerable knowledge of the letter of the word, a natural fluency of speech, a bold unabashed face and manner, and the applause of light professors, carry many on as preachers who seem to have no spiritual sense or feeling of what the ministry really is!

Until a man is led to see and feel by divine teaching what it is to be a mouth for God, and to stand up before the people as—his ambassador—a steward of his mysteries—a trustee of his gospel—an interpreter of his counsel—a messenger of his deputing—a witness of his dealings both in providence and grace with himself and others—and a servant who must one day give an account of his ministry to his heavenly Master—he will trifle both with God and man, and be unfaithful—to his office—to himself—and to his hearers. His ignorance, his incompetency, his unfaithfulness will be hidden from him by a thick veil of pride and presumption; and while the living, discerning family of God see in him nothing but barrenness and death, he will see in himself but little to censure and much to admire. But let a man once have his eyes opened to see what the ministry really is; and what he himself is as a minister—his unfitness in every way, both naturally and spiritually, for so great a work—his incompetency—his infirmities—his shortcomings—his inability to do or say anything aright—his ignorance—his unbelief—his fainting heart, stammering tongue, and faltering lips—his deadness, coldness, and unfruitfulness—his deep-rooted sinfulness, defiling all he touches—and his utter unworthiness to take the Lord’s name into his polluted lips—all these feelings will, at times, so press upon him as to try him to the very core, and make him doubt and fear whether he has anything to do with such a solemn, sacred, godly work as to preach the gospel of the Son of God.

It is true that he knows what he preaches, for he has himself tasted, felt, and handled the word of life which he administers; he is quite certain about the truths which he sets before the people, whether doctrine, experience, or precept; he labors to be faithful, and seeks neither money nor

applause; and he has a single eye to the glory of God and the good of his people. And yet there is not one point in which he does not feel to come short; and this deeply tries his mind. Sometimes he is tried about his text; and if, after much prayer and labor of soul, he gets one, then he is tried about his sermon. He is tried before preaching, in preaching, and after preaching; tried on Saturday night about what he has to say, and tried on Sunday night for what he has said. If a little helped, though he would bless God for it, he is still tried whether his liberty might not have been much in the flesh. If not sensibly helped, then he is tried whether he was ever called to the ministry at all. Thus he is never satisfied with himself, or if he begins to feel a little self-satisfaction, he knows at once that this is about the worst of his sins—for it is pride which is now puffing him up in one of its worst forms. But he has TEMPTATIONS as well as trials. Thus sometimes he is tempted to unbelief, sometimes to infidelity, sometimes to question the whole work on his soul, and to fear whether he is not a dreadful hypocrite, who has deceived himself, and well-near everybody else. Sometimes he is tempted to think that he never should have put his hand to the plough, and to wish he were anything or anybody but a minister. The people can come, he thinks, and sit and hear, and no one need know what they fear or what they feel. But he, poor he, must stand up, whatever be his feelings; whatever darkness, bondage, or distress he may be laboring under, however shut up in heart or tongue—he must stammer out something. The people are come together, some perhaps from many miles, looking to him for a word of consolation and encouragement; and he is as empty as an turned-over pitcher, as confused as chaos, and as dark as midnight. The word of God is a sealed book, the heavens as brass, the text slipped away, and scarcely one idea left for the sermon. It is true that at such times the Lord most usually makes bare his arm, and helps his poor trembling servant far beyond his hope or anticipation; and some of these seasons have been the very best both for the minister and the people. Light and life break in upon his soul; the heavens are parted asunder, fervent prayer goes up, answers of mercy come down; sweet liberty is felt in preaching the word of truth—and O how he can now exalt the free grace of God, and set forth the Person and work, blood and righteousness, dying love, and risen power of his dear Son. This must serve as a sample of ministerial trials and exercises which spring from SELF, for we might fill pages with them!

2. The trials and exercises which spring from OTHERS. We pass by his trials from the world dead in sin—and the world dead in a profession. A real sent servant of God will keep himself separate from both; and as long as he does this, neither of them will much trouble him. A disturbance in the street may be a passing annoyance, but what is it to a disturbance in the house—a disturbance in the family, among the children or the servants? Of all quarrels, the most trying are family quarrels. So the deepest trials of a minister, which spring from others, are church trials, family disturbances, family differences, family quarrels and contentions. Our, dear friend, the late Mr. Gadsby, used to say, that next to one's own spiritual troubles, the greatest of all troubles were church troubles. And indeed the dear old man found it so, for, in his own language, his church troubles in his latter days broke his heart. The perverse, contentious, unyielding spirit of some, whom he cannot but receive, with all their faults and failings, as the children of God, deeply tries many a servant of the Lord. He is for peace—but they are for war. He hates and abhors strife and contention—but they seem full of it, and never more in their element than when, like a sea-bird, in a storm. What painful spectacles often are church meetings, when a spirit of strife has entered into a church, and well-near rent it asunder. Word brings on word, and argument leads on to argument; temper rises, angry expressions drop, and while the meek and quiet sit and mourn in silence, the quarrelsome

and contentious battle with one another, almost as if the fear of God were lost out of their heart. But where a minister of God is spared such heavy trials as these, he will have exercises from other causes, almost as painful. Inconsistencies will break out in the church, of greater or less magnitude, which will deeply grieve his spirit. Reproach will be thereby cast on the cause of God and Truth, and be reflected, perhaps, even on his ministry, as if it encouraged sin. He will see sometimes much death creeping over those who once seemed lively in the things of God; others much buried in the world, or overtaken with a spirit of covetousness, who once seemed spiritually-minded, and their whole heart fixed on heavenly things. His best hearers and dearest friends, pillars of the Church and ornaments of the congregation, he will see taken away by the hand of death, and few or none raised up to take their place. He may have to see the cause sink very low, both as regards spiritual and temporal prosperity; little work going on, either in calling souls or delivering them, and much sloth, apathy, coldness, and indifference settling as a dark and increasing cloud on the church and congregation. Now if his soul be, as we assume it is, kept alive and lively in the things of God, all these things will deeply try his mind, and exercise both his faith and patience. And yet by these very trials and exercises his soul is made increasingly lively, for "by these things men live, and in all those things is the life of his spirit."

B. But he has his COMFORTS and ENCOURAGEMENTS. Indeed what could he do, and how could he get on, without them? To have nothing but trial and exercise, to feel nothing but bondage and misery in the work, would soon break him down altogether. The Lord, therefore, graciously, from time to time, comforts and encourages his soul, so that as his afflictions abound, so his consolation also abounds by Christ. When he is giving strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts, he gets a good drop himself of the wine of the kingdom, which he is bringing out for others; and as he drinks this, he forgets his poverty, and remembers his misery no more. He gives what he believes, and believes what he gives; faith is mixed with the word as it issues out of his heart and lips; and he thus not only ministers food as a servant, but sits down as a guest at the table. And as this inward feast of soul gives life to his word and power to his preaching, he comforts those who are in any trouble by the comfort with which he himself is comforted of God. One such good season makes up for many bad ones; and though he knows he may have to fast many days after his feast, yet the remembrance of it, and the savor which it leaves on his spirit, enables him to go in the strength of that food many days.

What a true servant of God wants for himself is, not what some men think and call liberty, that is, a mere liberty of tongue, which is, after all, in many cases, a mere carnal, natural fluency of speech. True liberty is an inward liberty of soul, a sweet and holy freedom of spirit before God, not a mere gift of the gab, (excuse the expression,) or a full and rapid flow of words, or even an increasing stream of texts and quotations. The two things are quite distinct. A man of God may have liberty of tongue, and be bound in spirit; and he may have liberty of spirit, and be bound in tongue. It is when liberty of spirit and liberty of tongue go together that he is most happy and most at home, most in his element, and most in the enjoyment of his work. But he has also comforts and encouragements from OTHERS as well as himself, for though a good man is to be "satisfied from himself," (Proverbs 14:14,) yet it is sweetly encouraging to him to see that the Lord is with him in the work. To go on preaching year after year, and see little or no fruit attending his ministry, how trying this must be to a minister whose heart is in his work, and who is continually longing for a blessing to rest on his testimony. But this is not usually the case with those whom the Lord himself

has called to the ministry. He who has thus called him will, from time to time, give him proof by signs following that a divine blessing rests on his ministry. One after another will be raised up as witnesses to the power of the word; and every such witness will confirm him more and more in the persuasion that the Lord has called him to the work and owns and blesses him in it. But it is time to draw our meditations to a close. The subject is so vast in itself, it has so grown under our hands, that, with all our attempts to examine it in the light of Scripture and experience, we have come short of setting it before our readers as clearly and as fully as we would desire. Still, let them receive what we have written in the same spirit as we trust we have brought it forth; and we would affectionately ask our spiritual readers generally, and our brethren in the ministry particularly, to take our meditations on the ministry as a whole, and not judge them by separate parts or isolated expressions. As we take a man's Christian character as a whole, as we take a servant of God's ministry as a whole, so deal with our treatment of this important subject. Take into consideration our general drift and meaning, and the spirit in which we have written. We have endeavored to be faithful and discriminating, yet, we trust, have not been harsh, unkind, or overbearing. We have not spared, indeed, the general ministry of the day, but we have desired to show in word what we feel in spirit to every real sent servant of God—esteem, tenderness, and affection. The Lord ever keep and bless them; and in this day, when on every side the enemy seems coming in like a flood, may the Spirit of the Lord, by their instrumentality, lift up a standard against him.

14.00. The Precepts of the Word of God

The Precepts of the Word of God by J. C. Philpot

Introduction

Encouraged by the kind way in which our "Meditations on Various Important Points of our Most Holy Faith" have been thus far received by many of our gracious readers, we feel a willing mind to continue following onward in the same track; and as hitherto we have found, we hope, seasonable help from the only Source of all light and life, so would we now at the opening of another year, and the commencement of a fresh subject, lift up our soul in unison, we trust, with theirs, that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened," that as the Lord the Spirit may be pleased to bring before our mind and lay upon our heart any portion of his precious word which may seem to us to be of vital importance, or of an edifying nature, we may unfold it with that "demonstration of the spirit and of power" which shall, as "seasoned with salt," not only minister grace unto our readers, (Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29,) but shall, "by manifestation of the truth, commend itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God." (Ephesians 1:17-18; 1 Corinthians 2:4 : 2 Corinthians 4:2.)

It is indeed a high privilege conferred upon us, a favor from on high for which we cannot feel sufficiently thankful, that the Lord should condescend to make any use of so weak and worthless an instrument to communicate any measure of instruction, comfort, or encouragement to any of those whom he has eternally loved, and whom he is leading through many a painful path of trial and affliction to a knowledge of his love here, that they may enjoy it in its full fruition hereafter. And as the Lord has been pleased, for his own wise purposes, to lay us aside, for a time at least, from the active work of the ministry, we feel doubly bound to avail ourselves of the privilege still granted to us to communicate with his dear people by our pen, and thus be neither idle ourselves, nor wholly unprofitable to the Church of God. We purpose, therefore, with God’s help and blessing, to bring before our readers in this and several following papers some thoughts upon the preceptive part of the word of truth, and especially as contained in and enforced by the Scriptures of the New Testament.

Several reasons have concurred to direct our mind to this particular point of heavenly truth—

1. First, it is a branch of divine revelation which, without wishing to speak harshly or censoriously, has in our judgment been sadly perverted by many on the one hand, and we must say almost as sadly neglected, if not altogether ignored and passed by, by many on the other. The probable causes of this neglect, or, to speak more decidedly, of this serious omission, we shall presently consider.

2. But a second reason for our taking up this subject is, if we may speak with all humility of ourselves, that it is one into which of late years we seem to have been more particularly led.

3. And thirdly, the consideration of the preceptive part of the word will, we think, form a not inappropriate sequel to our late papers on its power and authority on the heart. But let us now, by way of introduction to our subject, for the sake of clearness, first define and explain what we understand by "the precept," or, according to our title, "the Preceptive Part of the Word of God." Great clearness and precision are needed on this point, that we may so run not as uncertainly, so fight not as one that beats the air, but, as a workman that needs not to be ashamed, may rightly divide the word of truth. (1 Corinthians 9:26; 2 Timothy 2:15.) To make, then, our meaning as clear and as distinct as we can, we will view the point from two sides—its negative and its positive aspect.

1. First, then, negatively. By the precept we do not mean any part of the old "Do and live" covenant, but we carefully and rigidly exclude every point, fact, or consideration which springs out of, is connected with, or bears upon the law of works, either as a covenant or as a rule, either as justifying or as sanctifying, either as binding upon the conscience or as influencing the heart and life. Here we wish to stand particularly clear and decided, and to give place, no, not for an hour, to any men or measures, doctrine or experience, principle or practice, letter or spirit, word or work, which would bring us into bondage, or put a legal yoke on the neck of Christ's true disciples. No! let us be clear here; let us stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and not, in our zeal for the precept, put ourselves under the curse of the law, or mingle the smoke and flame of Mount Sinai with the bright and glorious light of Mount Zion.

Let us keep a clear distinction between "Do and live"—and "Live and do;" between the spirit of bondage—and the spirit of adoption; between the forced task of a convict in chains—and the willing obedience of a loving son; between the thief skulking in the pantry—and the child sitting at the table; between the grudging eye-service of a slave under the fear of the lash—and the affectionate offices of a wife whose best reward is a smile and a kiss.

If we cannot keep these things distinct, we had better put our fingers into the fire than handle with them the precepts of the New Testament. O, in considering this weighty subject, for some small measure of the grace and wisdom which so shine forth in the epistles of blessed Paul, in keeping distinct the law and the gospel, in separating between the ministration of condemnation, bondage, and death—and the ministration of righteousness, liberty, and life. Who so fervid as he against binding the legal yoke upon the neck of those whom the truth has made free, and confounding the children of promise with the children of the bond-woman? Hear his thunders, which, as armed with all the authority and power of an apostle of God, he launches against the Galatian teachers who, by their legal doctrines, would trouble the believing disciples of Jesus, and pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:7-9.) And yet mark how the same man of God could, with the grace of the gospel in his heart and the precepts of the gospel in his hand, be as gentle as a mother, and as loving as a father—"but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children." "As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory." (1 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12.)

2. But, having defined what we do not mean by the precept, in other words, having viewed it negatively, let us now define what we do mean by it, in other words, let us view it positively. We mean, then, by "the precept," or the "preceptive part of the word of God," those exhortations,

injunctions, commands, entreaties, admonitions—call them by what name you will, so long as you attach to the word which you use a definite meaning, which the Holy Spirit has revealed in the New Covenant as claiming our attention and our obedience, and as thus addressed to our heart, and intended to be influential upon our life. The precept is not doctrine, though founded upon it, nor experience, though connected with it, but stands apart from each, as possessing a peculiar, distinctive character of its own. All the three are equally a part of the same gospel, have the same Author, the same sanction, the same authority; and therefore are all three to be received by the same faith, with the same reverence, and in the same love. He who rejects or despises the one rejects or despises the other; and he who by divine power and influence truly believes the doctrine, will spiritually feel the experience, and graciously perform the precept.

Why, then, has the precept been so neglected among the Churches of truth? Friends and brethren, is it so—or is it not so? Guilty or not guilty, servants of the living God, members of Churches founded upon the love of truth in its purity and power? We are not speaking here, mind you, of a man tying at the end of a sermon the precepts together into a bundle of rods and flogging with them Christ's sheep and lambs. That is legality. That is not preaching the precept as Paul preached it, and as the Holy Spirit has revealed it. To handle the precept properly, is to handle it spiritually, in the love and spirit of the gospel, with a broken heart and a melted soul—broken by a sense of sin, and melted by a sense of mercy. This, not to anticipate future explanation, this is what we mean by preaching the precept. But are there no reasons for this omission? Surely there are, or the omission would not be so wide-spread. Have we not ourselves been guilty here? We freely confess our fault this day, and perhaps we have but to look into our own bosom to find why others have been faulty too.

Now we confess that for some years after we had received the love of truth we did not clearly or fully see the connection of the precept with the doctrines of grace and the experience of the saints. We saw, what was obvious enough, that the precept occupied a large and prominent place in the New Testament, and as such we received it. But two difficulties seemed to stand in the way of its cordial and hearty reception, and a right view of its beauty and blessedness as a part of divine revelation. These were, 1, the sinfulness; 2, the inability of the creature, and of ourselves in particular. The consciousness of utter inability to perform the precept made it as if too inaccessible to the hand to reach it; the holiness of the precept made it as if too pure for the hand to touch it. Thus, if passed by, it was not from contempt—but reverence; if not handled, it was not from willful neglect—but from not properly seeing its place in the gospel of the grace of God. Allow us a few words on this point. All truth, especially revealed truth, must be consistent with itself—harmonious in every part. But to see this consistency and harmony, not only must the eye be duly instructed, but must look at it from the right point of view. Will our readers permit us to use a figure or two to illustrate our meaning? In some gallery of art* take your stand before a beautiful picture, say one of Turner's grand sea-views. Look at it near at hand; what is it? A mass of blotches and smears, with dabs of white paint here and there. Go back a few steps, and view it from the right point. What a change! What beauty, what harmony, what coloring! The blotches and smears resolve themselves into a sea heaving with life and motion, and the dabs of paint are waves, curling with foam as if they would dash at your very feet. *It will be observed that this is merely an illustration, and does not imply that we sanction Christians visiting the exhibition, or public picture-galleries.

Take a more familiar figure. Look through a microscope at a photograph. What do you see? Something like a building, but all confusion. Wait a moment. Now you have got the focus. What do you see now? The front of a palace or a cathedral, with every architectural detail so clear and distinct that you might fancy yourself looking upon the very building itself. So in divine truth. Let the eye be spiritually opened, let the right point of view be gained, and then every part falls into its right place—full of beauty and harmony. While then we view the precept from a legal standing, we must see it distorted and out of place. It is what we may call out of perspective; we do not see it from the same point of view as the Holy Spirit has drawn it in the word, and as he intended it to be looked at with a believing eye. But when we see, as represented in the gospel, doctrine and experience, promise and precept, love and obedience, motive and action, receiving Christ and walking in him, the grace which saves and the grace which sanctifies, the blood that cleanses and the water that washes, Christ as Priest to atone, Christ as Prophet to teach, Christ as King to rule—all forming one harmonious whole, all combining in one glorious plan for the glory of God and the present and future blessedness of his people, then we view "the truth as it is in Jesus" almost as Moses gazed on the land of promise from Pisgah's height, or as, John "saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2.) But there was another reason, perhaps, why we did not see the beauty and harmony of the precept. Having had our fleshly holiness and creature piety knocked to pieces, having passed for several years through much inward exercise and temptation, and having learned in that school the thorough helplessness of the creature; then being delivered from the galling yoke of legality and self-righteousness, and having tasted the sweetness and the freeness of gospel grace—our mind revolted from everything which seemed legal, Pharisaical, or self-righteous. Thus there was a going to the opposite extreme; and, to avoid one evil, there was not a falling into, but too near an approach to the other. Repelled and almost disgusted by the way in which Arminians, moderate Calvinists, and the whole race of man-made preachers handled the invitations and precepts of the gospel, holding them out to dead men to act upon and perform, there was a shrinking from any confederacy with such doings and dealings, such teachings and preachings, such a turning of things upside down, such a fouling of the waters, such a treading down of the pastures of the flock of slaughter. Besides which we saw in even some good men (men of whom we had hoped better things) a legal bias, which led them to use the precept more as a rod for others, than as a rule for themselves, and rather to feed a spirit of bitterness in their own minds and of those whom they influenced—than as the pure milk of the word that they might grow thereby—the result being rather spiritual pride and self-exaltation among many of the real people of God—than humility, brokenness, brotherly kindness, and love. Hence separation between ministers of truth and divisions in Churches, being just the contrary effect to the real spirit and intention of the precept.

These things all combined to produce an injurious effect; and thus the precept, being thrust out of its place, lost a good measure of its loveliness, and seemed rather alongside the building, than a glorious part of it. "As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." Thus it may be that some of our experience on this point may have been the experience of others; and if so, it may explain why the precept has been too much neglected by them as well as by us. But for the last few years we have been called to walk in a somewhat different path. We have had much affliction of body, and with it much exercise of mind upon the things of God, with many searchings of heart. We wish to speak upon this point very cautiously, knowing the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of our wretched nature; but we trust that through these afflictions and accompanying

exercises there has been wrought in our heart a greater, as well as a more earnest and abiding desire to walk more closely with the Lord, to live more in his fear, and to know more of his Person and work, mind and will in the revelations of himself through the word of his grace. Not that we are one whit better; not that we find our nature less corrupt, or our heart less deceitful above all things, or less desperately wicked. Not that we can move forward a single step with any more life or power; not that our barren seasons are not many and long, and our fruitful seasons few and short.

No, all this we may but more increasingly feel, and yet not be wholly given up to carelessness and carnality, but only all the more bend our back to the word which smites it, or our neck to the word which yokes it. And yet we cannot but acknowledge that light upon the precept seems to have come gradually into our mind, and its place in the word of truth to have been more clearly opened to our understanding, and larger room made for it in our heart and conscience. How far this light is from above, let our gracious readers judge, when we shall have accomplished our task, from the truth and savour of our communication, and the weight and power with which it may be commended to their conscience as harmonizing with the word of God and their personal experience. But as we have confessed our fault in not at one time clearly seeing the place of the precept in the gospel of the grace of God, so we have thought it best to state as simply as we could the way in which we have been led to our present views and feelings on this important part of divine truth. In thus speaking, we have not, through rich mercy, any past error to acknowledge, any wrong or perverted view, any willful or unseemly neglect, any delusive experience as a Christian man, any false teaching as a Christian minister to confess—but we have rather thankfully to record a greater enlargement of desire at least after, if not of fuller attainment unto, "the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Colossians 1:9.) And as we are bidden to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," we should certainly desire and aim both for ourselves and others not to be ever fixed as a post at one and the same spot, or lie like a dead man at the same point of knowledge and experience, as if we already knew all that was to be known, and having reached the goal, were only waiting for the conqueror’s crown—but rather with blessed Paul, forgetting the things which are behind, should reach forth unto those things which are before, and thus press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Let, then, this suffice for an introduction to our subject, as to commence it in our present paper would either require more space than we can well afford, or compel us to break off abruptly soon after we had made a beginning. As we advance onward in the divine life, we usually see and feel more and more of the thick darkness and gross ignorance which brood by nature over our mind, and we become more fully convinced of our utter inability to understand or realize the certainty and power of spiritual things, except by a gracious revelation of them to our soul. "The things of the Spirit of God" we feel can only be, as the Apostle says, "spiritually discerned;" (1 Corinthians 2:14;) for being high, heavenly, and holy, they are, from their very nature, far beyond the sight, far out of the reach of our natural understanding, strain itself as much as it may, let it be cultivated to the utmost of its powers. As it is only in God’s light that we see light, (Psalms 36:9,) and as whatever does make manifest its light, (Ephesians 5:13,) the very sight and sense that we have of our darkness springs from the light of life in our soul.

As, then, we grow in light and life, for there is or should be a growth in grace, (2 Peter 3:18,) there is a growing discovery and a deeper feeling of the darkness of our mind in the things of God. But

all is not darkness with those who have been delivered from the power of darkness—for darkness is one thing and the power of darkness another—and been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Colossians 1:13.) Every now and then there are favored moments when glimpses and glances of heavenly realities, in their brightness and glory, break in upon their soul; and then, perhaps, they are as suddenly withdrawn, much almost, if we may use such comparisons, as the sheet which Peter saw in vision was received up again into heaven, or as the cloud received the ascending Lord out of the sight of his gazing disciples. (Acts 1:9; Acts 10:16.) But from these breakings in of divine light we obtain those spiritual views of heavenly realities which not only reveal their nature to the enlightened understanding, and seal their blessedness on the heart—but deeply convince us also what a veil there is over our mind when it is not thus graciously lifted up. Will our readers permit us to use a figure to illustrate this? (We crave this indulgence, because some, whose judgment in divine things we much respect, object to the use of figures for the purpose of illustrating scriptural truth, on the ground that spiritual things cannot be explained by natural comparisons. Admitting to some degree the force of this objection, we still find, as a matter of continual experience, that an appropriate figure, cautiously and temperately used, and not pressed beyond its legitimate bearing, will often convey an explanation of a truth where reasoning seems to fail; for many can understand a comparison who cannot comprehend an argument. Argument is much more forcible and much less fallacious than figure, but demands a more trained mind. We, therefore, to meet different readers, seek to blend both; and while we base our views and our explanation of them upon scriptural argument, we intersperse, as occasion serves, illustrations and comparisons, not only to enliven, but to throw light upon our subject.) On a misty day, when thick fog hides from view the surrounding landscape, the sun will sometimes suddenly burst forth; in a moment the veil is lifted up, and the whole prospect shines out bright and clear. The lofty mountain chain, or the smiling valley, or the long, winding sea coast, with all its rocky headlands, which had been shrouded in mist, stands out at once to view like a sudden apparition of beauty, and the whole landscape presents itself fully and clearly to the eye as a lovely, harmonious whole. But the mist returns almost as suddenly as it was drawn up; one object after another becomes wrapped up in cloud, until the whole view is again buried out of sight. And yet all is not gone. We can remember what we have seen. An impression has been made on the mind, which remains fixed as a durable recollection, though the vivid clearness is vanished and gone, and what we see now is but mist and fog. May we not apply this illustration to our views of spiritual things, both as regards light and darkness? For the most part we groan and sigh under a sense of the thick darkness of our mind, for though the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun, yet the days of darkness are many. (Ecclesiastes 11:7-8.) This is the dense mist and fog. But there are times and seasons when the Sun of righteousness suddenly arises upon the soul, with healing in his wings. (Malachi 4:2.) Then the mist and fog are immediately dispersed. Light beams into the heart; and at once the whole plan and scheme of salvation from grace to glory, from before the foundation of the world to the ages to come, from the original purposes of God to their full and final accomplishment in a blissful eternity, shine forth. This is produced sometimes by reading the word, sometimes by the power of a passage of Scripture applied to the heart, sometimes in secret meditation, sometimes when on one's knees before the Lord seeking his gracious face. At these favored moments there is an entrance of divine light into the soul, for "the entrance of your words gives light;" (Psalms 119:130;) and this light spreads itself, as it were, over the word of truth, lighting up every part on which it shines with an indescribable beauty and

glory. Let us read, for instance, under such a divine power and influence, Ephesians 1, or Romans 8, or the discourses of our blessed Lord with his disciples before his sufferings and death, or that wondrous prayer, (John 17:1-26) in which he interceded for them, and for us too who believe in his name, (John 17:20,) as the great High Priest over the house of God. As we read these heavenly truths, and faith is drawn out upon and mixed with what we read, what beauty and blessedness shine through every sentence; and how the glorious gospel of the grace of God beams forth, as with light from heaven, to connect every part into one grand harmonious whole. As the soul becomes softened and melted under the power and influence of the word thus made to it spirit and life, all seeming difficulties vanish; and not a jarring note interrupts the harmony of the heavenly choir of gospel truths, making sweet melody in the heart. At such moments and in such a frame, what we cannot fully understand we are content to leave; caviling and contention with either God or man, with both ourselves and others, die away, for they cannot live in this heavenly atmosphere; and the majesty and power of the word of the living God both awe the mind with reverence, and draw forth the affections into love.

All doctrine, all experience, all precept are then seen to center, as one grand harmonious whole, in the glorious Person of the Son of God. From him they all come; to him they all flow. Severed from him, doctrine is seen to be but a withered branch, experience but a delusive dream, precept but a legal service. But his light enlightening, his life quickening, his power attending the word of his grace—doctrine is seen to be no longer doctrine dry and dead, but glorious truth; experience to be not a mere matter of fluctuating feeling, but a blessed reality, as the very kingdom of God set up with a divine power in the heart; and obedience not a legal duty, but a high, holy, and acceptable service. But we must not anticipate our subject, for it will be found that in the channel thus briefly sketched our views and thoughts will chiefly run. And yet we have ventured to give this preliminary sketch, as feeling desirous, on the one hand, to disarm at the very outset all suspicions which might arise in the mind of friend or foe, that by taking up the precept we were swerving from the truth into legality; and, on the other, to prepare the way for a fuller consideration of the point which we have undertaken to elucidate. Without further preface, then, we purpose, in handling the subject before us, to consider theprecepts of the Word of God mainly under these four heads:

I. The IMPORTANCE of the precepts.

II. The NATURE of the precepts.

III. The place of the precepts in the WORD.

IV. The place of the precepts in the HEART and LIFE.

14.01. The IMPORTANCE of the precepts

The IMPORTANCE of the precepts

1. One very simple proof of the importance of the precept is what we may call its BULK. Let us examine this point by looking at several of the epistles of the New Testament. We particularly mention these, because as being addressed to Christian Churches, the precept occupies in the epistles its distinctive and peculiar place as a harmonious part of the revolution of grace and truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Take, then, as our first instance, the Epistle to the Ephesians—the fullest and richest, and what we may perhaps call, the highest in doctrine, of all that Paul, under divine inspiration, wrote to the Churches. Out of six chapters in this epistle three are preceptive, mingled indeed with and based upon doctrinal and experimental truth, for in this channel the precept always runs; but assuming the form of clear, positive exhortation, admonition, warning, and directive. Consider this point, you ministers, who Lord’s day after Lord’s day preach nothing but doctrine, doctrine, doctrine; and ask yourselves whether the same Holy Spirit who revealed the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians did not also reveal the last three? Is not the whole epistle equally inspired, a blessed part of that Scripture of which we read—"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17.) How, then, can you be complete as a minister and thoroughly equipped for every good work—if you willfully neglect any part of that Scripture which God has given to be profitable to you, and to others by you? But let us examine this point a little more closely. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3.) In the preceding chapters the Apostle had set before the believing Ephesians their eternal election in Christ, their predestination unto the adoption of children, their redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of their sins, their sealing by the Holy Spirit of promise as a pledge of their inheritance, their being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and that for a habitation of God through the Spirit. What a cluster of heavenly blessings, and all theirs as saints and believers in Christ Jesus!

What then? "I therefore." What a "therefore!" How it throws us back upon those spiritual blessings with which God has blessed us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Ephesians 1:3,) and brings them all to bear upon our walk and conduct! "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called," etc. But not content with this general exhortation, the Apostle follows up the precept for three successive chapters, pressing upon their heart and conscience every godly fruit, such as humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, love and union, mutual forgiveness; and mingles his exhortations with solemn warnings against every sin, such as uncleanness, lying, anger, theft, bitterness, wrath, evil speaking, etc.

Observe, too, how special and practical he is, taking up not only our individual walk and conduct, but entering also into all our family relationships, urging on husbands, wives, children, servants, masters, every relative duty, and the whole grounded on the highest motives, and based on heavenly and spiritual principles. Thus, in this epistle we have the highest doctrine and the highest practice, the most exalted views of the sovereign, eternal grace of God the Father, (Ephesians 1:3-12, Ephesians 1:19-23,) of the unspeakable love of God the Son, (Ephesians 3:17-19,) and of the quickening, sealing, strengthening work of God the Holy Spirit, (Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 1:17; Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 2:22; Ephesians 3:16) And following up this full and glorious exposition of the deepest doctrinal truth we find the closest precept, bringing before our eyes, as the fruit of all this sovereign grace, the most active obedience of heart, lip, and life, with every inward grace and every outward fruit. Look at this point, dear readers. Examine it for yourselves. You have your Bibles before you. You need no learning, no great education to understand this. You only need two eyes—the natural eye, the eye of the body, to read the letter, and the spiritual eye, the eye of the soul—to read the spirit of your Bible. When, then, you are a little favored in your soul; when you feel your heart softened and melted by a sense of God's goodness and mercy, get alone for a little while, enter your closet and shut your door—the outward and the inward door, (Matthew 6:6,) and prayerfully read the Epistle to the Ephesians; and as your faith embraces, with a holy joy and heavenly sweetness, the glorious truths of the first three chapters, read on, and by the same faith embrace the wise and holy precepts in the last three, which flowed from the same Holy Spirit who inspired and indited the first. As there is but "one Spirit" and "one faith," (Ephesians 4:4-5,) depend upon it, if the blessed Spirit enlightens the eyes of your understanding to see the doctrine, and anoint your heart to feel the power of sovereign grace, the same blessed Spirit will anoint your eyes and heart to see and feel the power of effectual grace; and will shine upon the inspired precept as well as upon the inspired promise. Nor will your faith which embraces salvation be less willing to embrace the things which accompany salvation. (Hebrews 6:9.) We know, indeed, that to do this requires a spiritual mind; but we write for spiritual readers—for those who know something of the power of the word upon the heart, as well as the meaning of the letter of the word in their understanding.

Take next the Epistle to the Colossians, which we may call a sister epistle of that to the Ephesians, as written about the same time, (A.D. 61, when Paul was a prisoner at Rome,) and dwelling chiefly on the same glorious truths. This epistle contains four chapters. Of these, two are preceptive, that is, half of the epistle. Is not this a significant fact? and can it be safe or consistent with becoming reverence to the word of God's grace tacitly to set aside half an epistle as of little or no significance? Next look at 1 Thessalonians. This contains five chapters, of which the last two are wholly preceptive; and if, instead of reckoning by the chapters, we count the verses, we shall find that somewhat more than half (46 out of 89 verses) are devoted to the subject of practice and the claims of Christian obedience. But an objection may be here started, that we have picked the epistles, and have omitted two of the longest and most important, that, namely, to the Romans, and that to the Hebrews, to neither of which our test of bulk will apply. It is perfectly true that in neither of these epistles is the proportion of precept to doctrine, measured by bulk, so great as in those which we have examined. But there is a sound and valid reason for this apparent disproportion in both cases. In setting forth, for instance, the grand doctrine of justification by faith in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, which forms the chief subject of the Epistle to the Romans, it was necessary to be full and ample, that so important a truth might be placed upon

a broad and permanent basis. A short epistle, like that to the Philippians, could not have adequately set forth, in all its various bearings, that foundation doctrine which Luther calls "the article whereby the Church stands or falls." A certain degree, therefore, of drawn out, argumentative proof (for the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans is a most masterly and logical piece of sustained reasoning) was necessary to place upon an unshaken foundation the Church's grand bulwark against error for all time.

Similarly the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, which forms the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, could not be treated in all its fullness and bearings except at considerable length; for it was necessary to trace in it the fulfillment of the Levitical dispensation, with its types and sacrifices, in the Person and work of the God-man Mediator. We see, therefore, at once, from these considerations, sufficient reasons why these two epistles form an apparent exception to our test of bulk. And yet in both of them the precept, if measured, not by actual bulk but by weight, by quality not by quantity, which surely is an admirable test, is not less strong and powerful.

Read, for instance, Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23. What a weight of precept; how condensed, and yet how comprehensive. What firm and strong gospel principles are laid down. The mercies of God; (Romans 12:1;) the property which Christ has in us; (Romans 14:7-9;) our membership with him and with one another; (Romans 12:4-5;) the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God; (Romans 14:17-18;) the example of Christ; (Romans 15:3-6;) the claims of brotherly love; (Romans 13:8-10;) the near approach of full and final salvation; (Romans 13:11;) and our accountability to God; (Romans 14:12;) what a foundation is thus laid. And upon this broad basis of Christian privilege what a godly superstructure of Christian precept. Read Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-7. What a weight of precept. How close and condensed, and yet how full is Romans 12:1-21; and with what a weighty, influential principle it begins—"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The body to be presented a living sacrifice unto God; non-conformity to the world; but a transformation of the renewed mind into the image of Christ, with a sensible experience and proof thereby of the perfect will of God. What a foundation for all vital, practical godliness. But we must not forestall our subject, as these things will have to be considered at length as we proceed. Let it suffice for the present to ask ourselves this simple question, "Can it be right, can it be safe, can it be scriptural, to treat all this fullness and weight of precept with no more attention than an obsolete Act of Parliament? or, to speak less harshly, to receive it as the word of God much as we might do the last chapters of Ezekiel, which we little read and less understand, though we have no doubt of its being a part of the inspired Scriptures?" The same observations will apply to the Epistle to the Hebrews. Measured by bulk, the amount of the preceptive part of the epistle falls short of the doctrinal; but who that reads Hebrews 12:1-29, Hebrews 13:1-25 can deny the weight of exhortation, admonition, warning, and direction with which these are filled, but which our limits will not allow us to do more than point out? But it will be observed that we have merely indicated bulk as one proof of the importance of the precept. If our readers feel disposed to follow up our argument, let them examine in this point of view the Epistle to the Galatians, of which two chapters out of six (Galatians 5:1-26, Galatians 6:1-18) are preceptive; the Epistle to the Philippians, in which precept is so prominent a feature,

and so blended with doctrine, (Php 1:6; Php 2:5-11; Php 3:20-21,) and with experience (Php 1:21-23; Php 3:7-14,) that it may be called a model of preceptive writing; the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, which are nearly all precept; and the Epistles of Peter and James, which are filled with precept from first to last. The amount of precept in the epistles, measured only by the simple test of quantity, would surprise a person whose attention had not been directed to that point, if he would but carefully examine it. But it is sad to say how little the Scriptures are read among us with that intelligent attention, that careful and prayerful studiousness, that earnest desire to understand, believe, and experimentally realize their divine meaning, which they demand and deserve, and which the word of God compares to seeking as for silver, and searching as for hidden treasure. (Proverbs 2:4.)

2. But the importance of the precept will be evident from another consideration. Were there no precepts in the New Testament, we would be without an inspired rule of life, without an authoritative guide for our walk and conduct before the Church and the world. We rightly discard and reject the 'law of Moses' as the believer's rule of life. What, then, is our rule? Are we a set of lawless wretches who may live as we desire, according to the libelous charge of the enemies of truth? God forbid! We have a divine, authoritative rule of life, a code of directions of the amplest, fullest, minutest character, intended and sufficient to regulate and control every thought, word, and action of our lives; and all flowing from the eternal wisdom and will of the Father, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son, and inspired and revealed by the Holy Spirit.

When, then, it is thrown in our teeth that, by discarding the 'law of Moses' as our rule of life, we prove ourselves licentious, lawless Antinomians, this is our answer, and let God and his word decide whether it be not a sufficient one. Not so. We have a rule of life as far exceeding the 'law of Moses' as the new covenant of grace and truth in the glorious Person of the Son of God exceeds and outshines the old covenant of works; and as much as the ministration of the Spirit, of life, and of righteousness excels in glory the ministration of the letter, of death, and of condemnation. (2 Corinthians 3:6-11.) In a word, the precepts of the New Testament, in all their fullness, minuteness, and comprehensiveness, are our rule of life. But mark what would be the consequence if the preceptive part of the New Testament were taken out of its pages as so much useless matter. It would be like going on board of a ship bound on a long and perilous voyage, and taking out of her, just before she sailed, all her charts, her compass, her sounding-line, her chronometer; in a word, all the instruments of navigation needful for her safely crossing the sea, or even leaving the port. But you may say, "If there were no precept, the Church would still have the Holy Spirit to guide her safely over the sea of life to her heavenly haven." It is true; and so the first Christians, as Stephen the martyr, who lived before the epistles were written, had the Holy Spirit to guide them, in the absence of the precept. But in those early days, first, the Holy Spirit was poured out in large measure, and, secondly, they had in their midst apostles and prophets, (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40; Ephesians 2:20; Ephesians 4:11-12,) directly and immediately inspired to guide and direct them, which gifts have been withdrawn since the canon of Scripture was closed. Besides which, as the Holy Spirit, who then wrought immediately by the lips of inspired men, (1 Corinthians 14:21,) now works mediately by the inspired page, the argument is neither sound nor safe that we could do very well without the letter of the precept as still having the Spirit. The question is not what God might do, but what God does; not what we think, but what God says. If God has mercifully and graciously given us rules and directions whereby to walk, let us

thankfully accept them, not question and cavil how far we could have done without them.

See, too, what a wide field would be laid open for wild enthusiasm to range in, were there no direct and positive lines laid down, as we now have them in the precept. How every deluded fanatic might come forward as inspired by the Holy Spirit to instruct us how to act, and what to do, and how to live, how many wives he might have, and how much money we must give to keep him and them in luxury and ease. What a mercy for us that we have God's precepts and not man's; God's holy, wise, and gracious directions how to glorify him in heart and life, how to walk in love and union with his dear people, how to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, how to know his will and do it, with his own blessed approbation in our conscience; and thus, by taking heed to our way according to God's word, (Psalms 119:9,) not become the prey of every vile Mormonite, every sleek impostor, every wily monk or crafty nun, every Papist, Puseyite, or sister of mercy who might seek to impose upon us with their pretended revelations, or bind us hard and fast with their stern, austere rules of fleshly holiness. What heavy burdens would they fasten on our shoulders, as we see in the case of the Pharisees of old, who made the word of God of none effect by their traditions, and in the self-imposed austerities of the Trappist and Carthusian orders among the Papists, and the Fathers and the Brothers Ignatius now among us, with their sandals and Benedictine dress, like "a rough garment to deceive."

Left to such blind or wilfully-deceiving guides, we would, but for the precept as the rule of our lives, as the inspired guide of our steps, have no word of the Lord to set against their delusions or their hypocrisies, and would pass our lives in continual bondage and fear, awed by their pretended revelations, or bowed down by their austere regulations. We have enough, God knows, of those would-be teachers and directors of conscience; some coming with their crafty impostures to deceive, others with their forms and ceremonies, preparations for the sacrament, manuals of religious instruction, practices of piety, aids to devotion, all drawn out to rule and pattern, to teach us how to live and how to die; and all as full of error as a blind understanding can devise, and as full of legality and lip-service as a superstitious, self-righteous, Pharisaical heart can make them. What a torrent of Popery seems fast coming in under what is now called "ritualism;" that is, a setting up of rites and ceremonies, mediaeval observances, and traditional rules, instead of the doctrines of grace and the precepts of the gospel. What a mercy, then, for the living Church of God that we have not only the Holy Spirit as our inward Teacher, to show us by his divine light these errors and delusions, but that the same blessed Spirit has given us in the word of truth the sweetest, soundest, safest directions to lead us into, and keep us in the way of eternal life; and that he from time to time sheds upon them his own benevolent unction, grace, and savour to make them spirit and life to our soul, and thus become a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. What a holy, happy liberty; what a free service; what a tender, affectionate, filial obedience do the precepts of the gospel set before us, as far removed from legal exactions and Pharisaic righteousness as from Antinomian licentiousness and loose, careless ungodliness.

O you, who see and feel these things, and have tasted the blessedness of serving God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, (Romans 7:6,) lift up your heart and hands with the writer of these lines, and say with him, "Bless God for the precept." May grace be given us more clearly to understand it, more carefully to heed it, more closely to obey it. But here for the present we pause, lest we should not only engross too much space for our own pen, but, by dwelling upon one subject at too great length, rather weary than edify our readers. In our last

paper we attempted to direct the attention of our readers to the importance of the preceptive portion of the word of truth, as being well convinced that if we could but once establish that point firmly in their hearts, it would, with God's help and blessing, much prepare the way for a close and careful consideration of the whole subject, both on their part and our own. A moment's thought will make this sufficiently obvious. If any part of God's truth be viewed as of little importance by writer or reader, by minister or hearer, the almost necessary consequence is that it becomes either wholly neglected, or is loosely and carelessly slurred over by both. Why need we devote time or thought to a matter of little moment? Why carefully and prayerfully examine a subject which will scarcely repay us for the trouble of our attention? We might, from a reverence to the word of God, forbear such thoughts or such expressions, and yet the practical effect might be what we have pointed out. But, on the other hand, if, through the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit, any portion of the word of truth is opened with divine light to our understanding, or laid with peculiar weight and power upon our heart, its solemn importance is at once seen and felt; it engages the whole of our attention, and we wonder how we could have been so blind to what is now so clear, or treated with neglect what is now so weighty. But as snares await us on every hand, a temptation here presents itself, from falling into which we must desire to be kept. As all true wisdom is from above, the free gift of God, who gives to all who ask him liberally, and upbraids not; (James 1:5; James 3:17;) and as the very reason why the Lord grants to any "a knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" is that they "might walk worthy of him unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God," (Colossians 1:10-11,) we must watch against being betrayed into a censorious spirit, lest, in our zeal for the precept, we ourselves be the very first to break it. Thus, while we may accept with thankfulness any communication of light, any opening of the word of truth for our comfort or edification, we must carefully guard against making a rod for others out of any grace to ourselves. That were not to use, but to abuse the goodness of God, and to turn the grand precept of the gospel, the new commandment of the Lord, that we love one another as he has loved us, (John 15:12,) into a matter of strife and division. It is, in fact, the working of this censorious spirit in the minds of most who have attempted to handle the precept, which has made the whole subject distasteful to many of the real children of God, they not being able clearly to distinguish between the precept itself, and the carnal, legal way in which it has been thrust upon them. But if preserved from this snare, if in the spirit and love of the gospel we can point out to our believing brethren from the word of truth the importance of the preceptive part of the New Testament, and the Lord shall be pleased to commend it to their conscience, we shall hope thereby to approve ourselves to them, as not seeking to have dominion over their faith, but as helpers of their joy. (2 Corinthians 1:24.) Our readers will remember that in our last paper we pointed out to their notice two considerations, which seemed to us much to establish the importance of the precept. One of these was drawn from the large amount which it occupies in the Epistles of the New Testament, or, to use our own words, its bulk and quantity. The second consideration derived its weight from the fact that, in the absence of the precept, we should have no authoritative rule of life.

3. Closely connected with the last point is another consideration, to us of no less weight in establishing the importance of the precept, to which we shall now call the observation of our readers. It is this; that, as without a special revelation of the precept in the word of truth we would not know what was the will of God as regards all spiritual and practical obedience, so, without it as our guide and rule, we would not be able to live to his glory. As this consideration must be, to all

who fear God, a matter of deep importance, we shall endeavor to unfold it somewhat fully, and especially to point out its connection with the preceptive part of the word of truth. As the glory of God is the grand end and object of all the manifestations of himself in creation, in providence, and in grace, so should it be the end and object of all our knowledge of him, of all our faith in him, of all our obedience to him. Such was the end and aim of our blessed Lord, the object for which he came, for which he lived, for which he died, for which he rose again, and for which he now lives at the right hand of the Father. He therefore could say, in his intercessory prayer before he offered himself up—"I have glorified you on the earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do." (John 17:4.) And having thus glorified his heavenly Father on earth by doing his will, (Hebrews 10:7,) not seeking his own glory, but the glory of him who sent him, (John 7:18; John 8:50,) he is himself now glorified in heaven, for he has "entered into his glory," (Luke 24:26,) being glorified with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. If, then, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps; (1 Peter 2:21;) if we are to glorify him here that we may be glorified with him hereafter, it must be by our faith and obedience. How plain is this from the word. But let us trace out its successive steps.

First, then, we "glorify God for his mercy;" (Romans 15:9;) that is, when we receive salvation as flowing to our guilty souls from his pure mercy, we praise and bless his holy name, as sinners saved by grace. We therefore read—"Whoever offers praise glorifies me." (Psalms 50:23.) This is the first step, as salvation by grace is the grand foundation of our living to his praise. But as this mercy and grace are only manifested in his dear Son, it may be said that the first step which we take in glorifying God is when we believe in Jesus. By raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand, God has glorified him; (Acts 3:13;) for he has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. (Php 2:9-10; Ephesians 1:20-21; 1 Peter 1:21.) When, then, we believe in Jesus by that faith which is of the operation of God, (Colossians 2:12,) we glorify the Father. We read of Abraham—"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." (Romans 4:20.) As, then, we walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, (Romans 4:12,) we in our measure glorify God as he did. But this work of faith is internal—seen of God, but not seen of men; and, therefore, though glorifying God, yet not giving him that glory outwardly before the world which he deserves and demands. Here, then, comes in the next step, which is Christian obedience, or that living to his honor and praise whereby God is glorified in the world. The world cannot see our faith, but it can see what that faith does. It cannot understand the union between Christ and his people, but it can understand good fruit when it grows on the vine. The Lord, therefore, said to his disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16.) And again more particularly, in his parting discourse—"Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." (John 15:8.) Thus also speaks the Apostle—"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Php 1:11.) But now comes the connection between the precept, and living to the praise and glory of God; and as this point is not often explained, or at least not often insisted upon, we shall endeavor to set it in its true and scriptural light. Be it, then, observed, and ever borne in mind that, as the glory of God is the end of all our obedience,it must be an obedience according to his own prescribed rule and pattern. In this point lies all the distinction between the obedience of a Christian to the glory of God—and the self-imposed obedience of a Pharisee to the glory of self. Take a survey of the wide field of what are called religious duties,

religious observances, decided piety, active exertions, and the whole movements of the religious world. What are they as weighed in the balances of the sanctuary? What is there of God or of his word in them? When God gave directions to Moses about the tabernacle and all its vessels, he said unto him—"And look that you make them after their pattern, which was showed you in the mount." (Exodus 25:40.) According to this pattern were all the vessels made, and as such, and as such only, were they accepted and approved. "The Israelites had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them." (Exodus 39:42-43.) So in a spiritual sense it is now. The pattern for our guidance in doing the will of God and living to the glory of God is laid down for us, not only in the example of Christ—but in the rule of the precepts.

Thus we see that if there were no precept as our guiding rule, we could not live to the glory of God, or yield to him an acceptable obedience; and for this simple reason, that we would not know how to do so. We might wish to do so; we might attempt to do so; but we would and must fail, as Moses must have failed in building the tabernacle, for lack of a guiding pattern. As, then, without a revelation of the doctrine of salvation we would not know how a sinner could be saved, and thus could not glorify God by our faith; so without a revelation of the precept we would not know how to serve God, and thus could not glorify him by our obedience.

Look at this point, believing child of God. You long to glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his. (1 Corinthians 6:20.) You desire, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, to do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31.) There are times and seasons with you when you sigh and mourn over your barren, unprofitable heart and life, and earnestly long to think and speak, and act to his honor and glory who has done so much for you in providence and grace. At least, if you have no such desires you are no Christian, and are at the best but a poor, worldly, dead professor. When, then, and how far do you live to God’s glory? Only then, and only so far as your life, and walk, and conduct harmonize with, and are guided by the precepts of the word. For see the connection. We can only glorify God outwardly by doing his will; we can only know that will, as regards our practical obedience to it, by the express revelation which he has given of it. Where is that revelation? In his word, and chiefly in the preceptive part of it. It is this which makes it "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." (Psalms 119:105.) David therefore cried—"Order my steps in your word;" "Make me to go in the path of your commandments;" "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes;" as feeling that it was only by walking in the word and by the word that he could please God and live to his praise. We find thousands in this land who, as they think, are doing God service by plans and schemes of their own devising, priding themselves on their good works. But we may say of all these their duties and doings what Augustine said of the ancient Roman virtues, that they are but "splendid sins"—or, to use the language of the 23rd Article of the Church of England, entitled, "Works before Justification," "for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

4. We are unwilling to weary our readers by dwelling too long on one point, and yet we cannot forbear adding another reason to show the importance of the precept. On its fulfillment turns the main test of distinction between the believer and the unbeliever, between the manifested vessel of mercy and the vessel of wrath fitted to destruction. To show this point a little more clearly, let us examine the test which our Lord in various places has given us between those who are really and truly his by vital union and regenerating grace, and those who have a name to live and are dead.

First look at the parable of the sower. Out of four kinds of hearers of the word, one only is saved and sanctified thereby. Now, what is the test given of this saved hearer? Is it not that he brings forth fruit? "But he who received seed into the good ground is he who hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:23.) Can any one deny, in the face of these words, that the grand distinguishing test of the good-ground hearer is, that he bears fruit—and that none of the others bear it? But now comes the question, What is fruit? Is it not inward and outward—the inward fruits of the Spirit in the heart, and the outward fruits of godliness in the life? But what rule guides and regulates these fruits, so as to distinguish them from the "splendid sins" of which we have been speaking? Evidently the precept, for by that, and in harmony with that, the Spirit works. Is there, then, heart fruit, such as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance?" (Galatians 5:22-23.) It is wrought by the blessed Spirit, according to the precepts, "Walk in love, as Christ has also loved us;" (Ephesians 5:2;) "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice;" (Php 4:4;) "Live in peace;" (2 Corinthians 13:11;) "Be at peace among yourselves;" (1 Thessalonians 5:13;) "With long-suffering, bearing with one another in love," (Ephesians 4:2,) etc. Is there not here a blessed harmony between the inward work of the Spirit and the outward word of the precept? Again, is there outward fruit? It is needless to show that this too is in harmony with the precept; for all will acknowledge the practical character of the precepts of the New Testament. But now take another test of a similar character from the Lord’s own lips, as brought before us in the parable of the Vine and the branches. What distinguishes the branches in Christ by living union from the branches in him by nominal profession? Fruit! "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away; and he prunes every branch that bears fruit, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:1-2.) The sentence against "every branch that bears not fruit" is that the Father "takes it away"—casts it forth as a barren branch. And how deals he with the branch that bears fruit? "He prunes it." Why? "That it may bring forth more fruit." Who, with these words of the Lord before his eyes, can deny that fruit is the distinguishing test of life, of grace, of salvation? But this fruit must and will be in harmony with the precept; for in the bosom of that is lodged all inward and outward godliness, all spiritual and practical obedience.

Take one more test from the Lord’s own lips. Read the solemn conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount—that grand code of Christian precept—"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7:24-27.)

What is the Lord’s own test of distinction between the wise man who builds on the rock, and the foolish man who builds on the sand? The rock, of course, is Christ, as the sand is self. But the test, the mark, the evidence, the proof of the two builders and the two buildings is the hearing of Christ’s sayings and doing them, or the hearing of Christ’s sayings and doing them not. We may twist and wriggle under such a text, and try all manner of explanations to parry off its keen, cutting edge; we may fly to arguments and deductions drawn from the doctrines of grace to shelter

ourselves from its heavy stroke, and seek to prove that the Lord was there preaching the law and not the gospel, and that as we are saved by Christ's blood and righteousness, and not by our own obedience or our good works, either before or after calling, all such tests and all such texts are inapplicable to our state as believers. But after all our questions and cavilings, our nice and subtle arguments to quiet conscience and patch up a false peace, there the words of the Lord stand, and, what is more, will stand forever, backed as they are by that solemn declaration from the same lips of eternal truth—"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:19-21) To draw, then, our argument into a short compass; if gospel fruit be the test of gospel grace; if, as God's workmanship, we are as much "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them," as we are made new creatures in Christ by spiritual regeneration, and are foreordained unto eternal life; (Ephesians 2:10;) if we are as much elected unto obedience as unto the blood of sprinkling; (1 Peter 1:2;) and if these good works and this obedience are all in the closest harmony with, and regulated by the precept, nothing can be more obvious than its great importance. And if it be thus important, it certainly has the strongest claim upon our attention and obedience.

14.02a. The NATURE of the precept

The NATURE of the precepts This is the most important part of our whole subject, and will therefore require the most careful handling on our side, and corresponding attention, and we may add, kind consideration, on the side of our spiritual readers. We would, therefore, say to them in all friendliness—deal fairly by us; judge of our views as a whole. Do not cavil at little points, or quarrel with isolated expressions; but compare our views and statements with the Scripture and the experience of the saints, and receive or reject them as they are or are not in harmony with both these tests of truth. If they do not agree with them both, they cannot stand; nor would we wish them to stand, as our only object is truth—truth in its purity, truth in its power.

We lay this down, then, as a broad foundation principle, that the precept, being an integral part of the gospel, must thoroughly harmonize with it. If it clashes, or rather, if our views of it clash with salvation by grace, personal election and predestination unto eternal life, particular redemption by the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, and the final perseverance of the saints—there must be something wrong somewhere.

Again, if the precept, or our views of the precept, clash with the work of grace on the heart, the teachings and witness of the Holy Spirit, and the inward kingdom of God, as set up by a divine power in the soul—there must be something wrong somewhere. We hope, indeed, clearly and fully to show that there is the sweetest harmony between the doctrines of the gospel, the experience of the gospel, and the precepts of the gospel; but for the present we wish to lay it down as a broad, fundamental principle that only those views of the precept can be right, which make it thoroughly harmonize with the gospel of the grace of God in all its fullness, in all its freeness, in all whereby it brings glory to God, in all whereby it brings salvation to man. In considering the nature of the precept, we shall examine, First, the LETTER of the precept.

Secondly, the SPIRIT of the precept.

I. The LETTER of the precept. Our readers will easily understand the distinction thus drawn between the letter and the spirit, if they will view the former as the body and the latter as the soul of the precept; for it is with the precept as with ourselves; the body cannot act without the soul, nor the soul usually without the body. Without the soul the body is dead. So the letter of the precept is dead without the spirit of the precept, and the spirit of the precept usually acts by the letter of the precept. We say "usually," because there was the spirit of the precept acting, beautifully acting, as in the case of those who "were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32) before any part of the New Testament was written, and, consequently, before the precept was given in its present form; and even now the Holy Spirit may move unto love and good works, and often does so without any special use of the letter of the precept. But his movements will always be in harmony with the letter of the precept, even where he does not particularly employ it for that purpose.

We shall first, then, examine the LETTER of the precept, and in so doing shall consider it under five distinct heads:

1. The people to whom the precept is addressed.

2. The connection of the precept with the doctrines of the gospel.

3. The things which the precept specially inculcates.

4. The motives by which the precept is enforced.

5. The form under which the precept is revealed. The Lord the Spirit enable us rightly to divide the word of truth.

1. The PEOPLE to whom the precept is addressed. These are believers, and believers only. The world has nothing to do with the precepts of the gospel. They are not addressed to it or meant for it. This will be evident from a moment's consideration. Where do we chiefly find the precepts of the New Testament? In the epistles. What are the epistles? Inspired letters written to Christian Churches or Christian individuals. Take any of the epistles, examine how they begin and to whom they are written. Is it not to "the beloved of God, called to be saints?" (Romans 1:7,) or "to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus?" (1 Corinthians 1:2,) or "to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus?" (Ephesians 1:1,) etc. It is not worth while to prove a point so plain—a point which any one can ascertain for himself by merely looking at the beginning of each epistle. But what an important consequence flows from this simple fact, that is, that spiritual precepts are only for spiritual men; and, therefore, that to take the precepts and force them upon carnal men is to abuse them. You write a letter to your wife in all the confidence of mutual love, and you tell her you wish her to do this and that—that you are coming home on a certain day, and want her to get this and that thing ready. Is that letter for all the women of the parish to read? And do you send directions in it to all the busy-bodies of the town, who might think themselves quite as well qualified as she is to do for you what you want done? Do you even write to your servant as you write to your wife? You ask the one; you command the other. The one works for love; the other works for wages. And yet for lack of seeing this simple fact, which stares us in the face every time we open the New Testament, the precepts and directions addressed by Christ to his bride and spouse have been laid hold of by any and all of the professing women who would gladly say to him, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach." (Isaiah 4:1.)

We all know that the only right key to a letter, especially if it be a long one, and dealing with many minute circumstances, is a knowledge of the person who wrote it, and of the person to whom it was written. When we receive a letter from a wife, a relation, a friend, however long or minute it may be, we understand every word of it. But if a letter be given us to read, written by a stranger to a stranger, especially if it embraces many minute circumstances—all is dark, mysterious, enigmatical. So the only true key to the Epistles of the New Testament is a knowledge of him who wrote it, and of him to whom it was written. He who wrote it is the blessed Lord, the Head and Husband of the Church; for, though indited by the pen of the Holy Spirit, it is really Jesus who sent it, and who now speaks to his people in and by it. He to whom it is written is the believer in Jesus, espoused to him by covenant ties and spiritual betrothal.

What, then, has the profane worldling, the proud Pharisee, the loose, licentious Antinomian, to do with the letters—the pure, chaste, holy love-letters of Jesus to his bride? No more than a stranger has to do with your letters to your wife, or to her whom you hope one day to make your wife! Put this key into the epistles, the preceptive part of them as well as the doctrinal, (for they are both

one, both of them parts of the same love-letter, and therefore each breathe the same sweet spirit of love,) and you will easily open the lock; though we must add that so many a bungler, not to say so many a burglar, has thrust wrong keys into it, or tried to pick it, that if the wards had not been made by him "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," they must have been hampered long ago.

2. Our second point in examining the letter of the precept is its connection with the doctrines of the gospel. This, above all others, is the point in which the peculiar character of the precept lies, and from which it derives its chief force and efficacy. A few examples, however, of this connection, will make this point more clear than a long explanation. "Be therefore, followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." (Ephesians 5:1-2.) We find here a precept bidding us to be "followers of God," that is, followers of the example of God, the exhortation being closely connected with the preceding verse, (Ephesians 4:32,) from which, indeed, it should not have been separated; and to "walk in love" with the dear family of God. Now, see the connection of this precept with the doctrines of the gospel. There is no doctrine of the gospel more blessed than the forgiveness of sins, and no sweeter experience than a personal knowledge of it. Indeed, we may call it the grand doctrine of the gospel. But sin is forgiven only through the blood-shedding and sacrifice of Christ. See, then, the foundation of the precept, that we should walk in love with the people of God, and its connection with gospel doctrine. Observe the following points of connection—

1. That we are addressed as "dear children," that is, dear to God. This connects the precept with our election and eternal predestination unto the adoption of children. (Ephesians 1:5.)

2. Mark "the love of Christ in giving himself for us." This connects the precept with the love of Christ in dying for our sins.

3. Observe next, "the sweet-smelling savor" unto God when Christ offered himself as a sacrifice. This connects the precept with the fragrance of Christ’s offering and sacrifice on the cross, and the Father’s acceptance of it with infinite approbation and complacency.

4. Observe, lastly, the complete forgiveness of all our sins by God, for Christ’s sake, and through this sweet-smelling sacrifice.

What a cluster of gospel doctrines—election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness; and all of them animated with life and spirit, and brought down into the heart by a personal experience of their blessedness.

Now, then, what follows? If God has so chosen us, if Christ has so loved us, if he has so bled and died for us, if the Father has so freely forgiven us for Christ’s sake—then let us walk in love with those who are alike chosen, alike loved, alike redeemed, alike forgiven. Is there anything legal here? Is it not all pure gospel, in the fullest harmony with every gracious doctrine, and in the fullest harmony, too, with a sweet inward experience of the love of God, of the Spirit of adoption, of the blood of Christ, of the forgiveness of sin? The fact is this, that instead of the precept being, as many think, base and legal—it is just the contrary. It is too high; has too much of the pure gospel in it to suit and please most even of those who truly fear God. It assumes what many do not enjoy—such as the liberty of the gospel, a blessed assurance of interest in the blood of Christ, a

sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. The precept, in fact, would suit our legal, working spirit better if there were not so much gospel in it; if it would but tell us how many chapters we ought to read a day; how often and how long to pray; how much we should give away out of our income; how many times we should forgive our brother, and whether seven would not be enough? How it would suit our Pharisaical spirit to have a few such nice legal tasks set for us—that we might please ourselves with performing them, and enjoy the greater pleasure still of well flogging our brother, who was not quite so exact as we in bringing up the full weight and measure of his religious duties. But the precept will have none of all this. It stands upon high and heavenly ground, and yet comes down to us in our lowest estate. Thus it stands upon the ground of free grace to the vilest of sinners, for such were the Ephesians, (Ephesians 2:1-3,) and yet chosen in Christ; blessed in him with all spiritual blessings; (Ephesians 1:3-4;) sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; (Ephesians 1:13;) raised up together and sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; (Ephesians 2:6;) made near by the blood of Christ; (Ephesians 2:13;) and built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22.) The precept knows nothing of tasks or conditions, nothing of legal duties and doings; but addresses itself in the purest and highest gospel language to the sons of God, as led by the Spirit of God. It says to them, as if with a voice from heaven—"Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, as being thus loved, thus blessed, thus saved, thus sealed, thus forgiven—walk in love with the dear children of God, forgiving them all their unkindness, hard speeches, cold looks, cutting remarks, or even more personal and painful injuries." Is this a hard precept? Yes, very hard when we have no experience of gospel blessings. No wonder, then, that you are shy of this precept when you are nursing a revengeful, unforgiving spirit against a brother! But what does this unforgiving spirit of yours show? That you yourself know nothing experimentally of the love of God in forgiving you your sins—or at least are not now walking in the experience and enjoyment of it. But is it so hard a precept? You get the pardoning love of God into your soul, and you will find it as easy as it is sweet to perform it. No, you cannot but perform it; for if you walk in love with God, you will walk in love with your brother also. This one example might suffice as a general key to all the other precepts, for they are all, so to speak, constructed after the same pattern; they all breathe the same pure gospel. But we will now take an example or two of what we may call family duties, or, to speak more correctly, social relationships—and see how gospel precepts are in their case also similarly based upon, similarly connected with, gospel doctrines.

Christian husbands are bidden (Ephesians 5:25-32) to love their wives. The whole of the exhortation is somewhat too long to quote fully, but we will give one verse—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25.)

Now look at the foundation of this exhortation. Why should a Christian husband, according to this precept, love his wife? Because it is his duty—or because conducive to his happiness—or because it is what she has a right to as his partner in life? None of these grounds are named, or even alluded to. But this is the foundation of the precept—Christ loved the Church as his mystical body, and gave himself for it; therefore as the believing husband holds to the believing wife as her natural head the same relative position which Christ holds to the Church as her spiritual head, he is bound to love her for Christ’s sake and after Christ’s example. Christ and his Church are one; she is his own flesh which he nourishes and cherishes. So a man and his wife are one flesh. When, then, he loves her he loves himself; and to nourish and cherish her is to nourish and

cherish his own body, as Christ does the Church. Is not this noble gospel ground—full of the most sublime and deepest truth? Is it not a spiritual, heavenly, and holy view of Christian marriage, and does it not baptize that social tie as with the very spirit and love of Christ? What a sanctity it throws round the marriage of Christians; how it elevates it above all worldliness and carnality, and brings down upon conjugal love the pure breath of heaven, more than reinstating it to what it was in Paradise in the days of man's primeval innocence.

Now take, as a counterpart, the precept to Christian wives, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:22-24.) This precept, perhaps, may be less palatable to those to whom it is addressed, for no wife minds how much her husband gives her of his love, but she has not always the same pleasure in giving him her obedience. But let her like it or not, the submission and subjection of a wife to her husband are here inculcated as one of the precepts of the gospel. But on what high, holy, and spiritual ground it is placed. Now the precept is based upon and connected with the glorious gospel doctrine of the headship of Christ and the Church's subjection and submission to him as such. When, then, a Christian wife seeks not her own will, but her husband's—when she submits to his desires and wishes, (and of course the Apostle assumes that as a Christian man these would be in harmony with the gospel,) her very submission is her glory, as well as her happiness. Is it not so in our submission to Christ? Is it not our glory and happiness to know no will but his, and to yield to him the obedience of love? Thus you Christian wives, when you submit yourselves to your husbands in love and affection, you do so after the example of the Church. There is no loss of dignity or position in this, no giving up of your rights. When you can respect and love your husband as a Christian man as well as a Christian partner, and you can walk together not only in conjugal but spiritual love, as he will require nothing from you which you may not safely and scripturally yield to him, so will it be your pleasure as well as your privilege to walk with him as his equal in Christ, but now subordinate in present position.

One of the first things which opened our eyes to see more clearly and distinctly the spiritual nature of the precepts of the New Testament was, observing their close and intimate connection with the doctrines of the gospel. This, indeed, presupposes a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the doctrines of grace; for unless we clearly see and experimentally feel the blessedness of salvation by sovereign grace, it is impossible to enter into the path of obedience which the Holy Spirit has traced out for the heirs of salvation to walk in. A son and a servant live by two very different rules. As, then, in an earthly family, none can live as a child who is not a child, so, in the heavenly family, none can live as a son who is not a son. It is for lack of seeing and knowing this for themselves that so many have stumbled over the precept—have canalized and legalized it—and, full of confusion themselves, have done little else but confuse others. As this point, then, is what we may call, in military language, the key of the whole position,* which if we gain, and on which if we firmly stand, the whole field lies open to our view, we shall, at the risk of being somewhat verbose, dwell a little further upon it.

* The key of a position is that particular spot on a field of battle, as some commanding height, on the possession and retaining of which chiefly depends the result of the engagement.

If our readers will refer to our last paper, they will see this connection traced out in several examples from the epistles. And we may observe that these are not forced or solitary instances—examples picked by us for a certain purpose, but that so particular and, we may almost add, so jealous is the Holy Spirit in enforcing and preserving this connection, that there is scarcely a precept given which is not linked as with a golden thread to some gospel doctrine. No, what is still more striking, this connection of gospel precept with gospel doctrine is so closely preserved that there is scarcely even a warning against vile and open sins, which is not based upon and connected with a gospel truth or a gospel blessing. As an illustration of our meaning, (for this is a very tender subject, and needs careful handling) we will give one or two instances of this connection, which will, we trust, set this point in a clear light.

There can hardly be two worse sins—that is, open sins, than lying and immorality. Would we not naturally expect that the Apostle, if he touched upon these sins at all, would come down upon them with some terrific denunciation of the wrath of God against them, cutting and hacking at them with a two-edged sword? But no! that is not his way of handling either warnings or precepts. Let us see how he warns, and whether, even in what we may almost call these extreme cases, he leaves Mount Zion for a single moment, to borrow the thunders of Mount Sinai. Not but that he does solemnly warn against such and other open sins, by declaring that those who live and die in them shall not inherit the kingdom of God. See for instance Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5-6; Hebrews 10:29-31, etc. But just observe how we are warned against these two sins by the precept in connection with the doctrines of the gospel.*

* Our readers will carefully bear in mind the distinction between warning against a sin and the actual commission of it. If the sin be committed, then comes in another rule—the rule of church discipline, as is the case of the incestuous Corinthian. The warning has been neglected; then comes the rod—the rod of God in the conscience or in chastisement, (1 Corinthians 11:30-32,) and the rod of the church in discipline. (1 Corinthians 4:21; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13.)

And, first, as to LYING. How does the Holy Spirit warn us against that base, low, and infamous sin—the vice of thieves and cowards? "Therefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor—for we are members one of another." (Ephesians 4:25.) Let us ask ourselves whether we would have ever thought of such an argument as this? Or, rather, ask yourself whether, if tempted to tell a lie, you were ever kept back by such a motive? If you say, as you probably will, "No," does not your very answer show how little we have of the mind of Christ, how low and legal are our views of gospel precepts? Is it not, then, well worth observing on what peculiar, what high and gospel ground, the Holy Spirit here bids us not to lie to one another, but always to speak truth with our neighbor? It is "because we are members one of another." If we had been asked to assign a reason why the children of God should not tell lies to each other, would we ever have thought of such a motive as this, that by so doing they would injure the union and communion which the members of the mystical body of Christ have with each other in him?

Just look for a few moments at this reason, and observe the connection (for that is the point which we are endeavoring to show) between the precept always to speak the truth—and the gospel doctrine of the oneness of the body of Christ. Why should I not lie to my brother? Because we are both members of the body of Christ. If, then, I lie to my brother, I do the same thing spiritually, as if

I used my right hand to stab my left; or employed my eye to thrust my leg into a dirty ditch; or made use of my ear to put my foot under a carriage wheel. But when I speak truth to my brother, it is spiritually as when each member of my body truthfully performs its appointed function; as when my eye rightly guides my hand, when my hand rightly guards my eye, when my ear rightly warns my foot, and when my foot rightly takes my leg out of danger. Is not this high and holy ground? But what a close union it implies of the members of the mystical body of Christ, and what a spirit of communion and fellowship with their Head and with each other. A religion like this is almost lost out of the church. No wonder, then, that the precept is disregarded when its very foundation, if not wholly gone, is sunk out of sight!

Now look at the way in which the Holy Spirit warns us against SENSUAL SINS. The very nature of the subject compels us to treat it very cautiously. But, "unto the pure all things are pure;" (Titus 1:15;) and if we have brought the subject forward, it is with the sole object of throwing a fuller and clearer light upon our present point. Read, then, carefully 1 Corinthians 6:13-20. We say this as expecting you to have your Bible in your hand when you peruse our Meditations, and to compare with it all that we advance; for, if we speak not according to the word and the testimony, there is no light in us. (Isaiah 8:20.) Now just observe that there are three most blessed gospel truths here brought forward by the Holy Spirit as reasons against all unchastity.

1. That "he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit with him." (1 Corinthians 6:17.) What an unsearchable depth of truth is lodged in that one verse—union with Christ so close, so intimate, so near, go real as to be one spirit with him. To unfold this would be to open up the inmost heart, the deepest and warmest secrets of a living soul in its best and most favored moments. But, as an illustration of this oneness of spirit with Christ, take what you have doubtless in greater or less measure felt, oneness of spirit with some dear child of God. There are those among the living family with whom we see eye to eye and feel heart to heart in the precious things of God. What a oneness of spirit is there between us when we see alike, think alike, feel alike in what is all our salvation and all our desire, and when our very souls flow into each other like two drops of oil, or as those of David and Jonathan. Now he who is joined to the Lord is in a similar, but in a much higher degree one spirit with him; therefore sees with him, thinks with him, feels with him. But see the conclusion drawn from this precious gospel doctrine of oneness of spirit with Christ, and how peculiar it is—one we would never have thought of. This is the argument—Shall those who in soul are one spirit with Christ, be in body one flesh with the vilest of the vile? (1 Corinthians 6:16.) What high, holy, and heavenly ground is this.

2. But now view another gospel doctrine in connection with the warning against uncleanness. It is this—The body of the saint is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19.) Shall we, then, pollute that temple in which dwells so sacred and holy a Visitant by allowing in it any filthiness of walk and conduct? Would not this be like offering swine's blood upon God's altar, (Isaiah 66:3,) or committing the sin of Zimri (Numbers 25:6-15) in the very presence of the Holy Spirit? Do you not think that if you carried about with you a deep and daily sense that the Holy Spirit dwelt in your body as his living temple, it would make you very careful how you spoke and acted, lest you would by polluting his temple grieve that holy and divine Guest?

3. And now observe the third gospel doctrine with which the precept is connected. "You are bought with a price," (1 Corinthians 6:20) a price no less than the blood of the Son of God. What then

follows? That "you are not your own," in either body or soul, for Jesus has bought both for his own possession and his own glory. What, then, is the consequence? That you are neither your own property or at your own disposal. And if so, what follows as the practical result? That you would glorify God in your body; therefore that it would be possessed in sanctification and honor; (1 Thessalonians 4:4;) and in your spirit, which are both his. Is not this high and holy ground, so high and holy that we seem scarcely able to look at it, much less to reach it? But does it not amply prove our point—the connection of gospel precepts with gospel doctrines, and that whether the Holy Spirit would warn us or exhort us, he always does so on the purest, clearest gospel ground; avoiding on the one hand, with this most holy and heavenly wisdom, the least tinge of what is legal, and yet on the other setting before us such a path of practical godliness, spiritual obedience, and Christian devotedness as to make our very hearts sink within us at the sight and sense of our inconsistencies and backslidings?

3. But we now approach our next point in examining the nature of the precept, that is, the things which the precept specially inculcates. And forgive us, dear readers, if here also we would be a little verbose. We want to bring you, as it were, face to face with the scriptures; not merely to show you the outside of the temple, the buildings and the goodly stones; (Matthew 24:1; Luke 21:5;) not merely to walk about Zion, and go round about her to count the towers thereof; (Psalms 48:12)—but to enter with you into the inner courts, no, into the very sanctuary itself; for the veil was rent asunder from the top to the bottom when the Lord of life and glory died, and we may now have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 10:19.) It will be a great point gained if our Meditations bring you to a nearer and closer search into the treasures of the word—and a greater gain still if any of these treasures become experimentally your own by our laying them bare to your view, and faith being given you to embrace them in hope and love.

What, then, are the things which the precept inculcates? We may briefly answer that there is not a good word or a good work, not a grace or fruit of the Spirit, not an act of love toward God or man to which the precept does not call and invite the living family! But as on this point, as well as on others connected with the nature of the precept, some misconception prevails, we will endeavor to clear it up according to the ability given us. There is an idea, then, generally prevalent, that the precept addresses itself chiefly to outward actions, and that its chief end and object is to guide and regulate the external life and conduct. Now, though this is to a certain extent true—it is but half true. The precept addresses itself mainly to the inward life—and to the outward life only in connection with the inward life. It is thus distinguished, root and branch, from the law—the "do and live;" for its call, its sweet harmonious voice, is not, "Do and live," but "Live and do!" It is, therefore, not so much a code of rules—as a code of principles, a law put into the mind and written in the heart by the finger of God, according to one of the four special promises of the New Covenant, (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10,) and not a stern, rigid list of doings and duties.

Thus it calls us to separation from the world; (2 Corinthians 6:17;) "to set our affections on things above;" (Colossians 3:2;) to be "transformed by the renewing of our mind;" (Romans 12:2;) to live and walk in the Spirit; (Galatians 5:16; Galatians 5:25;) "to put on the whole armor of God;" (Ephesians 6:11;) to "be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, to let our requests be known unto God;" (Php 4:6;) to "put off the old man, and to put on the new;" (Ephesians 4:22-24;) to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good;" (1 Thessalonians 5:21;) to read, meditate, and give ourselves wholly to the things of God; (1 Timothy 4:13-15;) to

flee all covetousness and ungodliness, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life; (1 Timothy 6:11-12;) not to faint under our trials and afflictions, but to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus. (Hebrews 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:5.)

See how the precept, in such and similar exhortations, addresses itself to our inmost being, to our heart of hearts—that it is not a cold, dry catalogue of duties to be performed, but a gracious call to a living, loving obedience of spirit, and devotedness of affectionate service to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. But though this high and exalted character is the leading feature and peculiar blessedness of the perspective—yet it graciously comes down to details, that we may have a rule of outward conduct, a code of practice as well as a code of principles. Thus, when the Apostle has given us (Romans 12:1-21) a series of influential principles, as that "love should be without deceit;" that we should "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good;" that we should be "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another;" that we should "be not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" that we should "rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, continue always in prayer," &c., when he has given us these general principles of a Christian life, he proceeds (Romans 13:1-14) to a more detailed line of conduct, such as subjection unto the higher authorities; the payment of tribute to rulers, and their officers; the rendering to all of their dues, "custom to whom custom, fear or to whom fear, honor to whom honor;" that we should "owe no man anything, but love;" that we should neither judge nor despise a Christian brother; (Romans 14:1-23) but "follow after the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another."

How comprehensive, yet how simple and beautiful a rule of Christian conduct is thus traced out in various minute details, which, were it but acted upon and carried out, would make gospel churches full inwardly of love and peace, and patterns outwardly of practical godliness. Thus we see that the precept has, if we may use the expression, an ascending and a descending voice. When it says, "Set your affections on things above;" "Let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light;" "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free;" "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice," &c., it has an ascending voice, for it calls our hearts and affections upward to heavenly things. But when it says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake;" "Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God honor the king;" "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear;" "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornent, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes", it has a descending voice, for it comes down to the very minutiae of practical obedience, and issues directions for our daily walk and conversation.

O what wisdom and grace shine forth in the precept when viewed in that light whereby all things are made manifest. (Ephesians 5:13.) What a spirit of holiness, and yet what tender, affectionate condescension to our infirmities breathe through it. How graciously it blends the highest freedom and the deepest obedience; how it consults the glory of God and the good of man; how gently it leads us along in the only path where true peace can be found, and yet never scolds nor reproaches, though it sometimes reproves us; how it never winks at the least sin, ever maintaining

the same undeviating line of gospel purity, and yet stoops down to the poorest sinner that lies at the footstool of mercy. And surely we may add that the more this perfect law of liberty is looked into, the more its beauty and blessedness become manifest; for we can truly say that even since we began our Meditations upon it, fresh light seems to have beamed upon our mind to see and feel the impress of the holy Spirit visibly and powerfully stamped upon it, and to give us fresh proof that in it the living God speaks to the hearts and consciences of his people.

4. But now let us consider the next point which we proposed to examine, that is, the MOTIVES by which the precept is enforced.

Actions spring from motives. What the wind is to a ship at sea, what steam is to an engine on the rail, or, to speak more correctly, what love is to a youthful lover, what honor is to the military officer, what ambition is to the statesman—such is motive to action. To take away love from the lover is like taking wind from the sail, and steam from the locomotive. No more longing for the appointed hour of meeting, no more swift and speedy step to the appointed place. So the precept has attached to it motives which give both wings to the soul and wings to the feet. We shall by and by hope to show how the Holy Spirit puts life into and applies these motives, for without his gracious breath they are ineffectual—but at present we shall merely speak of the motives themselves.

If, then, you carefully examine the preceptive part of the epistles, you will find that the blessed Spirit, in giving a precept, almost always gives a motive with it. Take a few instances. Look at what we may almost call the first gospel precept—"Come out from among them, and be separate;" and see what a motive is attached to it—"And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18.) It is as if the Lord said, "You shall be no losers by coming out of the world, even if you must leave father and mother for my sake. I will receive you into my kind care and tender embrace, and be a Father unto you, adopting you into my own family, and bestowing upon you every mercy and blessing which I give to my dear children." What a motive to take the step of coming out from among them, whatever sacrifices it may entail, and at once to plunge into the sea of mercy and love thus opened in the promise; instead of dallying with the world, like Lot’s wife, or standing shivering on the brink, afraid to turn back, and afraid to go forward. But take another instance of the connection between the precept and the motive attached to it—"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Why? For what motive? "For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:3-4.) What an influential motive to set our affection on things above, that when Christ shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.

Take another instance—"Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep in the night; and those who be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet the hope of salvation." (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8.) Here is a call to watchfulness and sobriety, and that, let it be observed, wholly of a gospel nature, as distinguished from mere legal watchfulness and sobriety; for it is by putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. But what is the motive attached to the precept? "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10.)

We hope we shall not weary our readers if, as a further illustration of this point, we show how relative duties are similarly urged, as backed and influenced by gospel motives. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." (Colossians 3:22-23.) Now, see the motive to influence and animate the servant to obey his master with a single heart and single eye, in the fear of God, and with a view to his glory—"Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:24.) To see the full force of this, consider for a moment the case of the poor Roman slave, for to such was the precept originally addressed. He was at the entire disposal of his master, who could imprison, scourge, or crucify him at his pleasure, without interference or redress. The state of slaves has been, and ever must be, miserable and wretched in every climate, and in every age; but it has never been anywhere, or at any time, so thoroughly wretched as under the Roman empire. Now just picture to yourself this poor slave called by grace, and serving a heathen master. See how he is bidden to obey in all things his master, not for fear of the lash, but from the fear of God; and mark the motive which is to support and cheer him under his daily toil, his slave's garb, his miserable food, his hourly exposure to the prison and the scourge. There was a blessed inheritance reserved for him, which would make ample amends for all his earthly servitude; for he was serving in spirit the Lord Christ, who would one day put him into possession of "an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which does not fade away."

Now take the believing master. He shall have a precept too, and a motive also. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (Colossians 4:1.) The master must do what is just and equitable to the servant. Why? Because he also has "a Master in heaven" to whom he is bound, by every tie of Christian obedience, to do that which is just and right. But we need not further pursue this part of our subject. Our object is not to dictate to our readers, but to put them, so to speak, on the right track, that, like the noble Bereans, they may search the Scriptures for themselves, to see whether these things be so. (Acts 17:11.) The Scriptures are much read, but for the most part little searched into, and less understood. If, then, the Lord will kindly use us to throw some little light upon his word, and especially the preceptive part of it, and if our spiritual readers, aided by this light, will prayerfully and carefully examine for themselves this portion of divine truth, they may, with God's help and blessing, derive both instruction and profit from it. We are nothing, and have nothing; but as the Lord works by instruments he can employ even our pen for the edification of his dear family. If our views of the precept are scriptural, the more they are examined, the more their agreement with the word of God will appear. Light will break more and more on the mind of the spiritual reader, as we hope it has on that of the writer; faith will be more and more strengthened as it becomes more fed and nurtured with the pure word of his grace; hope will cast forth her anchor more firmly in the glorious truths and promises as they are opened to the heart; and love will more warmly and tenderly embrace the truth, and especially Him who is the Truth itself, in whom center all the promises and all the precepts, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Our readers will, perhaps, remember that, is examining the nature of the precept, we proposed to consider it under two distinct heads: The LETTER of the precept. The SPIRIT of the precept. And that under the first head, that is, the LETTER of the precept, we named five distinct points as worthy of our attentive consideration. These were—

1. The persons to whom the precept is addressed.

2. The connection of trio precept with the doctrines of the gospel.

3. The things which the precept specially inculcates.

4. The motives by which the precept is enforced.

5. The form under which the precept is revealed.

Four of these points we have already examined. There remains, therefore, but one point more for our present examination, the fifth and last head under the LETTER of the precept—

5. The FORM under which the precept is revealed. But as we wish to make every point which we attempt to handle as clear as we possibly can, let us first explain what we intend by the expression "form," as used by us in reference to the letter of the precept. We understand, then, by it that peculiar mode or strain of language which the Holy Spirit has made use of, in revealing and enforcing the precept as a part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by which he has impressed upon it that distinctive shape which it bears as an inspired rule for the obedience of faith. The word "form" is a scriptural expression, and is twice used by the Apostle Paul in much the same sense as we have thus affixed to it. Observe, for instance, the following passage—"But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." (Romans 6:17.) "The form of doctrine" here spoken of as being delivered unto the Roman saints means the model or pattern of apostolic teaching, according to which their hearts were modeled. This seems evident from the marginal, and, we may add, preferable reading, "whereto you were delivered," as a coin or a die, and which, therefore, stamped upon them its peculiar impress, producing an obedience from the heart. (The word translated "form" here, literally means the stamp of a seal, or impress of a coin, (as produced by a blow,) and thence a model or pattern. Thus taking the idea of a coin, divine teaching is the die, and the heart of the believer the medal; the one being produced by, and the exact counterpart of the other.) So again we find the Apostle speaking—"Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 1:13.) This "form of sound words" which Timothy was to hold fast was the model or pattern, according to which the Apostle had delivered to Timothy the truths which had been revealed to his own soul by the Holy Spirit, as he speaks—"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:13.) Or, as the words might be rendered, "combining spiritual things with spiritual;" that is, uniting spiritual truths to spiritual words—the things revealed by the Spirit, (1 Corinthians 2:10-12,) being the truths of the gospel, and the words which the Holy Spirit taught, (1 Corinthians 2:13,) being the form under which these truths worn delivered to the Church by the Apostle. The Holy Spirit, then, has stamped upon the precepts of the New Testament a peculiar character or impress, which we call their "form," and the nature of which we shall now endeavor more fully to unfold.

14.02b. The NATURE of the precepts (cont)

The NATURE of the precepts (continued) The main, the leading form of the precept is of course that of INJUNCTION or DIRECTION; that is, it authoritatively bids us do or not do this or that thing, pursue or not pursue this or that line of action. (The definition of a precept, as given in our best dictionaries, is, "A commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule of action."—Webster) It is thus distinguished from an invitation, such as, "Come unto me all you that labor," etc. (Matthew 11:28.) "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink;" (John 7:37;) and from a rebuke, such as, "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:2.) "You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." (Galatians 4:10-11.) But though its main form is necessarily one of injunction, without which, indeed, it would not be precept at all, it assumes various shades of direction, and yet every shade in the fullest harmony with the grace and spirit of the gospel. By way of introduction to the point before us, we may briefly mention that these varied forms of preceptive direction are chiefly–

1. command

2. injunction 3. entreaty or beseeching

4. admonition

(According to our translation there is another, that is, "exhorting;" but as this in the original is the same word as that rendered "beseeching," we shall not notice it as a distinct form.)

1. Thus sometimes it assumes the language of COMMAND. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6.) And again—"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10.) So also—"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband." (1 Corinthians 7:10.) This is, so to speak, the highest note of the precept—its strongest, loudest, and most authoritative voice.

If we examine the passages in which the precept assumes the form of a command; we shall find it employed for the most part in the four following cases–

1. When some danger is near.

2. Or when some flagrant evil or error is denounced.

3. Or when a strong injunction is laid on a man of God to invest him with peculiar authority.

4. Or when some important precept is urged. To each and all of those cases the voice of command, as we shall see if we examine them, is eminently suitable.

1. Take the first case—the voice of warning against some advancing danger or imminentDANGER. It seems thus used by the Apostle Peter in his second epistle—"That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior; knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." (2 Peter 3:2-3.) The Apostles of the Lord knew that there would come in the last days ungodly scoffers, and therefore in the strong language of command they warned the people of God against these perilous times and these perilous men. Is there anything out of place in the language of command here? A low, soft voice, a gentle whisper, would not do were you to see a man about to cross the line as a railway train was coming in, or if in the dead of night it were needful to give an alarm of "fire" to your next door neighbor. The voice, then, of authoritative command is not out of harmony with the grace and love of the gospel, when the precept warns the people of God against coming dangers and advancing perils, and shouts to them, as if from the top of the mountains, to take close heed to their steps.

2. But now take the case of denouncing EVIL or ERROR in the professing Church. Is sin or error to be sprinkled with rose-water, or dealt with lovingly and tenderly, as if in a lover's whisper on a moonlight eve? Look at the almost parallel case of the ministry. Does not God bid his servants "lift up their voice like a trumpet, to show his people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins!" (Isaiah 58:1.) There is an allusion here to the two silver trumpets which, at the command of the Lord, were made by Moses for the priests to blow, for the calling of the assembly and the journeying of the camps. (Numbers 10:1-2.) As, then, it was still the same silver trumpet which, "in the days of their gladness and in their solemn days," was blown over their burnt offerings and their peace offerings that sounded, when needful, an alarm, so it is still the same gospel precept which sometimes speaks in the language of the tenderest entreaty, and at others denounces sin and error as with trumpet voice.

Thus the word "command" is used when the evil is denounced of not withdrawing from a brother that walks disorderly; (2 Thessalonians 3:6;) or of living lazily, without working, upon other people's bounty; (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12;) or of a woman's abandoning her husband, or the husband's divorcing his wife, as not being a believer; (1 Corinthians 8:10;) or of warning against some gross sin. (1 Thessalonians 4:2-7.) In these instances wisely and graciously does the Holy Spirit employ the language of command, as thus impressing upon the precept a firmer and more authoritative character than mere entreaty. The evil of a wife's forsaking her husband, or of a husband's divorcing his wife, is surely to be dealt with by a firmer hand than the lack of a forgiving spirit among brethren. Command is too strong for the latter; entreaty too mild for the former. Each has its place in the precept; and each is suitable and beautiful according to its use, and according to its place.

3. The next case in which the word command is used is the AUTHORITY which a servant of Christ possesses as mouth for God. For instance—"Those things command and teach." (1 Timothy 4:11.) "Let the people know and feel," says Paul to Timothy, "that you speak with authority. Deal with them firmly when needful. God has put into your hands weapons mighty to pull down strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4.) Speak out in the voice of command when evils arise, errors spring up, or dangers threaten. In this sense it much approaches the nature of another ministerial weapon—the language of rebuke. "Those who sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." (1 Timothy 5:20.)

It is a great mistake to think that the servants of Christ have no authority in the Church; no power to command, as well as to teach. The Apostle expressly says to Titus, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you." (Titus 2:15.) Paul well knew that there were those in the churches who would seek to exalt themselves and depress the minister; consider him their servant, or try to make him their tool. He, therefore, meets this leveling spirit by bidding Timothy command as well as teach, and by telling Titus to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Of course this authority is wholly spiritual; but it is derived from the Lord, not from the Church. Those churches, and, we may add, those officers of churches, therefore, greatly err who treat their pastors as if they were rather their servants than the Lord's servants; and instead of obeying those who have the rule over them, and submitting themselves to their authority, (Hebrews 13:17,) rather seek to domineer, and even tyrannise over them by carnal weapons, and by that worst and basest of all—the purse.

4. The next and last case where the precept assumes the language of command is when PECULIAR IMPORTANCE is attached to the command. Now, what is the grand precept of the New Testament; in fact, the sum and substance of all the precepts? Is it not love? Need we, then, be surprised if this best, this sweetest and greatest of all the precepts, should, above all others, be enforced with authority? How blessedly did this precept fall from the lips of our Lord with the voice of command! "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12.) And again—"These things I command you, that you love one other." (John 15:17.) So also—"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34.) In a similar spirit writes the beloved disciple—"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." (1 John 3:23.) "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God love his brother also." (1 John 4:21.) Our readers will doubtless think with us that we have said quite enough upon this point. We shall, therefore, now proceed to consider the other forms of the precept of which we have already given a short summary.

2. Sometimes, then, it takes the form of INJUNCTION, that is, it simply and plainly bids us do or not do this or that thing. This is its leading form, and that which mainly constitutes it precept. Thus when it says, "Put off the old man, and put on the new." "Pray without ceasing—in everything give thanks." "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Husbands, love your wives." "Servants, obey your masters in all things," and so on. It simply bids us, as Christian men, do those things which befit the gospel, and bring forth those fruits which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. As one of the simplest and most marked instances of this injunctive form of the precept, take what we may call that comprehensive code of directions given us Romans 12:6-21, or that line of Christian walk and conduct which is laid down 1 Thessalonians 5:15-22. The main feature stamped upon each of these concise yet clear lists of directions is that of injunction—in other words, the Holy Spirit simply bids or enjoins upon us to pursue a certain course of Christian conduct.

This, in fact, is the precept in its simplest form—a kind of medium between the voice of command, which is the highest, and the voice of entreaty, which is the lowest note in the scale. It therefore specially appeals to our spiritual understanding. Let us explain this point a little more clearly.

Assuming, then, that a believer possesses these four things, as parts or members of the new man of grace—a good or pure conscience; (1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Timothy 3:9;) an enlightened understanding; (Ephesians 1:18;) a new, tender, and broken heart; (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Kings 22:19; Psalms 51:17;) and spiritual memory, or recollection of the Lord's dealings with the soul; (Deuteronomy 8:2; John 14:26; Hebrews 10:32;) the four distinctive forms of precept which we have already enumerated address themselves severally to each of them. Thus, "command" addresses itself to the conscience, "injunction" to the understanding, "entreaty" to the heart, and "admonition" to the memory. Not that each of these forms does not take in, and address itself to, the whole of a believer's new man of grace—not that there is any real separation of his conscience from his heart, or of his understanding from his memory—for our spiritual as well as our natural faculties are so combined in thought and action that they cannot be separated; but for the sake of clearness we may view them as distinct both in themselves and in their action.

Thus the precept under the form of "injunction," which we are now considering, addresses itself chiefly to our spiritual understanding. It thus becomes "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." (Psalms 119:105.) In that beautiful psalm just referred to, in which the yearnings of a living soul towards, the actings of a believing heart upon the word of God are so vividly portrayed, we may very plainly see the connection between the precept and an enlightened understanding. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law." (Psalms 119:34.) "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." (Psalms 119:18.) Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes." (Psalms 119:33.) "Make me to understand the way of your precepts." (Psalms 119:27.) How such and similar petitions show the existence of a gracious connection between understanding the precept and doing it. Indeed, how can we do the will of God unless we know the will of God? How can I tell how to act in this or that case agreeably to his revealed will—unless my eyes are spiritually enlightened to see what that revealed will is? This is not head knowledge, or "the knowledge that puffs up," but that gracious light in the understanding whereby it is divinely illuminated to know the truth as it is in Jesus—the fruit of that "anointing which teaches of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," (1 John 2:27,) enabling its favored possessor to say, "We know that the Spirit of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." (1 John 5:20.)

It is then to this gracious, this enlightened understanding that the precept, under its simplest form of injunction, chiefly addresses itself. We have rather lingered on this point, as having long felt that so few see the distinction between what the Apostle calls "the form of knowledge," (Romans 2:20,) or "the knowledge which puffs up," (1 Corinthians 8:1,) or "that understanding of all mysteries and of all knowledge" which a man may have and "be nothing," (1 Corinthians 13:2,) and that gracious understanding of the things of God which springs out of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, (1 Corinthians 2:12,) and the shining of God himself into the heart to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4.) When we come to the spirit of the precept, we shall see how this enlightened understanding acts in sweet harmony with the conscience, heart, and memory.

3. A. third form of the precept is ENTREATY. This is the tenderest form of the precept—its lowest, softest note, addressing itself immediately to the heart, as softened and melted with a sense of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren by the mercies of God;" (Romans 12:1;) "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2

Corinthians 10:1.) "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called." (Ephesians 4:1.) What a tenderness there is in these earnest entreaties of the man of God; and to show that he used this language not of his own personal authority—but as the commissioned servant of God, he says in one place—"Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We implore you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20.)

How these tender appeals to our heart prove the true character of the precept, that it is gospel—not law; mercy—not judgment; grace—not works; liberty—not bondage; life—not death; salvation—not damnation; love—not fear; which animate it and breathe through it. O how this sweet spirit of gospel grace, breathing through the precept, distinguishes it on the one hand from the hard bondage of legal service, and on the other from that looseness of lip and life which has done more than anything else to throw discredit on the glorious gospel of the grace of God. But we are anticipating another part of our subject, and shall, therefore, now proceed to the last form of the precept proposed for consideration.

4. This is that of ADMONITION. To admonish is a part of the ministry of the gospel—"And we beseech you, brethren, to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." (1 Thessalonians 5:12.) And as it is a part of the ministry of the gospel, so it is also an appointed means of the mutual edification of believers by one another—"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Romans 15:14.) So also—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16.)

We have already intimated that the voice of admonition addresses itself chiefly to the spiritual memory. We do not say that it does not appeal also to the understanding, to the conscience, and to the heart, for all these work and act together; but it chiefly and mainly addresses itself to our recollection. Thus when Paul says to his son Timothy, "Of these things put them in remembrance;" (2 Timothy 2:14;) "If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things;" (1 Timothy 4:6;) or when he appears to his Hebrew brethren—"But call to remembrance the former days," (Hebrews 10:32,) he evidently addresses himself to their spiritual memory—the recollection of the Lord's mercies towards, and his claims upon them. So when Peter says—"Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth;" (2 Peter 1:12;) and again—"Moreover, I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance," (2 Peter 1:15,) he evidently appeals to their recollection of truths formerly laid before them, and of their own experience of their reality and blessedness in knowing that they had "not followed cunningly-devised fables." This mode of appeal singularly distinguishes the second epistle of Peter, and seems especially suitable to an aged Apostle, and one about shortly to put off his tabernacle. (2 Peter 1:14.) A dying man may well write as his last affectionate appeal to his beloved children—"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior." (2 Peter 3:1-2.) This is admonition of the strongest, and yet tenderest kind.

If an affectionate father on a death-bed had said to his weeping children—"Be mindful of my last wishes; remember my dying request, that you should live in peace and union with each other," would it be out of place if those children were admonished of their father's words by their mother or a friend when they seemed disposed to quarrel? Would it not stir up their minds by way of remembrance, and appeal to their hearts through their memory? And similarly do not our minds need stirring up by way of remembrance? Observe, it is our "pure minds," that is, our new man of grace—"the mind with which we serve the law of God," (Romans 7:25,) (not our carnal mind, our flesh, our body of sin and death,) which the precept stirs up by way of remembrance, when we call to memory the goodness and mercy of God, and feel warmed by a recollection of his past favors. Is there anything legal here? Anything like bondage, guilt, fear, wrath, hell, and damnation? O how the voice of the precept is misunderstood, when Sinai's thunders are heard in it, or when wretched legalists shake it over the poor distressed people of God, as though they would gladly tie them up to the post, and flog with it their bleeding backs!

No, dear friends, there is no terror in the precept as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the word, and as revealed by the same Holy Spirit to the soul. It is all pure gospel, as pure as the grace from which it flows; and if it sometimes address itself to your conscience, sometimes to your understanding, sometimes to your heart, sometimes to your memory; if it commands, or enjoins, or beseeches, or admonishes—it is still a Father's voice speaking to a son, and not a master's giving orders to a servant. It is the special privilege of the freeborn sons and daughters of Zion to have such a line of walk and conduct traced out for them by their heavenly Father that they may know his will and do it; and they have the greatest reason to praise and bless his holy name that he has so kindly condescended to teach and instruct them in the way which they should go, and thus ever guide them with his eye. (Psalms 32:8.) The main, the leading form of the precept is of course that of INJUNCTION or DIRECTION; that is, it authoritatively bids us do or not do this or that thing, pursue or not pursue this or that line of action. (The definition of a precept, as given in our best dictionaries, is, "A commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule of action."—Webster) It is thus distinguished from an invitation, such as, "Come unto me all you that labor," etc. (Matthew 11:28.) "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink;" (John 7:37;) and from a rebuke, such as, "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:2.) "You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." (Galatians 4:10-11.) But though its main form is necessarily one of injunction, without which, indeed, it would not be precept at all, it assumes various shades of direction, and yet every shade in the fullest harmony with the grace and spirit of the gospel. By way of introduction to the point before us, we may briefly mention that these varied forms of preceptive direction are chiefly–

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2. But now take the case of denouncing EVIL or ERROR in the professing Church. Is sin or error to be sprinkled with rose-water, or dealt with lovingly and tenderly, as if in a lover’s whisper on a moonlight eve? Look at the almost parallel case of the ministry. Does not God bid his servants "lift up their voice like a trumpet, to show his people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins!" (Isaiah 58:1.) There is an allusion here to the two silver trumpets which, at the command of the Lord, were made by Moses for the priests to blow, for the calling of the assembly and the journeying of the camps. (Numbers 10:1-2.) As, then, it was still the same silver trumpet which, "in the days of their gladness and in their solemn days," was blown over their burnt offerings and their peace offerings that sounded, when needful, an alarm, so it is still the same gospel precept which sometimes speaks in the language of the tenderest entreaty, and at others denounces sin and error as with trumpet voice.

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4. The next and last case where the precept assumes the language of command is when PECULIAR IMPORTANCE is attached to the command. Now, what is the grand precept of the New Testament; in fact, the sum and substance of all the precepts? Is it not love? Need we, then, be surprised if this best, this sweetest and greatest of all the precepts, should, above all others, be enforced with authority? How blessedly did this precept fall from the lips of our Lord with the voice of command! "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12.) And again—"These things I command you, that you love one other." (John 15:17.) So also—"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34.) In a similar spirit writes the beloved disciple—"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." (1 John 3:23.) "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God love his brother also." (1 John 4:21.) Our readers will doubtless think with us that we have said quite enough upon this point. We shall, therefore, now proceed to consider the other forms of the precept of which we have already given a short summary.

2. Sometimes, then, it takes the form of INJUNCTION, that is, it simply and plainly bids us do or not do this or that thing. This is its leading form, and that which mainly constitutes it precept. Thus when it says, "Put off the old man, and put on the new." "Pray without ceasing—in everything give thanks." "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Husbands, love your wives." "Servants, obey your masters in all things," and so on. It simply bids us, as Christian men, do those things which befit the gospel, and bring forth those fruits which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. As one of the simplest and most marked instances of this injunctive form of the precept, take what we may call that comprehensive code of directions given us Romans 12:6-21, or that line of Christian walk and conduct which is laid down 1 Thessalonians 5:15-22. The main feature stamped upon each of these concise yet clear lists of directions is that of injunction—in other words, the Holy Spirit simply bids or enjoins upon us to pursue a certain course of Christian conduct.

This, in fact, is the precept in its simplest form—a kind of medium between the voice of command, which is the highest, and the voice of entreaty, which is the lowest note in the scale. It therefore specially appeals to our spiritual understanding. Let us explain this point a little more clearly.

Assuming, then, that a believer possesses these four things, as parts or members of the new man of grace—a good or pure conscience; (1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Timothy 3:9;) an enlightened understanding; (Ephesians 1:18;) a new, tender, and broken heart; (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Kings 22:19; Psalms 51:17;) and spiritual memory, or recollection of the Lord’s dealings with the soul; (Deuteronomy 8:2; John 14:26; Hebrews 10:32;) the four distinctive forms of precept which we have already enumerated address themselves severally to each of them. Thus, "command" addresses itself to the conscience, "injunction" to the understanding, "entreaty" to the heart, and "admonition" to the memory. Not that each of these forms does not take in, and address itself to, the whole of a believer’s new man of grace—not that there is any real separation of his conscience from his heart, or of his understanding from his memory—for our spiritual as well as our natural faculties are so combined in thought and action that they cannot be separated; but for the sake of clearness we may view them as distinct both in themselves and in their action.

Thus the precept under the form of "injunction," which we are now considering, addresses itself chiefly to our spiritual understanding. It thus becomes "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." (Psalms 119:105.) In that beautiful psalm just referred to, in which the yearnings of a living soul towards, the actings of a believing heart upon the word of God are so vividly portrayed, we may very plainly see the connection between the precept and an enlightened understanding. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law." (Psalms 119:34.) "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." (Psalms 119:18.) Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes." (Psalms 119:33.) "Make me to understand the way of your precepts." (Psalms 119:27.) How such and similar petitions show the existence of a gracious connection between understanding the precept and doing it. Indeed, how can we do the will of God unless we know the will of God? How can I tell how to act in this or that case agreeably to his revealed will—unless my eyes are spiritually enlightened to see what that revealed will is? This is not head knowledge, or "the knowledge that puffs up," but that gracious light in the understanding whereby it is divinely illuminated to know the truth as it is in Jesus—the fruit of that "anointing which teaches of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," (1 John 2:27,) enabling its favored possessor to say, "We know that the Spirit of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is

true." (1 John 5:20.)

It is then to this gracious, this enlightened understanding that the precept, under its simplest form of injunction, chiefly addresses itself. We have rather lingered on this point, as having long felt that so few see the distinction between what the Apostle calls "the form of knowledge," (Romans 2:20,) or "the knowledge which puffs up," (1 Corinthians 8:1,) or "that understanding of all mysteries and of all knowledge" which a man may have and "be nothing," (1 Corinthians 13:2,) and that gracious understanding of the things of God which springs out of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, (1 Corinthians 2:12,) and the shining of God himself into the heart to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4.) When we come to the spirit of the precept, we shall see how this enlightened understanding acts in sweet harmony with the conscience, heart, and memory.

3. A. third form of the precept is ENTREATY. This is the tenderest form of the precept—its lowest, softest note, addressing itself immediately to the heart, as softened and melted with a sense of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren by the mercies of God;" (Romans 12:1;) "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:1.) "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called." (Ephesians 4:1.) What a tenderness there is in these earnest entreaties of the man of God; and to show that he used this language not of his own personal authority—but as the commissioned servant of God, he says in one place—"Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We implore you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20.)

How these tender appeals to our heart prove the true character of the precept, that it is gospel—not law; mercy—not judgment; grace—not works; liberty—not bondage; life—not death; salvation—not damnation; love—not fear; which animate it and breathe through it. O how this sweet spirit of gospel grace, breathing through the precept, distinguishes it on the one hand from the hard bondage of legal service, and on the other from that looseness of lip and life which has done more than anything else to throw discredit on the glorious gospel of the grace of God. But we are anticipating another part of our subject, and shall, therefore, now proceed to the last form of the precept proposed for consideration.

4. This is that of ADMONITION. To admonish is a part of the ministry of the gospel—"And we beseech you, brethren, to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." (1 Thessalonians 5:12.) And as it is a part of the ministry of the gospel, so it is also an appointed means of the mutual edification of believers by one another—"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Romans 15:14.) So also—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16.)

We have already intimated that the voice of admonition addresses itself chiefly to the spiritual memory. We do not say that it does not appeal also to the understanding, to the conscience, and to the heart, for all these work and act together; but it chiefly and mainly addresses itself to our recollection. Thus when Paul says to his son Timothy, "Of these things put them in remembrance;" (2 Timothy 2:14;) "If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things;" (1 Timothy 4:6;) or

when he appears to his Hebrew brethren—"But call to remembrance the former days," (Hebrews 10:32,) he evidently addresses himself to their spiritual memory—the recollection of the Lord's mercies towards, and his claims upon them. So when Peter says—"Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth;" (2 Peter 1:12;) and again—"Moreover, I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance," (2 Peter 1:15,) he evidently appeals to their recollection of truths formerly laid before them, and of their own experience of their reality and blessedness in knowing that they had "not followed cunningly-devised fables." This mode of appeal singularly distinguishes the second epistle of Peter, and seems especially suitable to an aged Apostle, and one about shortly to put off his tabernacle. (2 Peter 1:14.) A dying man may well write as his last affectionate appeal to his beloved children—"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior." (2 Peter 3:1-2.) This is admonition of the strongest, and yet tenderest kind.

If an affectionate father on a death-bed had said to his weeping children—"Be mindful of my last wishes; remember my dying request, that you should live in peace and union with each other," would it be out of place if those children were admonished of their father's words by their mother or a friend when they seemed disposed to quarrel? Would it not stir up their minds by way of remembrance, and appeal to their hearts through their memory? And similarly do not our minds need stirring up by way of remembrance? Observe, it is our "pure minds," that is, our new man of grace—"the mind with which we serve the law of God," (Romans 7:25,) (not our carnal mind, our flesh, our body of sin and death,) which the precept stirs up by way of remembrance, when we call to memory the goodness and mercy of God, and feel warmed by a recollection of his past favors. Is there anything legal here? Anything like bondage, guilt, fear, wrath, hell, and damnation? O how the voice of the precept is misunderstood, when Sinai's thunders are heard in it, or when wretched legalists shake it over the poor distressed people of God, as though they would gladly tie them up to the post, and flog with it their bleeding backs!

No, dear friends, there is no terror in the precept as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the word, and as revealed by the same Holy Spirit to the soul. It is all pure gospel, as pure as the grace from which it flows; and if it sometimes address itself to your conscience, sometimes to your understanding, sometimes to your heart, sometimes to your memory; if it commands, or enjoins, or beseeches, or admonishes—it is still a Father's voice speaking to a son, and not a master's giving orders to a servant. It is the special privilege of the freeborn sons and daughters of Zion to have such a line of walk and conduct traced out for them by their heavenly Father that they may know his will and do it; and they have the greatest reason to praise and bless his holy name that he has so kindly condescended to teach and instruct them in the way which they should go, and thus ever guide them with his eye. (Psalms 32:8.)

Let, then, some legalize and pervert, and let others neglect and despise the precept; it still remains the possession and the privilege of the living family of God—their possession as their Father's revealed will, and their privilege as their inspired guide to the obedience of faith. In our next section we hope, if the Lord wills, to enter upon the spirit of the precept; and may the Holy Spirit who has revealed in it the letter of the word, and who, from time to time, animates it with his

vivifying breath, rest upon our spirit and our pen, and upon the spirit of our gracious readers.

14.02c. The NATURE of the precepts (cont)

The NATURE of the precepts (continued) In considering the nature of the precept, we shall examine, First, the LETTER of the precept.

Secondly, the SPIRIT of the precept.

II. The SPIRIT of the precept.

We come now to a very important part of our subject—indeed, we may almost say the most important, for it is that part which gives life and spirit to the whole. This is the spirit of the precept as distinguished from the letter.

We have never seen any work on the precepts of God's word, which has given us full satisfaction; and for this simple reason. No man of truth, that we are aware of, has treated the subject fully and systematically. Owen, Bunyan, and most of the old Puritan writers have entered largely and fully into the preceptive parts of the word of God; but as they hold the Mosaic law for the believer's rule of life, their views were necessarily from that circumstance legal, confused and imperfect. Mr. Huntington and Mr. Gadsby have both of them most clearly and beautifully unfolded the spiritual character of the precept, and shown its full and thorough harmony with the grace of the gospel; and from the "Posthumous Letters," and other works of Huntington, whole pages might be selected in which the immortal Coalheaver has, in his most masterly manner, described the fruits and effects of the gospel in heart, lip, and life; in other words has drawn out the precept in all its living features as a rule of Christian obedience. But neither of these great men has handled the subject in a full and systematic manner, so as to enter into it in its length and breadth, and thus present it as a full, compact, and consistent whole to the consideration of the Church of God. It was not, indeed, necessary for them to do this, as their object was rather to overthrow the current doctrine—that the Mosaic law was the believer's rule of life—and to establish the gospel, the perfect law of liberty, as the believer's rule—than devote their attention to a minute consideration of the precept, which was but a part of their subject. It seemed, therefore, laid upon our mind to take up the subject as we had seen it revealed in the word of truth and in the experience of the saints, and handle it in a more full, clear, and systematic form than we believe has been yet attempted by any man of truth. And this must be our excuse if our exposition of it has been somewhat too lengthy and verbose.

Dim, superficial, confused views of the solemn, weighty truths of the gospel cannot satisfy our mind. We love, if God gives us the wisdom and ability, to go to the very bottom of a subject and turn it up for examination by the people of God, that they with us may be firmly established in the truth, and not be "children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Ephesians 4:14.) This, however, requires not only much careful examination and meditation, but a certain fullness of detail which, from undue length, may become wearisome. It was for this reason, therefore, that we examined fully the letter of the precept, which probably seemed to many dull and dry, but yet was

necessary to be thoroughly gone into, to lay a deep and broad foundation for the more spiritual and experimental part of our subject to rest upon. But having laid this foundation, we now come to those inner chambers which wisdom has filled with all precious and pleasant riches, (Proverbs 24:4,) to those experimental realities, where we and our spiritual readers feel most at home, and most enjoy that sweet union and unison of spirit in which we mutually delight. We come, then, now to the SPIRIT of the precept. In examining, then, this part of our subject, we shall consider the spirit of the precept under three points of view–

1. The nature and character of the spirit of the precept.

2. The connection between the spirit and the letter of the precept.

3. The way in which the spirit of the precept acts in unison and harmony—not only with the letter of the precept—but with the whole tenor and current of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. The NATURE and CHARACTER of the spirit of the precept. As it is most desirable to obtain, if we do not already possess, clear ideas upon the point now before us at the very outset, (for if we start confusedly we shall proceed confusedly, and shall probably end confusedly,) we shall first attempt to define as simply and as plainly as we can, what we understand by the spirit of the precept; and then, to set the subject in a fuller, broader light, shall illustrate our definition by some experimental and practical instances.

We DEFINE the spirit of the precept to be the life and power of the precept, as animated by the quickening breath of the Holy Spirit, and thus brought into and out of the believing heart by a divine operation and influence. In this life and power put into the precept by the Holy Spirit, and thus made spirit and life to the soul, lies all the difference between the spirit and the letter. This distinctive difference between the letter and the spirit we may see clearly exemplified in the Lord’s own words to his disciples—"It is the Spirit who quickens; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) Many heard the words in the letter which the Lord spoke with pleasure and approbation; for we read that on one occasion "all the people hung on his words," and on another, that, "all who were there spoke well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that fell from his lips." But to them it was but the letter of truth; for those very same people, who were amazed at his gracious words, when the Lord began to preach the discriminating grace of God "were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city." (Luke 4:22; Luke 4:28-29.) The Spirit did not quicken his words to their souls; they were not made, as to the disciples, spirit and life. They were, therefore, to them the mere letter of truth, and what is more, the killing letter, for by those words they were to be judged and condemned. (John 12:48.) The spirit of the precept is, then, so to speak, the breathing of life by the Spirit into the letter of the precept, and thus a bringing of it into the heart with a divine influence of power, and out of the heart into a gracious and practical fulfillment. Let us illustrate this explanation by several examples; and, to make the point clearer, we will take two distinct classes of precept—

1. That class which addresses itself peculiarly to our personal walk with and before God.

2. That class which addresses itself to our walk and conduct with and before man.

1. Take the following precept as addressing itself to our walk before God. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter 5:6.) I am here directed and enjoined to humble myself under the mighty hand of God. But can I do so? No, I cannot! I may make the attempt. I may fall on my knees, confess my sins, put my mouth in the dust—at least do all this in words. But can I produce in my soul that solemn humbling of my whole spirit before God, that believing view of his mighty hand under which I reverentially bow, that self-loathing and self-abhorrence, that brokenness and contrition of heart, that lying at his feet with weeping and supplications, that giving up of myself into his hands, without which all my humbling of myself is but lip service? No! I can do none of these things! I am so thoroughly destitute and helpless that I cannot produce one grain of real humility in my own soul. But let the Holy Spirit graciously work upon my heart; let him fill me with a deep sense of the mighty hand of God over me and under me; let him humble me in my inmost soul as the very chief of sinners under his mighty hand as able to save or destroy; let my heart be broken and my spirit made contrite under a sight of my sins, and a sight, too, of the life and blood, sufferings and death of my dear Redeemer—how can I not humble myself under the mighty hand of God? Is any spot too low for me to creep into and lie in? Where are my pride and self-righteousness now? Does not sweet humility fill and possess my soul?

Here is the spirit of the precept. Here is life and power put into it; here the Holy Spirit brings it, in the substance of it, into the heart, and out of the heart too. Here the precept is fulfilled in its spiritual import, in harmony with the grace of the gospel, according to the will of God, and, therefore, acceptably to him.

Take another instance of the same class of precept—"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Php 4:6.) Can you perform this precept? There it stands in the letter of the word—a gracious injunction—a holy, wise direction. But can you not be "anxious," (that is, as the word literally means, 'rent and torn in your mind,') "about anything," when you know what anxious cares about almost everything daily rack your bosom? And can you produce or maintain that prayerful spirit whereby in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God?" You know that you cannot! But suppose that, in some unexpected moment, when full of cares, you are favored with a gracious visitation of the blessed Spirit, and faith is given you to cast all your care upon the Lord, knowing that he cares for you; and suppose that with this a spirit of grace and of supplication is poured into your bosom, can you now in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving for past mercies and favors, make your requests known unto God? You say, "I can! I do! All my requests I make known to his gracious Majesty, and he hears and answers me to the joy of my heart." This is the spirit of the precept; this is fulfilling it from the heart; this is serving God in newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter.

2. Now take another class of precepts; those which prescribe and regulate our walk and conduct before man, and especially with our believing brethren. There is the letter—and the spirit. We will look it both. Take the following precept from the letter of the word—"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Ephesians 5:1-2.) We are here bidden to be "imitators of God"—that is, we are enjoined to imitate the example of God, in forgiving our brethren, as he has forgiven us, as is evident from the preceding verse. (Ephesians 4:32.) Now, can you thus imitate

God in forgiving a brother who has done you a grievous wrong? You try to do so before God and your brother. But while you are trying and trying to raise up a forgiving spirit, something rankles within, which keeps you back from a full and free forgiveness. But let the Lord the Spirit but bring into your soul a sweet sense of pardoning love; let him set before your eyes and bring into your heart the suffering Son of God, as loving you and giving himself for you, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour—can you forgive your brother now? Can you walk in love with all the dear family of God now? How freely and fully you can forgive; how warmly and affectionately you can love! Here is the spirit of the precept—not the cold, dead, naked letter—but the very spirit of it, warmed into life and motion—brought out of the word into the heart—and brought again out of the heart, all warm and glowing—into the activity and energy of practical obedience. This is a doing of the will of God from the heart, (Ephesians 6:6,) and therefore a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5.)

We need not pursue this point further. But if you wish to have your mind and judgment more fully formed and established in this point, in which really the very pith and marrow of the whole subject lies, take one precept after another and examine each by the light which we have endeavored to cast upon it. You will see that in every instance there is the letter and the spirit; and that the only way of fulfilling the precept is by having the life and power of it in your own soul.

2. The CONNECTION between the spirit and the letter of the precept. In a former chapter we illustrated the distinction between the letter, and the spirit of the precept by comparing the former to the body, and the latter to the soul of a living man. The soul, at least in our present time-state, does not, as a general rule, act separately from the body; and though each one’s individual consciousness sufficiently assures him of the distinctness of soul and body, yet are they so linked together that they for the most part act by and with each other. Can you, viewing the matter as a general, ordinary, everyday fact, see without your eyes, or hear without your ears, or feel without your fingers, or talk without your tongue? Yet what are eyes, or ears, or fingers or tongue separate from the soul which uses them as her instruments to gather in her ideas, and then, sitting apart in her noble citadel, forms from them her plans, which she bids them, as her ministering servants, execute? And faithfully do they execute the biddings of their mistress until old age or infirmity dims the eye and dulls the ear, stiffens the joints and weakens the active hand and nimble foot, until at length "the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken; and then the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7.) Of course our figure is but a figure, and, therefore, must not be too closely pressed; and yet there are points of resemblance which may help to illustrate the distinction which we wish to draw between the letter and the spirit of the precept, and at the same time show their intimate connection with each other.

1. The soul is unquestionably the nobler part of man. God has given us "a body as it has pleased him,"—a body fearfully and wonderfully made, and most admirably and beautifully adapted to our present time-state. But, as formed of the dust of the ground, it is and must be, from its very origin, inferior to the soul which God himself breathed into man’s nostrils with the breath of life. (Genesis 2:7.) So the letter of the precept, is necessarily inferior to the spirit of the precept—as standing merely in so many words and letters formed from the ordinary earthly language of man, as Adam’s body out of the dust, and, therefore, requiring an animating breath, the very breath of God, to put a soul into them. Except, then, as animated by the Holy Spirit, the letter of the precept is cold and dead—like a man asleep or in his coffin, a man with all the limbs and features of a human being,

but lifeless and motionless for lack of the living soul to inspire him into activity and movement. As, then, the soul of man is nobler than the body of man, so the spirit or soul of the precept, is nobler than the letter or body of the precept. An example from the Scripture will show this point in a still clearer light—"And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32.) How good, how wise, how gracious is this precept as it stands in the letter of truth. But surely the spirit of the precept, the spirit of kindness, of tenderness of heart, of mutual brotherly forgiveness, and all flowing from the sweet persuasion of being ourselves forgiven—is nobler than the letter of the precept; for it is that which animates it, carries it into practical execution, and makes it effectual to the obedience of faith. I may forgive as a duty. O how cold and worthless; how half-hearted, if not wholly insincere. But to forgive under a divine influence, as melted and softened by pardoning mercy—is not this spirit of forgiveness higher, nobler, fuller, more blessed than the mere fulfillment in the letter of a practical duty? For our obedience must be one or the other, must stand either in the letter or in the spirit—be an act of moral duty, or a fruit of special grace.

2. But on another ground the soul is superior to the body. The soul can act without the body; but the body cannot act without the soul. We think, we meditate, we pray; our active mind runs here and there; we pass in a moment from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven; we skim over the wide Atlantic to a friend in America, fly on over the broad Pacific to a relative in Australia or New Zealand, and leap at one bound from pole to hole. Spurning sea, air, earth, and sky—on, on flies the unwearied soul, more quickly than electric current or lightning stroke. And where is the poor body all the time? Ill, perhaps, in bed, lying languidly on the sofa, scarcely able, it may be, to walk across the room, chained fast with a broken leg or life-long lameness—while its ethereal mate, regardless of her clay partner, is soaring here and there swifter than light, and freer than air! But is this not inconsistent with our previous assertion that the soul does not, as a general rule, act separately from the body? Not a whit; and that chiefly jar two reasons. 1. First we qualified our assertion by the words "as a general rule;" 2. Though the soul can and does act separately from the body, yet it is only by means of those ideas which it has gained through the bodily senses that it thus acts in its rapid and varied flights. Thus in one sense the soul is dependent on, in another independent of, its sluggish companion, and yet remains in close connection with it—a connection of the past, if not a connection of the present. So with the letter and spirit of the precept. The spirit of the precept can act distinctly from the letter of the precept, and yet has gained from it its knowledge of the offices which it has to execute, its understanding of the work which it has to perform. If I love my brother, if I forgive my enemy, if I pray without ceasing, if I rejoice in the Lord, if I abhor that which is evil, if I cleave to that which is good, if I walk worthy of the calling with which I am called—assuming that I do these things, and do them in the very spirit of the gospel as taught, led, and, influenced by the Holy Spirit—I only feel, walk, and act in unison with the letter of the precept. I gather previously from the word of God what his will is and how I should walk according to it; and if the Holy Spirit opens this will to my heart, and enables me to act in obedience to it, I learn first from the letter of the precept what that will is. Our Lord could say, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is within my heart." (Psalms 40:7-8.) Thus though his delight was to do the will of God, yet that will was written in the volume of the book—either the volume of God's eternal decrees or the volume of the inspired Scriptures. So with us. If possessing any measure of the mind, grace, and spirit of Christ, we delight to do the will of God, we first see that will written in the volume of the

book. For what do we know of the revealed will of God—except from the Scriptures of truth? Thus there is a connection between the letter and the spirit of the precept, analogous to the connection of our body and soul. My intellectual knowledge, my mental ideas, have all been gathered in the first instance through my bodily senses, as sight, hearing, &c., and then my mind selects, compares, combines, and otherwise uses for its own purposes the materials of thought and reasoning which have been thus sedulously and steadily gathered. That the spirit of the precept can powerfully influence and vigorously act without the medium of the letter was evidently shown in that signal day when "the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and of one soul." (Acts 4:32.) It is true that the precept as delivered by our gracious Lord was in the mind and memory of his immediate disciples, and was at that time also in the mouth of the Apostles, as we find Peter giving it forth; (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:47-48;) but the love of God being shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the precept, "Love one another as I have loved you," was so strong and powerful that it not exactly superseded, but soared above, all written directions.

We have an instance of this point in the words of Paul to the Thessalonians—"As concerning brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another." (1 Thessalonians 4:9.) They were so taught of God to love one another that they needed no written directions to do so, no formal precept to bind it hard and fast in their consciences. And yet to show the nature and necessity of the precept, and its connection with spiritual obedience, the Apostle adds, "And indeed you do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that you increase more and more." (1 Thessalonians 4:10.) Their brotherly love might flag, or there were larger measures of it to be attained unto. The spirit of the precept might seem to render the letter almost needless in their happy case; and yet the Apostle would not neglect the letter, but would still urge it upon their consciences, as a revelation of the special will of God.

We may take an almost parallel case from the precept—"Husbands, love your wives." (Ephesians 5:25.) A Christian husband may so dearly and fondly love his wife that he may need no precept to urge him to love her. The spirit of the precept in this case may seem almost to supersede and render useless the injunction; and yet it does not do the one or the other, for he may love her too fondly, with too much of carnal love, and this may entangle him in some of those numerous snares which ever attend idolatrous or inordinate affections.

Here, then, come in the wisdom and grace of the letter of the precept to guide, to regulate, to sanctify conjugal love, to turn it into a Christian channel, to restrain its excess, and to hold up a pattern and an example that it may not be like the gross, sensual love of carnal men to carnal women—but be purified from idolatry and everything whereby the conscience may be defiled. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Ephesians 5:25-26.) The purity and sanctity of Christ’s love to the Church is thus offered as an example to purify and sanctify the love with which a Christian man should love his wife. Thus though the spirit of the precept can act independently of the letter of the precept, yet from the letter it gains its knowledge of the will of God, and by the letter it is guided, restrained, and regulated.

3. This, therefore, gives us another instance of the connection between the letter and the spirit of the precept and the extreme value and blessedness of this intimate connection. The letter guides

and regulates the spirit, and thus preserves it from enthusiasm and fanaticism. What a deep debt of gratitude do we owe to the Holy Spirit for the ’letter’ of the precept! What a preservative from pretended revelations or spiritual delusions! We live in a dreadful day, when the vilest impostures or the very depths of Satan are palmed off as "spiritual manifestations." Now, what an unspeakable mercy it is for the Church of God that there is a calm, sober, solid, weighty spiritual revelation of his mind and will in the New Testament, and especially in the preceptive part of it. This is at once a guide and a test, a restraint from all wild flights of what might be thought and called ’the spirit’, from all erroneous views of what we might be told the Spirit dictates or enforces, and yet at the same time, a safe, wise, and holy regulator of all our walk and conduct with God and man!

We have not space to prove it; but it might be easily shown that most if not all of the abominations of the Romish Church, her pretended revelations, her monkish austerities, her conventual discipline, her secret confessional, and the power which she wields over the minds and consciences of her devotees may be traced up to her casting aside the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and obedience. O the unspeakable blessedness, then, of possessing, as God’s gift—the wisest, safest, holiest instruction to guide our every step heavenward. O the greater blessedness still of having a divine teaching, power, and influence in our own bosom to quicken the precept as with new life—and to animate our heart to love and obey it, as held forth to our faith.

3. Having thus traced the connection between the letter and the spirit of the precept, we shall now attempt to show how the spirit of the precept acts in unison and harmony, not only with the letter of the precept, but with the whole tenor and current of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It thus elevates the precept out of the letter; takes it completely out of the hands of legalists and pharisees, who, by their ignorance or their self-righteousness, would pervert it into a mere moral code; brings it thoroughly away from Mount Sinai, where they would gladly fasten it on the mount which burned with fire, and was shrouded in blackness, and darkness, and tempest—and puts it under the shade and shelter of Mount Zion, as a part of that new covenant of which Jesus is the Mediator, and of which the blood of sprinkling is the dedication. (Hebrews 9:18-23; Hebrews 12:18-24.)

If you are still in doubt upon this point, ask yourself this simple question—"Is the precept a part of the New Testament or not?" If it is a part of the New Testament, which none can deny, it is of the new covenant, for the word in the original is the same, and the meaning of the two terms but slightly differs. Now, if it is a part of the new covenant, then it must be in harmony with every other part of it, unless you suppose that the God of all wisdom and of all grace has given to the Church a broken, divided, inconsistent, contradictory covenant; a circumstance which, according even to human covenants, would vitiate the whole. It is surprising how all difficulties, and especially those which we make for ourselves or others make for us by carnal reasoning, vanish and disappear before the simplicity of truth. How Mr. Huntington was abused for nearly half a century with the vilest names, called an imposter and an Antinomian by men who stood high in an evangelical profession, for merely holding and defending a truth which is as clear as the sun at noonday, thatthe gospel, not the Mosaic law, is the believer’s rule of life. Was this an error of the deepest magnitude? Was this "a heinous crime, yes, an iniquity to be punished by the judges," that in so doing he applied to God’s last and best will and testament a principle known to every man who has a shilling’s worth of property to bequeath, that a new will at once sets aside an old one, and that no

judge or jury, court of law, or attorney would so much as look at a will dated last week when there lies before them a will dated today? And yet men and ministers, holding in their hands or laying on their pulpit cushion a Bible divided into the Old and New Testaments, in other words, God's Old and New Wills, heaped abuse on the head of a man who simply asserted that God's New Will virtually repealed and set aside his Old Will. But as bats and owls hate the sun, because under his bright beams they cannot hunt and hawk for their insects and their mice; so do half-blind professors hate the sunlight of heavenly truth, as baffling their low and groveling appetites for everything which feeds the flesh; while new-born souls love its genial beams, and are ever crying, "Light, light, more light. Shine, Lord, into my heart; show me light in your own most blessed light, and fix my affections on things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." And the Lord answers them to the joy of their soul; for he "who commands the light to shine out of darkness shines into their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6.)

Readers, forgive this digression; but feeling our heart warmed with love to God's truth, our pen ran glidingly on. We have had some dry spots to travel over and toil through even in our present subject, when we were handling the letter of the precept. If, then, we can but get a little lying down in a green pasture, and a little leading beside the still waters, let us tarry awhile to eat and drink, and so pass on. The wilderness is still before us. Bless his holy name if the cloudy pillar there guide us, the manna feed us, and the well out of the rock follow us. Let us attempt to show, then, HOW the spirit of the precept acts in harmony with the whole tenor of the gospel.

1. The grand distinctive feature of the gospel is, that it is the revelation of a new covenant, the covenant of grace, made by the Father with the Son on behalf of a peculiar people. By the term "grace" we understand the pure favor of God, irrespective of all worth or worthiness in the creature, and flowing out to his people as chosen, accepted, and blessed in the Son of his love. The declaration and proclamation of this new covenant we call the gospel, that is, glad tidings—good news. And the gladness of its tidings consists in this—that it sounds forth salvation by grace. These are simple, well-known truths; but we need sometimes to be as if recalled to the simplicity of truth, especially when errors of various kinds spring up to pervert and distort it. As a revelation, then, of pure grace, the gospel is distinguished from the law, the covenant of works. Every part, therefore, of the gospel must harmonize with this grand characteristic; and as the precept is a part of this gospel, it too must, in all its varied bearings, move in fullest accord with the grace of God, as thus revealed in his dear Son. But grace is a most comprehensive term, for it embraces the pure favor of God both in its source and in its streams, in its manifestations and in its operations, in its purposes and in its effects, in its counsels and in its consequences. The precept, of course, is not co-extensive with the grace of God, for it is but a part, and comparatively but a small part, of that wondrous plan, as being chiefly confined to this time-state; while grace not merely respects the present, but looks backward and forward—backward to the eternal purposes of God in Christ, (Ephesians 1:3-11,) and forward to the accomplishment of those purposes in "making known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had prepared beforehand unto glory." (Romans 9:23.)

Thus the doctrines of the gospel are doctrines of grace, the promises of the gospel are promises of grace, the invitations of the gospel are invitations of grace, and the precepts of the gospel are precepts of grace. All this seems self-evident, and immediately as the gospel is seen and

acknowledged to be a revelation of pure grace, it follows as an undeniable conclusion. But it is found, as a matter of daily observation and experience, that the perverse mind of man will evade, or distort, or deny conclusions or consequences, however plain or clear they may appear, which are opposed to natural prejudices, or which press hard upon habits of self-indulgence or self-righteousness. You may, for instance, show a man, in the clearest manner from the word of God, the sin of covetousness, and he will admit the truth and force of your arguments and conclusions. But ask him the next moment for a few shillings for the poor, and you will soon see how his covetous heart evades or denies the point to which you have just brought him. So with the precept. With one breath a man will acknowledge it as a part of the gospel of the grace of God, and with the next utter words which convince you that he pays no real regard to it, holds it in no honor or estimation, and has neither seen its beauty nor felt its power.

Now, this one thing is certain to our own mind, for it has been worked out in our own experience—if we have never seen the beauty or felt the power of a truth, we have never heartily, cordially, affectionately embraced it; indeed, it is a great question with us whether we have embraced it at all. Put this point to a practical test. Why did you embrace the doctrines of grace? Because you saw their beauty and felt their power. Why did you embrace the Lord himself with true faith and hearty affection? Because you saw his beauty and felt the power of his grace and love in your heart. Then, on similar grounds, no one can embrace the precept heartily, cordially, affectionately, who has not seen its beauty and felt its power. But its beauty consists mainly in its grace. If we see beauty in its face, it is because grace has fashioned and adorned every feature, and stamped upon them its own loveliness; if we hear melody in its voice, it is because grace attunes it to its own beautiful harmony; if it attracts and draws us to follow after it, it is like the influence of a beautiful woman upon her lovers and admirers who follow her wherever she goes, pleased to do her slightest biddings, under the irresistible charm of her smile.

Thus it is the grace of the precept, its beautiful harmony with the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and communion of the Holy Spirit—which causes our heart to embrace it as at once holy and wise, tender and loving, savory and suitable—a faithful guide under all difficulties—a loving monitor against all evil—a gentle reprover when we go astray—and a kind friend ever at hand to give affectionate and solid counsel. Now if you have never seen anything of this beauty in the precept, and never felt anything of this power in it, one of these two is most certainly your case and state—either you have never seen the beauty or felt the power of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart—or that, as yet, you have not seen the beauty or felt the power of the grace of the precept.

We will gladly hope that the latter is the case with you, if you know not the meaning of our voice, and we are unto you a barbarian. But as this part of our subject is not yet exhausted, we will make another attempt in our next section—to reach your understanding, touch your conscience, and soften your heart. Our readers will kindly bear in mind that the part of our subject which we are now handling is the SPIRIT of the precept, and that the point immediately before us is the union and harmony which the spirit of the precept possesses, not only with the letter of the precept, but with the whole current and tenor of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To prove this point conclusively would require a close and thorough investigation of the whole current and tenor of the gospel; but, as this would be an almost interminable field, we shall content ourselves with simply stating a few leading characteristics of the gospel; and if we can show that

the spirit of the precept is in union and harmony with these, it will necessarily follow that, as the gospel is a uniform, consistent whole, it will equally harmonize with all the rest.

We know no part of Scripture where the law and the gospel are more clearly, concisely, and beautifully contrasted than in that remarkable chapter, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. The whole chapter demands and will amply repay the most careful and prayerful examination and meditation; for in it the Apostle places in striking contrast the two dispensations—the main points of contrast being the peculiar glory of each covenant, but the surpassing glory of the New Covenant. Paul does not, like some uninspired teachers, disparage the law, or push it contemptuously out of the way, but gives it due honor as a revelation from God, and as such, therefore, possessing a glory of its own. Following his invariable method of basing all his assertions on Scripture, he founds his view of the peculiar glory of the old dispensation upon a remarkable occurrence at the time of its revelation—"But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away." (2 Corinthians 3:7.) We would be glad to enter into the various circumstances and accompaniments of the giving of the law, but our limit prevents this; and we shall, therefore, merely remark that these accompaniments when "the Lord descended upon mount Sinai in fire," (Exodus 19:18,) were but the shadowings forth of the dreadful majesty of God, of his inflexible justice, and fiery wrath against sin, which burn to the lowest hell. Now, after these fearsome manifestations of the power, presence, and glory of God on Sinai's burning top, the Lord spoke what are sometimes called "the ten words," (Exodus 34:28, margin,) or ten commandments; and to impress upon them greater weight and permanency, he afterwards gave them to Moses written with his own finger on two tables of stone, at the end of his forty days' and nights' sojourn in the Mount. We read that "the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and that the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount." (Exodus 24:16-17.) In the midst of this glory Moses was, as it were, wrapped up; for he was the typical mediator of that covenant. When, then, he came down from the mount a second time with the two tables in his hands, the skin of his face shone, as if the glory of God in that covenant were reflected in it. The shining of his face Paul calls "the glory of his countenance," that being the reflection of the glory of God as seen by him face to face during the forty days' sojourn. But on this point we need not enlarge, our only object, in dwelling thus momentarily upon the glory of the law, being to draw attention to the superior glory of the gospel, as contrasted with it, which we shall find to have some bearing on our present subject. The apostle, then, in the chapter to which we have referred, mentions five points of contrast in which the glory of the gospel excels and outshines the glory of the law—

1. The law is but the ministration of the letter; that is, it stood only in so many written words or letters, engraved on tables of stone; (2 Corinthians 3:3;) but the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 3:8.)

2. The law is the ministration of death, for "the letter kills;" but the gospel is the ministration of life, for "the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6.) 3. The law is the ministration of condemnation; but the gospel is the ministration of righteousness.

4. The law genders to bondage; (Galatians 4:2 4;) but the gospel is the spirit of liberty.

5. The law was for a time, and then to be done away; (2 Corinthians 3:11; 2 Corinthians 3:13;) the gospel is permanent and enduring. (2 Corinthians 3:11.) To work out these points, contrast then with one another, and to show from them the glory of each dispensation, and yet the surpassing and superior glory of the gospel, would be a subject of deep and profitable meditation. But we shall only consider them so far as they have a bearing on our subject, and shall take but three of them, adding a fourth from another quarter. These four characteristic features of the gospel, constituting its main, its distinguishing glory, are, that it is a ministration of the Spirit, of life, of liberty and of love. With each and all of these four features will the spirit of the precept be in the fullest harmony.

1. The first leading feature of the gospel is, that it is the ministration of the SPIRIT; that is, through it and by it the Holy Spirit is promised and communicated. Thus Paul asks the Galatians, "This only would I learn of you—have you received the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2.) The "hearing of faith" means that hearing of the gospel with the believing heart, whereby it becomes "the power of God unto salvation," (Romans 1:16,) when it comes "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." (1 Thessalonians 1:5.) In this sense the gospel is the ministration or service of the blessed Spirit, that gracious and holy Teacher using it as a means of conveying himself into the heart. When our blessed Lord rose from the dead, and ascended on high, he "received gifts for men." (Psalms 68:18.) The prime and chief of these gifts was the Holy Spirit, which, being promised him by the Father as a part of the reward of his humiliation, sufferings, and death, is therefore called "the promise of the Father;" "Behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you;" (Luke 24:49;) "the promise of the Holy Spirit;" (Acts 2:33;) and "the Holy Spirit of promise;" (Ephesians 1:13;) the meaning of all these expressions being that the Holy Spirit, with all his gifts and graces, is the promised Comforter, Teacher, and inward Intercessor of all to whom the gospel comes with power.

Thus the chief glory of the gospel is, that it is the "ministration of the Spirit." If, then, the precept be an integral part of the gospel, it must also be a part of the ministration of the Spirit. Not that the precept communicates the Spirit, as do the truths, the promises, the invitations, the declarations of the gospel. These instrumentally communicate the Spirit, whereas the precept does but follow it, and acts in union and harmony with it. Let us explain this point a little more clearly. When a gospel truth, such as "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin;" or a gospel declaration, as "He who believes on me has everlasting life;" or a gospel promise, as, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you," or a gospel invitation—"If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink," comes to the heart with a divine power, the Holy Spirit is as if communicated thereby; for he comes into the heart through that truth, declaration, promise, invitation, etc. But he does not, at least not usually, come into the heart through the precept, for the precept follows as the fruit and effect of his coming. Yet as the fruit and effect of his coming, the spirit of the precept is in the fullest harmony and union with the whole tenor and current of the gospel. Thus there is not a single precept which is not in harmony with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. May we use a figure to illustrate this? Here is a piece of beautiful music—the master-piece of an eminent composer, say Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus. What do you see? Several sheets of musical characters, as notes, etc., which you may or may not read and understand. But while in the mere score, there is no music in them—at least, the body is there, but not the soul of music. Now, hear this score played and sung as intended. What a soul is put into it, and what harmony! Among thousands of notes you will not hear a jarring sound. So with the precepts. Dead in the letter, when

a soul is breathed into them by the Holy Spirit, they all are animated as with one harmonious voice, every note being in perfect unison with the gospel of the grace of God.

2. Another distinctive mark of the gospel is that it is the ministration of LIFE. "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6.) As, then, the Spirit gives life, the spirit of the precept must fully harmonious with the life given in and through the gospel. Christ is "the life;" (John 14:6;) "in him was life;" (John 1:4;) he "came that his sheep might have life and might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10.) The life, therefore, of the gospel is the life of the precept. Your heart literally, naturally, is the center of your bodily life; but your hands and feet are in union with your heart through the vital blood which flows from it into them. So with the gospel and the precepts of the gospel. Christ is the life; but this life he communicates through the gospel. Call, then, the gospel the heart, as the center of this life; and call the precept the feet and hands, whereby the life of the gospel is manifested in action; and at once we see that the life of the gospel is the life of the precept, as the life of the heart is the life of the feet and hands. How thoroughly, therefore, must the spirit of the precept harmonize with the gospel as the ministration of life.

3. A third feature of the gospel is, that it is the perfect law of LIBERTY;" for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" (2 Corinthians 3:17;) and, therefore, all the precepts of the gospel, as animated by the Spirit, harmonize with this perfect liberty. Under the law, all is bondage; under the gospel, all is liberty. Whatever, therefore, does not breathe liberty, call it what you will, wrap it up and disguise it how you may, is not the gospel. Here many teachers and preachers have erred in handling and enforcing the precept. They have read and heard of the liberty of the gospel, for that is too plainly revealed and insisted upon in the New Testament to be questioned or denied, but they have been afraid of extending this liberty to the precept, as if the necessary consequence was that we were at liberty to obey it or not, just as we pleased. Now this is a thorough misconception of the nature of the liberty of the gospel, and of the liberty of the precept as a part of that gospel. To this timorous though mistaken apprehension we may trace the tenacity with which so many have held that the Mosaic law is the believer’s rule of life. Their poor, timorous, servile minds, drenched and drowned in legal bondage, were afraid of the gospel, as if it were a kind of tamed lion, which would be very quiet and do nobody any harm as long as it was kept in a cage, but must not be allowed to get out, lest it should work incalculable mischief.

Or, to change the figure, they treated it almost as if it were a ticket of license. Man, who, though, from his good conduct in prison, he might be set at a kind of half liberty, yet was to be carefully watched, lest he should associate himself with thieves, or commit a burglary. And thus the free, noble, glorious gospel of the grace of God, containing in its bosom and holding forth the eternal love of the Father, the blood and righteousness of the Son, and the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit—this pure and precious gospel, which proclaims liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, has been shut up, caged, and confined within all sorts of bars, conditions, and limitations, as if it were a wild beast which "had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it;" and which, if let loose, would "arise and devour much flesh." (Daniel 7:5.) Yes, this pure and precious gospel has been suspected of all manner of evil deeds; and if, by its good and excellent behavior it has sometimes been allowed a half liberty, yet has it been most carefully watched with the jealous eyes of a whole host of clerical and lay police, lest it should plot a murder or accomplish a robbery. What so much troubles the clergyman of some quiet country parish as the appearance in it of a preacher of the gospel, and the opening of a little cottage where

a few poor people meet to hear it? What an immediate outcry is raised. "O these dreadful, those dangerous doctrines! Are they come at last into my parish—my domain?" As if this poor, humble minister were come to burn down the parish rectory; or as if his few hearers, probably by his own confession the best-living people in the parish, met together to get drunk, or strengthen each other's hands in all manner of sin and wickedness. And this terribly outcry of "dangerous doctrines" is raised by men who see no danger in the careless profanity of the rich, and the loose licentiousness of the poor; no danger in, or at least who raise no warning cry against, the stealthy advance of Popery; no danger in the rapid growth of infidelity; no danger in bishops and deans denying the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. But they are not the first, and will not be the last, who have spared the thief and arrested the honest man, justified the wicked and condemned the righteous. But these blind judges are not the only men who bark at the gospel. How the great bulk of preachers and writers, far and near, whether they call themselves churchmen or dissenters, are of one mind either wholly to cast out the precious gospel, or, by abridging it of its liberty, to stop its vital breath. And to do this wretched work more effectually, they have constructed a cage for the gospel out of the precepts of the gospel; and thus not only made it a prisoner, but have found or fashioned chains and fetters to tie it hand and foot by strips torn from its own clothes. But how ignorant are all such men of what the liberty of the gospel is; and that it is a liberty not to sin—but from sin—a holy, heavenly freedom of spirit which engages every willing affection of the heart to yield the obedience of faith. In fact, liberty is the very essence of the gospel—its vital breath, its animating spirit; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17.) The gospel is "the perfect law of liberty," therefore the very perfection of liberty, and thus thoroughly and entirely free from the least taint of bondage, the slightest tincture of servitude. It is this perfect freedom which distinguishes it from the law which "works wrath" (Romans 4:15) and "genders to bondage." (Galatians 4:24.) It is, therefore, a freedom from sin—(Romans 6:18;) from the guilt of sin, as having "the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience;" (Hebrews 10:22;) from the filth of sin, by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit;" (Titus 3:5;) from the love of sin, through "the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit;" (rout. 5:5;) from the dominion of sin, as "not being under the law but under grace;" (Romans 6:14;) and from the practice of sin, by becoming servants to God, so as to have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Romans 6:22.)

How, then, can this pure, holy, and precious gospel be condemned as leading to licentiousness? It is because its power, its preciousness, its happy, holy, heavenly liberty have never been experimentally known by them that some, like the Galatians, do all they can to frustrate the grace of God, by turning again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto they desire to be in bondage; (Galatians 2:21; Galatians 4:9;) while others, like those monsters of wickedness whom Jude and Peter denounce with such burning words, pervert and abuse the liberty of the gospel unto licentiousness, "They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures," and, "while they promise others liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption." (2 Peter 2:13; 2 Peter 2:19.)

Now the liberty of the gospel, as revealed in the Scriptures, and made experimentally known to the soul, steers, so to speak, between the two extremes, and is as perfectly free from the least intermixture of legal bondage as from the least taint of Antinomian licentiousness. It is, indeed, this holy liberty, heavenly power, and gracious influence of the precious gospel, under the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, which makes it so suitable to our case and state when first

convinced of sin, and cast into prison under guilt and condemnation. What release but a perfect release would suit our deplorable case as prisoner—in the pit where there is no water, shut up under wrath and guilty fear through a condemning law and an accusing conscience? This pure and precious gospel, therefore, comes down to us poor miserable captives, shut up in bondage under the law, under a guilty conscience, under the tormenting accusations of Satan, and the doubts and fears of our own trembling, misgiving heart. Yes, it comes down to our pitiable state and condition as a message of pure mercy, as revealing and proclaiming pardon and peace through a Saviour's blood; and when, by grace, we can receive, embrace, and entertain it as a word from God to us, proclaiming liberty as with a jubilee trumpet through every court and ward of the soul. And shall we take, or willingly allow any one else to take prisoner this heavenly messenger and shut her up in the condemned cell? Shall we stand tamely by and not lift up our voice with indignation when we see this beauteous visitant, fresh, as it were, from the very courts of heaven, and radiant with the glory of God, laid hold of by a villainous jailer, as if she came to rob and murder? What were we before this precious gospel reached our ears and hearts? Were we not bondslaves to sin, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, taken and led captive by Satan at his will—and while we talked about enjoying life, were, through fear of death, subject to bondage? When we saw the saints of God not daring to do what we did greedily, we thought that they were the slaves, and we the free men, not knowing that "to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness;" (Romans 6:16;) not knowing that "whoever commits sin is the servant of sin," and that our boasted freedom was real servitude, while their apparent bondage was real freedom; for they had an interest in that precious declaration—"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36.)

As, then, the spirit of liberty is the spirit of the gospel, it must be the very spirit of the precept also as an integral part of the gospel. If, therefore, you have never known the spirit of liberty in the gospel, you have never known the spirit of the precept, which is a part of that liberty; and if you have never known the spirit of the precept, you have never once performed one of the precepts aright. All your obedience has been not in newness of the spirit, but in the oldness of the letter.

O how pious and religious some of you have been, if not now are! How you have set the precepts before your eves and tried to keep them—how harshly you have judged others who were not so strict in keeping the commandments as you believed you were—how you spied out the liberty of some of the dear family of God which they had in Christ Jesus, that you might, by your conversation, or your preaching, your letters of advice, your solemn warnings, your sharp and angry reproofs, your praying at them, and, as you thought and said, for them, bring them into bondage. (Galatians 2:4.) How dangerous you considered must be the liberty of the gospel if it should set anyone who professed godliness free from all those shackles and fetters which, the more self-imposed and the stricter they were, the more closely you hugged them to your self-righteous bosom! Thus you took the precepts of the gospel out of their connection with the liberty of the gospel, and turned them into moral duties to feed your legal, self-righteous spirit. And what was the consequence? Bondage, guilt, and fear in your own conscience, for you could never keep the precept even according to your own interpretation of it; harsh judgment of all who did not partake of your legal spirit, whatever might be their experience or consistency; close alliance with shallow professors held fast in the same bonds with yourself; and a gradual departure from the truths of the gospel, until a miracle of grace put you into the furnace, there to learn what your own

arm could do for you, and that nothing but the gospel, in its blessed liberty and power, could save your soul.

We have rather wandered from our point, but we could not show the liberty of the precept as animated by the spirit of the precept, and its harmony with the whole tenor and current of the gospel, without entering a little into the nature of the liberty of the gospel; and, as this is a subject of great importance, and very dear to us, we have been tempted to stray somewhat from our due limits. But now observe the connection between the 'spirit of the precept' and the 'liberty of the gospel'. In order, then, that this liberty of the gospel should not be abused unto licentiousness, it is guided and regulated by the precept, and by the spirit of the precept as animating the letter. The liberty of the gospel is a living, animated principle—not a dead letter, but a gracious power and influence. This is one of its main blessings. The precept therefore, in guiding and regulating this liberty, must be animated, too, with spirit and life, or you would have the strange anomaly, the gross and palpable inconsistency, of a living body walking with dead feet, or served by paralyzed hands. In accomplishing this office, the precept serves two important uses—

1. The spirit of the precept so far restrains this liberty, that it should not degenerate into licentiousness. We are such vile wretches, such depraved creatures, that we would very soon abuse our liberty unless we were restrained. We are like our own children; they are at liberty to come in and go out of our house, to sit at our table, to sleep under our roof; for it is their house and home, as it is our own. Indeed, we cannot bear their absence from our table or our roof, unless we know where they are, and that they are absent by our permission; for we know that they are only safe when they are under our eye. But with all this freedom, their birthright and inheritance, they are under a restraint—a restraint absolutely needful for their good. They may not go out when they please, nor eat and drink when and as much as they please, nor go to bed and get up when they please. Why? Because they would abuse this liberty to their own injury. And yet, it being a restraint of love and affection, and for their good, it is no hindrance to the liberty which they enjoy as our children. They are not our servants, nor treated as servants, but are dear children, and treated as dear children; and it is because they are dear children they are restrained from injuring themselves; for we would feel any injury to them much more deeply than they.

Thus the precepts are to the children of God what the injunctions, commands, and declared will of a parent are to a child. And, as the happiness and well-being of a child, and, we may add, the happiness of the whole family as living together, much depend on the order and discipline of their home, and on the wise and affectionate authority and declared will of the master of the house—so the happiness and well-being of the child of God, and the happiness of the family of God, as united in church fellowship, much depend on the obedience of one and all to the precepts of the gospel as the revealed will of the Lord of the house, for the maintenance of the order and discipline of each and all its members. Happy child, who obeys the precepts of the gospel in the spirit and liberty of the gospel! Happy church, where the precepts of the gospel form its rule, the spirit of the gospel its animating principle, and the spirit of the precept its influential guide.

2. And this leads us to another important use of the precept. The spirit of the precept not only restrains liberty from degenerating into licentiousness, but regulates its actions. A person may not abuse his liberty, yet not know how to use it. Thus there is a using it aright, and a not using it aright. Here then, come in the value and blessedness of the precept, and especially the spirit of

the precept, to teach us how to use aright the liberty of the gospel, and to enable us to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. (Colossians 1:10.) Thus the liberty of the gospel and the spirit of the precept move, work, and act together in the fullest and most blessed harmony—the result being fruitfulness in every good word and work unto the glory of God. By this is accomplished liberty without licentiousness, and obedience without servitude. The union of liberty with obedience is the happiest of alliances. Liberty without obedience is licentiousness; obedience without liberty is slavery; their union guards liberty and ennobles obedience. This is true politically as well as religiously. Liberty is the Englishman's birthright. Liberty of thought, of speech, of action, of movement; liberty of public meetings, of petitioning parliament, of electing our own representatives, of worshiping God according to the dictates of our own conscience; liberty of the press, of the pulpit, of the platform. Who can enumerate, who can sufficiently prize, those civil and religious liberties which our forefathers won for us with so much toil and suffering, and which we enjoy as our birthright and inheritance? But mark how obedience to law regulates this liberty. Where is such liberty enjoyed as in England? But where is the law of the land so respected and obeyed? All that England is and has as the freest, most prosperous, and most favored country in the world, we owe, under God, to her union of the greatest liberty with the greatest obedience. Without law an Englishman could not live; without liberty an Englishman could not breathe. Take away our laws, which all equally obey from the queen to the pauper, violence and bloodshed would fill every street; take away our liberties, and England would be one vast dungeon. So it is in grace. Without the precepts of the gospel and spiritual obedience rendered to them, gospel liberty would degenerate into licentiousness; without the liberty of the gospel, the precepts would be turned into the greatest bondage and the most miserable legal slavery.

Those men, therefore, are utterly wrong who twist the precepts into a rod to flog the backs of those whom the truth has made free. In God's house there is a rod—"Shall I come unto you with a rod?" (1 Corinthians 4:21;) but the precepts are not that rod. How plain, how clear the distinction. In a family the father's will, the rules which he lays down for the regulation of the whole house, are, so to speak, the precepts of the house. But is this will, are these rules the rod? No! that is hung up, or kept in a corner, and only brought out when these rules are wilfully broken by any of the children. The rules are of daily, hourly use for the comfort, convenience, order, happiness, and well-being of the house. But the rod comes forth only now and then, and more rarely the better, when the sad occasion, which often sets the whole family weeping, calls for it. So in the family of God. The precepts are the rules of the house; the hidings of God's face are the inward rod for inwardly disobeying them; reproofs before all by the pastor, (1 Timothy 5:20,) or setting aside and putting away by the church, (1 Corinthians 5:13,) are the outward rod for outward disobedience. We have said enough and more than enough on this point, but, as this feature of the precept, as a part of the liberty of the gospel, is little known and less attended to, we have ventured to handle it at some length.

We trust that we have not wearied our readers by our long and protracted Meditations on the preceptive part of the word of truth. But if such unhappily be the case, the weariness will be due not to the subject itself, which must ever be of the deepest interest to all who truly fear God, and desire to walk in obedience to his will and word—but to our mode of handling it, and especially to the long and laborious consideration which we have bestowed upon it. And yet if a certain degree of length is absolutely necessary for a due examination of every important subject, how much

more must this be the case in the weighty matters of divine revelation. A deep subject, like a deep river, holds in its bosom an amount of matter in proportion to its depth. Its very copiousness makes it deep. Thus while we would avoid that prosy diffusiveness which makes length wearisome, we are bound freely to say that we could not have done justice to our subject by giving it a brief, hasty, superficial consideration. This, then, must be our excuse, if we have trespassed too much upon the patience of our readers. But if the voyage has been long, and to some tedious, land is at last in sight. We are approaching the shore; and in this or our following section, we hope to furl our sails and drop our anchor. May a favorable gale speed our ship and crown our voyage with a blessing which shall make amends for a protracted passage.

Chapter 183

14.02d. The NATURE of the precepts (conclusion)

The NATURE of the precepts (concluded) In our last section, we attempted to point out a few of those prominent features of the spirit of the precept which distinguish it from the letter, and elevate obedience to the revealed will and word of God into a spiritual service. From the letter of the precept we learn "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2.) But though we thus learn from the precept what is the acceptable will of God, we have no power in ourselves to perform it acceptably; for a mere letter obedience to the precepts of the gospel, however strict and conformable, is no more acceptable to God, than an obedience to the ten commandments. To make our obedience acceptable two things are absolutely necessary—

1. That it be presented through Jesus Christ; for as our persons, so our offerings are only "accepted in the Beloved."

2. That it be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle speaks—"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:16.) The Apostle Peter beautifully brings together these two points, and shows us in a small compass who are the acceptable worshipers, and what is the nature of their acceptable worship—"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5.) The acceptable worshipers are the "living stones" who come to Jesus, and are built up in him as "a spiritual house," constituting them "a holy priesthood;" the sacrifices which they offer are "spiritual sacrifices," as sanctified by the Holy Spirit; and these sacrifices are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," as offered by faith in him and ascending up to heaven perfumed by his intercession within the veil.

Thus no mere ’letter obedience’ to the precept, were such a thing possible, for the precepts of the gospel being spiritual, based upon spiritual motives and addressed to spiritual people, are out of the reach of natural obedience; no such mere obedience, were it possible, could or would be acceptable to God. It would be "another gospel," as many have preached and made it, and thus brought themselves under the curse according to that fearful denunciation of Paul—"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:8-9.) Perversion is perversion, whether men pervert the doctrines of the gospel, the promises of the gospel, or the precepts of the gospel—and for perverting the gospel of Christ they will not be held innocent.

We have already pointed out that the chief blessedness and glory of the New Covenant dispensation is, that it is the ministration of the Spirit; and that, therefore, the blessed Spirit must animate the precept as well as the promise with heavenly life, that we may believe the one and perform the other. You know what it is to believe a promise when it comes with power; so you must

know how to perform a precept when it comes with power. The power is the same; for it is the power of the Spirit acting through the word. A promise comes. I believe it, for I feel the power of it. A precept comes. I believe it, for I feel the power of it. Where, then, is the difference? Wholly in this, that by the promise I believe that it is the will of God that I should be saved; and by the precept that it is the will of God that I should forgive my brother. A letter obedience, therefore, is of no more worth or value than a letter faith; and to forgive my brother in the letter is no more real forgiveness than to believe in Christ in the letter is real faith. The precept, therefore, needs life breathed into it, that, as a word of and from Christ, it may be spirit and life to our soul. (John 6:63.)

If, then, there were no life thus put into the precept, it would be like a dead branch in a living tree—or a paralyzed limb in our natural body; an unsightly object instead of an ornament, an incumbrance rather than a help—a withered, useless appurtenance, cut off from all life and movement, and a drag upon the gospel as a poor paralytic drags after him a leg, on which he can neither stand nor walk. Compare this poor withered limb—with a strong, healthy leg, and you may see the difference between the dragging obedience of a servant in the letter, and the gracious obedience of a son in the spirit.

Life, then, and that as breathed into it by the blessed Spirit, is one main feature of the spirit of the precept. But this life has two blessed adjuncts, Liberty and Love; for these are two special fruits of the Holy Spirit, and move together in holy concert and gracious harmony to help forward the obedience of faith.

Liberty we have already considered. Her sweet, tender, and affectionate companion we have now to present to view; and who that has seen her lovely face and heard the accents of her melodious voice, will not welcome her as she comes forth for our contemplation? Her name is "Love." And do observe how the blessed Spirit holds, as it were, Liberty with the one hand and Love with the other. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17.) "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." (Romans 5:5.) And that life is his gift, is plain from the same inspired testimony—"The Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:6.) Death, bondage, and enmity, then, those evil fruits of the flesh, and the men who walk in them, have neither part nor lot in the glorious gospel of the grace of God, where life, liberty, and love animate every truth, every promise, every privilege, and every precept. As, then, we have endeavored to unfold the connection of Liberty with the spirit of the precept, so will we now attempt to show that part which is fulfilled by Love.

4. The last distinctive mark of the gospel, is that it is the ministration of LOVE. "God is love." That is his name, that is his nature; and what a proof, what a manifestation has he given of this love! "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through 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." (1 John 4:9-10.) The gift of his only-begotten Son, and that for these two special purposes, 1. that he might be the propitiation for our sins; 2. that we might live through him, is at once the proof and the measure of this love. To proclaim this love is to preach the gospel; to believe in this love is to believe the gospel; to taste, handle, and enjoy this love is to know and enjoy the power of the gospel; and to obey the precept under the constraints of this love is to obey the gospel.

Liberty and love must needs go together; for where there is bondage there is fear, and where there is fear there is torment, and where there is torment there cannot be love, at least not perfect love, for perfect love casts it out. (1 John 4:18.) Love, then, is the crowning feature of the spirit of the precept, and one of its most distinctive points of difference from the letter, for the strictest obedience to the letter of the precept without love is but legal bondage—the task-work of a servant, not the compliance of a son. You may set the precepts of the gospel before your eyes, and try your utmost to observe them. You may admire the holiness which they inculcate; see the separation from the world and the devotedness to God which they enforce, and what is more than seeing it, you may try to act upon it; you may walk in the ordinances which they hold forth, and strive by diligent attention to rules and regulations, carefully framed, to regulate your own conduct and that of your family, to attain to that inward and outward holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. All this you may do for years, and be at the end what you were in the beginning—a poor self-righteous Pharisee, shut up in bondage, lip-service, and bodily exercise, as far from the spirit and love of the gospel, as much in your sins, unwashed, unjustified, unsanctified, as a monk in his cell; or a parish priest intoning the Litany to a few old women and children in his medieval church. All this strictness, indeed, sharpens your eyes to see the defects and infirmities of others, who do not pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, nor tie themselves to your rules. But what are you yourself, as weighed in the balances of the gospel? What is all your strictness without life, liberty, and love? Are you stricter in lip and life than Paul was when, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," (that is, its external righteousness,) he was "blameless?" If you turn obedience to the letter of the precept into a legal service, which you must do if destitute of life, liberty, and love—you are not a son but a servant, a child of the bondwoman; and could you read your inmost heart, you would see it full of prejudice and enmity against, and ready to persecute the children of promise, by condemning their liberty as Antinomian security, and suspecting their standing if not their state.

How different from this miserable state of bondage in which many are held, miserable in itself and miserable to all with whom it comes in contact—is that favored soul which moves in the path of obedience under the sweet constraints of love; for love is not only the fulfilling of the law but of the gospel too. Such power and influence has love in the obedience of the gospel that we may boldly say that with love every precept can be obeyed—without love not one can be rightly obeyed. How plainly does our Lord speak on this point. "If you love me, keep my commandments." "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me." "If a man loves me, he will keep my words." "He who loves me not, keeps not my words." (John 14:1-31.) Similar is the testimony of the beloved disciple—"For this is the love of God—that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:2-3.) We thus see that the keeping of Christ's commandments, in other words, obedience to the precepts of the gospel, is not only the test and proof but the fruit of love. No more, when this obedience is the obedience of love, it opens a blessed door for the manifestations of Christ and the indwelling of God, according to those wondrous words of the Lord himself—"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves me, he will keep my words—and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23.)

How careful, then, should we be to distinguish between obedience in the letter, which is mere lip service or legal bondage—and obedience in the spirit, which springs from love and furthers its

enjoyment.

Taking a broad view of the precepts, of the gospel, and the obedience inculcated by them, we may reduce them to two leading heads—

1. What we owe unto God.

2. What we owe to the people of God.

1. What we owe unto GOD. The first will comprehend all that spiritual worship, all that devotedness of heart and life, all that submission to the will of God, all that glorifying him in our body and spirit which are his, which the precept so continually and forcibly inculcates; the second will comprehend the whole of our walk and conduct to our brethren in the Lord, whereby we manifest the power of his grace. As instances of the first we may mention such precepts as bid us "present our bodies a living sacrifice;" "to abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good;" "to rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation; to continue instant in prayer;" to "walk honestly as in the day;" to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof." These, and similar precepts with which the Epistles abound, direct us how to walk before God as dear children. They address us, therefore, not as servants, bidding us perform a stipulated task, but enjoin us as sons to yield the obedience of reverent affection to our heavenly Father. They speak to us as one with Christ by mystical union, and this as "chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

As, therefore, dead with him, buried with him, risen with him, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, and freely justified by his grace—as reconciled to God, brought near to him, and accepted in the Beloved—the precepts of the gospel call upon us to live to his praise, and walk before him in all devotedness of heart and life, to his honor and glory. But how can this be done without love? What holy, heavenly pleasure can there be even in such common, daily acts as reading his word, and calling upon his name; in meeting with his people in the house of prayer, and in Christian conversation; in separation from the world and the spirit of it; in living a life of faith and prayer; in watching our words and actions; in seeking a growing conformity to the image of Christ, and carrying out in a practical manner our Christian profession? We say not only what real pleasure can we have in this daily walk, without attending to which we shall be but barren, worthless professors all our days—but even what habitual attention can we pay to these things if not moved to them by love? Who will read the word, at least, as it should be read, with a believing and understanding heart, but he who loves it? Who will continually resort to a throne of grace, but he who loves there to pour out his heart before God? And who will day by day seek to walk before God in the light of his countenance, but he who has known and felt something of the power of his love? If the service of God be ever burdensome to us; if ever the word be neglected, prayer restrained, the company of God’s people shunned, the new man put off, and the old man put on—it is when love has grown cold. The sacrifice may be laid upon the altar; the incense put upon the censor; but if the fire of love be not under both, there is neither flame nor fragrance.

2. And so it is with the second branch of the precept, which directs and regulates our walk with and before our believing BRETHREN. In that as in the service of God, "Love supplies all defects."

Without a loving, affectionate spirit, it is impossible to perform those precepts which inculcate mutual forgiveness and forbearance, "kindness, tenderness of heart, mercy, humbleness of mind,

meekness, and long-suffering." (Ephesians 4:2; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13.) To do all this from the heart, and not merely in lip, we must "walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us." Without this love we may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; we may bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our body to be burned—and yet be nothing and have nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:2-3.) But if blessed and favored with this love, we shall obey those precepts which direct our walk with our brethren unto God and from the heart. Who that has seen much of Christian churches does not know the difference between the hard, cold, contentious, unforgiving spirit of some—and the tender, loving, affectionate spirit of others? Who that has a feeling heart has not been cut, wounded, and grieved by the pride, obstinacy, selfishness, hardness and unkindness of the one—and been softened, melted, and blessed by the tenderness, meekness, humility, loving and affectionate spirit of the other? Love is so the spirit of the gospel, and therefore of the precept as a part of the gospel, that we may unhesitatingly say that few more break the precept than some of the very people who most contend for what is called practice. Practice is excellent, admirable, indispensable—and the lack of it grievous, lamentable, disgraceful. But let us be clear in our views as to what practice is and what it means. If it be the mere doing of what are called good works, as alms-giving, visiting the sick, strictness of life, dress, deportment, accompanied with unblemished conduct—a 'sister of mercy' will outshine us all, and father Ignatius be a pattern of holiness.

It is plain, therefore, that something more is needful for acceptable obedience than external practice, and that this something is love—love to the Lord and to his people. Nor is it less evident that this love must be made manifest by our general spirit as well as our conduct; for love is not a mere occasional spurt, a now and then warming up, like a hot fit of the fever; or the slow, relenting gripe of a miser over a charity plate—but a living principle, ever discovering itself in words and acts of kindness, forbearance, self-denial, self-restraint, consideration of the feelings of others, meekness, gentleness, and a humble, affectionate, conciliating manner and bearing. You may be outwardly very consistent—but if you are harsh, censorious, self-willed, obstinate, unforgiving—if you would sooner see the church torn to pieces with strife than give way on some point which involves neither truth nor conscience, but merely some concession of opinion, you are breaking the precept as much by your disobedience to its spirit—as others by their disobedience to its letter. God, who searches the heart and reads our inmost thoughts, feelings, and motives, observes with unerring eye our spirit as well as our conduct; and if; indeed, we see light in his light, we shall read our own heart too, and distinguish between the proud, obstinate, self-willed, contentious spirit of the old man—and the humble, forgiving, affectionate spirit of the new man.

As, then, love must animate every precept that teaches us what we owe unto the Lord for all his goodness and mercy to us—so must love equally animate every precept that guides and regulates what we owe to our believing brethren. Look at the following precepts and see if love be not the ruling, animating spirit of them all—"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3) What but love can enable us to walk "worthy of the calling with which we are called?" Are we not called according to God's purpose, that we may love him? (Romans 8:28.) And called also to walk in love with his people?

How plain too, are the words—"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Ephesians 4:31-32, Ephesians 5:1-2) In a similar spirit writes the same "Apostle of Jesus Christ" to the Colossians. "Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." (Colossians 3:12-14)

O that this compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness more animated our spirits and guided our words and actions. There would then be no stormy church meetings, no broken friendships, no shy looks, no harsh words, no resentful memories, no magnifying and dwelling on infirmities and defects, no raking up of buried injuries, no malicious insinuations, or slanderous reportings. Having had so much forgiven us, we should freely forgive our offending brethren—and feeling ourselves to be the chief of sinners and less than the least of all saints, we should rather wonder at their forbearance of us, and admire their kindness to us, than cherish a resentful, unforgiving spirit, even against those at whose hands we may have suffered real or imaginary wrong.

We are approaching the harbor. Land was in sight in our last section, and now all that we need is a gentle yet favorable breeze to waft us on until we drop anchor, and bless God for giving us a pleasant and, we hope, not unprofitable voyage.

Two points remain for consideration, to dwell on which at any length, even at as great a length as they deserve, would set us again out to sea, and perhaps a stormy sea too; for one of them involves a subject not only of much difficulty, but of considerable strife and debate. These two points are–

1. The place which the precept occupies in the word.

2. Its place in the heart and life.

14.03. The place of the precept in the WORD

The place of the precept in the WORD

After our long and labored explanation of the nature of the precept, this point need not detain us long. But as the place of the precept in the word admits of two meanings—

(1) Its place in the written word.

(2) Its place in the preached word.

We shall address ourselves to the consideration of both of these significations.

1. The place of the precept in the WRITTEN word.

One main point with us has been to show that the precept, as it stands in the written word, is an integral, that is, a real and constituent part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and is as much a gracious revelation of the mind and will of God for our instruction and guidance as the doctrines themselves of our most holy faith are, for a knowledge of the way of salvation. We do not mean that a knowledge of the precept is saving in the same way as a knowledge of the truth is; but as a means, in the hands of the blessed Spirit, of influencing the heart and life, it is sanctifying. It is necessary to make and keep this distinction clear, lest in our zeal for the precept we should strain it beyond the place which God has assigned to it in the word of truth. We are saved by grace through faith; (Ephesians 2:8;) are justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; (Romans 3:24;) are reconciled to God by the death of his Son; (Romans 5:10;) are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 1:7.) These are the grand foundation truths of the everlasting gospel, are salvation matters, and as such stand apart from all works performed in us or by us.

We cannot, therefore, elevate the precept into a level with them, for we may be saved and sanctified too, as was the dying thief, without knowing or performing one gospel precept except that of love—love to the Lord for his manifested mercy. But as it is the purpose of God that his redeemed, justified, and saved people should glorify him here below, he has most graciously revealed to them how they shall learn to know his will and do it. This is the end and object of the precept. How beautifully does the Apostle pray to this effect for his Colossian brethren—"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9-10.) How blessed to be filled with a knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.

We are also bidden "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove," (that is, learn, ascertain, and approve of,) what is that good, and

acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2.) To know the will of God and do it, is the desire and delight of every regenerate soul. The Apostle, therefore, says—"therefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17.) So he speaks of "doing the will of God from the heart." (Ephesians 6:6.) Our Lord also said—"For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." (Mark 3:35.) The Apostle also prays that the God of peace would "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for over and ever. Amen;" (Hebrews 13:21;) and John's testimony is, "He who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17.)

How any one who calls himself a believer in Christ Jesus can think lightly of knowing and doing the will of God, is indeed a mystery. But this all must do who ignore the precept, think lightly of it, and neglect it. It is almost become a tradition in some churches, professing the doctrines of grace, to disregard the precepts and pass them by in a kind of general silence; and thus in a sense they "have made the commandments of God of no effect by their tradition." But when we are brought to see and feel the blessedness of knowing the will of God and doing it; when we can enter experimentally into the meaning of such words as, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). And again—"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20;) when such gracious precepts fall, we say, with weight upon the heart, we see what a blessed place the precept occupies in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When, too, we read and can enter a little into the spirit which breathes through such prayers of the Apostle as, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you—to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints;" (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13;) and again, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" (1 Thessalonians 5:23;) we see from these prayers what are or should be the desires of our own soul. To despise, then, the precept, to call it legal and burdensome, is to despise not man, but God, who has given unto us his holy Spirit in the inspired Scriptures for our faith and obedience. But we have rather wandered from our point, which was to show the place which the precept occupies in the written word. This is best seen by examining the epistles of the New Testament. The three which we would select for that purpose, as being most systematically written, would be that to the Romans, that to the Ephesians, and that to the Hebrews. It would take up too much time to give even a short analysis of these blessed epistles, or even of one of them, but we may observe generally that doctrine occupies in them the first place, experience the second, and precept the third; and yet all these three are blended so beautifully together that they sometimes run into one another, or, if not, always harmonize with the sweetest accord.

Take, for instance, the Epistle to the Romans, Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, and part of Romans 3:1-31 are taken up with proving the sinfulness of the Gentile and Jewish world, and the universal depravity, ruin, and condemnation of man. The Apostle then, (Romans 3:21-31,) in a few

but most significant words, opens the grand remedy—justification freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This grand point of justification by faith (Romans 3:28) is proved Romans 4:1-25 by the case of Abraham, of whom the Scripture testified that "he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." In Romans 5:1-21 commences experience in our having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as being justified by faith; and this strain of living experience, ranging from the deepest conflict (Romans 5:7) to the highest assurance, continues, blended with doctrine and precept, to the end of Romans 8:1-39. Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, and Romans 11:1-36 are chiefly doctrinal, as opening the case of the present rejection and future restoration of Israel after the flesh. In Romans 12:1-21 commences the precept, and runs on in the most beautiful strain to Romans 15:14, the rest of the epistle being chiefly occupied with Paul's personal matters, greetings, etc. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, doctrine occupies the first place. Election, predestination, redemption, the death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ, occupy Ephesians 1:1-23. In Ephesians 2:1-22 begins experience in the quickening of the soul from its death in trespasses and sins, its spiritual resurrection with Christ and sitting together in heavenly places in him, blended with the sweetest doctrinal truth, (Ephesians 2:11-22,) and accompanied with the earnest prayers of the Apostle (Ephesians 3:14-19) that the saints to whom he wrote might know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, so as to be filled with all the fullness of God. In Ephesians 4:1-32 commences the preceptive part of the word sweetly blended with both doctrine (Ephesians 4:4-13) and experience, (Ephesians 4:20-24,) and occupying the rest of the epistle, with the exception of that beautiful, experimental description of the whole armor of God, (Ephesians 6:11-18,) and even that urged with all the earnestness of practical exhortation. The Epistle to the Hebrews is constructed on the same pattern; first, doctrine in Hebrews 1:1-14, Hebrews 2:1-18, Hebrews 3:1-19, Hebrews 4:1-16, Hebrews 5:1-14, Hebrews 6:1-20, Hebrews 7:1-28, Hebrews 8:1-13, Hebrews 9:1-28; then experience, Hebrews 10:1-39, Hebrews 11:1-40; then precept, Hebrews 12:1-29, Hebrews 13:1-25. This brief sketch of the plan of these three epistles must suffice; but a longer and more detailed analysis would only more plainly show that though there is a systematic arrangement in them all, yet there is such a blending together of doctrine, experience, and precept, that the three form but parts of one harmonious whole, and, like a compact and beautiful building, mutually strengthen and adorn each other.

2. The place of the precept in the PREACHED word. But our view of the place which the precept occupies in the written word would be incomplete unless we added the place which it should occupy in the preached word. This is, we know, a difficult and delicate point, and yet we shall not shun to declare our views on it, whether they meet with the approval or disapproval of those whom they may concern. As the ministers of Christ profess to preach the same gospel that the Apostles preached, there must be some uniformity with the pattern which we have just laid out of apostolic teaching; for though preaching a sermon is not the same thing as writing an epistle, yet we may gather from the account which Paul gives us of his own ministry (Acts 20:21-27; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12) that there was a considerable resemblance between what he spoke by tongue and what he wrote by pen. Doctrine, then—pure, sound doctrine, must be the basis of the Christian ministry—"In doctrine showing integrity and seriousness;" (Titus 2:7;) "Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;" (2 Timothy 1:13;) "Take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and them that hear you."

(1 Timothy 4:16.)

Let us endeavor to keep every part of divine truth in its right place, and no more sacrifice doctrine to experience than experience to precept. He is the ablest minister who is soundest in doctrine, deepest in experience, and most godly in practice; for he preaches with heart, tongue, and feet. The servant of God, therefore, must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints," (Jude 1:3,) and "hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9.) He must have also a gracious experience in his own soul of the truths which he preaches, in their savour, sweetness, and power; or how can the unction of the Holy Spirit rest on his ministry?

All this will be readily granted; but now as to the precept. Is he to preach that also, as well as doctrine and experience? If he does not, there would seem to be something lacking, if we take apostolic teaching as our model. Assume, then, that he ought to preach the precept. Now comes a more delicate and difficult point. How is he to preach it? For as to preaching the precept, this is done by hundreds of ministers who know no more what the precept really is as a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ than they know what is a gracious experience of truth by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Anybody may preach the letter of the precept. But that is not what we want. It is the spirit of the precept which is needed, and which must be preached if preached at all. There is dry precept as well as dry doctrine; and as the latter is often concealed Antinomianism, so the former is open and often barefaced legality; for looseness, like Tamar, covers her face (Genesis 38:15) when Pharisaism stalks abroad in open day, for she loves to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets to be seen of men. What was true of old is true now. "For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath." (Acts 15:21.) The preachers of Moses are to be found in every city and every church.

How, then, should the precept be preached? We answer, In the same way as doctrine and experience should be preached—from a gracious knowledge of its spirit and power, and its sensible influence on the heart and life. To preach the precept in any other way is either legality or presumption. If a man knows nothing in his own soul of the spirit of the precept, and is not under its gracious influence, he cannot handle it with the fingers of a workman, and must either legalize it, or handle it deceitfully. If he binds burdens upon the people of God inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, he legalizes it; and if he bids others do what he himself never does or attempts to do, what is this but hypocrisy? And may God not justly say to him, "What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast my words behind you?" (Psalms 50:16-17.) We see, then, what a narrow line it is—the very line of which Mr. Hart says, "The space between Pharisaic zeal and Antinomian security is much narrower and harder to find than most men imagine. It is a path which the vulture’s eye has not seen, and none can show it to us but the Holy Spirit." But you will, perhaps, say, "Then you make the preaching of the precept depend on the feelings of the minister." That is an invidious way of putting the point, and it is neither our mind nor our language. What we say is this, that no man can preach the precept as a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ who has not a gracious experience of the power and spirit of the precept in his own soul. Is not the same thing true of preaching the doctrines of the gospel? Can any man preach the doctrines of the gospel as they should be preached, who has had no gracious experience of the doctrines of the gospel? And is not this all the difference between letter preaching and letter preachers—and those who preach the gospel

with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven? Is not this the main, the real distinction between the two classes of ministers, that the one have no gracious experience of what they preach, and the others have?

Now, we carry this same distinction between letter preaching and spiritual preaching into the precept as well as into the doctrines. Can they be separated? Have we not labored again and again to show that the precept is as much a part of the gospel as the doctrines and experience of the gospel? If this be so, then the preaching of the precept must stand on precisely the same footing as the preaching of gospel doctrine and gospel experience; and to preach the letter of the precept without a gracious experience of the spirit of the precept is no more preaching the precept as it should be preached than to preach doctrines of which you never felt the power, or experience of which you know only the theory, is to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15.)

Besides which, look at the inconsistency of a man preaching the precept who himself does not practice it, nor even know under what power and influence it should be performed. Consider the contradiction of a covetous man preaching up liberality; of a worldly professor inculcating "Love not the world;" of an unforgiving persecutor admonishing to forgiveness; of a light, trifling preacher, full of jests and jokes and foolish anecdotes, exhorting "young men (much more grey-haired ministers) to be sober-minded," for all "to put away foolish talking and jesting," and that their "speech should be always seasoned with salt, that it may administer grace unto the hearers." Such men instinctively feel that their hearers would despise, and that justly, such preaching and such preachers. They, therefore, quietly drop, not only the precept itself, as condemning their own conduct, but all allusion to it, and ignore it just as much as if it had neither part nor place in the word of truth! And as many, if not most, of such men’s hearers are in precisely the same state, as unwilling to hear the precept enforced and as unable to bear it as their ministers, need we wonder that there should be a silent compact between the pulpit and the pew that the subject should never be introduced at all—and that all mention of it or allusion to it should be considered legal and inconsistent with the doctrines of grace? The consequences of this silent compact may be easily read in the state of many churches professing doctrinal truth—that they are flooded with carnal professors, who think no more of the precepts of the gospel than of an old almanac, and that even among those who are partakers of the grace of life, vital godliness is, for the most part, at a very low ebb. This sad state of things some writers and preachers have seen and sought to remedy. But how? By rushing into the opposite extreme, and urging the precepts as legal duties, separating them, if not avowedly, yet tacitly, from the spirit and grace of the gospel.

After all this fault-finding and harsh censure, as some will doubtless consider it, may we be allowed simply to declare our view of the right way of preaching the precept as a part of the ministry of the gospel of the grace of God? It is this—that no man can do so, or ought to do so, without a gracious experience of the power of the precept in his own heart. And we will go further still—that we firmly believe no man can preach the precept with any power, savour, life, or unction, unless he be at the time under a divine and gracious influence. Why does the preaching of the precept fall from some men’s lips, even good men—hard, dry, and repulsive? Why does it produce bondage and death instead of life and feeling in the soul of the hearer? Principally, for the best of hearers may be much bound, very cold and dead under the warmest and most savory preaching, but principally because the preacher himself is not under a heavenly influence when he handles it,

and does it more as a duty at the tail-end of his sermon than as a part of his gracious message. But assume that his soul is warmed and melted with the life and power of the blessed Spirit, and is full of tenderness, love, and affection to the Lord and his people, how freely and fully can he exhort, admonish, entreat, and even reprove to love and good works. The people of God who sit under his ministry, for it is chiefly the pastor's office to preach effectually the precept, know the man and his communication. They esteem and love him for his work's sake. He has a place in their hearts and affections, and they look up to him with a mixture of reverence and love. Such a man can speak with authority, and enforce the precept without legality or presumption, as a part of his message from God. His exhortations will not be legal, nor will they fall upon the people's ears and hearts as dry, harsh, or bondaging. They will see and feel that the man speaks under a gracious power and influence; that he is not binding upon their shoulders heavy burdens which he himself will not touch with one of his fingers; that if he exhorts to love and unity, he does so because love is in his heart; if he calls for separation from the world, he is separate himself in spirit from it; if he admonishes to every good word and every good work, it is because he is himself desirous to speak and perform them. The grace of God in a man cannot be hidden. If Asher be blessed with children, and is acceptable to his brethren, it is because he dips his foot in oil. (Deuteronomy 33:24.) As anointed with fresh oil, his very countenance will sometimes shine; (Psalms 92:10; Psalms 104:15;) the sweet savour of the knowledge of Christ, like ointment poured forth, will be made manifest in him; (2 Corinthians 2:14; Solomon's Song of Solomon 1:3;) and his heart being melted and softened with the love of God, there will not be a tinge of legality or harshness in his enforcing obedience to the revealed will and word of God. The Lord's tender-hearted people will receive this ministry of the precept, will fall under it, and feel the benefit and blessing of it.

Antinomians, evil-doers, open or secret sinners, those at ease in Zion and settled on their lees, the quarrelsome and the contentious, will all make an outcry against this ministry as legal, bondaging, and burdensome. But those whose conscience is tender in the fear of God will, if not at once, yet sooner or later receive it, even though, at times, it cuts them very deeply, and reproves their inconsistencies and backslidings. They will feel at times very much searched by it, for a power attends it. This ministry of the precept will often find out hidden idols, lay bare indulged inconsistencies, and detect secret snares in which they have been long held, or allowed practices in business or in the family, which have weakened their strength and sadly marred the spirituality of their heart and life. They would resist it if they could, for it so crucifies their flesh; but they must fall under the power of the word when brought home to their conscience.

Nothing more detects hypocrites, purges out loose professors, and fans away that chaff and dust which now so thickly covers our barn floors than an experimental handling of the precept! A dry doctrinal ministry disturbs no consciences. The loosest professors may sit under it, no, be highly delighted with it, for it gives them a hope, if, not a dead confidence, that salvation being wholly of grace they shall be saved whatever be their walk or life. But the experimental handling of the precut cuts down all this, and exposes their hypocrisy and deception. It thus takes forth the precious from the vile, and becomes as God's truth. (Jeremiah 15:19.) To do all this, indeed, as it should be done, demands wisdom and grace, such as the Lord only can give. Nor can it be done at all times and seasons. Here the Lord the Spirit can alone help and teach the servants of God. But we can say for ourselves that we have at times, especially of late years, felt such a holy

influence resting upon our spirit that we could preach the precept as freely as the promise; and while we never had a deeper sense of our own sinfulness and helplessness and of the freeness and fullness of superabounding grace, yet we could urge upon our own conscience and upon all who loved the Lord the obligation laid upon us by that grace to live and act in all things according to the revealed will of God. We are, then, well convinced, both from the word of God and our own experience in the ministry, that there is a way of preaching the precept in the fullest harmony with every truth of the gospel, and every gracious, tender, and affectionate feeling of the heart; and that the right thing, spoken in the right way, will fall into its right place. But you will say, "If this be the right way of preaching the precept, how you are limiting the men who should preach it!" With this we have nothing to do. It is not for us to say how many or how few real servants of God there are at all; for your objection equally applies to all preaching and to all preachers. Should any preach the doctrines of the gospel who has not felt their power and influence in his own heart? Should any preach the experience of the gospel who has not felt it in his own heart? Similarly, should any preach the precepts of the gospel who has not felt their power in his heart, and does not manifest their practical influence in his life? The difference between us and you, supposing there is a difference, is this, that we put preaching the precept precisely on the same footing with preaching the doctrines and experience of the gospel. Now if you deny this, what will be the consequence? That you put asunder what God has joined together. You allow that a man should not preach the doctrines of the gospel or the experience of the gospel without knowing them for himself; and yet you think that he may preach the precept without a gracious experience of its power, or without living under its practical influence; or else you would strike out of his hand that part of the ministry altogether as legal or unnecessary. The Lord knows that it is neither one nor the other—not legal, but full of precious gospel; not unnecessary, for we see all around us in divided churches, loose profession, worldly conformity, and the low ebb to which practical godliness has almost everywhere sunk, the urgent necessity of its being more attended to. But we must wait patiently for the Lord’s time and way of bringing it about. A great step would be gained towards it if it were laid upon the heart and conscience of the servants of God to enforce it in the spirit of the gospel. We say "the spirit of the gospel," for there is no use flogging and spurring, scolding and censuring, setting tasks and impositions like an angry schoolmaster with school-boys, or giving extra drills, bread and water, and putting into the black hole, as an officer deals with obstinate soldiers. The precept needs the most cautious handling, or in your zeal for it you may soon turn it into the greatest legality, or drift yourself into the general preaching of the day, and getting far, far away from the experience of the Lord’s tried and tempted family, may become a nurse for Pharisees. You may take the precept into the pulpit and preach it in such a hard, dry, legal, universal way that a casual hearer might well suppose he had strayed into the wrong chapel, or that you were one of the general dissenters. This will never do, and is as great, of not worse, a fault than not preaching it at all, for to pervert any part of God’s truth is worse than to pass it by.

Well, then, may we say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Certainly not the writer of these lines; for bear in mind that it is one thing to see what is spiritual and right, and in some measure strive after it, and another thing to be able to do it. The best of men and ministers must ever see and feel their miserable deficiencies and shortcomings even in the things which they see to be according to the will of God, and which they desire with all their heart to be ever found doing. But we must not lower the standard of divine truth because we ourselves cannot reach it, or handle the word of God deceitfully to please the vitiated palate of ministers or hearers, preachers or professors.

It will be seen from these remarks what are our views of preaching the precept; and as the Apostle said of the law, "We know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully," (1 Timothy 1:8,) so we may say of the precept—the preaching of the precept is good if a man preach it spiritually. But surely there is a vast difference between a man's getting into the pulpit and preaching the precept in a hard, legal, bondaging way as a kind of moral duty, whipping up the poor, distressed, exercised family of God to a fleshly holiness and to a rigid line of strict practice which he himself never performs—and a man of God setting forth the precept in a spiritual, experimental manner, from a sweet sense of the goodness and mercy of God tasted, felt, and handled in his own soul. The former kind of preaching repels, irritates, provokes, burdens, and distresses the real family of God; the latter as applied to their hearts and commended to their consciences by the Holy Spirit, softens and melts them, is received in love and affection, and even if it smites them it is in kindness, or if it reproves them it is an excellent oil which does not break their head. A servant of God has to "reprove, rebuke, exhort," but then it must be "with all patience and doctrine;" that is, patient, experimental, gracious teaching. (2 Timothy 4:2.) He is bidden "to exhort and rebuke with all authority," (Titus 2:15.) But, to do this, he must have a strong place in the esteem and affection of the people, and his ministry must be commended to their conscience as attended with unction and power from above. His life and conduct, too, must be consistent with his profession, and he must practice what he preaches, or the people may well say, "Physician, heal yourself." The true pattern of exhortation is given us by the blessed Apostle—"For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts." (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4.) And again—"but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8,) And again—"You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory." (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12,)

Backed and recommended by such faithfulness, such a walk and conduct, such a tender, fatherly affection, we should feel no more bondage under the preaching of the precept than we should under the preaching of the doctrines and experience of the gospel. But to sit and hear every and any whipper-snapper who has just jumped from the counter into the pulpit, after being ground in the academical mill, exhorting and exhorting as if he were a Paul, or some poor legal, blind Pharisee whipping and spurring, or some loose liver reproving and rebuking, or some graceless preacher admonishing to every good word and work, in whom a microscope would not detect one good word or one good work from one year's end to another—who that knows anything of doctrine, experience, or precept, in their vital influence and power, would not turn away with disgust from such preaching and such preachers? Who ever commissioned them to preach God's word? If God had sent them they would preach it faithfully; and then, like a fire, it would burn up the chaff which gathers round them, and, like a hammer, would break into repentance and contrition rocky hearts now hardened under them. (Jeremiah 22:28-29.)

We would close up our views on this part of our subject with one question to the dear family of God. Do you feel any bondage in reading the precepts as they stand in the epistles of the New

Testament? We can say for ourselves that we have felt as much sweetness in the precepts as in any other part of those blessed epistles. If, then, the precept is preached as we find it in the epistles, and by men of God under the power and influence of the same blessed Spirit, it will meet with the same acceptance, and be received as a part of the same gospel. If it be otherwise, there is a fault somewhere.

14.04. The place of the precept in the HEART

The place of the precept in the HEART and LIFE of the child of God.

We have said so much on its place in the heart, as attended with light, life, liberty, and love, that we should only fall into wearisome repetition were we to go over that ground again. If the precept has no place in our heart, it is to us at present but a dead letter, and will either be legalized or neglected. But if it has a place in our heart it will have a place in our life. The heart is the first seat of all obedience—"But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you;" (Romans 6:17;) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13.) Now, from this obedience of heart, this effectual working of the word of God in those that believe, spring all the fruits of practical godliness. The word of his grace, coming into the heart with a divine power, has a cleansing, purifying efficacy. "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) But the effect of this is to produce an abiding in Christ.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." (John 15:4-5; John 15:7-8.) We thus see that Christ is the source of all fruitfulness, and that only as we abide in him can we bring forth fruit to his praise. But we abide in him by his words abiding in us, for they are spirit and life." (John 6:63.) He himself is our life, (John 16:6; Colossians 3:4,) and he has most graciously promised, "Because I live you shall live also." (John 14:19.) As our life, he is the life of the precept as well as the life of the promise, for only as he lives in us can we live by the faith of him, (Galatians 2:20,) whether it be to believe or to obey, to do or to suffer, to stand or to walk, to fight or to overcome.

Sadly would we miss the mark, grievously would we mistake the way, should we lay on the creature a hair’s breadth of will or power. "Without me you can do nothing," finds a responsive echo in every believing heart. And yet he does work in his people both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and, by the gentle constraints of his love, enables them not to live to themselves but to him who died for them and rose again, (Php 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.) His word has a place in their heart, and where this is the case it has an influence over their life. It separates them from the world and the spirit of it; makes and keeps their consciences alive and tender in the fear of God; produces uprightness and integrity of conduct; extends its influence to the various relationships of life; subdues pride, covetousness, selfishness, and contentiousness; softens and meekens the spirit; gives tender feelings and gracious affections; fosters prayer, meditation, and spirituality of mind; and makes itself manifest in the general life, walk, and conversation, that there is a grace in

the precept as well as a grace in the promise, and that there is a glorifying God in our body and in our spirit which are God’s. (1 Corinthians 6:20.) Our task is done. We have attempted, however weakly and imperfectly, to unfold the spiritual nature of the precepts of the New Testament as a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord graciously pardon all that he has seen amiss in our interpretation of his mind and will; and, so far as it is agreeable to his sovereign good pleasure, may he commend to the conscience and apply to the heart of our readers his precious truth, that, like his own inspired Scripture of which it is an exposition, it may be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16.)

S. The Puritans

The Puritans By J. C. Philpot The Puritans, called so derisively from their purity of principle and conduct, were hooted down, and driven from society as disturbers of the public peace. They had no need to separate themselves from the world, the world separated them from itself. Thus one grand point was gained. The church and the world were really separated. Ranks of society in those days were much more marked by outward distinctions than in our own. The gayest dresses, the richest silks, the most gaudy colors were then worn by all of both sexes who aspired to worldly distinction. Here were our Puritan ancestors specially distinguished. Their plain garb and unadorned apparel at once marked them. This made a gulf between the world and them, now too much bridged over. And as thus they were driven out of the world, they were more closely united with each other than we have in our day any conception of. Two distinct forces were thus at work to bring together the people of God—external persecution and internal love. One drove and the other drew; one closed the circle from without, and the other attracted in the circle from within. But as in all ages grain and chaff have been strewn on the same floor, wheat and tares have grown up in the same field, fish, good and bad, have swum in the same net, the Puritan assemblies were not exempt from admixture. If there was a Judas among the disciples, an Ananias and Sapphira among the Pentecostal converts, a Demas among Paul's personal friends, were the Puritans likely to be, according to their name, a pure heap of unmixed grain? But this very circumstance exercised a peculiar influence on their ministry and writings. If there had been no 'Talkatives' in the little meetings at Bedford, what materials would there have been for Bunyan's inimitable life-portrait? If no 'Mr. By-ends' or 'Mr. Hold-the-world' were to be found within reach of the Tinker's eye and voice, they would not have fallen within the scope of the Tinker's pen. 'Mr. Money-love', it will be remembered, says to his good friend By-ends, "They, and we, and you, Sir, I hope, are going on pilgrimage." And pilgrimage in those days did not mean complying with the Act of Uniformity. In this, however, as elsewhere, we see good springing out of evil. Being thrown by the circumstances already mentioned more closely together, if there was on one side deeper hypocrisy, there was on the other clearer discernment. In their small assemblies character became more closely watched, and therefore better known. Professors of religion lived more under each other's eye. There was more spiritual conversation; more discussion of doctrine and experience; more marked displays of God's providence; more mutual communion and affection; more sympathy and communion; more bearing of each other's burdens; and more general equality and brotherhood than we have any idea of. Those who experimentally knew the things of God lived more under their power and influence than in our day; and religion, as a personal reality, was with them more a matter of daily and hourly experience and consideration. As a necessary consequence, counterfeits were better got up. If the coins from heaven's mint had in those days a clearer ring, were of brighter hue, bore a more deeply-cut impress, and showed a closer resemblance to the Sovereign's image, the master of the infernal mint was not then behind in his imitative coinage. The crude, mis-shaped, base money of the present day would not have passed in times when Bunyan and Owen were assayers. Their sharp eyes would soon have detected the clumsy counterfeit. This has made the Puritan writers so searching, so discriminating, so minute in

the marks which they lay down of a real work of grace. But the Puritan ministers were also men mighty in the Scriptures. When they had opportunity they had been hard students. Dr. Owen was one of the most learned men of the seventeenth century, and was appointed by Cromwell Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, mainly for the advantage of the students. Most also of the ejected ministers were men of ability and learning. But persecution drove them from public libraries; and poverty soon compelled them to part with books for bread. A learned ministry was rather an idol with the Puritans; and this idol was to be broken. Having to defend the truth from the assaults of Popery on the one hand and infidelity on the other, they had been compelled, as they considered, to study works of learning. But, hunted down by informers, haled before magistrates, hooted by mobs, and immured in prisons, they had little time for learned researches. Poverty made them dig other roots than those of Hebrew words; and the prison taught them to tag laces instead of turning over lexicons. Hiding in a wood by day, and preaching in a cottage by night, expecting every moment to hear the door driven in, were not situations favorable to hard reading. Folios and quartos, the usual sized books of that day, were not readily carried about when soldiers were on their track; and a hollow tree or a damp cellar made but an indifferent study. Thus were they driven to study the heart instead of books, and to watch the movements of grace and the workings of sin instead of confuting the infidel arguments of Hobbes, or replying to the objections of Socinus. The work of grace on the soul, its various counterfeits, how far a person may go and not be a Christian, the certain marks of regeneration, the opposition made to it by sin and Satan, the privileges and duties of a believer, the misery and danger of an unconverted state, the work of Christ on the cross, and the influences and operations of the blessed Spirit on the heart—these and similar topics form the staple of the writings of the Puritans. And though in some points, such as the law, general invitations, &c., they may be obscure, or even erroneous, yet where they are at home there is a peculiar weight and power in their works. They are eminently scriptural and invariably practical. They were keen anatomists of the human heart, dissecting its hidden fibers to the very core. Its deceitfulness and hypocrisy were well known to them, and they possessed a peculiar ability in laying bare all its pretenses and false refuges. They were sometimes, perhaps, too systematic, and would scarcely tolerate the least deviation from the prescribed formulas of doctrine and experience. But they were a blessed generation, maintaining alive by their writings, when persecution had much silenced their voices, the hidden life of godliness in the hearts of hundreds; and by sending abroad from their hiding-places their spiritual and savory works, they much made up by their pen what had been lost from their tongue. The writings of the Puritans are the brightest mirror of their character, as well as the most enduring evidence of their worth; for in them, as in a mirror, we see reflected the features of the men, and, we may add, of that wondrous era when religion in this country was not a shadow but a substance, not a form but a power, not a name but a living reality, pervading all classes and ranks to a degree never before, and never since known. Then appeared a long and successive series of writers upon every religious subject, doctrinal, practical, and experimental, who filled the land with their works. The history of the Puritans, as a religious body of England, reaches from the accession of Queen Elizabeth, (A.D. 1558,) to the Revolution (1688.) But their writings, at least most of those preserved to the present day, have not so wide a range. The early Puritans were chiefly engaged in controversy against the corruptions of the Establishment, the spread of Popery and Arminianism, and the arbitrary power of the bishops. Their writings, therefore, were not of the same experimental character as the later productions of the same school. The press also being

heavily fettered, and no publications permitted but those which were licensed by the Authorities in Church and State, truth was gagged, and its voice choked in the very utterance. When before the writer stood the pillory with the Westminster mob, at its foot the executioner with the hot branding iron in one hand and the shears in the other, and behind it a cell in Newgate for life, it required some boldness of heart to put pen to paper, and paper to press. In Laud's bosom there was no more pity for a Puritan than now rests in the bosom of a London magistrate for a garotter; and as to punishment, there is not the least comparison, for no criminal out of Russia would now be treated as was Dr. Leighton. But when what is usually called the Great Rebellion, but what should rather be termed the uprising of the English people against the most determined conspiracy of Church and King to overthrow all their ancient laws and liberties, broke out, and in its progress and results liberated, to a large extent, the public press, then appeared a long and successive series of writers upon every religious subject, doctrinal, practical, and experimental, who filled the land with their works. The religious activity of that age it is almost impossible for us to conceive, and the contrast which it forms with the present is something absolutely marvelous. The change is as great as that of a man one day in full vigor of mental and bodily health, and the next lying on his bed with a paralytic stroke; or that of a fire blazing high, and casting heat and flame in all directions, and then sunk down into a heap of black ashes, under which it feebly and faintly smoulders. When, too, we consider other points of comparison, the contrast will appear more marvelous still. England at that period, say from A.D. 1640 to 1660, may well be contrasted with England of the last twenty years. It was then very thinly inhabited, its whole population probably not exceeding four or five million. There were no great towns; manufactures were but scanty, the woollen being the only one of any importance; the roads most miserable, and to wheel-carriages almost impassable. And yet, with all these disadvantages, there was an energy in writing, reading, and spreading religious works all over the length and breadth of the land as much beyond the present apathy as the serious earnestness, the ardent zeal, the Christian devotedness, the godly life, and the unwearied labors of the Puritan ministers outshine the words and works of their degenerate descendants. In those days men breathed religion, ate religion, drank religion. In the House of Commons, Oliver Cromwell would speak more in one half hour of the grace of God, the work of the Spirit, and the blessedness of knowing and serving the Lord, than most ministers in our day in a whole hour's sermon; and the very soldiers in his army over their watch-fires would read more in their little black bibles by the lurid light, and talk to each other more of the precious things of God in one evening, than many of our great divines would do of either in a week.

We by no means intend to express an opinion that all this was real religion, vital godliness. There is no fire without smoke; but, again, there is no smoke without fire. Shadow is not substance; but there is no shadow without it; and the larger the substance the greater the shadow. There is, indeed, the form without the power; but form presumes the existence of power, as much as the image of David, which Michal made in the bed with a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster, (1 Samuel 19:16,) presumed the existence of David. In those days there was, you will perhaps say, much false fire, hypocrisy, delusion, enthusiasm, and wild fanaticism. No doubt there was. But false fire implies true fire, or why should it be false? If, as has been well said, hypocrisy be the tribute paid to godliness, there must be the tribute receiver as well as the tribute payer. So with delusion, enthusiasm, and fanaticism. Where would be the place for these imitations of the light, life, and power of the Spirit—except in a day when his operations were specially manifest? But Satan is often transformed, you will say, into an angel of light. True—but there must be angels of light to

induce the arch deceiver to attempt the transformation. Thus, after making all the deductions that a friend, not an enemy, to vital godliness may assume, we must believe that in that day there was a blessed amount of real, experimental religion. How men could find time to write, money to buy, leisure to read, and strength to digest the ponderous folios which issued from the pens of Owen, Goodwin, Charnock, Manton, Howe, etc., seems at the present day an almost inexplicable mystery, of which we know but one solution—that in those days there was a large number of people in different classes of society who took the deepest and most lively interest in the things which concerned their everlasting peace.

Now, such writers must have had readers of a similar spirit with themselves—solid, serious, spiritually-minded men, with a heavenly sobriety of spirit, well-ripened judgment, and clear discernment in the things of God. There is no fairer or better test of an age than its approved authors, for they represent and embody its spirit. But while we have sufficiently, we think, indicated our high opinion of the value of these good old Puritan divines, we would carefully guard ourselves against the conclusion which some might thence draw that we fully agree with all their views and sentiments. This is very far from being the case; for in some points we most widely differ from them, as, for instance, in offers of grace, progressive sanctification, the law being a rule of life, calls to the dead. Upon these points, mainly through Mr. Huntington's writings, the church of God has more light than in the days of the Puritans; and as we are to call no man master on earth, and are bound to walk according to the light which is given us, it does not make us inconsistent to revere and admire the Puritan writers, and yet not tread servilely in their footsteps. We follow them as far as they follow the word; but when they depart from that, we depart from them. This is our Christian liberty; and as long as we use it not as a cloak of licentiousness, but as enabling us to serve the Lord in newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, none can justly condemn us for inconsistency.

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