

J.C. Philpot

Sermons

Volume 6

August 1845 to November 1845

Strict and Particular Baptists Minister

For 26 years

He held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham
(Rutland) Strict and Particular Baptists

Was the Joint editor of the Gospel Standard Magazine, launched
in 1835, with John Mackenzie, till 1849 when he became the sole
editor.

Reproduced by Bierton Particular Baptists
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 Fareham
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www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Charles Philpot (1802 – 1869) was known as “The Seceder”. He resigned from the Church of England in 1835 and became a Strict & Particular Baptist minister.



J C Philpot

While with the Church of England he was a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. After becoming a Strict and Particular Baptist he became the Editor of the Gospel Standard magazine and served in that capacity for twenty years.

Educated at Oxford University, he was elected a fellow of Worcester College, and appeared to have a brilliant scholastic career before him. But he was brought into solemn concern spiritually and the Lord led him into the ministry. He first preached in the Established Church at Stadhampton (Oxfordshire). In 1835, however, he was constrained, for the truth's sake, to sever his connection with the Church of England and to resign his curacy and his fellowship. The letter to the provost stating his reasons was published and went into several editions.

The same year, he was baptized by John Warburton at Allington (Wilts). The rest of his life was spent ministering among the Strict Baptists. For 26 years, he held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham (Rutland). In addition for over twenty years, he was

editor of “The Gospel Standard”, where many of his sermons first appeared.

“My desire is to exalt the grace of God; to proclaim salvation alone through Jesus Christ; 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.”

J. C. Philpot.

90 Divine Arithmetic

9

August 3, 1845

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

James 1:2, 3, 4

91 Miracles Not Ceased

28

August 3, 1845

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

Matthew 11:6

92 Spiritual Delight, and Confiding Trust

45

August 7, 1845

“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.”

Psalms 37:4, 5, 6

93 Divine Enlargement And Spiritual Obedience

63

August 10, 1845

“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

Psalms 119:32

94 The Refuge Of The Oppressed

79

August 10, 1845

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed: a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek thee.”

Psalm 9:9, 10

95 The Anchor within the Veil 98

August 17, 1845

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil: whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrews 6:18, 19, 20

96 Divine Husbandry 117

August 14, 1845

“Thou visiteth the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.”

Psalm 45:9, 10, 11

97 Blessings Imputed, And Mercies Imparted 134

August 17 1845

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

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“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Hebrews 6:12

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“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

1Cor. 1:30, 31

100 The Believer’s Gain His Loss, The Believer’s

Loss His Gain 189

August 24, 1845

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, 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 dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Philippians 3:7-9

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August 24, 1845

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Jeremiah 15:19

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Romans 7:19

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Philippians 3:15,16

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90 Divine Arithmetic

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord’s Day Morning,

August 3, 1845

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

James 1:2, 3, 4

This Epistle was written to “the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad.” These were not the Jewish tribes; for after that nation had rejected the Lord of life and glory, God the Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost to raise up a spiritual church consisting of believers in the name of God’s only-begotten Son. The twelve Jewish tribes ceased to have a standing as the people of God; and the Christian church was then established, and succeeded in their room and place.

These twelve tribes scattered abroad, (so called because they succeeded into the room and place of rejected Israel,) are the same people as those to whom the Apostle Peter writes, “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:1, 2.) The occasion of these elect strangers being spread abroad through these various countries, we find in the Acts of the Apostles, where they are said to have been scattered through the persecution that came upon the church after the death of Stephen. (Acts 8:18, 19.)

These twelve spiritual tribes thus scattered in various places of the world, at the time that James and Peter wrote their Epistles, were undergoing severe persecutions and trials; and the storm had come upon them so unlooked for and so unexpectedly that their heads were almost bowed to the ground before it.

This is the general effect of persecution. When the cloud first

breaks upon our head, it comes so unexpectedly, that it often bows us down before it. We are not prepared either for outward persecution or inward temptation, when the Lord first touches our hearts. We need therefore to be supported under persecution, and comforted under temptation, before we can be brought to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

James, then, writes to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, enduring a great fight of afflictions outwardly, and a severe conflict with temptations inwardly; and he bids them not be discouraged by these trials that had come upon them. He sets before them a sum in spiritual arithmetic—one not taught in schools or colleges, but one of a divine nature, made known to the soul by the teachings of God the Spirit. He says, “My brethren, count it”—here is a problem for you to solve, a rule-of-three sum to calculate—“count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

In taking up these words this morning, I shall, with God’s blessing, endeavour to look at them in two points of view, in order that I may be enabled as the Lord may direct, more clearly to unfold the meaning of the Spirit therein.

I.—The nature of these temptations.

II.—Their fruits and effects on the soul.

I.—The text speaks, you will observe, of “divers temptations.” These words do not altogether convey the full force of the original. By “divers,” we are not only to understand different, in point of quality, but we are to understand also numerous, in point of quantity; many and different. And by the word “temptations,” we are to comprehend not merely seductions to sin, powerful assaults of the enemy, and all that is usually implied by the expression “temptations;” but we are also to understand by it “trials.” So that would we give the full force of the two words, we must use this kind of circumlocution—many and different trials and temptations.

But James speaks also of believers falling into them, in which

there is something of an experimental nature implied. The idea conveys the impression of a person walking for a given time upon a smooth road, and then on a sudden coming into a rough one; or of a person travelling along a firm path, and suddenly finding himself sinking in a quagmire; or of one who has hitherto been advancing along a flowery meadow, and unexpectedly falling into a pit where he is torn by briars and thorns.

But the word “fall,” implies not merely the suddenness of the change, but the helplessness also of the creature to extricate itself from these spots of danger and difficulty.

Is not this, then, a singular circumstance, that the Apostle James, writing by divine inspiration, bids his suffering brethren “count it all joy;” esteem it as a pleasure, value it as a blessing, and estimate it as the richest of mercies, that they should fall into quagmires, that their feet should be sore and weary with walking on rough and rugged stones, and that the flesh should be torn from their skin by sharp briars? This is, as I before hinted, an arithmetic not taught in the schools, but one to be made known by nothing short of divine teaching in the heart and conscience of the Lord’s family.

But James has respect to the effect produced thereby. He is not looking upon trials simply as trials, nor temptations merely as temptations; he is estimating the fruit to be produced by them. To use an illustration. A person ignorant of agriculture, if he were to see the sower scattering large quantities of seed upon the ground, would think it a great waste of the precious corn; but he that understands the nature of ploughing, sowing, and reaping, would know that this seed thrown into the ground is consigned there with a view to harvest. So spiritually. The trials, temptations, exercises, and sorrows that God’s people have to pass through, are the precious seed, which springs up in the appointed time, and bears a bountiful crop. So that, just in the same way as we count it gain instead of loss when the farmer scatters his grain into the furrow, by comparing it with the crop that is to spring

therefrom, so are we to view the troubles and trials which God's people endure, not as so much loss, but as real and positive gain; for out of this apparent loss, as in the case of the seed, will the bountiful crop of eternal glory come. As the Apostle declares, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17.)

The word "temptation" has two significations; first, that which we more particularly understand by temptation; and secondly, that which is conveyed by the term trial.

There are several points of difference between temptations and trials. For instance: all temptations are trials; but all trials are not temptations. Temptations spring from Satan, our own hearts, and a world dead in wickedness. Trials spring from God; for "the Lord trieth the righteous." Temptations are connected with and act upon our carnal nature. But trials are connected with and act upon our spiritual nature; because they try faith, hope, love, and all the other graces and fruits of the Spirit. Temptations are more or less connected with sin; but trials are not necessarily so connected. There is therefore a broad line of distinction between temptations and trials.

Now all the Lord's family have to pass through each of these. They all have a sinful nature, and therefore must know temptations as springing out of that sinful nature. And as all the people of God have a spiritual nature, so they must be conversant with trials; for these are adapted to, and spring from the very existence of that spiritual nature. So that every one who is possessed of a carnal and a spiritual nature, in other words, every quickened child of God must know temptations and trials in his own personal experience. For the same reason, every child of God will from time to time be discouraged and cast down by these temptations and trials; and yet he will one day or other, when he reaps the spiritual profit, (for he cannot do it at the time), "count it all joy" that he has fallen into these "divers temptations."

Let us endeavour, then, with God's blessing, to trace out a few

of these temptations and trials.

i. And, first, let us look at some of those temptations that peculiarly beset God's living family.

1. What is the world to a child of God but one great scene of temptation? But is the world anything but man, fallen man, in the aggregate? Is it not the actings of sinful hands, the desires of sinful hearts, and the words of sinful lips? In a word, is not the world entirely made up of evils that you and I feel daily and hourly working in our corrupt nature? Just, then, as in our new nature we have spiritual communion with invisible things above, and with divine realities revealed in the word of truth; so, in our carnal hearts, we have a sensual, earthly communion with the world and all that is in it. And just in the same way as our spiritual nature loves, delights, and centres in heavenly things, so does our carnal nature love, delight, and centre in earthly things; for it never can rise above them. As long as we live in the body, our carnal nature will have sensual and earthly unions with the basest things; and there is nothing too vile or abominable for our carnal nature not to have close, sensual, earthly communion with. This, then, being the case, and there being a new principle in the child of God opposed to the evil of sin, separated from it by the power of the Spirit, bent upon eternal realities, and possessing a measure of the mind of Christ, it is through the opposition of this new principle, the temptation is felt to be temptation.

The men of this world have temptations. Satan tempts them; but they are not felt by them as his temptations. He tempted Judas and Peter; but how different the temptation in the case of Judas and that of Peter! In the case of Judas, there was no spiritual discernment of the temptation, no resisting principle, no inward conflict: his covetous heart fell in with it, was caught with the hook, and ruined by the snare. Peter was overcome in spite of his godly fear and a heart made honest by the grace of God, in spite of his love to Jesus and his faith and hope in him. He was not caught by a bait as Judas, but suddenly overwhelmed and carried away by

violence, in spite of and in opposition to his better principle.

When Satan tempts the men of this world, they fall in immediately with his temptations; they are carried away by them, drowned in their lusts, and, if grace prevent not, end eventually in destruction or despair. The same temptations assault the child of God; but they are felt by him to be temptations: he has in him a nature utterly opposed and averse to them; he has eyes that see, a conscience that feels, and a life that groans under them: and yet, to his shame and sorrow, he often finds himself entangled therewith.

2. Some of the Lord's people are sadly tempted with infidelity. I had to struggle under this temptation for many years before ever I knew that a child of God was tempted by it. I never heard it described from the pulpit; and the first place I ever saw it touched upon was in Bunyan's "Grace Abounding."

Many of the Lord's people, I believe, are painfully harassed with a reasoning mind producing every sort of carnal argument to tempt them to disbelieve the revelation which God has given in his word. This, where the heart is altogether infidel, is not felt to be a temptation; the carnal mind embraces it, and denies God with daring front; it espouses the cause of infidelity with open arms, and hates and abhors the truth. But with the child of God it is one of the most acute temptations, one of the most fiery trials he ever can pass through; for it saps the very ground of his hopes, and brings him to this point, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" It fills his heart with distressing sensations; for he has in him a believing principle which is grieved by these vile suggestions. He not only finds this world a barren wilderness; but a cloud of darkness rests upon the next. He knows himself to be a sinner; yet when infidelity comes in, tempting him to disbelieve the deity of Christ and the work of the Spirit, it leaves his soul without a refuge. There the workings of infidelity must be a distressing temptation to every one who is made alive in his soul.

3. Others of the Lord's family are tempted to blaspheme and swear. I do not know that I have sworn an oath for these twenty

years, certainly not since the Lord touched my heart; but I have had many times the working of it within, though, through mercy, it never has escaped my lips. What a temptation this is to a child of God! But was not Job tempted by it, when his wife, who should have strengthened and encouraged him, proved his tempter, and said, "Curse God, and die?" Was not Peter tempted with this, when he broke out into oaths and curses, and denied the Lord of life and glory? Was not Jeremiah more than tempted by it? It is true, he did not curse his God; he was saved from that, through mercy; he was kept from passing beyond that bound but he cursed the day of his birth and the man who slew him not from the womb. (Jer. 20:14-17.)

4. Others of the Lord's people are tempted to commit the unpardonable sin. Some persons say, 'the unpardonable sin cannot be committed now.' But I want to know this. Is not Jesus "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Is not the Spirit, the Third Person in the glorious Godhead, unchanging and unchangeable? Has his power ceased in the hearts of God's people? Then, if men could sin against the Holy Ghost in the days of the Apostles; if men's hearts are still the same, and if the power of the Spirit upon God's people is the same now as then—why should not men now commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, as well as then? I believe it is committed by many. But none of God's people can commit it: there is a blessed hedge set round about them; they may sin deeply and foully, and fall into the basest transgressions: but they can never break the bounds so as to commit the unpardonable sin: they can never trample upon the blood of Christ, blaspheme the Holy Ghost, or count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Satan may work in their mind all sorts of abominable things, and fill their hearts with all kinds of obscenity (those who are acquainted with these things best know to what daring lengths the accuser of the brethren can go); but he never has, and never will to the end of time plunge an elect vessel of mercy into the unpardonable sin. God himself will keep him, so that he never shall break through

the bounds. But there are seasons when he will be sadly tempted by Satan to think that he has committed it; and in a fit of despair his carnal mind may even sometimes wish to do it, that he may know the worst of it. But God the Spirit will keep him; the heavenly Pilot will preserve his bark from making shipwreck upon this fearful rock.

5. But there are temptations to sin also. Some temptations are of a horrible kind; suicide is among them; for it is a sin to which every principle of our souls is utterly averse. But other temptations are of a seductive kind. There are temptations that drive, and temptations that draw; there are temptations that hurry on with fearful violence, and temptations that allure the soul by the cords of sensual lust. It is difficult to say which are the more dangerous. If there be a precipice, it matters little, whether we are driven down it, or fall from it unawares. If we fall, we fall, whether it be by violence or seduction.

Many, then, of the temptations which God's people are exposed to, seduce, allure, and draw them into things that are dishonourable to God, and grievously wound their own conscience. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" the various seductions and allurements to sin, known only to those who painfully experience them, are continually endeavouring to draw away the child of God from the strait and narrow path. So that he often escapes by the very skin of his teeth; and merely by the mercy of God holding him up. If he walks on, it is in such a perilous path that none but the everlasting arms could hold up his soul from disgracing the cause with which he is connected, and distressing his conscience throughout the whole of his life.

ii. But we pass on to consider what is intended by the word "trials." I have before observed, that trials and temptations are distinct. God is not the author of temptations; he cannot do evil, nor tempt any man to commit it. That holy being Jehovah, can never, if I may use the expression, soil his fingers by touching evil. We therefore read, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I

am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James 1:13, 14.) 'But is it not said,' some might reply, (Gen. 22:1), 'that "it came to pass that after these things God did tempt Abraham?"' I answer, the word "tempt" there does not imply that God seduced Abraham into evil. It is a mistranslation, and means simply that God tried Abraham; that is, by putting him into the furnace, he exercised his faith, and proved whether he was obedient to him in all things. And therefore Paul says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." (Heb. 11:17.)

Trials, then, are of various kinds; but their object and end is one and the same; it is to try the graces and fruit of God the Spirit in the soul, and more especially the grace of faith. All the afflictions that God's people pass through are trials for their faith, whether they are afflicted in body, in circumstances, in mind, or in that way which each knows most painfully for himself. But what is the effect of the affliction? When it comes upon you, is it not to try your faith, and prove whether it is genuine? When your faith is put into the furnace, does it not separate the dross which is so mingled with it? Do not trials reduce faith into its true compass, and winnow away the chaff from the grain? Do they not bring faith to hang more closely upon the Author and Finisher of it? We may think we have great and strong faith when we have no trials, and all things are going well and smooth with us; but let painful trials come, sharp afflictions in providence, severe persecutions, bitter convictions, an arrow from God's quiver, or something that tries our faith to the centre and cuts our flesh to the very quick—does not our faith then at once seem to sink into so small a compass as scarcely to be visible? Yet at the very time our faith shall be all the stronger, for it will hang more upon, and flee more unto its blessed and bountiful Giver and rely more simply upon a Three-one God.

Now every one of God's children must meet with trials; some are without, and some within; but each has a burden peculiar to

himself, which he oftentimes thinks to be heavier than any others. It is with us in grace, as it is sometimes in nature; when one part of our body is afflicted, we think it to be the very worst place to bear the pain, and that we could endure it better in some other part. So spiritually: our trials come to us in the tenderest part, and are generally considered severer trials than any other which God's people go through. Each feels his own burden and trial, and suffers under his own sorrow; and being ignorant of the trials of another, each believer is tempted to think his trials are beyond most others sharp and painful. But let us consider.

II.—Their fruits and effects. James describes these as following one another: first, that they try faith; secondly, the trial of faith works patience; thirdly, that patience has her perfect work; fourthly, that when patience has had her perfect work, we become perfect and entire, wanting nothing. These fruits and effects I shall endeavour now to trace out.

I have already observed that James bade his suffering brethren “count it all joy” when they fell into these divers temptations and trials: for he was looking at the end, and viewing the crops, the rich harvest, to be produced thereby.

1. It is for the trial of faith. If we have a grain of spiritual faith, that faith must be tried as with fire; as saith the Apostle Peter, “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:7.) It has been said, with great truth, “Untried faith is no faith.” We can never therefore fully and satisfactorily know that we have faith till faith has had a trial, and has come triumphantly out of it.

But what is the first effect of trial? In many cases the first effect is to stun. It does not produce in our souls a seemingly favourable effect; it overwhelms and overpowers. When temptations to infidelity and blasphemy have come upon you, to deny or curse

God, or temptations to sin and the seductive pleasures of the flesh, or some sharp family or bodily affliction, has not the first effect of it been to stun, stupify, and overwhelm your soul? I know, through painful experience, that it has been so with me. We are thrown down by the blow, and there we lie upon the ground stunned, like a man who has had a knock-down blow, not knowing where we are. But after a time the soul rises again, and is revived out of its state, like the man who has had the knock-down blow, and begins to lift up his head.

There is then a revival of the soul. But with this revival there is sometimes rebellion. Rebellion does not always work at the first; the stunning blow strikes down rebellion, as well as apparently the life of God within. But when the soul revives rebellion will work; peevishness, fretfulness, hard thoughts of God, complainings that we are thus dealt with, angry askings why these trials have come upon us; or what can be the profit of these afflictions. All this while rebellion works most painfully in the carnal mind; and of all the trials that God's people have to endure, rebelliousness is one of the most distressing. What! a creature of the earth to rebel against the all-wise Jehovah! that glorious Being, who could turn us to destruction as easily as we trample upon a beetle, and with one frown send us to hell! that a puny wretch, like man, should dare to lift up his arm against the Almighty! that ever his mind should rise up in awful waves of rebellion against such a holy, wise, and gracious God! This is a trial that puts faith into the furnace, touches it to the very quick, and proves whether or not it is the genuine faith of God's elect. Where real faith is not in the heart, this trial will drive a man from the paths of God, into the world, or into despair, or into drunkenness and open sin, and sometimes into suicide.

But where there is true faith, the living faith of God's elect there is a secret cord that will keep the soul in the paths of God. However fluctuating, weak, and wavering, or however tossed to and fro, and apparently driven from its centre, yet there is that

secret band which links the soul to the throne of the Most High, never suffering it to go beyond a certain point; and this keeps it secretly and mysteriously, yet powerfully, from breaking through the bounds. All this is necessary and indispensable; there is no alternative; for faith must be tried.

There are writers and preachers that will admit there are such things as trials and temptations, and will even allow that many of God's people pass through them; but then they seem to set forth a path that may be travelled without them; such as "being drawn by love," and going to heaven safely and smoothly, without being assaulted by Satan, tempted by the world, entangled by fleshly lusts, or being put into the furnace of affliction. But all God's living people know it to be a truth, that wherever there is faith in the heart, however weak and small that faith may be, it must be tried. It is "the trial of faith," not faith itself, which is "more precious than of gold that perisheth."

2. Now this "trial of faith," which every child of God must pass through, produces a certain effect, set forth in the text. "The trying of your faith worketh patience." And patience can be produced in no other way. Men cannot gather patience out of the word of God, as they gather a plum from a tree; they cannot pluck patience out of the Scripture as we may walk by a hedge-bank, and pluck a violet out of the hedge. No: patience is a grace of the Spirit, a fruit of the Holy Ghost; it must be produced inwardly, and communicated and worked in our heart by a divine hand.

But, what is patience? It implies two things: first, endurance; and secondly, submission.

i. It implies, first, endurance, according to those words, "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 2:3.) Endurance is necessary to gain the victory. Do we not read, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 24:13.) If a man runs a race, we know he must have endurance in order to arrive at the goal. In the same way we must learn endurance; and this can only be learnt by passing through afflictions and trials.

Does the soldier learn warfare merely by being drilled upon the parade, and going through the appointed exercises? This may do for the yeomanry or militia, but it will not do for active service. A man must be engaged in the battle, face the enemy, hear the roaring of the artillery, see the flashings of the sabres, and often suffer grievous and painful wounds in his body; and then, after many campaigns, he learns to be a soldier. So spiritually. Am I to sit in my arm-chair, read the word of God, ponder over David's, Paul's, and Peter's experience, see the trials they endured, and learn the theory of spiritual warfare thereby? It may do to make a hypocrite, with a varnished face and a smooth tongue; but it will not do to make a "good soldier," enduring hardness as one of those whom the Lord is leading to victory. These learn endurance by trials, afflictions, temptations, and sufferings, and by more or less of the daily conflict. As the back is strengthened by carrying burdens; and the sinews and muscles of the arms enlarged by exercise; so the soul learns to endure hardness by having weights to carry, struggles to endure, and battles to fight.

ii. But again. The word "patience" implies submission. What is the grand point that God is bringing his people to? Do we not read that God has predestinated the elect "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren?" (Rom. 8:29.) Are they not said to "have the mind of Christ?" (1 Cor. 2:16.) And do we not read, that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps?" (1 Pet. 2:21.) But what was the most prominent point in the life of Christ? Was it not to do the will of the Father? Did he not say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me?" (John 6:38.) When enduring his dolorous sufferings in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, to which earth never has and never can witness a parallel—when the agony of his soul pressed the bloody sweat through the pores of his skin—and he was being "made perfect through sufferings," was not this the height of his obedience, "Nevertheless not my

will, but thine be done?” (Luke 22:42.) Now if we are to wear the image, and have the mind of Christ, we must learn submission to the Father’s will as he did. But how can we learn submission, if we have nothing to submit to? What is the use of my talking of having the grace of submission to God’s will, if that will never thwart mine? if that will be never unsearchable by my intellect, and as much beyond mine as heaven is beyond earth? If that will never cross mine in any particular, what can I know about submission? I may talk about it, think I understand it, and flourish a few words respecting it; but as to the internal grace of submission, I cannot know it, except I have trials, and God works it in my soul. I will tell you when we are able to submit.

We need to see three things prior to submission. First, we must see the hand of God in the trial, and that it is brought upon us by the Lord himself. We cannot see this at first. When bodily or family afflictions, cutting trials or sharp temptations come upon us, what is their keenest edge? We cannot see that they come from God. The Lord brings the trial; but he hides the hand that brings it; the cloud appears in the sky, but we see not the face of God behind it. But after we have endured the trial, we are brought to see that the Lord sent it. This was Job’s trial. If Job could have seen that God sent the trial, he could have borne it: but the Lord had hidden himself. Job went backward and forward, but he could not behold him. But the moment God appeared to speak through the cloud, Job saw the hand of the Lord; he laid his hand upon his mouth, and said, “Behold, I am vile!” He fell into his right spot; submission was brought in his soul. But when there was nothing but the cloud, and no divine hand seen, he was full of rebellion and peevishness; he could not feel submission, for he could not see the hand of God in it. Thus to see the hand of God in a trial is the first step to submission.

A second thing necessary to produce submission, is, to believe that we are interested in those words, “All things work together for good to them that love God.” (Rom. 8:28.) We cannot see this at

first. I have at times been fully persuaded that no good could come out of an affliction exercising me. It has been so contradictory to flesh and blood, that I have thought the time could never come when I should see the hand of God in it, or feel any good springing out of it. But when God enables us to believe (for he alone can) that a blessed crop will one day spring up out of it for our benefit and his glory, then we are brought to feel submission.

But we need also a third thing to produce submission, and that is, to be fully persuaded that the trial or temptation was absolutely indispensable; not merely to believe that God sent it, and that good will come out of it; but to be brought to this point, to be satisfied that good could come in no other way; that the heavy trial, the severe temptation, or the cutting affliction was really necessary, to come from the very quarter it did, to be laid upon the shoulders at the time it was, and to be brought into the heart in the precise way in which it came. When we can see and believe these three things, then we feel true submission.

3. But there is not only the work of patience, but also the perfect work of patience. There is a difference between the work of patience, and the perfect work of patience. The work of patience is to submit; but till patience endures without murmuring and submits without repining it has not had its perfect work. The trial must go on, and the sufferings be endured, in order that patience may be fully ripened. When murmuring is fully silenced, infidelity thoroughly subdued; peevishness and fretfulness ceased, rebelliousness taken flight, the soul softened at the footstool of divine mercy, and melted into a flood of genuine contrition and godly sorrow—when thus viewing the hand of God, we submit to his righteous will in all things, patience has its perfect work. It is now perfected, and brought to full maturity; it is not then merely the blossom, nor the unripe fruit, but the matured crop of patience, manifested in its implicit submission to the divine will.

4. But the Apostle adds another fruit and effect of patience—”That ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing.” There are

three fruits then produced by the perfect work of patience; 1. perfection; 2. entirety; and 3. wanting nothing.

1. Perfection. How can we understand these words? Is there such a thing as creature perfection? Certainly not. We must not interpret one part of God's word to militate against another, nor explain its meaning so as to clash with the experience of the Lord's family. The inspired word can never contradict the teachings of the Spirit in the heart.

By "perfection," we may understand two things, first, the soul's complete standing in Christ; its perfect acceptance in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Son of God. But we never see that we cannot become perfect by our own strength, wisdom, and righteousness, till patience has had its perfect work: we may have the doctrine in our head, and understand the theory of it; but the experience of it we cannot have till patience has had its perfect work. But when this is accomplished, the soul is brought to submission, and it becomes manifestly clothed in the obedience of Jesus. Whilst we are fretting, murmuring, and rebelling against the Lord's dispensations in providence or grace, what faith is there in the Son of God? what testimonies or intimations of mercy are there from the Lord? or what fruits and effects are there of his grace? But when we are brought to lie still, then patience has its perfect work, and the soul shines forth manifestly clothed in the Person and work of the Redeemer.

But by perfection, in the Scriptural sense of the word, we may also understand maturity and ripeness in the divine life—what the Apostle calls being "of full age," (Heb. 5:14, literally, "perfect.") This maturity and ripeness in the divine life is always produced by trials and temptations, and God's working through them the grace of patience, and bringing forth its perfect work in the soul.

2. But there is another word added, "entire." This means 'having every part complete;' literally, 'possessing the whole of everything allotted to us.' And this respects not the standing of the soul in Christ, but the work of the Spirit upon the heart. The new man

of the soul is proportionate in all its parts; every member and grace of the Spirit grows together. There is no enlarged head and withered heart; no strong arm and feeble limb; no dwarf, giant, nor deformed cripple among the family of God. The new man of grace is perfect in all its parts and in all its proportions. And when the new man of grace grows thus altogether, the believer is "entire," every part having its full proportion. You may have observed many persons in the religious world, professing to have faith, strong faith, almost to remove mountains, who have no humility, simplicity, brokenness, nor contrition; no tenderness of conscience, godly fear, deadness to the world, nor separation from the things of time and sense; an enormous faith, but a most scanty proportion of its fruits. Is not this a delusion? and is not hypocrisy stamped upon the very profession of it?

The Lord, then, in order to give every member and grace of the Spirit its due proportion, brings trials, temptations, and exercises; and this discipline causes every branch of the new man to grow together in perfect harmony. As faith grows, hope enlarges, love increases, humility deepens, patience strengthens, consistency brightens, the life is changed, and the soul becomes more truly conformed to the image of Jesus. Trials, temptations, and exercises produce this, by winnowing away, purging out, and separating what is carnal, gross, and sensual. So that by cutting off and cutting out that which is earthly and carnal, they leave the new man of grace to grow forth in all his blessed proportions. Am I afflicted? it strengthens my faith. Is my faith strengthened? my hope is increased. Is my hope increased? my love is drawn forth. Again. Is my hope strengthened? prayerfulness, panting after the Lord's presence, and desires after the blessed revelation of himself increase in proportion. Do these things increase? They produce more patience. Does patience increase? It produces more consistency. So, just as one grace flourishes in the soul, there is a beautiful growth in all. Faith is not like a sucker that grows from the tree, drawing away all its sap, which must be plucked

up in order to preserve the parent stock; it is rather the stem, from which all the branches grow in beautiful proportion. The faith of the Christian is not the twining ivy that lives upon, and eventually strangles the parent stem; but a divine root, from which all grows in just proportion, in beautiful and blessed harmony. A believer thus becomes entire: “one grace is not starved that another may fatten; one grace is not weakened that another may be strengthened. But faith being strengthened, patience has its perfect work, and the believer becomes entire; not that he becomes more perfect in Christ, but because he has every fruit and grace of the Spirit growing in exact proportion and harmony.

3. “Wanting nothing.” Before he was afflicted, he went astray; but now he keeps God’s word. Before the trial of faith, he was spreading all abroad; but after it came, it shut him up in a narrow compass. Before, he little knew whether the anchor of hope would bear a hard strain. Before, he was not certain whether his love was genuine, or whether he had true patience. There were many fruits of faith unripe, many graces of the Spirit in imperfect exercise, many members of the new man apparently feeble. But when trials came, the Lord through them produced patience, and eventually brought forth its perfect work.

Thus the soul becomes not merely actually, but also manifestly entire: it lacks nothing. Every grace and every fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in blessed harmony and beautiful proportion; not a single limb or feature of the new man is defective in the soul. Jesus himself is in the heart. Do we not see it so? Those who are most tried, have they not most of the likeness of Christ in them? Where am I to look for humility, prayerfulness, love to God’s people, simplicity, uprightness, the image of Christ? In an unexercised, hardened professor with the doctrines of grace upon his lips, and as dead to all vital godliness as Satan himself? I may see a distorted likeness: I may see a charnel-house white-washed over, full of dead men’s bones and uncleanness; I may see a clean outside cup and platter; but I shall look in vain beneath the varnished face

for the beautiful image of Christ in his soul. To see that, I must go to the perplexed, exercised, suffering children of God walking in the path of affliction, put into the furnace of suffering, and at times well-nigh drowned in the waters of sorrow. There you will see the mind and image of Christ; there you will see those who are “perfect and entire, lacking nothing.”

Now, do you think you have had the sum worked out? We have had a problem to handle and bring out the solution. There were these figures—“divers temptations;” and the sum to be brought out was, “all joy.” Take the mass of troubles, multiply the figures as much as you please, you will still find the sum total to be “joy.” Well it might puzzle the acutest schoolmaster to bring out this. But when we see what the Spirit does in the heart of God’s people, what sweet arithmetic does “the wonderful Numberer” (Dan. 8:13, marg.) bring forth! This we may not now see; but when God the Spirit shall calculate the sum for us, then we shall see and feel too, that divers temptations, many afflictions, and grievous sorrows are to be counted all joy, if they work in us the mind of Christ, conform us to the image of Jesus, and “make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” If this be the sum, and this the solution, then the most afflicted people, the most deeply tempted, and the most painfully tried, have reason to bless God the most. Above, there are no degrees of joy or glory; but as regards this time-state we may surely say, if small afflictions bring out but a small sum total of joy, very great afflictions will bring out a great sum total of joy. If a row of three figures is to bring out only a row of three figures of joy, then a row of ten figures of temptation and trouble will bring out—ten figures shall I say?—a hundred of spiritual joy below, and a thousand figures of joy in glory above untold and untellable. The Apostle says, “count it all joy.” He was a master of divine arithmetic. Nor was his brother Paul below him in the noble art of spiritual calculation; for he counted the sufferings of this present life not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in him; and casting up the figures

for the Lord's people as well as himself, says to them (2 Cor. 1:7), "Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

91 Miracles Not Ceased

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Evening,
August 3, 1845

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Matthew 11:6

A question has been raised, whether in sending this message to the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist wished to satisfy his own mind, or the minds of his disciples. Some have thought that John the Baptist could never have entertained any suspicion in his mind whether Jesus was the Messiah. And thus to vindicate John's honour, they have supposed it was the unbelief of his disciples that John wishes to remove. I do not profess to have a decided opinion upon the matter; but I cannot see why John, considering the circumstances in which he was placed, might not have had suspicions working in his bosom. Was he not a man like ourselves? Did he not carry in his bosom the same unbelieving and infidel heart that we are possessed of? And considering his circumstances, that he was shut up in prison, that the Lord did not appear to release him, might not a suspicion of this nature have crossed his breast—'Am I the Forerunner of the Messiah, and will he not come to release me out of this dungeon?' I do not see that it impairs the character of John to allow he had these suspicions, these doubtful thoughts in his mind, knowing what unbelieving hearts we all possess.

But, whether it was to satisfy the mind of John, or whether it was to satisfy the minds of John's disciples, the answer of the Lord was, "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." It appears from a parallel passage (Luke 7:21), that the Lord wrought several miracles before their eyes: "In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." Thus, he could appeal to their own senses, and say, "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." Does he doubt my mission? Does any suspicion cross his bosom whether I am the Son of God? Tell him what ye have seen, what ye have heard, that these things may support his wavering faith, that they may strengthen his faltering feet. Tell him the miracles which you have seen performed by my hands, "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them;" and then, as an intimation adapted to the wavering faith of John the Baptist, or of his disciples, he adds, "and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The miracles of our Lord were not merely testimonies of his mission from God, not merely manifest evidences of his almighty power, not merely temporal blessings to the objects of those miracles; but they had also a spiritual bearing; they were typical and figurative of spiritual blessings communicated from the same gracious hands. And in this way I shall this evening, with God's blessing, consider the words. I shall not speak of the miracles here spoken of as miracles wrought upon the body, but as miracles wrought upon the soul.

Miracles wrought on the body have, for the most part, ceased. The Lord of life and glory is now at the right hand of the Father in majesty and power, and has ceased, as once upon earth, to drive away sickness by a word or a touch: but he puts forth that power in men's souls that he once put forth in men's bodies. So that though miracles are changed as to their character, yet miracles have not ceased as to their existence. We behold indeed no natural miracles

now; we see no blind Bartimeus restored to sight; we view no dead Lazarus come out of the tomb. But wherever a work of grace is begun and carried on in the soul, there are blind eyes opened, there are the lame made to walk, there are the deaf made to hear, there the leper is cleansed, the dead raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached.

I shall therefore, with God's blessing, take up the words as they lie before me in this spiritual sense, endeavouring to trace out one by one the character first; and then, the miracle wrought upon that character.

I.—"The blind receive their sight." This is by the putting forth of the power of God in their souls. For 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 above? 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 may be increased, and it is increased, when darkness is put for light, and light is put for darkness; but it cannot be removed by any power of man in himself, or for others. It is the special work, the grand prerogative of the only-begotten Son of God, to remove this blindness by communicating spiritual eyesight. And this is done in a moment. We may not indeed be able to trace out the very moment that quickening grace visited our souls, though we shall, for the most part, be acquainted with the period within certain limits. But it was done in a moment of time; 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.

But how do the blind know that they have received sight? The way of the operation of the Spirit of God is hidden from us. This is the Lord's own testimony, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8) "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccl. 11:5). The way, therefore, of the Spirit's operation is to us unknown. But we begin to know that we see, by having objects presented to our mind, and by having an internal perception of those objects. Our natural eye sees everything but itself. A child when it begins, what is called, 'to take notice,' that is, to observe and understand objects, does not reason, perhaps lives and dies without ever reasoning, as to the process whereby it sees. But when objects are presented to the eye, there is a perception of those objects, and a feeling connected with them. So it is spiritually. A child of God cannot understand how, or why it is, but he knows that "whereas he was blind, now he sees:" that 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.

1. For instance. He sees that there is a God above, the holy, invisible, and eternal Jehovah, who looks into the secret chambers of his soul, whose penetrating eye searches through every veil, and pierces into the depths of that heart that is hidden from all eyes but that of a heart-searching God. This is what a man never sees by nature; this is the special work and act of faith; for by faith we endure, "as seeing him who is invisible."

2. But again. 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 eye-sight 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 thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job. 42:5, 6) "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isai. 6:5). 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 these perfections to drive it from a broken covenant: he makes known his purity, spirituality, and holiness to bring guilt upon the soul, drive it out of every lying refuge, and beat out of its grasp every hope but that which he himself implants. I cannot define—who can?—how much we shall know of God's purity, how much our hearts shall be broken within us by a sense of his majesty, what sensations of inward reverence, what feelings of guilt, fear and condemnation shall be produced by his holy law. But I am sure of this—if they do not beat us out of every false refuge, if they do not strip us of every natural hope, if they do not remove from under our souls every creature prop, they have not done their work yet. And why God displays his terrible majesty, why he sets our secret sins before our eyes, why he lays them with weight and power upon our conscience, and why he searches the very bottom of our hearts—why is all this preparation, but 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?

3. In due time, therefore, the blind receive sight to see the Person, blood, righteousness, glory, and beauty of Immanuel. "But we see Jesus." Did your eyes ever see him? Do look into conscience—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 conscience sprinkled with atoning blood, your mind lifted up above all earthly things to dwell and centre 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; you have seen the image of the invisible God; you have seen all the perfections and glorious character of the Godhead shining forth in him that 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 by faith of the beauty and glory of the only-begotten 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 whilst it lasted, such, in a greater or less degree, were the sensations produced. Now, if you have ever seen Jesus by the eye of faith, and ever had a tender affection going out toward him, you will see him in glory. But you will never see him in glory, if you have not seen him in grace; you will never see him eye to eye in the open vision of eternal bliss, unless you have seen him now upon earth by the faith of God's elect in your heart.

But we must not tarry over this portion; we must go on to consider the other parts of the text.

II.—"The lame walk." By the word "lame" here we are to understand, not one who is generally understood by the expression,

that is, one who has, in a measure, the use of his limbs; for if so, it would not be applicable. The lame often do walk, though feebly. The word “lame” rather means a cripple—one unable to move his limbs—unable, however feebly, to use any motion whatever of the body. Now, does not this set forth the state and condition of Adam’s fallen progeny? and of the elect as springing from the loins of this sinful parent? Has not Adam’s fall crippled every faculty of our soul? Has it not blinded our eyes? Has it not withered our arms? Has it not maimed our legs? Has it not dried up our hearts? Has it not affected our memory, our understanding, and our imagination? In a word, has it not so crippled every faculty of our souls, that they are altogether dead Godward?

Now, when the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, God’s people are made sensible that they are in a crippled state. Not merely lame, for that might imply that they could shamble a little forward, that they could get hold of a crutch or a strong staff, and by that means manage to walk in the strait and narrow road; but that they are more than lame, that they have lost more than the use of one limb, that they are crippled, paralytic, bedridden, unable to lift up a leg or a finger. And this is what exercises and tries many of God’s people. We know the fall in theory better than we do in practice. We know the fall in our head better than we know it in our heart. We say that man is dead in sin, that his faculties are all crippled, that he is utterly helpless in the things of God. This is our creed. But when we come to carry this out, we are exercised, perplexed, troubled, often distressed, because our creed is so true. We believe with our judgment perfectly, that we are altogether crippled; but when we begin to feel how unable we are to move forward, and how thoroughly we are what we say we are: when the light in our judgments descends into our heart to become life there, how it shackles the mind! Crippled in prayer, so as to be unable to pour forth the heart; crippled in reading, so as scarcely to understand, or feel a single portion of scripture: crippled in hearing, crippled in speaking, crippled in thinking, crippled in

acting; all blighted, all withered, all torpid, all unable to move forward. When a feeling of our helplessness thus lies upon our conscience, how deep it cuts! But the promise is—and there is a sweet fulfilment of it sometimes—that “the lame walk.” How? In their own strength? No; not in their own strength. In the strength of the Lord. We read, “they shall walk up and down in the name of the Lord;” that is, in the strength of the Lord. “My strength,” said Christ to Paul, “is made perfect in weakness.” “From me,” says the Lord to his church, “is thy strength found.”

Sometimes, then, the Lord enables the soul to walk on in his paths. The crippled state is for a time removed. Prayer is sweet—the word of God is precious—the heart is enlarged—the soul is enabled to move cheerfully on in God’s ways (“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart;”)—religion and the things of God are no longer a burden—the heart and conscience, the memory and feelings are no longer paralysed and crippled; but sweet life is poured into the soul—the vigorous sap that flows out of the stem penetrates and reaches to the remotest twig in the branch. And as the mighty sap penetrates through every branch, and as the life-blood from the Head pervades every limb of the body, there is power to walk cheerfully in the Lord’s ordinances, to walk in sweet communion with a Three-one God; to walk in light, life, and liberty, in the enjoyment of gospel means, and in the shinings of God’s uplifted countenance. When this is fulfilled, when we leave our bed where we have lain, perhaps, bedridden for months; when the limbs are supernaturally strengthened, and we move cheerfully forward; when the Lord himself lays the everlasting arms underneath;—then, like the cripple at the beautiful gate of the temple when his ankle-bones received strength, there is a leaping, praising, and blessing the Lord. Have you not felt this? You are not always crippled and lame, if you are child of God. It may be your experience, say, nine times out of ten: but the tenth time, is there not some feeling in your heart, some life in your soul, some sweet

enlargement, some heavenly love, some divine sensations? This is walking: and wherever this is felt in the heart, there is a fulfilment of the miracle, that “the lame walk.”

III.—But we go on to another case—a more desperate case than any that we have already handled. We have looked at the blind, and O how pitiful their state seems to be! We have viewed the crippled, and how helpless their condition appears! But what do you think of a man, not merely blind, not merely lame, but also leprous?—”from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores?” Leprosy was a natural disease, but it was also figurative of something spiritual. The leprosy of the body was a significant type of the leprosy of the soul. If you remember, there were no means to be used in the Old Testament to cure leprosy. God himself reserved its cure in his own hands. But when the leper was cured, there were certain ceremonies to be performed, as we find in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus. The leprosy, however, was a figurative disease—figurative of the deep-seated disease of the soul. Now, I believe in my conscience, that every child of God will, sooner or later, feel himself to be a leper. He will have the upper lip covered, he will dwell alone, and will cry, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ He will feel himself, sooner or later, to be a leprous wretch. He will feel the sores of sin, not merely externally, but internally. He will have the ‘quick, raw flesh,’ and every symptom in his soul corresponding to the symptoms of the leprosy in the body.

The Lord of life and glory, when he was upon earth, shewed forth his almighty power in cleansing lepers. We read of several instances. We read of one who came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” And we read of his cleansing ten lepers at once, though one only, and he a Samaritan, returned to give him thanks. Now, this was typical and figurative of the cleansing power of the Lord of life and glory in the soul. Am I a leper spiritually? I can no more cure myself of my leprosy, than the leper could naturally. Was leprosy a disorder that kept spreading,

deepening, and increasing, till, unless God cured it. it brought its victim to a premature death? So spiritually. If I live and die with the leprosy of sin uncleansed, where God is, I cannot come. The leper must be cleansed—cleansed, not merely by the shedding of atoning blood upon the cross, which is the actual cleansing of him from filth and guilt in the sight of God: but he must be cleansed also by the application of that atoning blood to his soul, by having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and thus enjoying a testimony of the everlasting favour of God.

Now, when a man is convinced in his soul that he is a leper, to whom can he go for cleansing, but to the Lord of life and glory? We may try a thousand remedies: they will all prove insufficient: but “the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin,” has never proved—no, not in one case—insufficient. Do not some of you think, sometimes, your wound incurable—your heart so hard, that it seems nothing can soften it—the disease of sin in you so desperate, that it seems at times to you utterly impossible you can be anything else but a sinner? Now, the deeper we sink into a spiritual knowledge of our leprosy before God, the more do we seek after, the more do we cleave unto, the more do we value, and in due time, the more do we prize that balmy blood which cleanseth from all sin. What else can take out the stains from so deeply-dyed a soul? What else can present it pure before the eyes of infinite Purity? What else can pluck a sinner out of the depths of the fall, and make him whiter than an angel of light before the throne of the Most High? The blood of the Lamb of God revealed in the heart, applied to the soul, and sprinkled upon the conscience, takes out the deepest stain of guilt. Whatever our sin has been (except the unpardonable one, which cannot be committed by a child of God), however deeply ingrained our iniquity is—if it be of the most awful nature, the blackest dye—the blood of Jesus, applied to our soul, will take it all away, and purge the conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works to serve the living God.

IV.—”The deaf hear.” Who are the deaf? Are they not spiritually

and figuratively those who, in a state of nature, have no ears to hear the voice of God, and live? Yes: by nature we are all deaf—deaf to warnings, deaf to condemnations, deaf to threatenings, deaf to precepts, deaf to promises, like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears, and will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Who can describe the deafness of man by nature to every warning, every threatening, every portion of God's word? It is indeed an awful part of the fall. But when the Lord the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, he circumcises the ear. He thus opens it to receive instruction. He gives a new faculty to the soul, whereby the truth of God is received as from the mouth of God. Has not this been the case with some of you? When you heard the law, in times past, its threatenings rolled over your heads, like the thunder, without making any impression; when you heard of the love, blood, and sufferings of Jesus, there was no softening, melting, humbling of your soul. Were you not deaf, utterly deaf? Had you any one divine sensation in your soul? any one tender feeling? any breaking down of spirit? Not one.

But when God the Spirit mercifully removes this deafness to all the truth of God—then the deaf begin to hear. This is one of the first marks of life in the soul. They hear the threatenings of God's law, and every threatening reverberates in thunders in their hearts. They hear, and they believe what they hear, that he will bring the wicked to judgment; that there is appointed a day to judge the world; and that those who live and die in their sins will be swallowed up in an awful gulf of misery. When the Lord the Spirit opens their ears, they hear the voice of the Son of God; for he says, "My sheep hear my voice;" and again, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." They hear the "still, small voice" whispering in their souls. They hear the feeblest intimation of his mercy and grace. They hear what he says in his precepts, and obey. They hear what he says in his promises, and hope. They hear what he says in his invitations, and believe. They hear the voice of the Lord, which "shaketh the

wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory." This voice of majesty and mercy sounds through every chamber of the heart, and penetrates with almighty power, still and gentle though it is, into the most secret recesses of the conscience.

In hearing the word, have you not sometimes heard things that broke your heart all to pieces? Have you not sometimes had your sins turned up to view, and cutting convictions produced? Have you not sometimes had your evidences brightened, your hope encouraged, your affections drawn out, your path cleared up, and your souls graciously comforted and strengthened? If so, a miracle has been wrought in your heart. The Son of God, sitting at the right hand of the Father, has as much, by divine power, opened your ears spiritually (or you could not hear), as ever, in the days of his flesh, he opened the ears of the deaf naturally. O what a mercy it is to have the hearing ear, and the believing heart! Not setting ourselves against the majesty of the Most High: not rushing on the thick bosses of his buckler—but to be broken down and humbled; to kiss the Son lest he be angry, to touch the hem of his garment, and to hear, or to long to hear him speaking in soft whispers to the heart, "Fear not; thou art mine."

V.—"The dead are raised up." The "dead" are those who by nature are dead in sin. These dead are raised up when life from God visits their souls. They are raised up to faith in Jesus—raised up to hope in his name—raised up to a sense of his dying love to their souls—raised up from doubt and fear—raised up from the depths of despondency, to look unto him and be saved. What a mercy it is that the Lord of life and glory still puts forth the same power in the hearts of his people, that he once put forth in their bodies, and that he raises them up from their state of death and deadness! Do we not often feel so dead, as though we had not a particle of the grace of God? So dead, that it seems scarcely possible to have a sensation of spiritual life again? So dead, that we

almost fear whether the power of God was ever felt in our hearts? Now, the Lord raises up life and feeling in our souls, by putting forth the same power that called Lazarus out of the tomb. And every lifting up of the heart towards him—every panting desire to know him, and the power of his resurrection—every breathing of tender affection—every sigh, cry, and groan—yea, every feeling, however short, however transient, Godward—is a proof that the Lord of life and glory is still putting forth his power in the hearts of his people.

Now, just in proportion as we know and deeply feel our state by nature, shall we experience and value these spiritual miracles. In the days of the Lord's flesh, who valued him? and who wanted miracles to be shewed forth? Was it not the characters whom he shewed to the disciples of John? the blind, the lame, the leper, the deaf, and the dead? And the more inveterate and the more irremediable these cases were, the more the power and the glory of Jesus were shewn in bringing them out of this forlorn state, and giving them health and cure. Is it not so spiritually? If I am not by nature totally blind—if I am not by nature thoroughly crippled—if I am not a leper to the very core—if I am not completely deaf—if I am not altogether dead—I cannot know, I cannot value when known, the power of the Lord in removing these diseases. But if I am deeply sensible of my lost and ruined condition, and know that I am by nature a complication of maladies—that every disease meets in me—that I am not only blind, but also lame—and not only lame, but also a leper—and not only a leper, but also deaf—and not only deaf, but also by nature dead: then I learn to put an inestimable value upon every breath of life, every teaching of the Holy Ghost, every mark of God's favour, and every testimony that I am one of his.

VI.—But the Lord adds another word, which throws a sweet light upon the whole—"The poor have the gospel preached to them." Why should the Lord mention this among his miracles? Was there any putting forth of miraculous power in this? Was there

anything resembling, anything analogous to, giving sight to the blind, strength to the lame, cure to the leprous, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead? There was, considering the circumstances of the times. The poor, in those days, as is too much the case in our own, were generally despised. We see what the spirit of the Pharisees was, in what they said to the blind man—"Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." The poor were looked upon more as brutes than men. The rich, the noble, the educated—these were admired; but the poor were looked upon as the common herd whom any oppressor might trample under foot.

But when the Lord of life and glory appeared upon earth, he came as a poor man. God was determined to stain the pride of human greatness: he therefore sends his only-begotten Son into the world, to be born in a stable, and cradled in a manger: to be the son of poor parents, and to work with his hands for his daily bread. Therefore they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?... How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" The very parentage of Jesus, though it was from David himself, was obscured by the low condition in which he was born. When he came into the world, poor men were his companions. He chose poor fishermen to be his disciples, and he associated for the most part with the poor. It was therefore a miracle that these poor people naturally should have the gospel preached to them. And being so contrary to every practice then known, it stood on the same footing, as a proof of his heavenly mission, as his raising up the dead, giving eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, and cleansing the lepers.

But there is a deeper meaning than that; there is a spiritual interpretation connected with the words. The "poor," understood spiritually, are the "poor in spirit," the broken in heart, the contrite, the lowly, the troubled, the emptied, and the exercised, who are nothing, and have nothing in themselves spiritually good.

Now to these the gospel is preached. It is their very poverty

which makes the gospel received by them, and makes the gospel precious to them. As the blind needed eye-sight, and received eye-sight—as the lame and crippled needed power to walk, and received power to walk—as the leper needed cleansing, and received cleansing—as the deaf needed hearing, and received hearing—as the dead needed raising up, and were raised up: so the spiritual poverty of the poor in spirit prepared them for, and made them receive the gospel.

And what is the gospel? Is not the gospel a proclamation of pure mercy, of superabounding grace? Does it not declare the lovingkindness of God in sending his only-begotten Son to bleed and die, and, by his obedience, blood, and merit, to bring in a salvation without money and without price? Is not this the gospel? Not clogged by conditions, nor crippled by anything that the creature has to perform; but flowing freely forth as the air in the skies? The poor to whom the gospel is preached, value it; it is suitable to them; it is sweet and precious when the heart is brought down. But if I stand up in religious pride, if I rest upon my own righteousness, if I am not stripped of everything in the creature, what is the gospel to me? I have no heart to receive it; there is no place in my soul for a gospel without money and without price. But when I sink into the depth of creature poverty, when I am nothing and have nothing but a mass of sin and guilt—then the blessed gospel, pardoning my sins, covering my naked soul, shedding abroad the love of God, guiding me into everything good, and leading me up into enjoyment with a Three-one God, becomes prized. When such a pure, such a blessed gospel comes into my heart and conscience, has not my previous poverty of spirit prepared me for it? Has not my previous beggary and necessity made a way for it, made it suitable to me, and when it comes, makes it precious to me? We must, then, sink into poverty of spirit, that painful place, in order to feel the preciousness, and drink into the sweetness and blessedness of the gospel of the grace of God.

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, exercised, stripped of every prop, that the gospel may be to us the gospel—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 sensation, soul enjoyment, soul blessing, and soul salvation. When the Lord the Spirit preaches the gospel, “without money and without price,” to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and exercised—it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner’s broken heart.

VII.—And then the Lord closes his message to John, by pronouncing a blessing upon a certain character, “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” What is the meaning of the word “offended?” It signifies stumbled. This is the meaning of the word in the New Testament.

Now there are many things in Jesus that stumble us by nature. Have you not been stumbled by his Godhead? Has not your reason been shaken to the very centre, and has not every sort of infidel suspicion crept over your mind concerning it? This was stumbling. Do not the precepts of the Lord of life and glory stumble most men? are they not too high for them to cross, and a stumbling-block in their path that they cannot get over? Is not Jesus generally a stumbling-block to the sons of men? When God laid the stone in Zion, was it not for two purposes—to be for his people a foundation, and to be for his enemies a stone of offence and a stumbling-block? All then, but God’s people are offended in Jesus. They stumble upon that stumbling-stone. His precepts are too rigid—his yoke too heavy—his cross too burdensome. His precious gospel is distasteful to the carnal mind; therefore all natural men are offended, and stumbled. They like not the pure gospel. The unconditional gospel is not lowered sufficiently to their carnal heart. But the Lord’s people are, by divine teaching, brought through these difficulties. They may be stumbled, and that

painfully, at times, at the infinite Godhead of Jesus. They may be stumbled to know how his blood can cleanse from sin; a thousand difficulties may perplex their mind: but they will not stumble so as to fall. They may totter and stagger, but not stumble so as to fall entirely.

Now, do look at the blessing that the Lord has pronounced—”Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” (Matt. 6:6.) What is the feeling of your heart toward Jesus? What is the solemn desire of your soul? that he would come and make your heart his abode? that he would visit your soul with the light of his countenance? that he would sprinkle his blood upon your conscience? that he would make himself very near, very dear, and very precious? Do you count one word from his lips worth a thousand worlds? a smile of his countenance worth thousands of gold and silver? Then you are blessed. You are not stumbling upon the dark mountains of error. You are not stumbling at the perfections of the Son of God. You are not offended at a free gospel, an unconditional salvation. No; the Lord in mercy has slaughtered your prejudices, subdued your enmity, and brought you to receive the gospel as a little child.

‘Well,’ but some may say, ‘I believe all this; but then, I have doubts and fears whether the Lord has begun his work in me, whether I am one of his family. I cannot enjoy the power of truth as I would wish.’ But, does not the Lord say, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me?” You are not offended and stumbled at Jesus. No: your very lamentation is, that you cannot enjoy him, cannot feel him precious, cannot love him, cannot delight in him, cannot have sweet smiles from his countenance, cannot have a blessed revelation of his love in your heart. Now, if you were offended by a pure gospel; if you turned your back upon wisdom’s ways: if you preferred the indulgence of some vile lust to obedience to the Lord of life and glory: if you were fighting against sovereign grace, and against the Person, work, and blood of the Lamb, you would be under the curse. But if there be in your heart, in spite

of doubts and fears, in spite of suspicions and apprehensions, an earnest desire to know the Lord of life, and to breathe out all your soul into his bosom; if this be the reigning feeling within—that none but Christ revealed in your heart can do you good, and you would sooner have a precious Jesus in your soul than thousands of gold and silver:—you are blessed, for you are not offended in Christ. You may be offended at many things in yourself, but he is to you, at times, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. And he that is not offended in him, but is enabled to receive him as the Christ of God, to look to him, to believe in him, and at times to feel him precious—he comes under the blessing which “maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it”.

92 Spiritual Delight, and Confiding Trust

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening,
August 7, 1845

“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.”

Psalm 37:4, 5, 6

To search and to know the heart of man is God’s special prerogative. He claims it as such; for, when speaking of man’s heart, he says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” he adds, “I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins.” (Jer. 17:9, 10.) We find the Psalmist using similar language, “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me: thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off; thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways: for there is not a word in my

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tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.” (Psa. 139:1-4.)

The deepest traces of this knowledge which God has of the heart of man are to be found scattered up and down the Scriptures of truth. The 37th Psalm, [I believe the author meant the 73rd Psalm] for instance, contains the deepest knowledge of the heart of man; and not merely the most intimate acquaintance with all its secret movements, but also with the remedy which God himself has provided to meet the malady. It is a grand spiritual armoury out of which heavenly weapons to fight against the peculiar besetments of God’s people are to be brought to the end of time. It is a repository of healing medicines to be applied from time to time to the rankling wounds that these peculiar besetments continually make in the conscience. One of these peculiar besetments is the fretting and envying that there is in a gracious man’s heart against the prosperity of the ungodly. Asaph deeply felt this; nay, so deeply that his feet had well-nigh slipped altogether through the force of the temptation. Job felt this, as we read in the 21st chapter, when he was so stumbled at the prosperity of the wicked. And all God’s people, one in a greater and another in a less degree, feel from time to time the workings of this spirit of envying and fretful murmuring, when things go against them, and in favour of those whom they know to be ungodly.

The Lord in this Psalm meets this case, and provides remedies for it; and these remedies he not merely provides for his people in the letter of truth, but he also, in his own time and way, graciously applies them to their soul.

You will observe, that in the text there is a very close and intimate connection betwixt the precept and the promise. The Lord lays down two precepts, and he connects with them two promises. And it will be my endeavour and aim this evening, if God give me power and ability, to show not only what the precept and the promise are, but also the spiritual and experimental connection between them. So that, if we are enabled (and God alone can enable us) to perform the precept, we are sure of having the promise

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fulfilled in our heart’s experience.

The text consists, therefore, as I have just observed, of two distinct branches. There is a precept in each, and a promise in each, and these two are intimately connected.

I.—The first precept runs thus, “Delight thyself in the Lord;” and the promise connected with that precept is, “And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

There is a close and intimate connection betwixt the humbling teachings of God in the heart, and our delighting ourselves in him. What was the frame and mind, and what was the peculiar besetment that God the Spirit met in this Psalm? It was the envy and fretfulness which often work in a good man’s bosom against the prosperity of the wicked. In other words, the character pointed out in this Psalm was one walking in a path of peculiar trial, temptation, and perplexity; and one of his peculiar trials, perplexities, and temptations was, that all things went contrary to him, whilst all things went on favourably with the ungodly. Now I do not say that this was absolutely necessary to make him delight in the Lord. But I say this, that we cannot delight ourselves in the Lord till we have ceased to delight in other things; and therefore we need to be led in a path of trial, temptation, perplexity, conflict, and sometimes to experience great distress of soul on account of sin laid upon our conscience, in order to be brought to fulfil this precept spiritually.

The precept is not laid down here as though man were able in his own strength and wisdom to take it up and obey it. There is a preparatory teaching of the blessed Spirit before a man can enjoy in his own soul a living experience of the precept. And the very way whereby God brings him to perform it is, by first leading him into those paths of trial, perplexity, and sorrow which stir up the enmity, peevishness, and fretfulness of his rebellious heart. For instance

1. By nature we delight in the world. It is our element, our home, and what our carnal hearts are intimately blended with. We

need to be divorced from this carnal union; we need to have the world embittered to us. Now the very means that God employs to embitter the world to us are cutting and grievous dispensations as unexpected reverses in fortune, afflictions of body, of family, or of soul. But these very means that the Lord employs to divorce our carnal union from the world, act upon the peevishness and fretfulness of our depraved nature. So that we think we are being very hard dealt with in being compelled to walk in this trying path, whilst the ungodly are prospering. And yet by these cutting dispensations we are eventually brought to delight ourselves in him, who will give us the desires of our heart.

2. Again. We cleave close to a covenant of works. Our naturally religious heart is continually aiming to do something whereby we think we can gain the favour of God. Now when every exertion to set up our righteousness is completely baffled, when our resolutions are proved to be weak as water, when all our endeavour to do something that we think God can accept prove entirely baseless, and the corruption of our heart becomes more and more manifest in every attempt to carry out what we think will please God—this stirs up the self-pity, the murmuring, the peevishness, and the rebelliousness of our nature.

3. Again. 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 carnal 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 whale swims in the waters of the sea. But the Lord will never suffer us to do the evils that we would; he prevents us from walking in these things, by laying the guilt of them upon the conscience, by producing cutting convictions in our soul, by making us at times loathe ourselves in dust and ashes on account of our own sinfulness and folly, by making us feel ashamed of ourselves, and covering us with confusion of face because our carnal heart so delights in wickedness.

4. We by nature 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, and our own gratification, or something whereby self may be flattered, admired, adored, and delighted, is the grand end and aim of man's natural worship.

From all these things, then, which are intrinsically evil, which a pure and holy God must hate with perfect abhorrence, we must be weaned and effectually divorced. This we cannot learn from reading the Scriptures, or by hearing the experience of others. We may have the theory correct; but the experience of it must be wrought by God's own hand in our conscience. But 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. There cannot be. We cannot delight ourselves in the Lord till we are purged of creature love, till the idolatry of our hearts is not merely manifested, but hated and abhorred, till by cutting temptations, sharp exercises, painful perplexities, and various sorrows we are brought to this state—to be sick of sin, sick of self, and 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.

How long you shall be walking in this painful path, how heavy your trials, or what their duration shall be, how deep you may have to sink, or how cutting your afflictions may be in body or soul, God has not defined, and we cannot. But they must work till they have produced this result—weaned, divorced, and completely separated us from all that we naturally love, all that we idolatrously cleave unto, and all that we adulterously roam after. If they have not done this, they must go on till 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.

See, then, the connection betwixt the workings of fretfulness, rebelliousness, and peevishness in the heart of the saint, and the precept, “Delight thyself in the Lord.” “What?” it may be said, ‘here is a man full of peevishness, rebellion, enmity, and fretfulness, and God tells him to “delight himself in the Lord.”’ He fain would do it, but cannot. This is the state and case of many of the Lord’s people; they have enough religion to make them miserable, but not enough to make them happy; enough grace to make the world distasteful, but not enough to make the Lord of life and glory precious; enough religion to keep them from falling into sin, but not enough to break down the hankering idolatry of the carnal heart.

The Lord, then, who sees all their trials, raises up in their hearts the power to perform the precept—to delight themselves in the Lord. But how does the Lord do this? We are completely powerless, thoroughly unable to delight ourselves in the Lord. It is as impossible for a fallen sinner to delight himself in the perfections of Jehovah, as it is for him to create a new sun, and plant it in the sky. It ever is, and ever must be, a special act of grace, and of the operation of God the Spirit in the heart and conscience of the elect sinner. But there is a time and season when the Lord does enable his dear family to fulfil this precept, “Delight thyself in the Lord.”

How then does he bring about the fulfilment of this precept? By manifesting himself, with more or less clearness and power to their souls. There are in the Lord of life and glory infinite treasures of loveliness and beauty; and when these are manifested to the soul, then delight in these glorious perfections instantaneously springs up in the heart. Sometimes the Lord is pleased to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, and then we have a view of his matchless perfection, beauty, and loveliness by the eye of living faith. We see an indescribable glory in his eternal Godhead; we see an indescribable loveliness in his pure and spotless humanity; and we see an indescribable beauty in the union of the Godhead and the manhood in one glorious Immanuel. I have seen, I believe, with the eye of faith, that “perfection of beauty,” which the tongue

of man can never express, the beauty, loveliness, grace, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. When there is any discovery of his beauty and glory to the eyes of the understanding, and any reception of it by living faith in the heart, it is utterly beyond the tongue of men or angels to describe. But when we have a view by faith of the matchless perfection, glory, beauty, and loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is then, and then only we are enabled to delight ourselves in him. There is in the soul a solemn delight in the beauty of the Lord of life and glory; there is a going forth of the tender affections of the heart unto him as the “altogether lovely;” and there is a flowing forth of the secret desires of the soul towards him as he sits enthroned in glory, power, and majesty at the right hand of the Father. Now if ever we have seen this, we have fulfilled the precept, “Delight thyself in the Lord.” But this delight is not in thy religion, not in thy own acts, no, nor in thy own experience either, but “in the Lord”—thy thoughts, thy desires, thy meditations, thine affections, all fixed in, all fixed upon, the Lord of life and glory.

Now, when we are enabled to delight ourselves thus in the Lord, it is sometimes in the way of meditation. There is a sweet meditation of the soul upon his glorious attributes. Every divine character that shines forth in the Person of Immanuel is received by faith; and no sooner does faith receive it, than hope in the soul anchors in it, and love in the heart flows out towards it. Sometimes in reading the Scriptures, they are opened up to us with sweetness and savour. We see and feel an indescribable beauty in those passages which speak of the Lord of life and glory. Faith is kindled; the soul believes, simply and with a child-like spirit, what it reads; and the affections flow forth to that which is so sweetly and solemnly made known. Sometimes, in secret prayer, there is a drawing near to the Lord—a delighting ourselves in him as altogether beautiful, and altogether glorious and lovely. And sometimes, without any special means, before the heart is aware it is made like the chariots of Amminadib, caught up in believing admiration and adoration of the Lord of life and glory. Now, when this is felt in the soul, it is a fulfilment of the

promises—"Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isa. 33:1)—"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." (Isa. 4:2.) Then the soul can enter, in some measure, into the language of the Bride, when she said, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest amongst ten thousand: yea, he is altogether lovely."

II.—But I pass on to consider the connection of the promise with the precept. You will observe, the Lord has given a precept—"Delight thyself in the Lord;" and he has closely connected a promise with it—"And he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." Now, if we are enabled (and only God can enable us) to delight ourselves in the Lord with child-like simplicity and affection, the Lord, for his own name's sake, for his own mercy's sake, will fulfil the promise so closely connected with the precept. And not only so. They are not merely connected by the solemn declaration of Jehovah, but also by a link in time. I will explain my meaning. If we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, he gives us then and there the desires of our heart. The precept and the promise are so closely allied, there is such an intimate connection between the two, that they are linked together in time in enjoyment at seasons, as closely as they are linked together in the word of truth. When we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, the desire of the heart flows out instantaneously unto him in whom we are enabled to delight. There are times, many times (O how numerous are they?), when we have no delight in the Lord—when we can scarcely recall any delight we have ever experienced—when our heart is a desolate wilderness, where nothing grows but thorns and briars; and when we have no desires after him. But when we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, immediately desires spring up. The very same Spirit that raises up the power and gives the feeling to delight ourselves in the Lord, enables us, at the same moment, and by the same operation, to feel desires—nay more, to give those desires

utterance, to pour them forth, to spread them out, to lay them, with all humility and simplicity, at the divine footstool. And what are these desires? Let us endeavour to mention a few of them.

1. One is, to embrace in our arms that blessed Lord in whom we are, at the time, delighting. We see him sitting in heaven above, in glory and beauty; and our desire is, to stretch forth our arms, and bring him down into our heart, and that he would come with divine savour and power into our soul. We want something more than to delight ourselves in him—we want to enjoy him. It is not sufficient to see his beauty at a distance. It is not sufficient to have the affections of the heart drawn out towards that beauty. That does not satisfy us—nothing satisfies us but a personal enjoyment of that beauty, made manifest and shed abroad in the heart. But when we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, there is the desire going forth that the Lord would reveal himself with power, come down with glorious majesty, and sweetly form himself in our heart the "hope of glory." This, you see, is the desire of the heart; and the Lord gives the desire when he enables us to perform the precept. To be brought near to that blessed bosom out of which all grace flows, and in which all affection and love centre, is the desire of the heart when we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord; not to be at a distance, but to be brought near; and the nearer we are brought, the nearer we desire to be brought. If I may use an illustration, it is something like the movement of the earth towards the sun. Philosophers tell us, that were the earth to advance towards the sun, it would move every moment, more and more rapidly towards it, till at last it would be altogether swallowed up, and lose its own existence in it. So spiritually. When the Sun of Righteousness attracts a soul near to himself, the more near it is drawn, the nearer it desires to be drawn; so that nothing can really satisfy and satiate it, except to be absorbed and swallowed up in his boundless grace and glory.

2. Another desire of our heart is, to be conformed to his image. When we delight ourselves in the Lord, and are then enabled to

tell him the desires of our heart, one is—that he would stamp upon us his own image, and conform us to his own likeness. We see his meekness, gentleness, tenderness, and compassion. We see him “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” We see in him all perfection—everything holy, pure, and blessed. Now, we cannot delight ourselves in the Lord, unless there be some sympathy and union between us and him. Can impurity delight in purity? Can sin delight in holiness? Can the carnal love that which is spiritual? Impossible. But when we are under the sensations I have traced out (and I hope I know something of them, or I could not speak of them as I do), then there is that softness of heart, that spirituality, that heavenly-mindedness, that tenderness of conscience, that holy affection, graciously wrought out and produced in the soul, whereby we desire to have the mind, likeness, and image of Christ stamped upon us. And if the Lord would but indulge us with it, we would wish never to sin again, never think anything again dishonouring to God, never speak anything that grieves the Spirit, never do anything that the Lord eternally hates.

3. Another desire of our heart is, to be separated and weaned from the things of time and sense, to have the world put under our feet, and the body of sin and death subdued; that we may not live under the power of any sin, but trample it under our feet.

4. Another desire is, to receive the blood of sprinkling with full power upon our conscience; to feel its sweet efficacy, purging away all sin and guilt; to have it so applied by the Holy Ghost, so spiritually received, known and felt, that fear, dread, and darkness may all take flight from the soul, and hide themselves in their dens as the unclean birds were driven away from Abraham’s sacrifice.

5. Another desire of the heart is, to shelter under his glorious righteousness. When we delight ourselves in the Lord we behold his righteousness; but to behold his righteousness with solemn delight, is not the same thing as feeling the sweet enjoyment of that glorious righteousness received into the soul. There is a delighting in it as

a garment; but this is a different thing from having the garment put upon and imputed to us, suited and perfect in all its parts. But when the soul delights itself in the Lord’s spotless righteousness, its desire goes after this righteousness, to be altogether wrapped and clothed in it, to feel the sweetness and know the efficacy of it, that it may stand up before God whiter and brighter than the angels of light.

But many, nay, innumerable are the desires which the soul feels, when it is enabled to delight itself in the Lord. Each has his peculiar trials which then he can lay before the throne; each has his peculiar griefs which then he can unbosom himself of; each has one request which then lies with greater power upon his heart than another. And when he delights himself in the Lord, he is enabled to tell the Lord that desire. There are times when we have desires in our hearts, but we cannot utter them; sometimes unbelief works in us; sometimes self-pity, sullenness and murmuring; sometimes despondency and rebellion; sometimes a cold, torpid spirit that freezes up every faculty of the soul. We may too have desires fluttering in our heart, and working at the bottom of our bosom; but there they are fluttering to and fro, without any power to raise themselves up from the heart in which they lie. But when we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, they come trooping forth. This however may not be once a year, or very rarely in a man’s life. These are not every day banquets, every week or month’s enjoyments; no, they are for the most part very rare things,—so rare that when they are past we look back at them as sweet reminiscences. But it is at these times if we have desires, that we are enabled to lay them before the throne of mercy.

Now if we have ever been enabled, in the depths of the soul, in the movements of the heart towards God, when stretched upon our bed, sitting by our fireside, occupied in the affairs of life, or in any of those solemn moments, when no eye or ear saw or heard us but the eye or ear of the Almighty—if ever we have been enabled to delight ourselves in him, and to have the goings forth of sweet

affection towards him who is infinitely, ineffably, and inconceivably glorious—if ever our delights have centred in him who is altogether lovely and only desirable, then God will give us every desire of our heart. At these moments he says, inwardly, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;” “Make thy request large; make it in heaven above, or in the depth beneath.” And the Lord is pleased, so to speak, that his dear people should open their mouth wide at such times, telling every thought, and uttering at his footstool every secret desire.

III.—But we pass on to consider the other precept contained in the text, and the promise connected with it. I see a great beauty, glory, and sweetness in the linking together of these two precepts and these two promises. I will explain how.—There may be here some of God’s people (perhaps many) who cannot altogether realize what it is to delight themselves in the Lord. They want to do so more than they have been yet enabled. They have had glances, glimpses, testimonies, hopes, tokens; but as to a season of solemn delight in the Lord, they cannot say clearly and positively, that such has been their experience. Well, does the Lord cut off such? Does the Lord do with them as many a haughty professor does now-a-day, trample them under foot as nothing? take his weak sheep and trembling lambs, and throw them over the hurdles? God deals not so with his little ones. The sympathizing bosom of Jesus is as distinct from the conduct of such professors, as heaven is from hell. He knows his people’s state and case. He sees the secret movements of their hearts. He knows all their times of despondency, fear and apprehension. And therefore he gives them a precept, and connects with that precept a promise as suitable as the other. “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Some here may say, ‘O that I could delight myself in the Lord! but my heart is hard, my path intricate, my mind perplexed and burdened, and my soul dark; I feel my helplessness; I know I cannot delight myself in the Lord; but it is my grief and burden that I cannot do so.’ Now are you to be cut off for that? No: does it not say, “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” What is ‘thy way?’ Why, it is thy perplexed way, thy entangled way, thy desponding

way, thy doubting and exercised way, every feeling thou hast in thy soul because thou canst not delight thyself in the Lord—this is ‘thy way.’ ‘But,’ say some of you, ‘if I could see my interest clear; if I could feel the blood of sprinkling applied, enjoy the sweet assurance that I am saved, and taste the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, how happy I should be!’ The anxiety and sorrow you feel because you cannot realize these sweet sensations in your heart, are your ‘way;’ that is the path in which you are walking. And it is this which tries you so. It is your perplexed way, your intricate way, your entangled way, that is the grief and trouble of your heart.

Now, the text says, “Commit thy way unto the Lord.” But God must as much work in us the power to commit our way unto him, as he must work in us the ability to delight ourselves in him. They are both acts of faith. The minor act of faith, to “commit our way unto the Lord,” is as much an act of living faith, as the greater act of faith, to “delight ourselves in the Lord.” It requires the same power that made heaven and earth to enable a living soul to commit his way unto the Lord. But there are times and seasons when the Lord enables the soul to fulfil the precept, to commit its way unto him.

But what is the idea contained in the word “commit?” It is to take one’s burden, and lay it humbly at the Lord’s feet; to bring our case, and put it in the Lord’s hand; in whatsoever state, whatsoever trial, whatsoever experience, to take it, and lay it at the Lord’s feet—this is to commit our way unto the Lord. But before we can do this, we must be divorced and weaned from looking to the creature. How prone we are to do this, to measure our experience by that of others, to trust to the good opinion of men or of a minister, to try to gain the approbation of a church—something or other distinct from God’s approbation in the soul, something or other distinct from the witness of the Spirit in the heart! Now, the reason, the main reason, why the Lord exercises his people so with perplexities and trials, shuts them up, makes the way dark before them, is to take them off the creature, and bring them to

this spot—”none but the Lord himself can save my soul, pardon my sins, relieve my distress, and give me that which alone can satisfy me I am his.” Whenever this is wrought in the soul (and it is for the most part wrought there by a series of cutting disappointments), it is enabled to commit its way to the Lord, to lay its case at his footstool. This is an act and exercise of living faith. How many of the Lord’s people there are who have a way in which they are walking, and this way they think altogether peculiar: that no saint has ever walked in the path before them! Theirs, they complain, is such a strange, such a strait, such a difficult, such an entangled road, that they cannot think any child of God ever travelled in it.

Now, whatever be the way, the precept runs—”Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Art thou dark? Commit thy darkness. Art thou unbelieving? Commit thy unbelief. Art thou tempted? Commit thy temptation. Art thou exercised? Commit thy exercises. Art thou perplexed and embarrassed as to what course to take? Commit thy perplexity and embarrassment to the Lord, in the actings of simple faith, in the pouring out of spiritual desire, in the goings forth of hope and love from the heart Godward.

But some may say, ‘Why, you are setting before us an impossibility.’ It is so: but God works these impossibilities. What is impossible to man, is possible to God, for “with God all things are possible.” Nay, I will tell you another thing—if you have never committed your way unto the Lord, you are no Christian; you are nothing but a dressed-out professor; you have never had the teachings of the Spirit in your conscience, nor the actings and exercises of living faith in your soul. You may have the doctrines correctly—you may have a sound system, creed, and theory—but you have never felt the operation of God the Spirit upon your conscience, if you have never committed your way to the Lord. I know the difficulty, as well as you do, of committing one’s way to the Lord—the workings of unbelief, the temptations of Satan, the harassings of the enemy of our soul; the infidelity and scepticism, the doubting and fearing of a perplexed mind. But I know also

what it is to commit that way. We must know both sides. We must not take the infirmities, the sins, the unbelief of God’s children, and because we have that which all men have, conclude we have the other. We must know both sides of the question. We must know the impossibility, and we must know the possibility. We must know the difficulty, and we must know the ease. We must know the want of power, and we must know the communication of power. We must know what it is to cry under our burden, and we must know what it is to lay that burden at the Lord’s feet. And this committing of our way unto the Lord is as solemn an exercise of living faith in the soul (though not so clear, not so sweet, not so satisfying), as much an act and operation of God the Spirit, as delighting ourselves in the Lord.

IV.—But the text adds—”Trust also in him,” which is a further expansion, a more complete development of what it is to commit our way unto the Lord. There is this difference betwixt the two—trusting is a further act of faith. I will illustrate my meaning by a comparison. Say you have a sum of money in hand; and this, for various reasons, you do not wish to keep in your house. You have a friend, a trustworthy friend: you go to him, and say, ‘Will you take charge of this little sum of money I have?’ Now, putting into his hands this sum, is committing your money unto him. It is committing to his charge and keeping what is dear and precious to you. After you have left the money, perhaps, a certain fear comes over you—’suppose he should spend the money; suppose he should not give it back when I want it; suppose he should employ it for his own purposes; what becomes of me? what becomes of my engagements?’ But if after you have committed the money to your friend, you feel implicit confidence that when you ask for the money it will be returned, then you trust in him. You first believe, then you commit, then you trust. If you did not believe your friend was trustworthy, you would not commit it to him. After you have committed it to him, a doubt may rise in your mind as to whether he is really trustworthy; but when your confidence in him is so

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well-grounded, that you are sure he will return the money when wanted, then you can trust in him that when you go for it he will return it fully and fairly into your hands. Look at it spiritually. Our 'way' is that most dear to us. Nothing can be so dear to a man as the way by which the Lord leads him. His experience is all in all. If that be right, all is right—if that be wrong, all is wrong. If he part with that, he parts with all he holds dear. When then he believes, by the actings of living faith in the soul, that the Lord Jesus is revealed that he should commit his way to him; that as God, he has almighty power—as man, a tender, sympathizing bosom—as God-Man, he is "over all, God blessed for ever;" when in the actings of this faith, he commits his way to the Lord, he puts his soul into his hands, puts all his difficulties, perplexities, exercises into his hands, into his very heart. But there may rise doubts, fears, suspicions—'Will the Lord hear me? will he appear for use? Is he all that I believe him to be?' Infidelity will work—doubt, suspicion, and fears may arise, 'Is the Lord what I believe him to be? am I what I believed myself to be?' But when we are enabled to feel that he will keep what we have committed unto him, and that he is able and willing to keep us who have committed it, then we are enabled to trust as well as to commit.

V.—Now follows the promise—"And he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." "He shall bring it to pass." What? The thing that lies deepest in thy heart—"thy way." Does not thy way lie deepest in thy soul—the path that God has led you by, the path that God is now leading you; your path of temptation, trial, and perplexity; your past or present experience; the case and condition in which you now are? You may be troubled in your soul, doubting in your mind, fearing in your heart, distressed in your feelings; you may sink down to the lowest point that a child of God can sink to; yet that way, in which you are so deeply sunk, if the Lord enable you from time to time to commit it to the Lord, and trust in him, he will bring to pass above what your heart desires. Look at the

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movements of your heart Godward; look at your embarrassments, temptations, and exercises; look at that which rolls backwards and forwards in your mind, and which is tossed to and fro on the waves of your anxious bosom—what lies nearest, dearest, and deepest,—let honest conscience speak. That, whatever it be, the Lord tells you, and sometimes enables you to commit to him, to put it into his hands, to trust it to him. Now whatever it be, so committed and so trusted, the Lord has declared in his unerring word of truth, he "will bring it to pass; "he will fulfil it when his time has arrived. Does darkness envelop it? do mountains of difficulty stand up in the way of its fulfilment? Never mind; God will bring it to pass in the face of all, over mountains and through difficulties, in spite of, and in the midst of, all surrounding obstacles. He "will bring it to pass,"—that which lies deepest in your heart, nearest your affections, and that which you are enabled in the actings of living faith sometimes to commit into the hands of the Lord God Almighty.

But, in order to clear up the point, God the Spirit has added, by the pen of the Psalmist, this explanation, "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." The word "righteousness" in the Scripture has more than one signification. I will not take up the time, as it is wearing away, by explaining the different senses; but merely observe two. One is, 'the righteousness of God,' which is imputed unto and put upon all them that believe; the other is, uprightness, sincerity, and honesty of heart in the child of God, as a part of his new nature. Now both these different kinds of righteousness will God bring forth as the light. I have been endeavouring to show that the precept, "Commit thy way unto the Lord," is a precept adapted to the exercised, tried, tempted, and distressed. Now do you want your righteousness to be brought forth as the light, that you may see Christ's righteousness, and that you may see your interest in it, as clear, plain, and palpable as the light of day? And if you have committed your way unto the Lord, your doubting and fearing

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way, he will one day give a clear discovery of this righteousness to your heart. What the everlasting God has said, that he will fulfil, “He will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.” It shall spangle before your eyes, glisten in your heart, and shall be manifest in your soul’s happy experience as the light of day when it arises to gladden the earth.

But there is another sense—the uprightness, sincerity, and integrity of a man’s heart Godward. There is much of this spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures; the sincerity and uprightness of a man’s heart. It is a cutting feeling to us, (and yet we must have the experience of it), to have our motives misunderstood, and the things that we do and the things that we say from pure motives (and so far as they spring from the new man of grace they are pure) put down to base ones. Few things are more mortifying or more trying to me, than to have my words and actions attributed to the worst of purposes, such as, that they are said and done merely to exalt and glorify myself, when it is the very furthest from my thoughts. Now we shall all have to lie under this imputation, that pride may be mortified. We would glory in our pure motives, in our integrity, did our professing brethren, did the real brethren admire them. We should glory in man, and rob God of the glory. Therefore he permits that your motives, thoughts, and actions should all be misrepresented, and put down to base motives. But the time will come when the Lord will bring forth your righteousness (so far as you have acted in any point from pure and simple motives) as the light. It shall shine in the eyes of men. It shall be as bright to those that have spiritual discernment as the light of the sun, which shines forth clearly in its own intrinsic glory. Now, this may be your lot. You have acted from motives really, in the sight of a heart-searching God, simple and pure. You are now lying under misrepresentation. It is no use your trying to remove it—your attempts to remove it will only make it worse. But the Lord will one day bring forth your righteousness, the integrity of your motives, the sincerity of your actions, as the light, so that men shall be forced to acknowledge

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that you were honest and upright in intention.

“And thy judgment as the noon-day.” The word ‘judgment’ here means case—the case to be decided by the judge, the point in hand that perplexes a man’s soul, the grand trial at issue. Every man has a case, a cause—something to be decided; a cause that he looks to God to give him an issue upon. Now, if you are enabled to commit your way to the Lord, and trust in him, he will surely fulfil these promises. He will bring forth your imputed righteousness as the light to gladden your soul with its beaming rays. He will bring forth your integrity and uprightness to shine and glisten before the eyes of your believing brethren. He will also bring your judgment—the case in hand, the trial at issue, the point that lies most upon your heart, the thing that presses most deeply upon your conscience—he will bring this judgment forth as the noon-day. You shall see Satan defeated, sin pardoned, your enemies baffled, your case brought out to the light as clear as ever you have seen the noon-day sun walking in his brightness, and casting forth his beams of glory and splendour to enlighten the world.

93 Divine Enlargement And Spiritual Obedience

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord’s Day Morning,
August 10, 1845

“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

Psalm 119:32

I was endeavouring to show on Thursday evening a connection between the precept and the promise; and I observed that, whenever the precept and the promise are linked together, if we are enabled to perform the precept, God is sure to fulfil the promise. But there is a connection of another kind between them—that namely betwixt the precept itself, and the power to perform it. The word of God

is full of precepts, but we are totally unable to perform them. We can no more, without divine operation, perform the precept, (that is, with a single eye to the glory of God, from heavenly motives, and in a way acceptable to the Lord), than we can, without special power from on high, believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God. We need a peculiar power to be put forth in our hearts, a special work of God the Spirit upon the conscience, in order to fulfil in the slightest degree the least of God's precepts spiritually. The way in which we perform the precept, when we do perform it at all, is set forth in the words of the text, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

In taking up the subject this morning, I shall endeavour to unfold it according to the two clauses of the text; but in so doing I shall invert their order; and, with God's blessing, I shall endeavour, first, to trace out the mind and meaning of the Spirit in the words, "When thou shalt enlarge thy heart;" and, secondly, "I will run the way of thy commandments."

I.—Before we come to examine the subject closely, it will be desirable to give a little explanation of two points—What is intended by the Holy Ghost by the expression "heart;" and, as things are best seen by their contrast, to explain what it is to have a contracted heart, in order that by the contrast we may understand the better what it is to have an enlarged heart.

1. By the word "heart" in the Scriptures, the Holy Ghost means more than one thing. Sometimes, for instance, He means by it that corrupt, depraved principle, which we derive from Adam. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. 17:9) God saw "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, continually." (Gen. 6:5) "A heart," Solomon says, "that deviseth wicked imaginations." (Prov. 6:18) In all these passages, the expression, "heart," means that corrupt nature which we derive from a fallen progenitor. There is another signification which the Holy Ghost has attached to the word, which I may define in one short sentence, "the feelings of the soul Godward."

It is, therefore, sometimes taken for the understanding. Thus we read, that God gave Solomon "largeness of heart, as the sand upon the sea shore." Here it means wisdom and understanding. Sometimes it means affections, the tender affections of the soul, as in numerous passages where David speaks of his heart "inditing a good matter," "panting after the Lord; __ rejoicing in his salvation," or else sorrowing, mourning, or cast down. And sometimes, it signifies conscience, as where God said of Josiah, "Because thine heart was tender." (2 Kings 22:19.)

2. This heart, then, or new nature, is susceptible sometimes of contraction, and sometimes, as divinely wrought upon, of expansion. The heart of a child of God, viewed spiritually, is a tender exotic; it is not a hard, rough, native plant, that stands every storm, which no frost nips and no drought burns. It is a foreign plant; for it comes down from heaven, the abode of eternal purity, and dwells in a man's bosom, with all the tenderness of a plant from a warm country. Now these tender feelings Godward are susceptible of contraction. They resemble a hot-house plant. Open the windows, expose it to the chilling blasts of this cold, inclement, northern clime, it shrinks, the tender buds refuse to expand, and the whole plant droops and dies. But let the windows be closed; let the bright sun pour his warm rays through the glass roof upon it, and the same plant, which so contracted, shrivelled, and withered away under the blast, opens its tender bosom and sends forth its sweet fragrance. So with the new-born soul. There is that which shuts it up, and that which opens it; that which makes it shrink sensitively into so small a compass as scarcely to be seen, and that which draws it forth and causes it to send abroad its heavenly odours.

We will look then, with God's blessing, at some of those things that contract, straiten, and shut up the heart, before we look at the causes and nature of what expands and enlarges it. The new heart of grace is exceedingly tender. And therefore there are many things that will cause this tender heart to shut up and contract itself.

i. One is guilt. Whenever guilt lies upon a man's conscience, it shuts him up altogether in his feelings Godward; it narrows, it contracts his heart. There is no room in his soul for divine enjoyments; there are no divine consolations shed abroad, no inshinings of divine light, no incomings of heavenly love.

ii. Another is unbelief. O what a narrowing, contracting, and shutting-up power is there when unbelief works powerfully in a man's carnal mind! How the tender plant of faith shrinks into a small compass before its chilling blasts! How unable then are we to receive the truth in the love of it—unable to act upon the perfections of the Lord of life and glory—unable to come forth into the light of His countenance, unable to enjoy any one testimony of His manifested favour; unable to realise a single mark, or testimony of the grace of God being in the heart!

iii. Darkness of mind is another thing that contracts and shuts up a man's heart Godward. Many flowers, when night comes on, hide themselves as it were from it; their petals gather up and close over the bosom which, during the day, expanded itself to the warm rays of the sun, defending it from the cold dews and chilling breaths of the night. So spiritually. How darkness of soul (and all the Lord's people are brought to mourn and sigh under felt darkness) contracts the heart! How it closes up every gracious feeling! How it checks every going forth of the soul in the actings of faith, hope, and love! What a veil it spreads over the hidden man of the heart! So that there is nothing good or gracious apparently in exercise.

iv. Deadness, coldness, torpidity of feeling Godward, that wretched state in which many of God's people are so continually,—how this shuts up, contracts, and narrows the heart Godward! How unable a man is in this dead, cold, torpid state, to enlarge his own soul! Does he attempt to pray? He has no power to pour forth a single desire. Does he attempt to read? He can scarcely get through half-a-dozen verses without wandering. Does he come to hear? There is scarcely anything that even his outward ear receives.

He is unable to fix his thoughts and affections, unable to realize the presence, love, and power of God in his soul. Does he attempt to converse? He has scarcely a word to say, shut up in his feelings toward the family of God, shut up in his feelings toward the Lord Himself.

We must know by painful experience what it is to have these narrow, contracted, shut-up hearts, that we may by the contrast know what it is to have an enlarged, expanded heart. We cannot know the one except by knowing the other. It is this miserable feeling of contraction, which makes us know the difference betwixt these painful sensations and of an enlarged, expanded heart.

II.—This leads me to enter more fully into what it is to have an enlarged heart. What is the meaning of the word enlarged? The idea is this—the making of an opening, so as to give a wide space. Thus, the Lord promised to the children of Israel that He would “enlarge their border;” that is. He would give them more ample room; that they should not be confined to a narrow space in which their population should exceed its limits; but that He would so extend their boundary as to give them ample width for their increasing numbers! Thus the word conveys the idea of an expansion, a removal of all that is narrowed up and contracted, by giving a wider coast. a more ample border.

Now none but the Lord Himself can enlarge the heart of His people, can give them spiritually what Jabez prayed for “O that thou wouldest enlarge my coast!” (1 Chron. 4:10.) None but the Lord can expand their hearts Godward, and remove that narrowedness and contractedness in divine things which is the plague and burden of a God-fearing soul.

Having seen what is meant by an enlarged heart, let us look at the way whereby God is pleased to enlarge it.

1. It is by the special operation of God the Spirit upon the soul that there is ever felt any enlargement of heart Godward. For instance; when he applies any portion of His word with power, that enlarges the heart; “the entrance of thy word giveth light.” The very

nature of divine light is to expand the heart into which it comes. As darkness shuts up, so light opens; as darkness freezes, so the word of God sealed with power melts. “He sendeth out his word, and melteth them.” (Ps. 147:18.) Truth revealed to the soul has a liberating power. “Ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free.”

2. A sensible realization of the Lord’s presence enlarges the heart. When the Lord is absent, when He hides His lovely face, when He does not draw near to visit and bless, the heart contracts. There is no going out to Him, no coming down of, sweet communications from Him; the heart is shut up in itself, contracted in its own narrow compass. But when the Lord is pleased to favour 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. To use a figure I have before alluded to, the heart is often like a flower beaten down by the rain, prostrated by the wind, surcharged with moisture, overpowered by the dews of the night, unable to lift itself up, dropping downwards, with all its petals contracted. But let the sky clear up, let the beams and rays of the glorious orb of day shine forth, the flower, whose petals before were closed, expand themselves to receive the warmth of the mid-day sun. So it is with the God-fearing soul. When the dew of night rests upon it, when darkness covers, when the cold blast beats, when the rain drifts upon it, there is no unfolding, no enlarging. But when the Sun of Righteousness breaks forth, the drooping heart then expands all its bosom to the warm rays, and lifts its bending head, which before had been sunk down by the cold mists.

3. The unction, savour, and power of the Holy Spirit, whenever felt in the soul, produce an enlargement of heart. The absence of the dew of the Holy Ghost leaves the heart shut up in its own darkness. But when dew, savour, and power rest upon the soul, they immediately by their secret, penetrating, unctuous influences expand and enlarge the heart; they soften its rigidity; they melt

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down its harshness. Whereas before it was narrowed and contracted, so as not to open itself to any one divine feeling; no sooner does the softening dew and melting unction of the Holy Ghost touch a man’s heart than it enlarges, opens, melts and expands itself before the Lord.

I have hinted that the word “heart” in Scripture has more than one signification. Sometimes it means understanding, sometimes conscience, and sometimes the affections. Now whenever the heart is enlarged by the internal operations of God the Spirit, it is enlarged in these senses.

i. The understanding is enlightened; we read, “Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:45.) And we find David pleading earnestly, “Give me understanding and I shall live.” (Ps. 119:144.) It is a great blessing to have an understanding heart; not to be tossed to and fro with every wind of error; not to be caught with every delusion of Satan; but to have a sound mind, established in the truth as it is in Jesus. But when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, He opens the understanding; He gives an insight into the Scriptures of truth; He shews us the mind of Christ; He brings a sweet light into our soul, whereby we read the Scriptures with the same light and in the same spirit by which they were inspired. Thus we enter into the meaning of passages we never knew before; we understand mysteries, which before we were unacquainted with; we feel our minds to open, expand, and receive the truth as it is in Jesus in greater simplicity and godly sincerity.

ii. But there is also an enlarging of the conscience. If our heart is contracted, our conscience is not sensitive nor tender. Have you not observed, that when your mind was contracted, your affections toward God cold and dead, that your conscience was not sensitive, that sin was not that burden to you as at other times—that you could play with it, walk upon the borders of it, venture upon forbidden ground, dally with evil, did not feel this and that thing to be inconsistent with the will and word of God, which you felt

to be so at other times? Now when your heart has been enlarged, when your soul has felt the power and operations of the Spirit, your conscience becomes more sensitive—as it is said in Isaiah of the human nature of Christ—“of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.” Sin is more seen to be sin; evil is described in things where we did not see it before; the “exceeding sinfulness of sin” is more deeply felt; the worldliness and carnality of others that did not when we were cold and dead much affect us, now that we are under the inshinings of God the Spirit, become irksome and burdensome. Thus, as the understanding is enlightened to see, the conscience is made more sensitive: as we get a deeper insight into the Person, work, and blood of Jesus, the conscience takes a wider range, and is made more alive and more tender than it was before.

iii. Besides this, there is an enlargement of the affections. Our affections will waver in the same way as our understanding and our conscience. When our understanding is dark, and our conscience is hard, then our affections are cold; but when the Lord is pleased by the entrance of His word to give light in our understanding, and to make the conscience more tender and sensitive, then there is an enlargement also of the affections.

Have you not felt at times as though you had not a single grain of love towards the Lord of life and glory? Has not your heart often been as an adamant, which neither judgment nor mercy, threatening nor love could move? And have you not been, when in that state, unable to love God’s truth or His people—yea, rather felt your heart filled with the most fearful hardness, and enmity towards them? But when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, these affections, which before had been shut up, expand, breathe themselves forth, and flow out and flow into the Lord of life and glory. There is a clasping Him in the arms of tender affection, and a desire to live and die in His embrace.

4. When God enlarges the heart He enlarges every grace and fruit of the Spirit.

i. For instance. There is faith. Faith in the soul sometimes sinks

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down to the very lowest ebb; there seems at times to be scarcely one grain of it left. We have not a single spark of faith in living exercise. The hand which should take hold of Christ’s strength is as if paralysed; there is no putting it forth to receive strength out of His gracious fulness. But when God the Spirit, by His secret power and unction enlarges the heart. He enlarges faith: as the Apostle says. “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly.” (2 Thess. 1:3.)

This is an enlargement of faith; and just in proportion to the enlargement of faith, do we take in the object of faith. When our faith is very weak, it is like the hand of a little child. Its tiny fingers can only grasp little objects, and can scarcely hold them when grasped. So when faith is small it is unable to take hold of great things; and if it take them, it is unable to hold them. But when the hand of the child is increased to the brawny fingers of a man, then the same hand, which before was unable to grasp little substances is now enabled to lay hold of great burdens. So with faith in the heart; it is in some as the hand of the child, it is in others as the hand of the adult. The hand in the one case is weak, in the other strong. But the hand of the child differs only in size and strength from the hand of the man. When then the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges the fingers of the hand; as we read of Joseph, “His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” (Gen. 49:24.) So when the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges the sinews and muscles of living faith, and presenting Christ before it, enables it firmly to embrace His Person and work, His atoning blood, His justifying righteousness, all that He is and has for God’s poor needy family.

ii. So also, when God enlarges the heart, He enlarges hope.

Anchors, you know, are made different sizes. You may walk in the Queen’s dockyard, and there you may see anchors for a boat, and anchors for a three-decker. Yet all anchors are made in the same way, and are designed for the same purpose; and the little anchor that holds the boat is as useful and as much an anchor as

that which holds the three-decker, so spiritually. There is hope in the heart of the babe. But the hope in the heart of a babe is but as the anchor of a boat; yet it holds that babe as firmly as the anchor holds the boat to which it is moored. But as the Lord increases hope, He increases the size of the anchor; and as the vessel and its anchor always bear a proportion to each other, so when He enlarges the size of the anchor He increases the size of the ship. Nay more, as He increases the size of the ship, He increases its burden: for these two are proportionate. He increases a man's trials, perplexities, difficulties, and sorrows. And thus, ship, anchor, and burden are all enlarged together.

Thus, when He enlarges the heart He enlarges a man's hope. It takes a more vigorous hold within the veil; it enters more deeply into the presence of God; it takes a firmer grasp of covenant engagements, electing love, the immutability of God's purposes, and the unchangeable nature of the great eternal I AM. Have you not felt at times your hope sweetly enlarged, so that it almost attained to the "full assurance of hope?" Scarcely a cloud remained between you and God; and you believed you should ride triumphantly into the haven of bliss and peace? and having these blessed sensations in your heart, you could part with life itself at that moment to fall into the embrace of your God. Now this was a sweet enlargement of your hope.

iii. In the same way when the Lord enlarges the heart, He enlarges its love towards Himself and His people. How cold are our hearts too often toward the Lord! and, as a sure and necessary consequence, how cold towards the brethren! Sometimes we seem even to dislike their company; and if we see them coming down one street, we would gladly take another turning in order to avoid them. How averse too from the Lord's ways! How cold in prayer, cold in reading, cold in hearing, and cold in doing anything to the glory of God! How backward, how opposed to every thing holy, heavenly, and spiritual! But when God in mercy enlarges the heart, He also enlarges the affections to love the Lord, to love His word,

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to love His people, to love all that savours of the precious name of Jesus.

iv. There is also an enlargement of the mouth. "My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation." (1 Sam. 2:1.) It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." (Prov. 16:23.) When your heart is contracted, when your soul is shut up, when your affections are chilled, there is no enlargement of the mouth, especially if you have any tenderness of conscience. Hypocrites and dead professors can talk about religion at all times. "But a prating fool shall fall" whereas the Lord's people are often shut up. and have not a word to say upon divine things. If there be no sweet enlargement of the heart, there is no enlargement of the mouth; and when there is no life nor feeling in the soul enabling it to speak of the things of God, to speak of them at all is but a burden to them. But when the Lord enlarges the heart, then there is an enlargement of the mouth. The lips speak freely, simply, with savour, dew, and unction, of the things that God has done and is doing in the soul.

v. There is also an enlargement of the steps, as David says. "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." (Ps. 18:36.) This is a strengthening of the feet, so that they are enabled to take longer steps. Sometimes from weariness we stumble, can scarcely drag one limb before another, get so faint and tired that we seem unable to move one step further in the ways of God. But when the Lord enlarges and strengthens a man's feet and steps, He enables him to move more actively forward, and to run more eagerly in the way of His commandments.

III.—This leads me to the second part of the text, the connection of the precept with the power given to perform it: "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." David was no legalist: he was no Arminian perfectionist; he was not drawing upon the strength and wisdom of the creature, but he was looking up to the Lord to work a certain work upon his

soul. When that certain work was wrought upon him, then, and not till then, would he, or could he perform the precept. How often have you seen the precept handled in the way of which the Lord speaks as done by the scribes and Pharisees of old! “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matt. 23:4.) Nothing is more easy than to take a bundle of precepts into the pulpit, and tie them round the necks of the Lord’s people like an iron collar. But how many of them does the minister perform out of it? Every child and servant of God taught by the Spirit knows that he cannot perform one precept except as the Lord enlarges his heart. This deep sense of our helplessness does not foster sloth, nor lead to licentiousness; for guilt and condemnation are felt from the non-performance of the precepts; and our desire and prayer, when we are in our right mind, are, that the Lord would enlarge our heart, for we love to run the way of His commandments.

What are these commandments? And how do we run in the way of them? I will endeavour to show you.

The Lord in His word has given several commandments; and these commandments we perform when the Lord enlarges our heart. For instance.

1. The Lord commands us to believe in the name of His dear Son, as the Apostle John writes, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 3:23.) But we cannot believe in the name of Jesus, any more than we can make a world, until God enables. Believe in Jesus! receive Him by precious faith into my heart! feel the efficacy of His atoning blood in my conscience! bathe my blissful soul in the sweet enjoyment of His dying love! I do this? Before I can, of myself, do this, I must be able to say, “Let there be light, and there shall be light.” But when the Lord by His grace and Spirit enlarges the heart; when He drops His dew, unction, and savour into the soul; when He draws near to it, and makes it draw near to Him; when this blessed Sun of

Righteousness shines forth through the dark cloud, and warms the cold dark soul, then it can no more not believe in Him than before it could believe in Him. We can no more refuse to believe when faith comes into the heart, than we can believe before faith does come. When God enlarges the heart, and draws forth the affections, then we run in the way of this commandment. We do not believe as a duty; we do not believe as a precept; nor do we believe even as a privilege. But we believe as a blessing. We believe as we see an object with our eyes. We open our eyes, and we cannot but see. So when faith opens its eyes, it sees Jesus; nay, it cannot but see Him.

2. Another commandment is, to repent. “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” What! repent! Have the heart broken with contrition! feel godly sorrow! experience the flowings forth of grief towards a crucified Lord! Can I do this? It is utterly beyond my reach. I may shed crocodile tears. I may work myself up into fleshly excitement; I may fall upon my knees, lacerate my back, refuse to eat my meat, and lie upon the ground. But to feel a broken heart, melted down into compunction and godly sorrow—the man that feels what an adamant he carries in his bosom knows well that it is the pure grace of God alone that can give him repentance. I believe the Lord brings all his people to that spot of which Mr. Hart speaks—when the question was not whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether I will do this for the Lord, but whether the Lord in mercy and grace will do this for me. The great I sinks then into absolute insignificance; and the creature is brought down to its true spot—abasement and helplessness. But when the Lord enlarges the heart, with this enlargement is there not the grace of penitence? Is there not the tearful eye, the convulsive sob, the inward grief of soul? Is there not real gospel repentance and sorrow felt in a broken and tender heart? I am sure there is this.

3. God commands us “to love one another.” “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” (John 13:34) Can I of myself feel this love? I may pretend to do so; I may

do as one of old did, who came to his brother with a very fraternal salutation, "Art thou in health, my brother?" and then smote him under the fifth rib with a sword. I may say, 'Brother this,' and 'Sister that'—'how I love you!'—'what affection I feel for you!' I might, if God did not keep me honest, play this part of a varnished hypocrite. But I cannot feel, nor create this true love, without a special work of the Spirit on my soul. But when He enlarges the heart, and melts the soul at his footstool, He gives love to Himself: and with that love, He gives love to His people, pure affection: not a feigned, but real desire for their spiritual welfare; not a few canting phrases, but a true feeling of brotherhood; not a mere expression of 'brother' on the lip, but brotherly affection in the heart.

When He enlarges the heart, we do not want to go amongst our brethren to say, 'Brother,' or 'Sister;' we feel them in our very soul; when we are alone with God there is a tender affection flowing forth out to them of our heart, an embracing of them in our soul. Nay more, we can forgive our enemies when the Lord enlarges our heart. If we can see them in the right spot, where we would see them, we can forgive them, though they have been most unkind to, and cruelly treated us. I have felt, that when the Lord is pleased to enlarge the heart, anger, enmity, prejudice, bitterness, malevolence—those unclean birds all take flight, and simplicity, tenderness, humility and love all live in the soul.

4. The Lord commands us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, put off the old man, and walk as becometh the gospel. Can we do this? We cannot. We may affect a popish austerity; we may put on a hypocritical visage; we may look all sanctity and holiness; we may cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, and put an extra coat of whitewash on the sepulchre. But as to that inward crucifixion, that inward deadness to the world, that inward putting off of the old man and putting on of the new, which the word of truth speaks of, we cannot attain to, except God the Spirit work in us both the will and the power. But when God enlarges the heart, then there is no burden in God's ways; His precepts are not grievous; it is a pleasure

"I will run the way of thy commandments." Not lag, nor loiter, not turn aside, not faint, not falter. "I will run" eagerly, actively, as a lover runs to his beloved bride—"I will run" cheerfully the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart.

5. So with the ordinances, the ordinances of the Lord's house—baptism and the Lord's supper. These are not grievous; they are not burdensome, when the Lord enlarges the heart. When we are narrowed up, shut up, contracted, these ordinances of the Lord's house are burdensome to us. We hate the very sight of the table spread with the emblems; we have the most horrible feelings of rebellion against the ordinance of baptism; yea, we feel every infernal sensation that Satan can stir up in our minds. But when the Lord enlarges our heart, there is no burden then; whatever be the precept, whatever be the ordinances, we can run in that way with cheerfulness, freedom and liberty.

6. So with respect to every precept of the gospel. whatever it be, we can run in the way of God's commandments when He enlarges our heart. There is no running in any other way. All other service is legality; all other obedience is but the froth and spawn of free-will, nothing but the mere natural obedience of the creature, not the spiritual obedience of the child of God. But let us look at this. Is it our happiness, is it our pleasure when we cannot run the way of God's commands? Do we lay the inability upon God, or pack it upon the old man? and say, It does not matter, I cannot obey them: but when God gives me the power, I shall. This is the very essence of antinomianism, the very spawn of licentiousness, the worst abuse of gospel grace.

The Christian is in one of these two spots for the most part; sometimes shut up, contracted, cold, dead, torpid. But this is his grief and misery. In this state of feeling, he cannot run the way of God's commandments. But is he pleased with being a loiterer? No: it is his grief and trouble that he cannot run in the way of God's commandments. This evidences the work of God the Spirit upon

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him; he would do it, but he cannot—"the good that he would, he does not." But it is the will being on the side of God which proves the reality of grace; it is the heart and conscience being enlisted on the side of the Lord that proves God is at work on his soul.

On the other hand, the children of God are sometimes in this state. Their hearts are enlarged, their souls strengthened, and their feet are enabled to run the race that is set before them. This is their joy, their happiness, and their delight.

Now can you trace out these two things in your conscience? What is the use of my standing here to speak these things? Is it merely to amuse you? Is there not something deeper wanted than that? You have a soul to be saved or damned; you are a child of God or not; the grace of God is in your heart, or it is not; you are on the broad road to hell, or on the narrow road to heaven. Have you no concern about it? What! stand upon the brink of eternity, and have no anxiety respecting it! If you are a child of God, you will have this deep concern at times in your bosom.

Can you trace out in your soul the distinct existence of the two things I have endeavoured to handle? Do you know what it is to be shut up, cold, dead, and stupid? Is this your grief and burden? You say, it is. It is a good thing if you can say so with an honest heart. Look at the converse. Did you ever know what it was to have an enlarged heart? Did mercy, grace, peace, blood, and salvation ever cast out these grievous enemies of your soul? If so, it enlarged your coasts, it strengthened your borders. Did you ever experience what is said of the church, that she shall "fear" (rather flutter, or palpitate) "and be enlarged?"

Did your soul ever experience the unutterable sensations of divine enlargement? When this came into your heart, did it produce sensible expansion Godward, enlargement of understanding, conscience, and affections; so that you walked at liberty, and had sweet testimonies that God was your God? And how do you feel as to the precepts of God's word? Are they sometimes burdensome? Are they sometimes pleasant and delightful? They will be

burdensome when we are shut up; and they will be delightful when we are enlarged. When shut up, nothing so difficult; when enlarged, nothing so easy. When shut up, nothing so painful; when enlarged, nothing so pleasing. When shut up, afraid to look at them; when enlarged, able to enter into their length, breadth, and meaning. When shut up, seeing no beauty in them, and only viewing them as a task-master; when enlarged, contemplating them as the will and word of a kind parent, and desiring to obey them, because God has so graciously and plainly revealed them. Thus, by these distinct ebbings and flowings, these distinct sensations in your conscience—by tracing out the work of the Spirit therein, we may at times come to some decision whether God the Spirit has begun and is carrying on the work of grace in our conscience, or whether we are dead in an empty profession.

The Lord clear up the difficulty (where it is felt to be a difficulty) in the hearts of His trembling ones. The Lord decide the doubtful case; and shew them, that their spot is the spot of God's children—that they are walking in the footsteps of the flock—that their God is with them, and will be with them, to lead them in a right way, and to bring them to "a city of habitation."

94 The Refuge Of The Oppressed

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street. London, on Lord's Day Evening,
August 10, 1845

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed: a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek thee."

Psalm 9:9, 10

I found upon the vestry table this morning a letter requesting me to preach from a certain text, "Jesus wept." The writer of that

letter must know very little of the perplexities and exercises that I and every minister of truth have with respect to the texts that we preach from. I cannot take a text, and speak from it in the mere exercise of my judgment. Before I can take a text, and preach from it, I must have three things. First, I must see a vein of experience in it; in other words, I must have light upon it: secondly, I must find a measure of sweetness and savour in it; I must know something personally of the experience contained in it, and feel a measure of dew and unction to rest upon it; in other words, I must have life from it: and thirdly, I must find in it sufficient matter to form a tolerably full and connected discourse. I cannot run here, there, and everywhere all through the scriptures, nor deal in vague, loose generalities: but as far as the Lord gives me wisdom, strength, and ability, my path is to unfold the mind of the Spirit in such portions of the scripture as are commended with some savour to my conscience. In making these remarks, I wish not to condemn other gracious men who are led differently. Each has his own path and his own work: and God will bless each according to that line in which he leads him.

I have been much exercised and perplexed as to what text I should preach from. I think I have turned the Bible over this afternoon from beginning to end, without finding any one text in which I could see and feel these three things. At last, my eyes, in turning over the Psalms, fell upon these words. But it remains to be proved whether God directed my eyes there; for if he directed my eyes there, and brought a measure of their sweetness and savour into my soul, the effects and fruits will be seen and felt in your consciences.

The text consists of four clauses. May the Lord enable me, in taking up these clauses, so to unfold them, that the dew, power, and savour of the Holy Ghost may rest upon, and seal them with a divine unction to our hearts.

I.—"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed." By "the Lord," in the text, we are to understand Jehovah in his Trinity of

Persons, and Unity of Essence: Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the Son, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit, Israel's Three-one God. Now God, in his Unity of Essence, and Trinity of Persons, is a refuge to God's poor, oppressed family.

How he is. I shall endeavour under my third head more particularly to unfold: but previously, it will be desirable to enter a little into the meaning of the word "refuge."

1. The leading idea contained in the word "refuge" is that of shelter. For instance, we read in the scripture of "the cities of refuge." These were certain cities, three on one side of Jordan and three on the other, which God appointed for the manslayer to flee unto, that the avenger of blood might not smite him with the sword. When the manslayer had fled into these cities of refuge, he found in them shelter, protection and safety.

2. Again, Strong holds, fortified cities, and lofty rocks are set forth in scripture as places of refuge. David says, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.., my high tower, and my refuge" 2Sa 22:2,3 . "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats" Ps 104:18. All these expressions imply, that when a person escapes to a fortified city, a lofty tower, or a high rock, there he finds shelter.

3. Again. A harbour of refuge is an expression in common use, that is. a natural or artificial haven along a rocky or dangerous coast, into which a ship tossed by the storm, or in danger of being cast upon the rocks, may run, and find safety.

Thus, the leading idea in the word "refuge" is shelter and safety: a place where one that has the guilt of blood upon his conscience, or one who is attacked by an enemy, or one who is tossed upon the stormy main, may find a secure shelter.

The Lord Jehovah in his Trinity of Persons, is this refuge for his people? He is their city, he is their rock, he is their harbour: unto him they flee in their distress, and find eternal safety.

But before we can find the Lord to be a refuge and a shelter for our souls, we must, by the work of the Holy Ghost upon our

conscience, be brought into that spot to which the Lord as a refuge is adapted. The cities of refuge were nothing except to the man who had shed blood: the strong hold and fortified city are nothing except to one who is pursued by an enemy: the harbour of refuge is nothing to a vessel sailing before the wind, on a smooth sea. Danger, attack, alarm, violence, peril—these things make a refuge suitable and desirable.

Carry this idea into spiritual things, as the text unfolds it. “The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.” Does not the Holy Ghost here point out the persons who need refuge?

Who are these “oppressed”? They are the Lord’s tried family, his quickened, exercised, and often perplexed people. These are oppressed in various ways. But it is their oppression which makes Jehovah sought after as a refuge for their souls.

There is a great deal of natural oppression in this country. What strides it is making! This country presents at this moment a fearful spectacle—the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer; avarice sweeping into its lap the labours of the poor, increasing thereby its ill-gotten substance: and many of those who toil by their hands reduced to extremity and well-nigh starvation. These things I should not allude to, were not many of God’s people suffering participants. The poor child of God suffers under the iron hand and iron heel of oppression just as much as his fellow men. But there is this difference between them. The oppressed men of the world know no Jehovah as a refuge to flee unto: but the Lord’s oppressed family flee for refuge unto that invisible God whom the world knows nothing of. They have a God of providence on whom to fix their eye: and the Lord, who counts the very hairs of their head, and who knows they stand in need of supplies for their temporal necessities, at times opens his hand. They have not fled to him for refuge in vain: for they thus see more clearly his bounty in providence relieving them from their oppression.

But there is another sense of the word, a higher and deeper signification, that is, oppressed spiritually. All the Lord’s people

are not oppressed naturally: but all the Lord’s people are, in their measure, oppressed spiritually. For instance,

1. There is the heavy burden of sin. The guilt of sin lies weighty and powerful upon many a tender conscience. This is an oppression which often bows the family of God down to the earth with sorrow, fills them with fearful pangs of apprehension as to what will be their future portion, lays and keeps them low, and often makes them sigh and groan under the heavy burden upon their shoulders. But it is this very oppression, in the hands of the Spirit, which leads them to make the Lord their refuge. We need heavy weights and burdens to bring us to a point in our souls. We are often trifling with the things of God, getting a few doctrines in our judgment without knowing their power and blessedness in our soul’s experience. And so some go on for years hovering around the truth, without coming into the feeling power of it, satisfied with a sound creed, without having the sweetness and savour of divine realities made manifest in their conscience. Now, when the Lord has purposes of mercy and love to manifest—when he is determined that a man should know him to be the only refuge, he lays burdens upon his back, he brings guilt into his conscience, he sets his secret sins before his eyes, he makes him feel that of sinners he is chief. Wherever this is laid by the Spirit upon a man’s conscience, it will bring him, sooner or later, to the Lord as his refuge. ‘What can I do?’ says the poor burdened soul; what help can I find from the creature? What salvation can I find in myself, a poor guilty wretch, weighed down with the oppression of sin? This will make him seek after the Lord as his refuge, for he has none other to flee unto.

2. But he is oppressed also by Satan, that enemy of his soul’s peace. And O, what an oppressor is this! I have been speaking of earthly oppressors. I have been endeavouring to shoot an arrow at those exactors who grind the face of the poor. But what are those outward oppressors to the inward oppressor? What is the iron hand of creature oppression to the iron hand of Satan when he is let

loose upon a man's soul? How many of God's people have to groan and sigh bitterly on account of the oppression of this cruel exactor, harassing, teasing, assailing, tempting, perplexing, and confusing them in some way or other: drawing them into sin, or driving them into despondency. The Lord came, it was an especial part of his mission, to heal those that were oppressed by the devil. Satan is the oppressor of the whole human race: but he is the oppressor particularly of God's family. But when we are oppressed in this way, if the Lord be our teacher, it will drive us off the creature, out of a name to live, out of fleshy religion and natural wisdom, and bring us to the Lord himself, as the refuge of our souls.

3. The daily conflict that God's people have to pass through, produced by the body of sin and death under which they "groan being burdened," and by the sinfulness of a depraved nature, grievously oppresses all the living family of God. But this very oppression is overruled for their good—this very body of sin and death, which is the heavy burden of their souls, is made to work for their spiritual profit: it leads them to the Lord to support them under it, who graciously brings them through, and enables them to overcome in this battle.

Now the Lord is "a refuge for the oppressed." Every oppressed soul, sooner or later, finds him to be such. But in order to find the Lord to be our refuge, we must be cut off from every false refuge; as the prophet declares, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place" Isa 28:17. As long as we can hide our heads in a lie, we shall hide them there; as long as we can escape into a creature refuge, into that hole shall we slink. The hail therefore of God's wrath needs to be felt in the soul to sweep away the lying refuges; the waters of judgment must come into, and overflow the hiding-place, and bring us out of it, lest they drown us in it; and then, and not till then, shall we know by heart experience that the Lord God Almighty is a refuge for the oppressed.

II.—But the second clause of the text opens up still further

when Jehovah is a refuge—a refuge in times of trouble. 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 want him to be a refuge when there is no trouble. Shall I use the expression without irreverence? we can then do without him. We can love the world, can amuse ourselves with the things of time and sense, can let our heads go astray after the perishing, transitory vanities of a day: we can set up an idol in our heart: we can bow down before a golden god: we can have our affections wholly fixed on those naturally dear to us: we can 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 want something more than flesh and blood: then we want something more than the perishing creature can unfold; then we want something more than this vain world can amuse us with. We then want God; we want the everlasting arms to be underneath our souls; we want to feel support; we want manifestations and consolations; we want something from the Lord's own lips dropped with the Lord's own power into our hearts.

1. These "times of trouble" are sometimes times of temporal trouble. If you live long enough, you will have about as much temporal trouble as you can well stand under; you will have as many waves and billows of temporal sorrow as will sometimes seem about to drown you. But what a mercy it is, when the waves and billows of temporal sorrow beat upon the head, like the surf upon the rocks, to have a God to go to! not to be looking here and there, driven perhaps to a mad-house, to strong drink, to the halter, razor, or pond. But to have a God to go to! an ever-living,

ever-loving Jesus, who opens wide his arms, unfolds the treasures of his sympathizing bosom, and says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now these "times of trouble" which the Lord's people have to pass through, make them to know that there is a God above. And this is a grand distinguishing feature of a child of God that his very worldly troubles are, so to speak, the wave that carries his bark farther on to the kingdom of God. When worldly troubles come upon a natural man, they are the ebbing wave that carries him away from God to dash him upon the rocks. But when temporal troubles come upon a child of God, they are the flowing wave that takes him into the peaceful haven of Jehovah's bosom.

2. But there are spiritual troubles. And what are all our temporal troubles put together to our spiritual troubles? They are but a drop in a bucket: they are but the dust in the balance. Soul trouble outweighs and ever will outweigh natural trouble. But soul trouble will drive a man to the Lord, if anything will. When we are in soul trouble, we want such a God as he has revealed himself to be in the scriptures—a God of infinite power, infinite mercy, infinite faithfulness, infinite forgiveness, and infinite love.

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 compunction, 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? 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 it and we must know for ourselves whether we ever have, 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, and we may lean upon every staff but the true. 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 about our bed, and about our path, and spieth out all our ways, and who has sent his dear Son to be a propitiation for 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.

But you will observe, that the text speaks of "times of trouble." It does, not define and it is a great mercy it has not defined what these times are, how many, or how long: nor does it define what that trouble shall be. Whatever trouble comes upon a child of God, is a "time of trouble:" and however long it may last, or however short it may endure, it is still a "time of trouble." And in these times of trouble, the Lord will be his refuge. But 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 complaints, that there is a heart, a sympathizing heart, in the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, that feels for us; to know that there is a hand to relieve, and to experience, at times, relief from that Almighty and gracious hand!

III.—"And they, that know thy name will put their trust in thee." There is a knowing of God's name. By the "name of God" are to be understood the revealed perfections of the Almighty—all that he has revealed concerning himself in the scriptures of truth. Every attribute, every perfection, everything that God has said of himself, is summed up in the "name of God." But especially does the "name of God" signify the Son of his love, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person;" as he said to Moses, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will

not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him;” that is, all my revealed perfections, all my glorious character, all my divine attributes are in him; for “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Now, there is a knowing this name of God; that is, there is such a thing as an experimental acquaintance in the soul with the perfections of God as revealed in the scriptures. His name is therefore known when the perfections of God are revealed in the heart and conscience by the power of the Spirit. And this is by virtue of living faith in the soul. By faith we see God. By faith we know God. When we receive into our hearts the truth as it is in Jesus, and when we believe by living faith what God has said of himself in the word, then we know the name of God: and every manifestation of God’s mercy, every token of God’s favour, and every shining in of God’s perfections, is a discovery in our hearts, a raising up in our souls of the knowledge of God’s name.

Now, till we know God’s name, we cannot, we shall not, put our trust in him. But if we know his name, if we have received into our hearts the perfections of God, and have a personal experience of them—then the necessary and infallible consequence will be, that we shall put our trust in him. Let us take a review of some of these perfections of God, which when made known enable the soul to put its trust in him.

1. For instance. There is God’s eternal faithfulness—the covenant faithfulness of a covenant God. Now, if we have received into our hearts this perfection of the Almighty—if we have any personal, experimental knowledge of it, from having found God faithful to his word in our soul’s experience—by knowing that name, or that part of God’s name, we put our trust in him, as in a faithful, promise-making, and promise-keeping Jehovah. But wherever the Lord makes his faithfulness known to his people, he will try that knowledge. Our faith is to be put into the furnace, and our knowledge of God is to be tried as with fire. We may believe his faithfulness: but that is not enough. Our belief in his faithfulness must be tried before it can be known, or proved to be genuine.

The Lord therefore hides himself, veils his face with a dark cloud, does not shine forth into our souls as we would fain have him, brings upon us a train of perplexing circumstances, and appears, instead of doing the thing we desire him to do, to do the thing exactly contrary. But if we know his name, if we know him to be a faithful God, in spite of all appearances—then we shall put our trust in that faithfulness, because that faithfulness has been proved in times past, and has been received into the heart as a part of God’s eternal character.

2. His lovingkindness and tender mercy are another part of the name of God. He has shown this in the gift of his only-begotten Son. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” 1Jo 3:16 . Now, if we have tasted a measure, though it be but a small measure, of the lovingkindness and tender mercy of God: if ever his favour has dropped into our souls, like the dew upon a branch: if ever this secret of the Lord has been upon our tabernacle,—we know that part of the name of the Lord, and if we know it, we put our trust in it. We feel it to be trustworthy, to be a support for the soul that knows that the lovingkindness and tender mercy of God are from everlasting to everlasting.

3. Another part of his name is, his infinite and unspeakable wisdom. 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 thy 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. I admit it. I have felt it. I have known it.

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 Nadab and Abihu were smitten by the Lord, Aaron knew that God could not err; he "held his peace" Le 10:3. 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.

"They that know thy name." They who have these perfections revealed in their hearts, who have something more than a name to live, who have something deeper than a sound creed, that know God's name by a manifestation of that blessed and glorious name to their conscience, they, and they only, will put their trust in God. These are great words. Put your trust in God! Have you ever seen him? Is he not invisible, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see? What! put our trust in an invisible Being, one whom we have never seen? Surely, there must be something more than nature here. Yes, there is something more than nature here. What says the scripture of one of the ancient worthies? "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He saw him that was invisible: he felt the presence, he knew the power, he beheld by the eye of living faith, the invisible Jehovah.

We must have precisely, in our measure, the same experience in our hearts, before we can put our trust in God. The faith of most professors shall I say, nine out of ten? is nothing but an empty trust,

nothing but a name, an idea, an opinion, a speculation. It is not a heartfelt reality, known in the depths of their conscience before the eyes of a living God. 'But,' say they, 'they put their trust in God.' Yes, so they do—in a God of their own framing, by a trust of their own devising. But to put their trust in an invisible God, just as though he was present for their eyes to look upon and their hands to touch; to rest on him the salvation of their immortal souls; to put all their concerns into his hands, and carry that on for a series of years,—thus to put their trust in the invisible God, something more than flesh and blood—something more than nature, sense, and reason—something more than creature wisdom and creature prudence—something more than an enlightened judgment, is needful here.

On this wide sea all will be wrecked, except the vessels of mercy that God is bringing to their destined haven. But he that in the quiet depths of conscience, and in the actings and exercise of that faith of which God alone is the giver, puts his trust in the name of the Lord God, and gives up himself, with all that he is and has, in the solemn moments when God weighs up the secrets of his heart and puts the thoughts of his soul into his balance—he that can solemnly, deliberately, feelingly, experimentally, and believingly thus put his trust in an invisible God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—does so because he knows the name of that God in whom he trusts.

Here is the turning point. Here is the grand line betwixt life and death: on the one side. a dead professor: on the other side, a living soul. Notional confidence, feigning to be true faith—that will one day be consumed by the blaze of God's nostrils, as flax before the fire: it will never endure the appearance of the Son of God. But the weakest spark of living faith in the soul, the humblest confidence of a child of God, will never be disappointed. That faith will be crowned in the day of the Lord's appearing. It will issue in honour, bliss, and glory.

IV.—"For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

There is a word here that sweetly closes the subject—"them that seek thee." There are some perhaps here who say, 'These things are too high for me: I cannot attain unto them.. 'I have searched my heart,' say some of you; 'I don't know whether I have passed through all that oppression you have been speaking of.' 'I have cast a hasty glance over what I have felt to be my experience,' say others, 'and I cannot speak positively of times of deep soul trouble. You have been explaining to us what it is to know the name of God, and to put our trust in the invisible Jehovah. When I search my heart, and trace out the feelings of my soul, chilling apprehensions arise, whether I am really a partaker of that grace you have been describing.' Now, shall I cut you off? Does the word of God rather cut you off? Look at it. It puts in a word for you—"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

"Them that seek thee." Now, this takes in the poor, the halt, the lame, the crippled—the little ones of God's family, who cannot mount up into great heights of experience, and have not sunk into great depths of soul trouble. It does not leave out any of God's family, for not a hoof of Israel is to be left behind.

There is, then, a seeking of God. But before we can seek God, we must have two things wrought by divine power in our souls. First, we must have a desire to find something; and then, we must know something of that God from whom we are seeking that which we desire to find. If I lose anything, I seek for it. I am merely playing, merely trifling, I am at a child's game, to be looking and searching into every corner, if I have lost nothing, and want to find nothing. So that, if there be not lodged in the depths of our heart, a solemn spiritual desire to find Jesus as the salvation of our soul, as our hope, our portion, our treasure, our all, our seeking is a dream: it is only child's play: it is mocking God: it is trifling with our own soul: it is only playing the part of a varnished hypocrite.

Is this, then, wrought with divine power in your conscience—that you want to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection—that you long to feel his atoning blood sprinkled upon your

conscience—that you pant to taste his dying love shed abroad in your heart—that you desire to know the fellowship of his sufferings, and be led by the Holy Ghost into solemn union with a broken-hearted Lord? Do you want to know whether your name is in the book of life? Whether the Holy Ghost has really begun a work of grace upon your conscience? Whether you are truly in the narrow, narrow way that leads to eternal life? Does this ever fill your soul with trembling anxiety, so as to lie nearer to your heart than any worldly care, or any earthly thing?

Then, if this be the case, you are seeking that you may find something; and you know what you want. You want power, you want mercy, you want the blessing that maketh rich, you want the testimony of God and the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost in your soul. If you want not this, all your profession is a lie. But if you want this, you have also been taught by the Holy Spirit where to get it. You have been brought off the creature, been emptied of your own righteousness, weakened as to your own strength, had your evil heart laid bare, felt the burden of sin in a guilty conscience, and known real anxiety, and, at times, distress of mind. You have seen the way of salvation through the Son of God. You believe though it may not bring peace into your heart that he is "the way, the truth, and the life:" and you believe that none but he, in his sweet manifestations, can do your helpless soul good.

Now, this leads you—if you know these things by divine teaching—this leads you to seek. How do you seek? You pray, you sigh, you cry, you groan, you search the scriptures, you hear the word. Your poor heart, sometimes, is panting after the Lord as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks. You are crying for a sweet discovery of Jesus' blood to your conscience. Sometimes you are doubting, sometimes fearing: sometimes hoping, sometimes desponding: sometimes lifted up, sometimes cast down: sometimes feeling that you are a child of God, sometimes almost believing that you are a child of the wicked one. And yet on you go. You cannot rest satisfied, as thousands are, with a name to live, with a form of

godliness, with the outside of religion. Something vital, something inward, something experimental, something saving, revealed by the Holy Spirit in your heart and conscience, you know to be the sum and substance of vital godliness: and if you have not this, you feel you have nothing. You cannot take up with anything short of this. You cannot rest upon outside consistency. You cannot believe by your own strength. You cannot store your head with a system of sound doctrines, and rest in a scriptural creed. If you have not Jesus in your heart and in your arms, you have nothing, you feel you have nothing.

And this often tries your mind. You cannot get a sweet view of Jesus, cannot feel him coming into your heart in soft love and power. He will not speak. He will not whisper peace. He will not tell you that you are his. He will not bind up your wounds. He will not discover himself in the manifestations of his mercy. This tries you. It is a good thing it does. For this whets your appetite for divine things. This makes you hunger and thirst after righteousness. This makes you weary, and therefore to want rest. This makes you troubled, and therefore to need consolation. This makes you perplexed, and therefore to crave a divine solution to your difficulties. This makes you empty, and therefore you long to be divinely filled.

Now, it says for your comfort who seek the Lord—who really pour out your very soul before him—who seek him on your bed—who seek him in the different hours of the day—who seek him with an honest heart—who really hunger and thirst after him for what he is in himself—this is spoken for your consolation, “Thou, Lord”—David solemnly appeals to God himself—”Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” “They often fear that thou hast forsaken them. They often doubt and tremble in their minds whether thou wilt ever appear. But thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them.’ Do you often find it so? Is there not sometimes a little encouragement? Do you not sometimes under the word hear your experience traced out? Is there no little enlargement sometimes

in prayer? Is there no sweet text, that sometimes comes into your bosom, and makes your very soul feast, as it were, with honey and the honey-comb? Is there no sweet sensation raised up in your heart, whereby you believe that really God is at work upon your soul?

Now, the Lord never forsakes his people. He says, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” O these secret waterings of God upon the soul! O these secret leadings of the blessed Spirit in the heart! How he revives the soul when dead! How he opens it when shut up! How he enlarges it when contracted! How he draws it with the cords of love! How, from time to time, he lays the everlasting arms underneath the fainting, tottering spirit! He “has not forsaken them that seek him.” There may be long seasons of darkness. We may pray, and get no answer. We may cry, and the Lord give no token. We may fear that he never will hear us; yet it will be found in the end, that the Lord has not forsaken them that seek him. No, not for one moment; some appearance on our behalf, though we cannot clearly see it: some support, though we may not sensibly feel it; some check in the conscience, though we may not be fully conscious of it; some secret guidings of the feet, though we may not be able plainly to discern them.

“Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” No. He never will forsake them, for his promise runs thus, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” The Lord never forsakes the work of his hands. He will never give up his little ones into the hands of Satan that he may destroy their souls. He will not forsake them that seek his face, and call upon his name.

Can you find, you that desire to fear God—and there is no use my speaking to any one else, for they have no ear to hear, nor heart to feel—can you feel anything of this experience in your heart and conscience?

Let me just recapitulate a few of the things I have endeavoured to unfold this evening, that they may be warm in our memory, and

sealed upon our conscience, if God please.

Were you ever oppressed, or had a real burden of sin? Were you ever harassed by the devil? ever plagued by a body of sin and death? Did you ever grieve and groan on account of the sin that dwelleth in you? If you have, I will pass on to another enquiry. Did this lead you to God as your refuge? There is the turning point. A man may have convictions, fears, and troubles, and they may only harden his heart the more—drive him from God, instead of drawing him to God. But what has been the case with your soul? Has it brought you to God as your refuge? so that, in solemn moments, you have fallen down before God, and said, “Thou art my refuge, and my hope in the land of the living!” If ever this experience has taken place in your soul, you are a child of God. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed. But he never opens his arms, and never bows down his ear, except to his own poor and needy family.

You have known—have you?—“times of trouble.” I do not mean natural trouble though you will have your full portion of that, but soul trouble. Can you recall when? Do you remember how it came on? How long did it last? How weighty did it prove? Above all, what was the effect? Did it bring you to God as a refuge? Did it drive you out of a refuge of lies, a name to live, a form of godliness, an outside profession? We must look at the result. Trouble does not prove you a Christian, but your making God to be your refuge in times of trouble proves it. Cain had trouble—Saul had trouble—Ahab had trouble—Judas had trouble—and it never drove them to God. But the trouble of God’s people leads them to God, for they have no other rest, no other refuge. Have you not found it so? It is a mercy for you, if you have. Have you any testimony that you know God’s name? Have his glorious perfections ever been opened up in your heart? Have you ever received the love of the truth, and seen the glory of God shining forth in the face of his dear Son? And has it produced this effect in your conscience—that you have put your trust, cast your hope, anchored your soul in these glorious perfections? If so, you are a child of God: none but living souls

know these inward dealings.

One word more before we close. If you cannot come in here, can you come in with this—that you seek God? that there is a cry in your soul after him, a desire in your heart to find him gracious, a breathing out of your spirit into his ears and into his bosom? This is almost the lowest evidence of a living soul: and God has mercifully given that evidence to encourage the hearts of his fainting family. Then you are a child of God. If this seeking of your heart is really a spiritual breathing of your soul into his bosom, God will not forsake you; he will not leave undone the work he is carrying on; he will not suffer sin, the world, the devil, and self to get the mastery; he never has forsaken, he never will forsake, those that seek him sincerely.

Surely, if we are children of God, we can find our character under one of these heads. Here it is traced out by the finger of God the Spirit; surely, if the Lord is our teacher, we can find some of these characters in our hearts. O what a mercy to have the feeblest spark of grace in our souls! Some men think that I am some reckless—what shall I say?—some reckless hacker and hewer, who does not care how he cuts down men, women, and children. God forbid I should lay the weight of my little finger upon the soul that the Lord has touched, though it be but the birth of yesterday.

This is my desire and aim—however far I may fall short of it—to trace out every mark of divine life in the soul, and to cut down and pull to pieces every empty profession that wears but the appearance of it. I would, if God gave me wisdom, strength, and ability, encourage the feeblest breath of divine life in the soul, the faintest mark of the finger of God upon the conscience. But as to encouraging an empty profession, as to bolstering up vain confidence, as to deceiving those who would gladly deceive themselves—God in his mercy, as long as I occupy a pulpit, keep me from doing the devil’s work! On the one hand, may he enable me he alone can to take forth the precious from the vile, and thus be as God’s mouth, and as a Barnabas to comfort God’s children;

and on the other hand, may he enable me to cut down and hew to pieces everything that does not bear the stamp, lineaments, and features of the work of God upon it.

And I know—I speak not of myself—I am a poor instrument in the hands of the Lord—I know such a ministry God will always bless, if he indeed has sent forth a man with it in his heart and mouth. Such a ministry he will bless, and no other. He will not bless a mere doctrinal ministry; neither will he bless a mere practical ministry: he will not bless anything but an experimental ministry: men equipped, commissioned, and sent forth by his own glorious power to trace out the work of God the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of his people, and distinguish spiritual life from professional death: and thus become instruments in the hand of God to build up the church in its most holy faith.

Some of you I may not see again, perhaps the greater portion of you; for though if God will I speak again on Thursday evening, yet many of you may not hear me, at least this year, again. Therefore I would leave this with you, and may God in mercy seal it upon your conscience—What do you know of the things of God in your soul? If you know the least of God’s teachings, you are as safe as if you knew the most; but if you know nothing whatever of the teachings of God in your soul, may God in mercy lead you to reflect on what the awful consequence will be of living and dying with a name to live, and with nothing but a lie in your right hand.

95 The Anchor within the Veil

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord’s Day Morning,
August 17, 1845

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and

which entereth into that within the veil: whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrews 6:18, 19, 20

The Apostle, in this chapter, has been describing the miserable end of apostates from the truth. But lest the things he had declared concerning these apostates might discourage and cast down the hearts of those true disciples to whom he was writing, being tender in the faith, he adds, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” And this leads him to shew what these “better things” were, and the nature of those “things that accompany salvation.”

He therefore immediately mentions (verse 10-12) their “work and labour of love,” and bids them “shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

This leads him to shew the nature of those promises, and the character of the heirs of them. “When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.” He then shews that Abraham, like all his children, inherited this promise through faith and patience. “And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”

He then proceeds to point out the foundation upon which these promises stand—that they rest upon the immutable oath of God. “For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife: wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.”

And this brings us to the words of our text: “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay

hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

There is something so ample in the text that I feel this morning like a weak man attempting to grasp in his arms a burden beyond his strength. In fact, there is sufficient substance in these words to occupy at least a dozen sermons, if God gave a man experience and ability to bring out all contained in them. I can therefore, only attempt to skim over the surface of the things that are contained in the text. I cannot plunge into the depth that coucheth beneath.

Let us therefore endeavour (as the words seem to lie with some degree of sweetness and power upon my heart) to bring out a few of the prominent truths contained in the text. I shall therefore, with God’s blessing, attempt

I.—To shew the character of the persons here spoken of.

II.—The nature of the refuge to which they flee.

III.—The firm foundation on which that refuge stands.

I.—We will look, first, then, at the persons spoken of in the text. Their character we may sum up under two leading features; one is, that they are “the heirs of promise;” the other, that “they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel.”

1. Their first character is, that they are “the heirs of promise;” that is, they are God’s children, who are inheritors of the promises made in the gospel. And it is through faith and patience on their part that they come into the personal enjoyment of them. They are heirs not through anything in themselves; they are heirs because they are sons. “If sons then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Their sonship gives them heirship. But before they can

enter into the inheritance, before they can be put into possession of the things laid up for them, they must have two distinct graces of the Spirit wrought in their heart; they must have faith to believe, and patience to wait for the things that their faith lays hold of. Faith is necessary in order to give the promise a place in their hearts; and patience is needful (for “he that believeth shall not make haste;”) that they may not precipitately run forward, but may wait, endure, and suffer to the end, till they come into the actual enjoyment of those promises which were brought into their heart by the power of God.

2. But, besides this character, that they are “heirs of promise,” the Holy Ghost has stamped a second upon them: “they have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them.” This implies that they have been beaten out of false refuges. We know that man by nature makes lies his refuge. Nothing is too treacherous, nothing too delusive for you and me not to shelter in. The world is a shelter for some; their own righteousness for others; a delusive hope for a third; the good opinion of men for a fourth; mere rites and ceremonies for a fifth. We know that man’s lying, treacherous heart will hide itself anywhere but in the hope set before us in the gospel. Therefore, the Lord’s people, who carry in their bosom the same treacherous heart with all their fellow-men, need to be beaten out of all these lying refuges, that the hail may sweep them away, and the waters overflow them.

The expression “fled for refuge,” throws a light upon the way in which they came to lay hold of this shelter. It is an expression of alarm. They did not walk gently forward, nor carelessly saunter to the refuge, but they fled. This implies that there was that which drove, which alarmed, which beat them out of the false refuges in which they had hidden themselves. Now, we do not attempt to define how long, or how deep, convictions of sin must work in a sinner’s conscience. But we may be quite sure of this—if they have not worked so long, if they have not worked so deep, as to bring him out of all false refuges, they have not yet done their work. If

these convictions, these apprehensions, these fears, these solemn thoughts have not made us flee with fear, with anxiety, with alarm to the refuge set before us, we as yet lack the character stamped upon the heirs of promise.

To flee implies a pursuer, and a pursuer of that nature that unless we escape him, he will plunge his sword into our bosom. Such is the law with its awful curse. Such is Satan with his fiery darts; such is death with his sweeping scythe. If we do not flee from these pursuers, these avengers of blood, they will strike an arrow through our liver. So that by these pursuers, these avengers of blood, we are compelled, whether we will or not, forced, driven out of every refuge of lies, to that which is set forth in the gospel.

But the Apostle tells them what this refuge is, “the hope set before them.” Hope here signifies the Object of hope, the Lord of life and glory, “Immanuel, God with us.” He is therefore called, “The Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble.” (Jer. 14:8.) And he bears this title because in him all the expectations of Israel centre; and to him every sin-burdened soul flees that he may obtain shelter and refuge. This hope is set before us in the gospel. The word of truth reveals Jesus as the hope of the hopeless, the shelter of the shelterless, the refuge of the refugeless. And when the Lord the Spirit is pleased to enlighten our understanding—when the glorious Person, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and finished work of the only begotten Son of God are set before our eyes, and a measure of faith is raised up in our heart to look to Jesus as the object of our soul’s desire, then we lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel.

But there are several things which must be wrought by a divine power before we can do this. We must, first, feel a sense of our danger—that is indispensable. We must, next, by a sense of our danger, be driven out of lying refuges—that is equally indispensable. We must then see what to flee to. Not to be running here; not to be turning to the right hand, not to be swerving to the left. But we must have a definite Object—know the goal to which our feet

are tending; not looking back to the Sodom from which we have escaped; not hanging for help upon man, or on any thing in the creature: but with our eyes looking right on and with our eyelids straight before us, run as having a certain object in view; a goal traced out in the word of God, and held up before our soul’s eye. And this is Jesus, whom we embrace as set forth in the Scriptures as the only begotten Son of God—“Immanuel, God with us;” as having, by his sacrifice upon the cross made a propitiation for sin, destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and opened a way through the veil, that is, his flesh, into the presence and sanctuary of God.

When this is made known to the soul, viewed by the eyes of an enlightened understanding, and faith is raised up to receive in simplicity and godly sincerity what is revealed with power, then we no longer run hither and thither, seeking help and finding none, turning to the right hand or to the left: but we flee to a definite Object, to the goal set before us, which is Jesus, the great High Priest over the house of God.

But there is an expression, “to lay hold,” that deserves notice. There is something to be touched, tasted, felt, handled, known, and enjoyed. It is not an object merely seen at a distance—a something to be viewed merely by the eye, and not grasped by the hand. But it is set forth as a tangible object, as something laid hold of, embraced, grasped, and experimentally and definitely felt. This vital and experimental laying hold distinguishes living from dead faith; the mere natural understanding speculating about Jesus, from the enlightening of the eyes of the spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost. Natural faith may see Christ in the Scriptures; but it cannot see him by the eyes of the soul. Nor is there a laying hold. A living soul alone has power to embrace and grasp a living Saviour. Natural faith fails here; it may think, talk, reason, and argue; but it cannot lay hold, grasp, embrace, or bring in; it cannot enjoy a living union between a living soul and a living Lord. It is a withered hand, paralyzed and dead. But living faith reaches forth

into eternity, stretches beyond the vale of transitory things to lay hold, by a sensible act and appropriating touch, of the hope set before us in the gospel.

This we see signally shown in one case when the Lord was upon earth—that of the poor woman with the issue of blood. (Luke 8:43-48.) The multitude thronged round Jesus; the crowd rudely pressed upon his sacred Person. But only one trembling hand touched him; and when that timid, yet believing hand touched but the border of his garment, instantly virtue flowed forth from his sacred Person, and healed her disease. So spiritually. Professors may intrude upon the Lord, and thrust themselves into his presence; they may, as the Jews of old, throng and press his sacred Person; but it is only the peculiar touch of living faith that derives virtue out of him. So that it is not merely fleeing for refuge; nor is it merely seeking the hope set before us, but it is the laying hold of it by a living hand. It may be indeed sometimes almost with a convulsive grasp; it may be at others with a trembling hand; it may be but for a few moments that living faith touches the object of the soul's hope. The accompanying incidents of time or intensity do not affect the nature of real faith. As in the case of the diseased woman, it was not the strength, nor length of her touch which healed her, but the faith which was in it, so it is now. The distinctive character of true faith is, that it touches, embraces, lays hold of, and thus brings supplies out of Christ's glorious fulness into the poverty-stricken soul.

Now this Object of hope is set forth in the gospel. But you will observe, that the Apostle having spoken of the Object of hope transfers himself immediately to the grace of hope—"which hope," he says, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

II.—And this leads me to show, as I proposed, secondly, the nature of the refuge that the Lord's people flee unto. When the soul flees for refuge to the hope set before it in the gospel, whom does

it see within the veil? Is it not the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec? Was not this typified by what took place on the great day of atonement? You will remember, that none but the high priest, while the temple was standing, was allowed to enter within the veil, and that only one day in the year. He entered in with the blood which he sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. And this was typical of the entering of the Lord of life and glory, after his resurrection, into the presence of the Most High.

Now, hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, enters within the veil where Jesus now is. And this is its distinguishing character. It pierces beyond all temporal and transitory things; and enters into things eternal and invisible, within the veil. But the high priest upon earth, when he had discharged his appointed office within the veil, came forth again to sojourn among his fellow-men; but not so with the great High Priest, his glorious and ever-living Antitype; he tarries within the veil, at the right hand of the Father, the great High Priest over the house of God—the Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate of God's family.

When then Jesus reveals himself to the eyes of living faith, they view him in all the circumstances of his holy life, in all the circumstances of his suffering death, and in all the circumstances of his glorious resurrection and ascension. And thus hope fixes itself upon the risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, the great and glorious High Priest, who is passed within the veil.

The veil of the temple signified the separation that existed between God and man, and the hiding of heavenly things from his eyes. But when Jesus died upon the cross, the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, implying that a way of access was opened into the very presence of God—that believers are no longer, like the Jewish worshippers, to tarry without; but are allowed to enter, in the actings of faith, hope, and love, into the very presence of God himself.

Thus, a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, passes through all sublunary things; it

pierces through that cloud which hangs upon the eyes of men; it penetrates through the veil of unbelief that rests upon the heart; it passes through the waves and billows of infidelity, as the literal anchor through the waves of the sea, and it takes firm hold of him who is within the veil. Its flukes anchor firmly in the great High Priest over the house of God, as the natural anchor passes through the deep waters, and buries itself firmly in the sand.

Jesus is here called “the Forerunner;” that is, he has entered heaven before any of his people; for “in all things he must have preeminence.” He is the firstfruits and wave-sheaf of a whole harvest of redeemed, and is gone to prepare a place for them, that where he is they may be also. He has ascended up on high, and set himself down at the right hand of the Father; and there ever lives, the great High Priest, the true Melchisedec, to present his intercession before the eyes of Jehovah. He presents not his actual blood, but the merit of that blood. He presents his righteousness; he presents his holy Person, yea, he presents himself, the great and glorious God-Man, as the church’s ever-living and loving Head.

Now the nature of true gospel hope is, to anchor in this glorious High Priest; not to rest upon anything in ourselves, not to rest upon anything in others; but to pass through all these frail and perishing things into the very presence of God himself; so as to take firm hold upon the glorious High Priest within the veil.

But this we cannot do until we have a sight by faith of the King in his beauty—until there is a discovery to the eyes of our understanding, and faith be raised up in our hearts to look unto, live upon, and embrace with all our soul’s affections this glorious Forerunner, who is entered within the veil. This looking unto him, is an act of faith; this anchoring in him is an act of hope; and this tender affection towards him is an act of love. These are the three grand graces in the soul—faith, hope, and love. And wherever there is faith to believe, there is hope to anchor, and love to flow forth in the breathings of tender affection.

This “Forerunner is made a High Priest after the order

of Melchisedec.” There are two points in which the order of Melchisedec differed from the order of Aaron. 1. The Aaronic priesthood was hereditary. It passed from father to son, and therefore was always in a course of mutation and change. But the Melchisedec priesthood is permanent, immutably fixed in Jesus. As the apostle argues, Heb. 7:23, 24, “And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this Man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” Thus, as Melchisedec was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually;” so the priesthood no longer passes out of the hand of Jesus, as it did in the course of nature out of the hands of the Jewish high priest. It is not a temporary, nor transitory, but an eternal priesthood. The second feature of the Melchisedec, as distinguished from the Aaronic priesthood is, that it is a royal priesthood. Melchisedec was “king of Salem;” and of Jesus it was prophesied, “He shall be a Priest upon his throne.” (Zech. 6:13.)—Zion’s King as well as Zion’s Priest. Thus he not merely intercedes as the great High Priest within the veil, but he lives as a King to execute his own purposes. The hope of the soul anchors in and rests upon this royal High Priest, knowing that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him—standing at the right hand of the Father as an Advocate for the poor and needy; and manifesting the virtue of his intercession, by sprinkling his blood upon the conscience, discovering his glorious righteousness, and shedding abroad his dying love.

Now everything that we have received out of Jesus, every testimony of interest in him, every mark of his favour, every glimpse and glance of his love, every thing that has raised up our heart heavenward, every word that has come home with softening, melting, dissolving power into our conscience—all flows from this one thing—having fled for refuge, and laid hold of the hope set before us in the gospel.

III.—But the apostle shews us, (and this is the third point which I shall endeavour this morning to speak upon) the certainty and security of this refuge that the Lords people flee to take hold of: “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.” The Lord gave certain promises (and these are the promises to which the apostle alludes) to Abraham. He said, “Surely, in blessing I will bless thee.” This was the leading promise, “Blessing I will bless;” that is, absolutely, unconditionally. But in giving this promise to Abraham, he gave it to all who have the faith of father Abraham. Every believing soul that walks in the steps of believing Abraham, God blesses with the same absolute, unconditional blessing that he blessed his spiritual progenitor with—those rich blessings which God has blessed his children with in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. As the apostle declares, (Gal. 3:7, 9,) “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Again (ver. 14,) “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promises of the Spirit through faith.” And again, (ver. 29,) “And if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Now these promises rests upon two things; and these two things the Apostle, declares to be “immutable,” or unchangeable. One is, the counsel of God; as we read, “to shew the immutability of his counsel;” and the other is, the oath of God.

The counsel of God is, the determinate purpose of God to bless whom he will bless, to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and to save whom he will save. This is his eternal, immutable, unchangeable counsel. The Three-One God fixed his love upon definite objects; the purpose of his love being to bless

them and bring them to the eternal enjoyment of himself, in spite of all opposition from without and within. This counsel stands firm as the throne of Jehovah; an irreversible counsel, that though man may change, the elements melt with fervent heat, the world pass away, and the heavens be rolled up as a scroll, yet the eternal purpose of a covenant Jehovah never can pass away. Upon this counsel and purpose of God his promises stand; they flow out of this counsel; they run parallel with this counsel; they stand upon the same foundation with this counsel; and were given in the mind of God ere the world itself had any being, and when the “everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure,” was made between the Eternal Three.

We have the transcript of this counsel in the written word. Every promise in that word flowed from his eternal counsel; and his eternal counsel was the basis of every promise. So that when we read the promises, we read the counsel from which those promises flow, and on which those promises stand. When then we read “the promises,” we may be as sure that every promise will be fulfilled, as we are certain that the eternal counsel itself will be fulfilled. The eternal counsel is the source, the promises are the streams; the eternal counsel is the foundation, the promises are the superstructure. The superstructure will last as long as the foundation stands, and the streams will flow as long as the source remains.

But God has confirmed his immutable purpose with an oath. He adopts here the custom of men, knowing how weak, how feeble, how frail man’s faith is. It was not sufficient to give a simple promise, to make a covenant, and bestow promises resting upon that covenant—he would do more, he would confirm it with an oath, as we find in Genesis 22:16, “By myself have I sworn.” The margin of the text instead of “confirmed” reads, “he interposed himself;” that is, put himself by an oath, as between the promise and its fulfilment. And this he did, in infinite condescension, that Abraham’s faith might be stronger as resting not merely upon the

word of God, but upon the oath of God. Now, a man's word we trust to, if he be an honourable man; but if we have, not that man's word only, but the additional security and sanction of his oath, it creates double confidence. So it is with the Lord. His word is enough; but he has, in condescension to human infirmity, knowing the weakness of his people's faith, not only given his word, but also his oath: "Surely by myself have I sworn."

Every heir of promise has an interest in this counsel of God; and every heir of promise is interested in this oath of God. I may—you may—doubt, fear, and question in our own minds what right we have to the promise of God. We read them in the word; we see them to be unspeakably precious; we behold them spangling the Scriptures of truth as the stars spangle the sky; we view them loaded with blessings. But this thought arises, 'Am I interested in them? I see them full of blessings; but what testimony have I that they belong to me?' Now, this is the mark—"that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel." This is the mark of the heirs of promise: this is the stamp that God has put upon them, "that they have fled for refuge;" not that they have been extremely religious, not that they have been remarkably consistent, not that they have done this or that, or mean to do this and that, for the Lord. But this is the divine stamp put upon them—that they have "fled for refuge." In other words, that they have had such a work of grace upon their hearts—such convictions of sin—such guilt, such soul trouble, as has beaten them out of lying refuges: and that, being beaten out of these lying refuges, they have looked to find some shelter from the storm which they know will one day burst upon a guilty world. Having heard the roar of the thunder upon the horizon, and seen the flashes of lightning in the sky, and felt the drops of falling rain upon the earth, while the world saw nothing but a bright sky, they fled for refuge to the Saviour that God himself has set before them in the gospel—to the Lord of life and glory revealed in the Scriptures of truth—to the Son of God, as having appeared in the flesh. They have fled by faith to his

atoning blood for the pardon of their sins—to his righteousness as their only justification—to his sacred Person as their Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father—to the promises of the gospel as the breasts of consolation to which they desire for ever to cling, and milk out their sweetness and blessedness. This is their character.

Now, every soul that has experienced these things, that has been taken out of refuges of lies, and fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel, and not merely fled to, but also by an act of living faith has laid hold of Jesus, has felt a measure of his love and blood, tasted his grace, and been ravished by his beauty—every such soul, however doubting and fearing, however dark and distressed, however cast down with the difficulties of the way, is "an heir of promise;" and being an heir of promise, he rests upon the counsel and the oath of God. In a word, every such soul that has "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel," has the counsel of God upon his side. He is one of those on whose behalf the eternal covenant was made. His title to it is—he has "fled for refuge;" and the counsel of God, the secret counsel, and the manifested counsel is, to save that man, whoever he be, however black his sins, however vile his heart, however contradictory the path he is walking in may seem to flesh and blood, however rough and rugged his way, however assailed from without and within. That man who has fled for refuge by an act of living faith to lay hold of the hope set before him—it is the counsel of God that he shall be saved. Nay more, lest that should not be enough, God has interposed himself, has confirmed it by a solemn oath that he will save such; not merely said it, but sworn it. That they may have additional security, he has condescended to swear by himself, that surely he will bless, surely he will save such souls.

Now the Apostle holds this out as strong consolation. He says, "By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation." No: it is utterly impossible for God to lie. The earth may be dissolved, and all creation reduced

to chaos before God could lie. He would cease to be God if the faintest breath of a change, or the shadow of a turn should pass over the glorious Godhead. But it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore this holds out strong consolation for those that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them.

“Strong consolation” implies comfort applied to the soul; and that in proportion to the strength of its faith, in proportion to the depth of its trials. Who needs strong consolation? Is it not those who have nothing which this world can comfort them with? Those who have fled for refuge? fled out of the world, and therefore they do not expect any consolation in the world? They have fled out of sin, and do not expect consolation from sin. They have fled out of self-righteousness, and do not expect consolation from self-righteousness. They have fled out of those refuges of lies. They may cast at times, through the wickedness and weakness of the heart, a hankering look for other shelters; but they never turn back. These need strong consolation. They need something that can bear up their minds, something that can support them, something that can enable them to endure to the end.

And what is the ground of this strong consolation? This is the ground, that God has eternally determined and sworn by himself—that he will save and bless those that have “fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel.” This is the foundation of their consolation, this is the ground of their hope, that God has made such and such promises, and confirmed such and such promises by his solemn oath—that those who flee for refuge, and lay hold upon this hope, have an interest in and title to them, and have a manifest assurance of being “heirs of promise.”

See how the Lord puts “strong consolation” on the surest ground. He does not say, ‘Look at your lives—how pious, how holy, how religious they are!’ nor does he even point at the depth of your experience; nor does he condescend to notice anything whatsoever of the creature. But this is the foundation on which he places it—his own counsel, his own oath.

Now, did you ever in your life feel spiritual consolation? If ever you did, it was by laying hold of the hope set before you in the gospel. There was no consolation ever got by looking at fallen self. If ever there was any true consolation, any hope raised up in the heart, any solid comfort, it came out of the actings of living faith embracing the blood and righteousness of Christ, tasting a measure of his preciousness, seeing his glory and beauty, and feeling the heart in some measure dissolved into nothingness at his footstool. Not looking at ourselves; but receiving as empty sinners out of his fulness: not trusting to ourselves, or our own attainments; but going to Jesus, and receiving something into our hearts out of him. Nothing but this can give us consolation; and the more this is felt, the more this will give us “strong consolation.”

But, you will observe, that the Apostle speaks of this act of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ as an anchor; and he says, this anchor is “sure and stedfast, and entereth into that within the veil.” In other words, that this hope acts the same part towards the soul as the anchor literally and naturally acts to the ship. Now, can we always see the ground on which the anchor rests? Is not the bottom covered by the dark, deep waves? And the deeper the anchor sinks, is not the ground less seen? Is it not so spiritually? Is not this the mark and characteristic of a living soul—“to endure as seeing him who is invisible?” Is there not, must there not be, a laying hold of invisible realities in the soul? And is not this laying hold of, and is not this anchoring in invisible realities, a grand mark of faith? If I can see with my eyes, I do not want to see with my heart. If I can believe in my judgment, I do not want to believe in my conscience. If I can touch by the hand of nature, I do not want to touch by the hand of faith. These all fail, and come short. The child of God, I am well convinced, will be opposed at every step he takes. But he has fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him; and he believes, hopes, and anchors in an invisible Jesus.

Unbelief is always looking for something visible. Reason always questions ‘how this thing can be consistent with that?’ And

thus all the reasonings and argumentations of our fallen nature will be bringing up strong artillery against living faith. But the Apostle says, "Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24.) If we could see Jesus as plainly with our bodily eye as we can see the texts of Scripture in which he is spoken of, there would be no need of the special act of God the Spirit upon our heart to give us faith. If we could reason upon truth and receive it into our souls, as we reason upon and receive matters of science and human learning, there would be no need of the special operations of God the Spirit. Therefore, just in proportion as our hope enters within the veil, and anchors in this glorious Immanuel, will be the opposition made to it by nature, sense, and reason. And nature, sense, and reason, with the unbelief and infidelity of our hearts, will sometimes work so powerfully, that the anchor seems almost giving way. Nay, we scarcely at times seem to have any anchor at all. The ship is so beaten about by the waves, that there appears no firm hold of, no real anchoring in, the Person, blood, and work of Jesus. And yet it holds. The ship is not beaten from her anchorage; it does not fall upon the rocks, is not cast away and lost. Still, by some invisible cable it holds, in spite of nature, sense, and reason. Therefore, the Apostle says, it is "sure and stedfast." It is firm and stayed; it may be out of sight, and seem giving way; the waves and billows may rise so high as even to hide the cable from our eyes; and as the cable dips beneath the waves, it may seem sunk and lost; and yet all the while there is a secret, firm, invisible hold. Have not a thousand temptations blown across us to drift us from Jesus? I am sure they have blown upon my soul. Have they not blown across yours? Have not a thousand waves of unbelief almost tossed us upon the rocks? Have we not sometimes been tempted by lust, and sometimes been driven almost by despair, to give up our anchorage? Have we not sometimes doubted and feared whether our hope was not all a delusion, and whether we ever really by an act of living faith cast anchor within the veil? Yet it will not, it does not altogether give way. There is still some coming

unto the Lord, still some going up of tender affection, some actings of faith in his blood and righteousness, some pantings of heart after him, some love to him, some embracings of him as our only hope and help. Then it has not failed yet; nay, the more it is tried, does it not prove the anchor to be all the stronger? Does it not prove the anchorage to be all the firmer? What can fail? Can the anchorage fail? That cannot fail—it is the Person of Jesus. Can the anchor itself fail? That cannot fail—it is the work of the Spirit to create it in the soul. Can the cable fail—the mysterious connection there is in the heart between the soul and Jesus—can that break? No: that is twined by an eternal hand—that was woven by the fingers of God himself—that cannot, cannot break. Then what can fail? Shall the ship fail? If it be a ransomed soul—if the Lord of life and glory be the pilot, he knows all the shoals, and can steer it into the haven of eternal felicity. If that infallible Pilot who never yet missed the harbour has purchased her, chartered her, and is guiding her upon her homeward destination, how can the bark itself, 'The Good Adventure,' be ever cast away?

Then, if none of these things can fail, what strong consolation there is to those that have "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel!" How this noble anchorage, this safe roadstead, opens its capacious arms to receive every living child of God! Surely you must know whether this has taken place in your conscience; if once you were in a lying refuge, and then a storm came, and beat you out of it—then you must know whether there were any goings forth, any lookings, any longings, any stretchings forth, any reachings forward to lay hold of a precious Saviour. You must know if these things ever had a place in your soul—if you have had these feelings you must know whether Jesus ever had a place in your heart—whether you ever viewed him by the eyes of enlightened understanding—then you must know whether faith ever flowed towards him, hope anchored in him, and love embraced him. These things cannot take place in a man's bosom, without his knowing he has had such things working in his soul

with power. He may have many doubts, fears, and apprehensions as to the reality and genuineness of the work. His faith may be sorely tried. But he must know whether he has felt these things or not—whether these things have had a certain definite effect upon him that has brought him out of lying refuges to “lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel.”

Now, if God the Spirit has wrought these things in your heart in a measure, though a feeble measure, you are a heir of promise; and if you are a heir of promise, you have a title to strong consolation; for your soul rests upon the immutability of God’s counsel, and the immutability of God’s oath. Is it not a mercy it should be so? Suppose it was thus—that I had made myself a holy man; that I had, by a long course of penance, endeavoured to atone for my sins; that I had, by rigorous acts of obedience, worked out a measure of self-righteousness;—should I not be always at uncertainty? and would not the issue be final despair? But when it comes to this—“fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel”—when it stands thus, that this is the mark God has stamped upon the heirs of promise, and put his finger upon this experience—if you have this, you have everything. If this has been wrought in your heart by divine power, you are a child of God—your soul will be saved as sure as there is a God in heaven, a counsel of God in eternity, and an oath of God in time. If these immutable things that cannot fail are on your side; how it holds out an escape for every poor sin-convicted sinner—every one that knows the plague of his own heart—every one in whose soul the blessed Spirit has begun and is carrying on a work of grace!

The Lord enable us to see it more plainly! The Lord enable us to feel it more powerfully! The Lord enable us day by day to be manifested as heirs of promise, to be continually fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the blessed hope set before us—so that when eternity shall come, and time have passed away, and be no longer—then we shall see face to face in heaven what we have seen by the eye of faith upon earth; and enjoy in full that which in this life we have only

realized by feeble and distant anticipation.

96 Divine Husbandry

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening,
August 14, 1845

“Thou visiteth the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.”

Psalm 45:9, 10, 11

The text contains a very sweet description of the way in which God fertilizes the earth, and causes it to produce food for the use of man. But I should fall very far short of the mind of the blessed Spirit here, if I limited the meaning of the words merely to the natural productions of the earth, and to the way in which God causes those productions to spring forth. There is doubtless an experimental meaning in the words, a vein of spiritual truth couched beneath the figure. I always have been, and always hope to be, an enemy to what I may call “a false spiritualization” of God’s word; for as there is a true spiritualization, there is also a false one. But if we observe three rules of interpretation, I think that a false spiritualization will not easily be put on any text. First, the spiritual interpretation must be strictly based upon, and closely coincide with, the literal one. Secondly, the interpretation must be in every point agreeable to the analogy of faith, and consistent with the teachings of the Spirit in the hearts of God’s children. Thirdly, there must be a savour, more or less, connected with, and flowing forth from it into the heart of the preacher, and thence into the heart also of the hearer.

I hope, in endeavouring to explain the mind and meaning of the Spirit here, I may not fail in any one of these three rules; in other words, that my interpretation may be true, may be consistent, and may be experimental. The Lord only, I know, can give the blessing.

In speaking upon these words, I shall make no formal divisions; but viewing the text as an experimental description of the work of God upon the soul, I shall take the points as they lie before me, beginning with the first process, and going on to the consummation. But we must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit, in speaking here of the work of grace upon the hearts of God's children, follows out that mode of cultivation which is adopted in, and is suitable to, Eastern countries. We must discard from our minds the system of agriculture in this country, and keep before us the mode pursued in the East, in order to see the analogy between the process described in the text, and the work of grace upon the hearts of God's people.

I.—The first point to which I would call your attention is, the subject of the operations, set forth in the text under the word earth—"Thou visitest the earth." The earth naturally is but the mere soil in which all its productions grow; and in itself is utterly unable to produce anything suitable for the food of man, except it undergo special operation. The dull, brutish earth can never without cultivation produce out of its bosom food for the use of man. So it is with respect to man's heart by nature; it is as incapable of producing anything gracious, heavenly, spiritual, and acceptable to God, as the natural earth is unable spontaneously to bring forth those fruits and crops which are for man's sustenance.

The earth is in more than one Scripture set forth as typical of the soul of man. For instance: "Ye are God's husbandry;" that is, your soul stands in the same relation to God the spiritual husbandman, as the earth stands in relation to the natural cultivator. Again: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Has the earth ears to hear? Does God address himself to the natural soil? No; he speaks to the inhabitants of the earth—to man, whose body he formed

out of the dust of the ground. So that we have Scriptural warrant to interpret the word "earth" as typical of the soul of man.

1. But what is the first word in the text, introducing the whole process, so to speak, of divine agriculture? "Thou visitest the earth." The earth, man's soul by nature, lies waste and void, overrun with briars, thorns, and thistles, and naturally incapable of striking forth spiritual culture. "Thou visitest the earth;" 'thou lookest upon it in its desert state; thou beholdest it utterly devoid of life; thou seest what it is naturally, incapable of producing anything spiritually good.'

2. But God does not merely visit the earth with his eye, so as to mark it out for future culture, but he also visits it by the communication of his precious grace. He visits the soul by regenerating it through the operation of the Holy Ghost; by making it a partaker of a new and heavenly nature. And the first touch of the divine finger upon the conscience, the first entrance of spiritual light, the first communication of heavenly life, is summed up in the expression, "Thou visitest." What a gracious expression it is! Here is the earth, utterly unable to raise up in itself anything acceptable to God. But in mercy he visits it, looks down from the height of his sanctuary upon the elect soul, dead in sin; and in his own mercy and grace, unasked for (for the Lord is unsought when the earth bears nothing but that which is fit for the fire), he visits the soul with the light and life of the Spirit.

II.—But the text goes on to say, "Thou visitest the earth, and watered it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it." that is to say, everything fit. The first grand process in the East, indispensable to all cultivation, is to irrigate the soil. In this moist climate, the chief feature is humidity; but in those burning climes, the chief feature is dryness. We, in our humid climate, are obliged to drain the land to make it bear fruitful crops; but in those hot countries, they are obliged to irrigate it and cause streams to

pass over it, in order to make it fit for the plough. It is so hard, so dry, so burnt up with drought, that unless it is irrigated and watered the plough cannot pierce the soil. Thus we see the necessary process pointed out by the Spirit of God here by watering it. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it." Before, then, it is ploughed up, before the seed is committed to the bed, it is irrigated and watered. But how? It is explained in the text. "Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water." This "river of God" is the river of mercy and grace that flows out of the bosom of a Three-one Jehovah. It is the same river which Ezekiel saw in his vision, that came from the temple, flowing by the altar, and entering into the salt sea to heal the waters, and make them sweet. It is added, "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezek. 47:9.) It is the same river of which the Psalmist elsewhere speaks, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (46:4.) It is the same river that John saw in vision, and which he describes: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1.)

This "river," then, "full of water," is the eternal flowing forth of mercy, grace, truth, and love out of the bosom of a Three-one God. And this mighty river irrigates and waters every soul that God visits. I do not mean to say that the first communications of grace to the soul are manifestations of pardoning mercy; but the very first watering and enriching of the soul by the river that is full of water, flows out of the hidden mercy and grace that lie stored up in the bosom of God for his elect family. Until the soil of the human heart is moistened and softened by the flowings-in of the flood-tide of grace; until some measure of this overflowing and ever-flowing fountain of mercy gushes out of the Redeemer's heart

into the sinner's conscience, there is no breaking down of his soul before God, no preparing and fitting it to receive the truth in the love of it, no seed-bed in which the word of truth may germinate. Therefore, after the Lord has visited it, then comes the watering and irrigation by this "river that maketh glad the city of God," so as to prepare it for the reception of the word of life; as we read, "Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it."

But previous to preparing and sowing it with corn, after it is irrigated, there must be the ploughing: the irrigating is to prepare it for the plough. In its dry, hard state, the plough could not pass through. There must be a softening of the heart, a breaking down of prejudices, a humbling of the soul, a melting of the spirit, proceeding from the divine watering, so as to soak into the depth of a man's soul, before the divine plough can rightly enter into his conscience and plough it up, so that the seed may find a bed in which to germinate. Do we not find it so? Is not the law often preached in all its curses, without reaching the sinner's heart? But when the sinner's heart has been visited by God's grace, and when it has been humbled, broken down, and prepared, then the plough is put in to break up the soil, and to draw a furrow in which the seed may find a bed, and germinate. It is thus the heart becomes fit and prepared for the word of life. The object of the ploughing, as we shall see when we get further into the text, is to make a ridge, and a furrow; as it says lower down, "Thou settlest the furrows thereof." Now, if there is no plough passed through the conscience, there can be no ridge, and no furrow. A furrow implies a ridge; and a ridge implies a furrow. A ridge and a furrow are both produced by the plough passing through the conscience. This breaking up of a man's heart, this bringing to light the worms and maggots and black soil that lie underneath, this tearing up of whole crops of weeds, this driving of the plough through all the briars and thistles that cover the human heart, prepare the soil for the seed which God has provided for it.

This "corn," or seed, is the word of life. The Lord himself, in the

parable of the sower, explained that the seed sown was the word of God; sown instrumentally by the undersowers, and made effectual unto salvation by God the Spirit.

This seed, then, is truth, received into the heart; the truth concerning the Person of Jesus, as the God-Man Mediator, "God over all, blessed for ever;" the truth as respects his atoning blood, as shed to put away sin; the truth as regards his glorious righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe;" the truth as it respects the internal operations of God the Spirit upon the hearts of God's family. It therefore comprehends all that in Scripture is called, "the truth as it is in Jesus." And to have it sown in the heart is called "a receiving of the love of the truth, that we may be saved;" (2 Thess. 2:10); and a receiving Christ especially, who is "the way, the truth, and the life." (Col. 2:6; John 14:6.)

Now, until God in mercy has visited the heart; until he has irrigated it with this "river of the water of life," which greatly enriches it by communicating its fertilizing properties; and until it has been ploughed up and broken, and the ridge and furrow traced for a seed-bed for the corn, there can be no reception of the truth in love. In the parable of the sower, the seed was cast forth, and fell upon different sorts of soil; but it only found a seed-bed in the good and honest heart. Some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air devoured it up. Some fell on stony ground, where there was no depth of earth, for the plough had not passed through it. Some fell among thorns, where the stream had not passed to soften and irrigate it, and so make a seed-bed. The good and honest heart, made so by God's grace, alone had a seed-bed for the corn to germinate in and grow.

Any other reception of truth than this will never profit the soul. If we have never had God's grace visiting the soul, never had any communication of life and light out of the fulness of Jesus; in other words, if this river has never shed its sacred streams over our souls, and if the plough of conviction has not passed into our conscience, so as to turn up our deep corruptions to view, and prepare the

heart for the reception of the word, whatever be our knowledge, whatever our profession, whatever our consistency, we have not yet received the love of the truth. And here lies all the difference betwixt a honest-hearted child of God, taught of the Spirit, and a conscience-seared professor. They receive the same doctrine; but the one receives it into a honest and good heart, made such by the grace of God; and the other receives it into his natural understanding, without any divine life or power in the conscience.

III.—But after the seed has been safely committed to the furrow, there is another process pointed out in the text: "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settest the furrows thereof." Irrigation takes place on two occasions. The earth is first irrigated to make it soft to receive the plough; the plough is then passed through it to make the furrow; and after the seed has been committed to the soil, then there is another watering, "to settle the furrows thereof," and "to water the ridges abundantly;" a second irrigation, after the seed has been committed to the furrows, to make it germinate and grow.

This is carried out experimentally in the hearts of God's people. When we first receive the love of the truth, it is through the blessed Spirit putting that truth into our heart. But is there not a further pouring out of his gracious influences and divine operations, so as to water the ridges and settle the furrows of the heart, in order to cover the seed, and make it moist and tender to germinate? Unless this tide of the same pure river flows over the ridges and furrows, the seed is not properly buried, nor is it in a fit state to germinate downward, and bring forth fruit upward. When we first receive the love of the truth, we receive it in power. "Our gospel," says the Apostle, "came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5.) But do we not need the same Spirit again and again to water that truth which has been implanted, and settle the furrows of the soul; so that it becomes settled down into an enjoyment of, and a firm adherence to, the truth as it is in Jesus?

IV.—But we pass on to what takes place after the second irrigation, “Thou makest it soft with showers.” We have had two irrigations; we have had two copious waterings; we have seen how, by the river of God, the soil has been fully saturated. But in those burning climes the effect would soon pass away; the Lord therefore not merely speaks of the water of the river, but he speaks also of the showers from on high. The bottles of heaven have to do their work, as well as the river of God.

Thus after the Lord’s people have received the love of the truth, and after they have received a clear testimony in their conscience, they may never perhaps all their lives long have such sweet enjoyment; they may never again have the river pouring into their hearts its copious streams; they may never be moistened and saturated in every ridge so completely and fully as when they first knew the Lord. But are they unwatered because that tide does not pour forth an equally copious stream? No; the Lord has another method of watering the soul after its receiving the love of the truth. “Thou makest it soft with showers.” Every now and then communications of grace descend in still showers upon the heart, which is thus kept moist, tender, and soft by the dews and rains that fall from on high. Have not you, that know the Lord by divine teaching, found this in your experience? You have come parched to hear the word; your soul has been dry, barren, and dead; but the Lord has opened the word with life and feeling to your soul. Then there was a shower. It did not come with all that overflowing sweetness which you had in days past; still there was a softness communicated, and your parched soul was refreshed, just as the dry chapped soil is refreshed by the droppings down of the rain from above.

V.—But “He also blesses the springing thereof.” He not merely makes the ground soft with showers, but also blesses the springing, after the seed has been committed to the furrow. The first operation in nature is to send forth a root, and the root buries itself downward in the soil. So it is with the word of God received

in the heart. It does not lie there, as a pebble in the soil; as torpid and as inert as a stone in the street. It is a living thing, just as the seed-corn in the earth is a living thing. As the seed-corn puts forth a root, so the truth received in the love of it puts forth a root in the souls of God’s people; it strikes its tender yet strong fibres into the heart and conscience, and penetrates into a man’s very being, so as to take firm and fast hold of his conscience and affections. And thus the springing thereof is connected with, and depends upon, the shooting of the root downwards.

But besides this, there is the springing of it upwards; the springing up of the soul toward God; the going forth of heavenly affections; the mounting up of living faith to its Author; the budding forth of hope towards its Giver; and the springing up of love and affection towards its Shedder abroad. And how sweet it is to experience something of the springing up of divine life in the soul; to feel the power of the truth we have received into our understanding, and believed on in our conscience! And though we often seem to have no religion worth the name, and to be utterly destitute of vital godliness, yet how sweet it is, now and then, to experience the springing up of divine life in the soul! If we have never experienced this springing up in the soul, what right have we to think ourselves Christians?

Have we, for instance, any springing up of godly fear? As we read, “the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death.” (Prov. 14:27.) The property of a fountain we know is to gush forth. When sin then comes before us, when temptations present themselves, when Satan is laying some snare to entangle our feet, the fear of the Lord will at times spring up in the soul. “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

There is also sometimes a springing up of faith. There is a looking unto Jesus; a viewing by the eye of faith his glorious Person, his atoning blood, and justifying righteousness; there is a casting of a longing, languishing look towards his dying love.

Sometimes there is a springing up of hope—”a good hope

through grace;" that when body and soul part company, we shall be with the Lord; that we shall not perish in the waste howling wilderness; but that when death comes we shall depart to be with Jesus. How sweet it is at times to feel this springing up of hope, this blessed anchor, that enters into the very presence of God!

How sweet also, at times, to feel the springing up of love towards the Lord of life and glory, and in secret moments, when no eye sees, no ear hears, to experience the secret risings up of tender affection towards him!

There is also the secret springings up of tender affections towards God's people. When we come into their company, and our hearts become knit together in tender sympathy, we feel a measure of love and affection, and union and communion with them spring up spontaneously in our souls.

There is a springing up likewise of reverence towards God's great majesty; a springing up of humility, so as to fall down at his footstool; a springing up of a teachable broken spirit, to sit at Jesus' feet, and hear his words, with the temper and feelings of a little child: a springing up of heavenly-mindedness, so as to set the affections upon Jesus at the right hand of God; a springing up of faithfulness, so as to be zealous and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; a springing up of a single eye to the glory of God, so that what we say or do may be said or done more or less to the honour of God. Now all this is the springing up of truth in the heart, of that seed which God has committed to the soul, and which he waters with his grace, in order that it may bear fruit to his glory.

The Lord blesses this springing. There are some perhaps of God's people who can scarcely trace out in their hearts anything of this springing up. They have been deeply exercised and tried by sin and guilt upon their conscience; but they cannot honestly say that they have had clear communications of grace and mercy, and received the love of the truth. They hardly dare call themselves the children of God. Yet when we look at that which takes place in the

secret chambers of their heart before God, we find the springings up of a living faith, hope, and love, and of every other grace of the Spirit that God himself has planted in the soul. The Lord blesses the springing thereof. If the Lord did not bless the springing, no sooner did the tender plant rise out of the soil, than it would be nipped by the cutting winds, or devoured by the caterpillar; it never could live out half its time, much less rise up to bear solid fruit. But the Lord graciously keeps alive and blesses the springing up of everything good and gracious which his own hand has planted in the heart.

What a mercy it is to be able to trace out any springing up of these blessed things within! for we know that we are utterly unable to create them in ourselves.

VI.—But it adds: "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." As though he would say, "Let us take the whole circle of the seasons. Let us not merely look at the spring-time, when the corn is in the blade. Let us not look merely at the summer, when the corn begins to ripen. Let us look at the autumn, at the harvest time, when the corn is gathered in. Yea, let us look at winter, when we eat the fruits of the earth." Thus we find the Lord going round in a gracious circle. "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." Then if the Lord has blessed the springing thereof, he will bless its subsequent stages; he will bless the ripening of the corn, as well as the first committal of it to the seed-bed; he will bless the gathering of it in, as well as the waterings, and the springings up of it; and thus will crown the whole revolving circle with a gracious harvest.

After the seed has sprung up, is there not a long series of months before it is matured? "First the blade," as the Lord speaks, "then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." After the Lord has watered the soul abundantly with his mercy and grace, and after he has blessed the springing thereof, we should expect that all things would go on smoothly. But we see it is not so in nature, and I am sure it is not so in grace. We read (Psa. 74:16, 17), "The day is thine, the night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun: thou

hast set all the borders of the earth; thou hast made summer and winter." Now, night in nature is as indispensable for the ripening of the fruits of the earth as day. The earth is so constituted, and the seasons are so adapted to it in their beautiful variation, that every change is indispensable for the maturation of the seed. The alternation of night and day is particularly indispensable to its growth. So spiritually. After the Lord has committed the seed of truth to the soul, and after he has blessed the springing thereof, is that all? Is there not something more to be done? Does it now bring forth fruit? Is there not some further process necessary? Surely. In order that there may be maturity, there must be an alternation of seasons.

1. For instance, there must be night. How painful it is for the living soul, after he has enjoyed some of the beams of day, to have to pass through a dreary night! But I believe all the Lord's people know more or less what it is to walk in darkness. They do not feel in their souls those sweet in-shinings that they long to experience. They have not those gracious breakings in of the Sun of righteousness that their hearts earnestly long after. They have "to walk in darkness, and have no light." In this state, we often call in question all that the Lord has done for our souls. We actually cannot believe that the Lord has done what we in time past believed he had done. The work of grace is so obscured, the evidences so beclouded, the mind so perplexed and confused, that however clear our experience may have been at the time, now that darkness covers the soul, we feel unable to form a right judgment even upon our own experience. But this night is necessary for the strength of the soul. Were it all day, the plant would spring up rapidly, and grow so flaccid, so luxuriant, and so tender, that it would break down by its own luxuriousness. There is a certain stage in which it needs to be strengthened; and this strength is given in the night season, by withdrawing those influences of the sun which would draw it up too luxuriantly. So spiritually. We need to be strengthened. Did not the Apostle learn this lesson?

How did he learn it? Was it by basking in the beams of the Sun of righteousness? Was it by enjoying sweet manifestations of the Lord of life and glory? Was it by having all his evidences brightened and made conspicuous? Not so; but by having a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. He thus learnt his weakness, and when he learnt his weakness, he also learnt the strength of Christ made perfect in his weakness; so that he could glory in his infirmities, not as infirmities, but because the glory of Christ rested upon his soul in his infirmities. So these spiritual night seasons, though all things seem then to be against us, yet strengthen the soul. We begin in the night season to look out for the work of God more conspicuously. We begin to feel more clearly the difference between the teaching of God and the teaching of man. We come to this point, that in these dark seasons God alone can give us light, and in these cold dead seasons God alone can give us life. Now, this is real strength—real strength, because we learn it in our weakness, and learn by that where our real strength lies. The work of grace upon the heart must be tried. If it be a feeble work, it must be tried feebly; if it be a strong work, it must be tried strongly. But whatever the depth of the work of grace upon the heart, it must have trials in order to prove it genuine. These night seasons, then, prove whether the work upon our heart be genuine or not. We can travel on very comfortably by day; but when night comes, and we are unable to see our way, we must lean upon our heavenly Conductor, or most assuredly go astray. While we can see our evidences, we can go cheerily forward; but when darkness covers them, we begin to look out for help, and want the everlasting arms spread forth for our support, lest we fall into pitfalls and quagmires. Thus we learn the secret of our strength in these night seasons.

2. Again. In all climates there are cold days to be endured, as well as hot days. We, in our folly, sometimes think we could manage the seasons better than the Lord. Sometimes we would not have these wet days, and at other times these dry days, or these cold nights. We think, in the vanity of our hearts, that we could arrange these

things better than God. But when harvest is gathered in, and the crops laid up in the barn, then we see how much more wisely God has ordered these matters than we could have done. The very cold has an effect upon the goodness of the fruit. If the Lord “crowns the year with his goodness,” then every chilly night, every stormy day, must have a ripening effect upon the corn, just as much as the warm beams of the glorious sun. Do we not often painfully feel the coldness of our heart Godward? Have we not often mourned and sighed on account of the hardness, barrenness, and leanness of our heart in spiritual things? And can we think this is really for our good? But “all things work together for good;” and therefore these cold, dry, barren seasons must be among the things that work together for our good. What good, then, do I get by passing through these cold, dead, insipid seasons? I get emptied of fleshly religion. If I did not know by painful experience the coldness and deadness of my heart Godward, I should make an idol of self, be filled with false zeal, think I could do something in my own unassisted strength, talk and act as an unemptied, unhumbled pharisee, and wear a fancied crown of creature holiness. But when I feel as cold towards God as though I had not one spark of grace, as dead in my feelings as though the light and life of God had never come into my conscience, as utterly unable to move my soul Godward as the earth in the frost of December is unable to clothe itself with the verdure of July, then I learn this great lesson—to distinguish between the teachings of God in the heart, and the mere zeal and activity of nature. Is not this real strength? Is not this necessary for maturing and ripening the fruits and graces of the Spirit in the heart? By enduring these nipping blasts, I learn whence “all my fruit is found;” all my strength proceeds, all my faith flows. Yes: by passing through these cold seasons, I learn to prize the feeblest ray of warmth, as well as to be thankful for the smallest mark of favour. I learn, too, that if I have heavenly affections and spiritual desires, God is their author and giver. I learn also, having no righteousness of my own, to receive with a thankful heart communications of

grace and mercy out of the fulness of Jesus: and I learn that they are free and sovereign, because they are undeserved, and because I am utterly unable to raise them up in my own soul.

3. But there are storms also, as well as cold nights and wintry days. We see the storm sometimes beats down the tender blade; but we do not see that at the same time it washes off the vermin that drink up the juices and would eat out the heart of the young corn. The thunderstorm and the hail all do their part in killing those things that would prevent the maturation of the crop. So spiritually. If I am a Christian, I have to pass through storms, to have fierce trials from the devil and persecutions from the world—many hard blows from sinners, and many much more cutting blows from saints; I have to endure the unkindness of enemies, and what is more painful, the unkindness of friends. I am not to be a coddled up child, whom its mother takes such tender care of as to keep it ever by the fire-side corner, if I am to be a hardy, vigorous man. I must go forth into the storm—I must endure the winter’s piercing cold, and the summer’s burning heat—I must endure till the vicissitudes of seasons, if I am to bear them uninjured. So spiritually. Am I to be matured in the Christian life? Then all luxuriant growth must be checked. It is like a youth shooting up rapidly, while a fatal disease is about to cut him down in the bloom of life, and hurry him to an early grave. A really hardy and vigorous growth will deepen and widen, as well as heighten the plant. Then we must pass through these storms that are necessary for the due maturation of the fruits of the Spirit. The stormy seasons that we may have to endure will do our souls good, because they come from the Lord, and execute certain purposes. Say, for instance, I am leaning too much upon the arm of a friend. Well, a storm shall come, and separate me from that friend. Does that do me harm? Not if it bring me to lean more upon the arm of Jesus, and make me follow more closely after him. The storm, in passing over my head, has then done me no harm, but real good. It may perhaps have beaten down my religion, and obscured my evidences. There

may even be the flashing lightning of God's anger, and the lowering clouds of vengeance, and heavy showers of hailstones. But if these storms wash away and beat down those lusts that creep round my soul, and would insinuate themselves so closely as to eat out the heart of vital godliness, I have reason to thank God for the storm that beats off these vermin. I have reason to be thankful even for the pelting hail and cutting rain, though it lacerate the feelings, as the hail wounds the plant, if it kill those caterpillars which would otherwise eat into the kidney of the wheat, and destroy the very heart of the crop.

4. And then, when the corn has been ripened by this succession of day and night, this circle of the seasons, comes the last stroke of all, the gathering into the heavenly garner. How the Lord's people shrink from this stroke! The Lord Jesus has taken away the sting and destroyed the power of death; and yet how often the fear of death brings God's children into bondage? But can the corn be harvested in any other way than by cutting it from the stalk? Or can our souls be taken to the bosom of God by any other way than cutting us from the earth? That stroke, when it comes, may be less cutting, perhaps, than we now think. But how cutting in prospect it is as to the families whom we leave behind, the relations whose tears we see in anticipation, the widow or husband for whom we feel more tenderly than for ourselves! Yet that last cutting stroke is indispensably necessary to gather the soul into the heavenly garner.

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness." All thy paths in providence, and all thy paths in grace, though they often be in the deep waters; yet thy paths all drop fatness into the soul, making it rich and fruitful, so as to bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God.

Now, the real children of God may not be able always to trace out the spot in which they are, but they will be, if under divine teaching, in some one spot marked out in the text. There are some, then, whom the Lord has but just "visited," whose hearts he is making tender, whose consciences he is dealing with and working

upon, giving them an ear to hear the truth, bringing them out of self, knitting them to the people of God, and teaching them to enquire the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. They have many things to contend with—right eyes to pluck out, right arms to cut off; many thorns and briars still growing in their hearts; many worldly lusts entangling their feet; doubts and fears working in their mind, or infidelity perpetually striving within. Yet with all this, they set their faces Zionward; however cast down, they are not cast away; however falling, yet rising up again, with tears and cries asking the Lord to be merciful.

There are others perhaps who have had "waterings." They have felt the incomings of the divine tide. When hearing the word, when reading the Scriptures, when alone upon their knees, or when thinking upon divine things, they have felt a tide of indescribable sweetness, bearing all before it; tears have gushed from their eyes, and their hearts have been melted and dissolved. They cannot tell how it came, or whence it came; yet it has melted them down, and brought them completely out of the world and from dead professors.

Then, perhaps, there are others in this congregation passing through another part of the process, having the corruptions of their hearts turned up to view, and the secret lusts that sometimes get the better of them. There are, perhaps, others who are full of love to the truth, who are looking to Jesus, and to whom his name is as ointment poured forth. They have desires springing up and pantings after the knowledge of him and the power of his resurrection—secret breathings forth of ardent affection, and flowings forth of living faith. These have received the love of the truth, and from time to time feel the springings up of faith and hope in the Lord of life and glory, of love towards his name, mingled with reverence, humility and, godly fear.

There may be others passing through dark seasons, in which there is no light; through cutting blasts, nipping nights, and cold days, that shake their faith to its very centre.

Yet the Lord crowns the year with goodness after all! And when he puts in the sickle, and gathers his saints into the garner above, each will bless the Lord with joyful voice, each will give the Lord the glory, that he has crowned the year with goodness; that superabounding grace has reigned through righteousness; that matchless love has triumphed over all; that in all his dealings, however painful, in all they have had to pass through, however seemingly adverse, yet goodness and mercy have followed them all their days, and they shall dwell in the house of God for ever. Happy is the soul that can find any of his experience in these words! The least is as safe as the greatest; the feeblest as secure, in the purpose of God, as the strongest. "Happy are the people that are in such a case! yea, happy the people whose God is the Lord."

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Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Evening,
August 17 1845

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

1Cor. 1:30, 31

These words, or rather a portion of them, came to my mind this morning as I was sitting in the pulpit after I had done preaching. And as I have usually found it far better that a text should come to me, than that I should go to a text, I have been induced to take them, and endeavour to speak from them this evening.

Some of my enemies, and alas, some of my professed friends, have endeavoured to make out that it was my natural ability, or my acquired learning, which enabled me to preach; though I must say that I have but slender pretensions to either. But I know, if

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either were the case, I should have the whole word of God, and especially this chapter and this epistle against me: and did I look to, or lean upon either, I had better have remained where I was, in Babylon, than attempt to stand up in God's name. But, through mercy, I have a witness in my conscience, which contradicts such representations.

I believe I have the same perplexities and exercises with respect to texts, and also with respect to sermons to be preached from texts, as others of my brethren in the ministry. I know what it is to be in thick darkness, and what it is to have a measure of sensible light; I know what it is to be shut up, and what it is to enjoy a degree of liberty; I know what the absence of life and feeling is, and at times what is their presence; I know (to use an expression of Brainerd's) 'what it is to work with stumps, and what it is to work with fingers.' So that, with respect to both my texts and sermons, I stand precisely on a level with my other brethren. I have often to cry to the Lord to give me texts from which to preach; and when I have got the text, to cry to the Lord to give me matter out of it. For I know by experience that all wisdom which does not come down from "the Father of lights" is folly; that all strength not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness; and that all knowledge that does not spring from the Lord's own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance. To him therefore do I desire to look that he would teach me this evening how and what to speak. And may he grant that a savour from his own most blessed Majesty may rest upon the words that may drop from my lips.

With respect to the text, we may observe in it three leading features.

I.—The eternal purpose and counsel of God with respect to his peculiar people—"Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

II.—The execution of that eternal purpose, in what Christ is of God made unto this peculiar people—"wisdom, righteousness,

III.—The final purpose and grand result of God’s counsel, and of its execution—”He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

I.—But it will be first desirable to point out who the people are, concerning whom the apostle makes this declaration, “Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.”

The word “ye,” though it is but a monosyllable, though but two letters compose the whole of it, yet has a vast meaning connected with it. We must go to the beginning of the epistle to know who are intended by this little monosyllable. “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” These are the persons to whom the apostle addresses this epistle; these are the persons comprehended in that little monosyllable “ye”—the church of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints; with all who know what it is, by prayer and supplication, to call upon the name of Jesus Christ.

The “ye” then, in the text, means quickened souls, believing characters; those who, by a work of grace upon their hearts, are sanctified, and enabled, by a spirit of grace and supplication, to call upon the name of Jesus Christ as their Lord and God.

Now, in the text, the apostle traces out what brought them into this state of saintship, “Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.” The expression refers to two distinct things: 1. The original purpose of God; and 2. The execution of that purpose. Both are “of Him.”—flowing out of him, arising from him, purposed by him in eternity, and executed by him in time. “Of Him”—not of yourselves: “not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth:” not by the exertion of creature intellect, not by the instrumentality of human operation, not by anything the creature has done, not by anything the creature can do. The apostle traces up the standing of Christ’s people in

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him to its origin—the eternal purpose and counsel of God. All that takes place in time he represents as flowing out of the eternal mind, and happening according to the original purpose and covenant plan of Jehovah.

You will observe, then, that when the apostle speaks of these Corinthian believers as being “in Christ Jesus,” he intends thereby to set forth their personal standing in the Son of God under two distinct points of view:

1. As originating in eternity;

2. As taking place in time. In other words, every believer has a twofold union with Christ; one from all eternity, which we may call, an eternal, or election-union; the other in time, through the Spirit’s operation in his heart, which we may call a time, or regeneration-union. Let us attempt to unfold these two kinds of union separately.

1. Every soul, then, that ever had, has now, or ever will have a standing in Christ, had this standing in Him from all eternity. Just in the same way as the vine, according to the Lord’s own figure, puts forth the branches out of the stem; not a single branch comes out of the stock but what previously was in the stock: so, not a single soul comes manifestatively into spiritual existence which had not first an invisible and eternal union with the Son of God. This eternal, immanent, and invisible union with the Person of Christ, God blessed his people with before all worlds, by his eternal purpose, and according to his own eternal counsel.

2. Now, out of this eternal and immanent union springs the second union that we have spoken of, which is a time union—a union in grace: a vital union betwixt a living soul and a living Head. Until the Lord quickens elect vessels of mercy they have eternal union, but they have not time union. Their eternal union never can be altered: that never can be dissolved: that accompanies them all through their unregenerate state: but their vital, spiritual,

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and experimental union takes place in time, through the teaching,
and under the operations of the blessed Spirit.

But 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 this eternal union that brings them into time existence. 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 time-state are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are called; they cannot die till 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, fall they will not, fall they cannot, till 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 till 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.

But this time union, this vital, experimental union, we may speak of also under two distinct points of view.

1. Directly that God the Spirit is pleased to quicken the soul, there commences a vital union with Christ. But this vital union is not then known to the soul. What saith the scripture? "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17) One spirit! The Spirit that rests upon the soul to quicken it into spiritual life, by that very visitation, that very indwelling, gives a vital union to Jesus. But it is not at first known, it is not brought forth into the soul's enjoyment, it is not made manifest in our personal experience. It is, to use a figure that the scriptures have adopted, like the process of grafting. Now we know that the process of grafting is this. A

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scion is cut off an old stock, and grafted into a new one. Before the scion can be grafted into the new stock, it must be cut off from the old: but when it is cut off from the old, and applied to the new, union does not immediately take place. The wounded scion and the wounded stock are brought into close apposition: they are joined together: and yet a time elapses before the sap flows forth out of the new stock, so as to give the scion a union to the tree. This may throw a little light upon spiritual grafting. Though the soul is cut off from the old stock, and brought into close apposition with the Lord of life and glory, yet full union is not at once nor immediately enjoyed; though the scion is cut off from the old stock, and grafted into the new, joined together never to be separated, yet a certain time is wanting that they may coalesce, that the cut stock and the cut scion may both grow together, that the sap out of the living stock may flow into the living scion.

2. When the Lord is pleased to bring the soul experimentally near to the Son of his love, and communicates a measure of that precious faith whereby Jesus is looked unto, leaned upon, believed in, trusted in, hoped in, and cleaved unto, and a taste of his love and blood is felt in the soul—that produces vital union. Then, if I may use the illustration I have before adopted, the scion and the stock are not merely in close apposition, as when first grafted; but the scion and the stock grow together—there is a coalescing between the two, a union never to be dissolved and the sap out of the stock flows out freely into the scion, so that it puts forth first its leaves of honest and tender profession, then its blossoms of faith, hope, and love, and finally those "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Now the grand struggle of a living soul before he feels this vital union is to have it made manifest in his conscience. How many of the Lord's people are in this state—cut off from the old stock, coming, as far as they are able, unto Jesus, crying to be saved by his blood and righteousness, desiring above all things to know him and the power of his resurrection; yet no divine power communicated,

no inward testimony sensibly felt, no precious sap manifestatively brought into their heart, no enjoyment of the Lord of life and glory in their soul. Though there is an eye of faith to see, a hand of faith to touch, an ear of faith to hear his voice, a heart of faith to receive Jesus into its very secret chambers, yet there is not brought about a clear, manifest, experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

But wherever this vital union is brought about, it is a union of that nature which never can be broken: “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.” See how the Holy Ghost, by the pen of Paul, ascribes the whole to God; nothing is given to the creature to do; not the weight of a straw is laid upon the back of freewill. God does it altogether. In eternity, God ordained and gave the everlasting union; and in time, by a work of grace, he cut the scion off the old stock, brought it in close apposition to the new, bound them round together, that they may never more be separated, by the cords of faith and the cement of love; and in time brought about also that close coalescing, that vital junction between the two, which causes the sap to flow freely into their souls, and make them abundant in every good word and work.

II.—We pass on to consider what flows out of this eternal, and this time union—”Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Observe again—we cannot observe it too often—how the whole is ascribed to the Lord; how completely the creature is set aside; how entirely man’s wisdom, and man’s exertions, and man’s righteousness are put into the background; and how the Lord of grace and glory reigns triumphant. The apostle had ascribed the eternal and vital union, which the people of Christ have with their Head wholly to the purpose, and wholly to the execution of the Father; and now what Christ is to his people, he also ascribes wholly and solely to the same almighty and merciful God. “Who of God”—observe, “of God”—that is first, by the eternal purpose and secret determination of Jehovah; and secondly, by the fulfillment of his eternal counsels, in the execution of his own almighty appointment—who thus of

God “is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” The “us” here are the same persons as the “ye.” There is no distinction betwixt the two. We are ye—ye are we. The apostle sometimes addresses the church of God as distinct from himself, and he sometimes addresses the church of God as one with himself. But whether he uses we or ye the persons meant are the same—the saints of God, the elect unto eternal life.

Now, to these, and to these only, Christ Jesus is of God made “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” The Lord knows the wants of his people. He knew in eternity what they would need in time. The fall did not take God unawares. It was not an interruption to his eternal purposes. It was not an unexpected hindrance, which God never foresaw, never provided for. God decreed it by his own permissive decree. There are active decrees, and there are permissive decrees. There are good things which God decrees, and which he himself performs: and there are evils which God decrees, that out of them good might come. But God does not put his hands to the execution of those evils. He decrees to permit them, not himself to do them; for God is not, and never can be the author of sin. We must make this distinction, or we shall impute to God that which he hates. At the same time, we must admit, that God decrees permissively, or the whole chain of events would be thrown into a mass of confusion. The distinction is beautifully set forth in what Peter said to those that crucified the Lord: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”—there is the decree—”ye have taken, and by wicked hands”—there is the agency of man—”have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23.)

The Lord, then, foresaw what his people would be, and foreseeing what his people would be—how completely ignorant, how deeply dyed in guilt, how awfully depraved, how entirely destroyed—he took care to provide a remedy beforehand. He set up, in his own eternal counsels, the God-man Mediator, that he might be, in his fullness, all that they should need in time, and

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enjoy in eternity. For instance:

1. He saw that they would be sunk into utter folly: that all the wisdom of man would be foolishness with God. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" God saw that when man fell from original righteousness, he fell from all wisdom, and became a fool, mistaking good for evil and evil for good, sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet, light for darkness and darkness for light. God knew that he would stumble upon the dark mountains, far away from peace and righteousness. Therefore, knowing how folly would be bound up in the hearts of his elect children, he beforehand appointed Jesus to be their wisdom.

Now, I think, with respect to these four things which the Lord of life and glory is said to be to his people, we may view them, first, as imputed, and secondly, as imparted. Some who hold imputed righteousness, object to imputed wisdom, imputed sanctification, and imputed redemption. But why should we stand aghast, as though this would lead us into the depths of Antinomian licentiousness? If we take care to state that there is imparted wisdom, as well as imputed wisdom; imparted sanctification, as well as imputed sanctification: imparted redemption, as well as imputed redemption; if we do not by imputation destroy impartation—I do not see why we should shrink from imputed wisdom more than from imputed righteousness. Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) Is not wisdom a spiritual blessing? and if this be "in heavenly places in Christ," is it not a blessing by imputation? For what am I by nature? A fool: all my wisdom, out of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness, and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance. Can I then ever be considered as wise? I can, if Christ is made wisdom to me. If I have a standing in Christ, then I have a standing in all that

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Christ is to me. Is Christ wise? the only wise God? infinitely wise? unerringly wise? Is he Wisdom itself, Wisdom in the abstract, set forth by that title in the Pr 8 8th of Proverbs?

Then if I have a standing in him, a living union with him, I am wise in him, because his wisdom is mine. Can you find anything in the stem that is not in the branches? Penetrate the branch—does not sap ooze and flow forth? Penetrate the stem—does not sap flow forth too? Take your microscope—examine both minutely. Is not the sap in the stem and the sap in the branch identical? Is it not so with respect to Christ and his people? Have they an eternal standing in him? Have they a vital union with him? Is he wise? Then they are wise. Not indeed wise as he is, originally, eternally, intrinsically, infinitely: but wise because he of God is made unto them wisdom.

But in what sense is Christ thus made "wisdom?" Not as the second Person in the glorious Godhead, the eternal "Son of the Father, in truth and love." As a Person in the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the blessed Spirit, he could not be made. It is therefore by virtue of the eternal covenant whereby he became a glorious Mediator, the Bridegroom of the Bride, the Head of the church, and in due time by actual assumption of the flesh and blood of the children, Immanuel, God with us. In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ is made unto his people wisdom, and they are thus accounted wise before God, as having a covenant standing in Christ.

Now, how this sets all the Lord's people on a level! Some of them are educated, others uneducated: some can scarcely, perhaps, read the letters in the Bible; others have had instruction in the arts and sciences: some have had deep spiritual teachings, and the teachings of others have been more shallow. But do they not all stand on one level when we view them as wise in Christ? Are not all distinctions at once abrogated? Does not the wise man naturally come to be a fool? Does not the fool naturally come to be wise? Do not all the family of God who have a standing in Jesus, by having

Christ's wisdom imputed to them, stand upon the same level—wise in Christ—because they are one in Christ?

But besides this wisdom by imputation, there is also wisdom by impartation. Without imparted wisdom, we have no manifested interest in imputed wisdom. Imparted wisdom is by the Holy Ghost making the soul wise unto salvation: and his first step in making the soul wise unto salvation is to convince it of its folly. The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and the wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. There must then be a complete reversal—a turning of things upside down—before we can be brought into a state to have wisdom divinely imparted. But when we are brought into that spot where, I am convinced, the Lord will bring all his people, that left to ourselves we are perfect fools: that we have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet: that we are blind, ignorant, weak, helpless, and utterly unable to find our way to the city—when by painful experience we stumble upon the dark mountains, and grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes, then we value the least spark of divine wisdom communicated and dropped into our souls from those lips into which grace was poured.

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 directly it was known they were diamonds, they were eagerly caught hold of, and their value rose a thousandfold. So spiritually: until we are brought in our souls to prize the teachings of God and the communications of divine wisdom—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. But when we are brought to see and feel how, in every instance, we have erred when left to ourselves; what mistakes we have made; what backslidings we have been guilty of; what foolish things we have said, and what worse than foolish things we have done;—when we see folly bound up in our hearts,

and stamped upon every word and action, then how we prize any portion of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation! and how at times we long for the droppings in of that dew and power into our souls, which shed abroad a sweet and unctuous light and lead the soul unto Jesus, to find peace in him!

2. But Jesus is also made unto us “righteousness.” Does not this imply that we are unrighteousness? For is not all that Jesus is, in exact proportion to our wants? So far as we are God's people, we find all our wants precisely met by him. Can we find a single spot into which a child of God can sink, to which some character of the Lord of life and glory is not adapted? Does he sink down as a fool before God? Does he feel such ignorance that he scarcely knows what he is, or where he is? Are the scriptures hidden from his understanding, his experience buried in darkness, and he himself in his own eyes, the worst of fools? How suitable, that Jesus, the Son of God, should be made unto him wisdom! Is he made to feel himself a polluted wretch, and brought painfully to know that all his righteousnesses are but filthy rags? that his iniquities, like the wind have taken him away? that he has not by nature one grain of that which is pleasing in the sight of God? that all his motives, all his thoughts, all his desires all his actions, all his words, bear upon them, bear in them, the deep-grained dye of guilt? Does he shrink into self-abasement at the sight? Does he loathe himself in dust and ashes? Does he feel that he is only fit to be trampled into hell as a polluted worm? When brought here, how suitable, how precious, is it to see that Jesus is made unto him righteousness!

Observe the word. It does not say, that the obedience of Jesus is made righteousness; but it says, that Jesus himself is made righteousness. It is perfectly true that the obedience of Christ to the law is the justifying righteousness of those that believe in his name; “for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” and “by one man's obedience many are made righteous.” But besides that, the Lord himself is their righteousness. Is not this the sure declaration of holy writ? “In him shall all the seed of Israel

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be justified, and shall glory.” “This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.” What a sweet view does this give of Jesus! We look sometimes at Christ’s righteousness as distinct from Christ. Shall I use a figure? We look at the garment as distinct from the Maker and Wearer of the garment. We look at the righteousness so much, that we scarcely look at him who wrought out that righteousness. Now, we must not separate Jesus from his righteousness. We must not look merely at the garment, the imputed robe, and forget him that wrought it out, that puts it on, and that keeps it to this day in firm possession. But when we can see, that not only the obedience of Christ, but Christ himself—all that Jesus is—all that Jesus has, as the head of his church, as the risen Mediator, as the great High Priest over the house of God—when we can see that this God-man, Immanuel, is made unto his people righteousness, how it expands the prospect! Then we look, not merely at the robe itself, beautiful, comely, and glorious; we look farther—we look at him that made it. We do not look merely at the robe as distinct from him. We look at him who made that robe what it is—Jesus, who ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us.

This, to my mind, is a sweet view. If I sink down into creature sinfulness, shame, and guilt, and see Jesus made of God unto me righteousness, what need I more? Has God made him so? Who can unmake him so? Has God made the Son of his love righteousness to my soul, that I may stand in him without spot, speck, or blemish? Who is to alter it? Can sin alter it? That is atoned for. Can the devil alter it? He is chained down unto the judgment of the great day. Can the world alter it? They cannot stretch forth their finger to touch one thread of that robe, to touch one lineament of the Redeemer’s countenance. If he is made unto me righteousness, what more do I want? If I can find a shield, a shelter, and a refuge in him as my righteousness, what more can I want to preserve me from the charge of men or devils?

But there is the impartation of righteousness, as well as the

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imputation of it; and the impartation of it is the communication of a divine nature to the soul. Not merely the sheltering of the soul from the wrath to come by a robe cast around it, and by the interposition of the Redeemer’s glorious Person, but also the breathing of God’s image, the raising up of a new creature, and the stamping of Christ’s likeness on the heart.

3. We pass on to another thing that Christ is made to his people—that is, “sanctification.” What am I? What are you? Filthy, polluted, defiled; are we not? Do not some of us, 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? I cannot see him, except so far as the Lord of life and glory is made sanctification to me. Why should men start so at imputed sanctification? Why should not Christ’s holiness be imputed to his people as well as Christ’s righteousness? Why should they not stand sanctified in him, as well as justified? Why not? Is there anything in Jesus, as God-man Mediator, which he has not for his people? Has he any perfection, any attribute, any gift, any blessing, which is not for their use? Did he not sanctify himself that they might be sanctified by the truth? Is he not the holy Lamb of God, that they might be “holy, and without blame before him in love?” What is my holiness, even such as God may be pleased to impart to me? Is it not, to say the least, scanty? Is it not, to say the least, but little in measure? But 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.

But there is not only imputed sanctification, there is also

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imparted sanctification. 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 because, by a gracious act of God the Father, Jesus is made unto his people sanctification, he imparts a measure of his own holiness to them. He works in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires: in a word, he communicates a nature perfectly holy, which therefore loves holiness and has communion with a holy God; 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 exercised and troubled because he has so little of it; yet he has enough just 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 Godward? Do you never 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.

4. But lastly, he is made of God unto them “redemption.” Now, whatever Jesus is to his people, he is to them precisely according to their wants. Are they fools? He is their wisdom. Are they condemned? He is their righteousness. Are they unholy? He is their sanctification. Are they captives and prisoners, who have sold themselves under sin, and become slaves to Satan? Of God

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he is made unto them redemption. His redemption is imputed to them, is put to their account, is considered as theirs. When Jesus died upon the cross, he purchased a peculiar people. What he did then, and what he did there, is put to their account. The debt that he paid is crossed out of the books. The sum that he laid down is transferred to their account. Thus of God he is made unto them redemption.

But besides that, there is imparted redemption, as well as imputed redemption. What do I know of imputed redemption unless I know something of imparted redemption? But what can I know of imparted redemption, unless I have known what it is to be a captive, in bondage, in hard chains, oppressed by cruel slavery, unable to deliver myself, chained like a galley-slave to the galling oar, bound down with fetters, so that I cannot release myself? If I never have known that, how can I desire to know Jesus Christ as of God made unto me redemption? But if I catch a sight of Christ, as made unto me redemption, that communicates a gracious feeling of redemption by impartation. No sooner does the eye of faith catch what Jesus is made unto his people, than what he is to his people comes instantaneously into their heart. What he is to them, he is by imputation; and when they see what he is by imputation, then they enjoy it by impartation. Do I see redemption? Do I feel it, count it my own, and enjoy it? Then what does it do for me? Does it not break, in a measure, the chain of slavery? Does it not bring me out of captivity? Does it not, so long as it lasts, subdue my lusts, and overcome my pride? Does it not shatter the galling fetters of bondage? Does not faith in Christ as my redemption, communicate a measure of that redemption to my spirit? It does. This is the connecting link between imputation and impartation.

God has made Christ all these to his people. He has set him up as their eternal Head, made him the Bridegroom of their souls, that out of his fullness they may all receive. Then, just in proportion as they learn these two lessons—what they are, and what he is—they receive him into their hearts and they see actually what he is to

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them in the purpose of God. Am I a fool? Do I feel it and know it? Have I had painful experience of it, so that all my creature wisdom is turned into one mass of foolishness? Do I catch by the eye of faith a view of the risen Mediator, “Immanuel, God with us,” and see what he is made of God to us? The moment my eye sees him as “wisdom,” that moment a measure of divine wisdom flows into my conscience. Am I polluted and defiled throughout? Have I no righteousness of my own? Is all my obedience imperfect? Am I unable to fulfill the requirements of God’s holy law? If once I catch by the eye of faith this glorious truth, through him who is the truth, that Jesus Christ is of God made unto me “righteousness”—the moment I see that by the eye of faith, that moment a measure of imparted righteousness flows into my heart? Am I an unholy, depraved, filthy wretch? Does corruption work in my heart? The moment I catch by the eye of faith Jesus made unto me of God “sanctification,” that moment a measure of sanctification comes into my heart, drawing up holy affections, casting out the love of the world, curbing my reigning lusts, and bringing my soul into submission at his footstool. Am I a poor captive, entangled by Satan, by the world, and my own evil heart? The moment that I catch this glorious view, that Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father is made unto me “redemption”—if I can believe that he is made such for me, that I have a standing in him, and a union with him, so that he is my redemption—that moment a measure of deliverance comes into my soul, and redemption imputed becomes redemption imparted; the soul receives then internally what Christ has done externally. In a word, when Christ is received as “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” he becomes all these in vital manifestation.

Now, do you see the steps? Just observe the connecting links. What do we learn first? We learn, first of all, what we are by nature. That is the first thing; there is no overstepping that. Then, just in proportion as we learn what we are by nature, and the Lord the Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the gospel to our understanding,

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and brings a sweet revelation of them into our conscience, do we see and feel what Jesus is made unto his people: and we see and feel that he has everything our souls want: that we have not a single necessity that there is not ample provision made for in the gospel—not a need unsupplied—not a malady without a remedy—not a sinking without a corresponding rising. But what is the effect of it? Why, no sooner is this seen, than a measure of it is communicated to the heart. First, I must see what I am; secondly, I must see what Christ is; thirdly, I must feel that Christ is all this to me: and when I see what I am, and see what Christ is, and then feel a measure of what Christ is for my soul, then Christ becomes to me inwardly what he is outwardly. He becomes in my heart what he is revealed in the word of truth; and this is the only way whereby we can have a vital and manifest union with him.

III.—But this leads me to the grand crowning point—”According as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Man may glory. Yes: God has determined that man shall glory. But in what, and in whom? In himself? No; God has for ever trampled man’s glory under foot. He shall glory, but he shall never glory in self; for if he glory in himself, where God is, he never will come. God’s purpose is to stain the pride of human glory.

“He that glorieth”—yes, we may glory; we may have a song of triumph; if the Lord do but tune our hearts to sweet melody, we may speak in accents of glory and thanksgiving—”he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Look at the words: “Glory in the Lord.” Not glory in himself, whatever he be—however deep his experience, however great his abilities, however consistent his conduct. No creature shall ever, in the sight of God, glory in itself; but we may glory in the Lord as of God made unto us all that he has determined he shall be. what a sweet losing of one’s self there is in Christ! See how he has raised up Adam’s fallen progeny! See how he has given the elect a standing in Christ which they never had in their fallen progenitor! Adam could glory. Adam had natural wisdom, creature righteousness, native strength, and created innocency. He might

glory in these. Just as a horse can, without sin or shame, curve his proud neck, and glory in his strength when he paweth in the valley, as Job speaks: so Adam, in his native innocence, could glory in what God had made him. But when Adam fell to the very depths of creature depravity, all his glory was for ever lost: the pride of the creature was for ever stained.

But God has determined that men may glory still: only he has changed the object of that glory, and put that glory upon, and centered that glory in his only-begotten Son. He turns the eyes of his poor needy family to look to him for salvation, and to glory in him: for “in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

Sure I am, from the little I have felt (and it is but a little), there never can be any feeling so sweet as to glory in the Lord alone. Glory in my wisdom! Why, if I were to do so, there is a worm at the very bud of that glory. There is misery in the very feeling of self-esteem. Glory in anything I am! It is nothing but “vanity and vexation of spirit.” But if I lose myself, trample myself under foot—cease from my own glory, strength, and wisdom—lose it all, put it all aside, despise it as nothing worth, and look unto him who “of God is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” to his people—I may glory then, and my glory shall be this—may it be my glory in time, and may it be my and your glory in eternity—to glory in the Lord—to glory in his wisdom, in his righteousness, in his sanctification, in his redemption—to glory in him for what he is in himself, and glory in him for what he is to his people. This is a sweet absorption of the creature into the Lord of life and glory. This is indeed taking off the crown of human pride, and setting it upon the head of him who alone is worthy to wear it.

This is indeed a sweet loss; to lose our own wisdom and obtain divine wisdom; lose all that the flesh can boast of, and the flesh can rejoice in—and find it all again heightened, shall I say?—no, not heightened, for it is of a totally distinct nature—find it all of different and more glorious kind in the Lord Jesus, as of God made

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Preached at Keppel Street Chapel, London, on Thursday Evening,

August 21, 1845

“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Hebrews 6:12

In the primitive Churches—I mean the Churches to which the epistles were addressed—there were prominent differences; that is, some of the churches were more abundantly blessed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit than others. For instance, the comforts of the Holy Ghost appear to have abounded very greatly in the Thessalonian church; and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as distinct from his graces, appear to have been most prominent in the Corinthian church. The Galatians, on the other hand, we find deeply tinged with legality; the Colossians and Ephesians led more deeply into the mysteries of the gospel; and the Hebrews, to whom the Apostle Paul addressed this epistle, appear to have occupied a position of this nature—1. That they were very weak, timid, and wavering; and 2. That they were more beset by persecutions and severe trials than their sister churches in the New Testament. Now, there was a connection doubtless betwixt these two leading features of their character. They were persecuted chiefly on this account, that they were Hebrews. For that a Jew should renounce the religion of his fathers—that a Jew should profess faith in that Jesus whom his nation had crucified as a malefactor, was, in the eyes of his bigoted countrymen, the very essence of high treason against God and the Law. The Hebrews, therefore, appear to have borne the very brunt of persecution. They stood in the front of

the battle. The thundercloud of trial burst immediately over their head. It was but the tail of the shower, so to speak, that fell upon the other churches; the whole burst of the thunderstorm fell upon the head of the Hebrews. But they were weak and wavering. They had not received that power from on high whereby they were able to stand up against this storm of persecution that burst upon them. Therefore, we find the Apostle Paul, in various places through this epistle, endeavouring to trace out, and fortify them against, those evils which he saw most prominent in them.

There are two chapters in this epistle (the sixth and the tenth) that speak of the sin of apostacy from God, and hold out the most awful threatenings and warnings against those who apostatize from a profession of the truth, when once they have made a profession. These chapters have terrified and alarmed many of God's dear family, though I believe they have nothing to do with the Lord's own quickened and spiritual people; my own firm conviction being, that the characters pointed out in the sixth and tenth of Hebrews are not partakers of the grace of God, not real saints under the teachings of the Holy Ghost, but mere professors, with a name to live while dead. But, to my mind, there is much force and beauty in the very ambiguity that clothes these two chapters. It makes them more searching. Suppose the matters were as plain as ministers endeavour to make it; suppose we took away all the ambiguity that rests upon these fearful passages, we should take away their very force. It is because they come so close that they cut so deep. It is because they hold out such warnings and threatenings against a mere profession of truth, that they are specially adapted to search the heart and conscience of God's people. Thus, their very ambiguity is their very beauty; because, being so close, they cut the children of God more to the quick, they winnow away more of the dust and chaff of profession, they bring them more, in their feelings before the eyes of a heart-searching God, and they thus eventually make the work of grace to be more clear and decided in their conscience.

But you will observe, if you read carefully this chapter, and if the Lord give you understanding to see the spiritual meaning of it, that the Apostle does not mean to include the Hebrews in these awful warnings. "Beloved," he says, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." And then he goes on to trace out certain marks which they possessed, but which never, with all their splendid gifts, were to be found in apostates. He testifies to their work and labour of love; he speaks in the text of faith and patience; and lower down we find him tracing out in them the possession of hope: so that, being partakers of the graces of love, faith, patience, and hope, they, with all their timidity and wavering possessed in their hearts and consciences that which was saving, and that which everlastingly distinguished them from those apostates who had "crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

But the Apostle, knowing the tendencies of the human heart, that it is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," that its bias is to apostacy—that, like gravitation in nature, the heart of man is so bent upon falling, that fall it must except held up by the power of God—knowing the tendencies, the unalterable tendencies of the human heart by nature to depart from the living God, has interspersed this epistle with these solemn warnings; but at the same time has laid down marks of grace, so as not to discourage God's living family; sufficiently close to cause heart-searchings, yet sufficiently clear not to drive to despair; tracing out the line so clearly, as every minister should do, as not to discourage any who need encouragement, and yet to encourage none who need no encouragement. But seeing they were in this timid, wavering state, he gives them the precept which this evening I shall endeavour to unfold—"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

I shall endeavour to open, as far as the Lord shall enable me, the mind and meaning of the Spirit under two leading heads. I shall not dwell much upon the fist clause of the text, but confine

myself almost exclusively to the latter portion, and show first, what the promises are; and secondly, how God's people inherit them through faith and patience.

I.—But we will look a little first at the precept which the Holy Ghost has here given, “that ye be not slothful.” The Lord's people are made diligent when he is pleased to work in their hearts with power. When he suspends his operations, when he does not bestow the dew and unction of the Spirit, they relapse into their own fallen, carnal nature. Now the Lord sends trials upon his people in order to stir them up. He knows that “the hand of the diligent maketh rich; but the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing.” We cannot ourselves produce diligence. We may attempt it; we may counterfeit it; we may be full of fleshly zeal; but spiritual diligence is as distinct from natural diligence as Christ from Belial. But when the Lord would make his people diligent in every good word and work, it is instrumentally by sending trials, afflictions, and sorrows, so as to stir up his own blessed graces in their heart, and enable them to be fruitful in the exercise of that faith, hope, and love which are the gift of his own Spirit. And when the Lord is thus pleased to work in our hearts with power, we can no more be slothful than, when the Lord suspends his operations, we can be diligent. We can no more lie in sloth when the Lord is pleased to work in our hearts by his own blessed Spirit, than we can be diligent, earnest, begging, crying, seeking, and pleading with the Lord when his gracious operations are not felt in our heart and conscience.

But to come to the latter clause of the text. There are promises that God has given in his word; in fact, the Scriptures are spangled with them. The stars in the sky are scarcely more abundant, and they scarcely shine with greater lustre than the promises scattered up and down God's word; and though the day will come when the sun will hide its light, and star after star will be extinguished, the promises in all their glorious fulfilment shall shine forth in inextinguishable light, for the word of God endureth for ever.

Now these promises we may class under three heads. There are promises temporal, promises spiritual, and promises of a mixed character—what, if I may compound a word, I may call temporal-spiritual. The Lord has given in his word many temporal promises; for he knew that his people would ever need them. He has “chosen the poor in this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;” and having chosen them in the furnace of affliction, to walk for the most part in the path of tribulation, and to be hard and deeply pressed with many providential trials, he has laid up promises suitable to those situations of trial into which his own hand leads them. For instance, such a promise as this is of a temporal nature: “His bread shall be given him, and his waters shall be sure.” (Isaiah 33:16.) Now all the Lord's family, so far as they are brought into various providential trials, have an interest in this promise. The Lord, again, has said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33.) These are two sweet promises: one absolute, “His bread shall be given.” However it may be opposed by nature, sense, and reason; however, the depth of poverty may stare the poor child of God in the face; however unable to say whence the promised help shall come; yet “bread shall he given him, and his waters shall be sure”—“food and raiment,” as the apostle interprets it. The other, I will not say is conditional, but founded on the Spirit's work upon the heart; “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” If we are enabled to seek first the salvation of our soul, that we may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, all temporal things shall be bestowed as an additional gift.

But there are, as I have said, promises of a mixed character. For instance: “All things work together for good to them that love God.” (Rom. 8:28.) That promise is of a mixed character; for “all things” include things providential, as well as things spiritual. If all things are to work together for your good, your temporal trials are included in “all things.” Every bodily affliction, every family trouble, every thing that tries us in providence, every thing that is

bitter and cutting to our flesh, as well as every thing spiritual and gracious is included in that comprehensive expression. Another promise of a mixed character, is, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” (Psa. 50:15) The day of trouble is not limited to spiritual trouble, but it includes every kind of trouble. Art thou in temporal trouble? Is thy body afflicted? Art thou suffering in circumstances? “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will answer, and deliver thee.” But also, if it be spiritual trouble, the promise still runs the same—”Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” So that the promise is not merely temporal, not merely spiritual, but of a mixed character, including both trouble temporal and trouble spiritual.

But there are other promises, which are given to the Lord’s people, entirely spiritual, which have respect to their state and case as living souls. For instance—

1. There is the promise of eternal life. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” (Titus 1:2.) What a sweet feeling is raised up in the soul (I have felt it for myself) by the prospect of immortality! What a sweet text is that, 2 Tim. 1:9, 10, “Who hath 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; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Our nature shrinks from annihilation. I have read of an infidel who on his death-bed even preferred an eternity of woe to actual annihilation—to ceasing to exist. There is a craving in the mind of man after immortality. No longer to be, to cease to exist, is repulsive to the mind of man. But when we can penetrate by the eye of faith into the realms of bliss, into the sanctuary of God, and believe that a glorious immortality awaits us, and when we drop our clay bodies, and become divested of the shell that hides the

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inner man of grace, our ransomed souls will mount up to be with Jesus, to see him face to face, and bathe in streams of endless bliss through the countless ages of eternity, there is something in the feeling unutterably glorious. There is something in immortality, a glorious immortality, an immortality of eternal bliss—there is something in the thought, when felt, when a confidence is raised up in the soul that we shall be clothed with immortality—there is something that feasts the heart with fat things, satisfies all the desires of the spirit, replenishes the sorrowful soul, and becomes indeed marrow and fatness to the believer, who longs not only to live, but to live for ever in the presence of his Lord.

2. Again; there is the promise of pardon of sin. “I will pardon whom I reserve.” (Jer. 50:20.) And all the Lord’s people must have this promise sealed upon their heart in time, if ever they are to see Christ as he is in eternity. They never go out of this world in an unpardoned state; remission of sins is given by the Lord of life and glory, who is “exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:31.) And every God-taught soul is in one of these two states—either enjoying, or having enjoyed, the felt application of the atoning blood of Jesus, giving him the pardon of his sins, or else hungering, thirsting, begging, pleading, and desiring to experience the sweet sensations in his soul which the pardon of sin brings.

3. Preservation to the end is another promise in the word of truth. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5); “He will keep the feet of his saints” (1 Sam. 2:9); “Behold I and the children which thou hast given me.” (Isa. 8:18.) Bringing the elect through every storm, setting all the ransomed before the throne of the Almighty for ever, 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 endeavouring 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 cut in Jesus' breast and worn on Jesus' shoulder, that he will preserve them to the end, and bring them home through every storm.

4. Supplies of grace and strength as they are needed—according to the words, “As thy day is, so thy strength shall be” (Deut. 33:5)—is another promise most suitable to the Lord's poor, tried, and tempted family. Depend upon it, the Lord's family have to go to heaven through much tribulation. 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; and 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 fibre of our natural disposition, that we shall cleave to our own righteousness as long as there is a thread to cleave to; we shall stand in our own strength as long as there is a point to stand upon; we shall 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, exercises, sorrows, and perplexities. What is their effect? To teach us our weakness, and bring us to that only spot, where God and the sinner meet—the spot of creature helplessness. Do you not see how this was shown in the experience of the Apostle Paul? how, after he had been caught up into the third heavens, had heard unspeakable words, and had his soul ravished with the most blissful revelations, he had a thorn in the flesh, a

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messenger of Satan to buffet him? Why was this? To teach him his weakness; was it not? Therefore, when he had been taught his weakness by it, he found the strength of Christ made perfect in that weakness, according to the Lord's own solution of that most painful enigma of Paul's heart. He then could use those wonderful words, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong. (2 Cor. 12:9, 10.) When he felt that just in proportion as all his own strength drained away, decayed, and became utter weakness, the strength of the Lord of life and glory was made perfect in his soul he could then glory in his poverty, in his weakness, in his nothingness, from feeling the blessedness and sweetness of the strength of Christ being made perfect in him. In order, therefore, to bring us to this spot, to know experimentally—and there is no other knowledge worth a straw—to know in our soul (and there is no other knowledge will stand in the day of judgment)—in order 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 eternal reality, tasted by the inward palate of our soul, descried by the eyes of living faith in the conscience, and felt as actually as anything we can palpably touch—in order to have this experience wrought into our hearts with divine power, we must be brought to this spot—to feel our own utter weakness. Now, when we are brought here, we are brought into the very situation that corresponds with the promise. To use a familiar figure, the promise and our condition is as the mortice to the tenon. The mortice is nothing without the tenon—the tenon is nothing without the mortice; but when the mortice and the tenon come together, and fit into each other, then there is a close joint. So spiritually. Here is the promise—that is the tenon; but if I have no place in my heart for that promise to enter into, there is no junction—it is like putting the tenon against a plank or a wall—there is no union. There must

be a cut made—something that the tenon can enter into, before there is a junction. So spiritually, I must have such a work of grace upon my conscience, and be brought into that peculiar place in living experience to which the promise is adapted; and when the Holy Spirit puts this promise into my heart, he not merely puts the tenon in, but cements it firm and fast by his own heavenly unction.

But time would fail me to gather even a few more ears of the rich harvest of promise in God's word. I could no more glean up the rich promises in the Bible than I could carry the produce of a whole field of corn upon my head. I must therefore pass on to the second of my discourse, which is to shew, how the Lord's people come to inherit the promises.

II.—Let us look a little into the expression, "inherit." I love, if the Lord give the wisdom, to dive beneath the surface, beneath the letter, into the vein of experience below. Look, then, at the word "inherit." It is a familiar figure taken from heirship, the right and title which the son has to his father's property. Now inheritance without possession is but a name. We sometimes hear of heirs presumptive, and of heirs apparent. But the heir presumptive is a very different thing from being the heir apparent. The heir presumptive may be entirely shut out of the property by the coming in of the heir apparent. Many people have what I call a presumptive inheritance. They are not the children of the heavenly Parent, but they stand in such a relation to God as Eliezer of Damascus stood to Abraham. We hear the complaint of the father of the faithful, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward (or rather, 'heir') of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen.15:2.) Who was Eliezer? He was Abraham's servant, a faithful servant: but he had not sprung from Abraham's loins. But when the Lord gave Abraham Isaac, the heir of promise, what became of Eliezer of Damascus? Had he any right, any title, any inheritance when the son came? No; we read, "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac;" (Gen. 25:5); while Eliezer had nothing but servant's wages, for he had nothing more that he could claim. Now this is

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exactly the difference between servants in God's house and sons in God's house. Mere professors, who are not born of the Spirit, are not heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, but mere servants. But the true-born sons are children of the living God, members of the body of Christ, branches of the true vine, sheep of the good Shepherd, the Bridegroom's wife, the Spouse of the Lamb. These are the heirs, the true heirs, because they are inheritors by birth.

But there is a being put into a possession of the inheritance. The Apostle in the Epistle to the Galatians speaks, "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." (5:1.) There is such a thing then as a child of God being an heir, and yet being, in his feelings, in no way different from a servant; in other words, not yet put into a feeling enjoyment of the inheritance, not able to call God "Abba Father," not able to feel the Spirit of adoption in his heart, not able to come with holy familiarity to his heavenly feet. This is because the spirit of bondage and servility works in him unto death; perfect love has not been shed abroad in his heart to cast out fear, which hath torment.

But the Apostle in the text points out how we come to inherit the promises. Here they are in God's word. But will their being in God's word give me a title to them? Should I not be a madman, if, as I passed through the country at the rapid rate at which travellers now travel, I should lay claim to all the various lands that meet the eye? I remember well, when I was a boy, there used to be a woman who walked up and down every day before the Bank—perhaps some of you remember her—dressed in widow's weeds; and I believe she had this delusion in her mind, that all the money in the Bank belonged to her. That was her insanity. Are those a whit less mad who think because the promises are in the word of God they have a claim to them? Let a man go into the Bank tomorrow, and lay claim to the money, the claimant would be seized by the police as a madman. Not a whit less mad are those spiritually, whatever verdict might be passed upon them by a commission of lunacy,

who, without a title, venture to lay claim to the treasures laid up in God's word of truth.

There are two things, then, necessary to be wrought in a man's conscience by the Spirit of God before he inherits the promises; one is, the grace of faith—the other is, the grace of patience. “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them”—treading in their footsteps, in the good old paths that were cast up by the saints of old, the Old Testament worthies, who fought the battle, gained the victory, and now wear the crown—”that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” These two gifts and graces, then, of the Spirit are absolutely indispensable, that we may, in soul feeling, and in personal experience, come into the possession and enjoyment of the promises of God's word.

The first is, faith. There are two kinds of faith. There is faith natural, and faith spiritual; there is faith temporal, and faith the work of God upon the heart, which lasts all through the pilgrimage of the favoured saint until landed in glory. There is a faith that can move mountains, but utterly unconnected with the sister graces of hope and love. There is a faith which can do great things in the eyes of man; and yet only a delusion of Satan, a mere breath of nature. Now, that faith never can put us into possession of the promises. The promises are of a spiritual kind; they must therefore be laid hold of by a spiritual hand. A dead hand cannot handle the word of God so as to bring life and power into the soul. The ancients used to put a piece of money into the hands of their corpses, to pay toll to Charon on coming to the infernal regions. But what sensation had that clay, cold hand of the money entrusted to it? So spiritually. If my hand be dead—if my faith, in other words, be not of divine operation—can I handle the living words of the living God? I need spiritual hands to handle spiritual things, I need spiritual eyes to see spiritual objects, I need spiritual ears to hear spiritual sounds, I need spiritual feet to walk in spiritual paths, I need a spiritual heart to embrace and love the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” We cannot realise any one

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 portion of God's truth in our own experience without faith; and if we do not realize it there, it is but a name, but a notion, but a theory. It is the grand province of faith to receive what God gives, to receive it as from God, to receive it with simplicity, sincerity, humility, tenderness, contrition, hope, confidence. Do we not see this set forth and verified in the experience of the saints? Look at Abraham's faith. He is set forth in Scripture as the pattern of them that believe, as the father of the faithful. Was not Abraham's faith dependent upon the word of God? Did not God say to him, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said, so shall thy seed be.” (Gen. 15:5.) Was not that promise laid hold of in Abraham's soul by the hand of living faith; and was not that imputed to him for righteousness? Now you will observe that Abraham's faith never wandered (shall I used the word?) into generalities. Abraham's faith was not like a bark committed to the wide ocean without sail, rudder, or compass. It had a certain point in view; it looked to one object, and one object only. It was like a well fitted ship upon the sea bound to one destination, sailing thither by a good chart, guided according to a certain preordained course. Abraham's faith was not wandering here and there, like a dismasted ship, through loose generalities; but it dwelt upon the word of God dropped into his heart. He trusted it and relied upon that word, and felt in his soul the sweet experience of it. That faith God honoured; that faith God crowned by giving him the fulfilment of the promise which he himself had given.

Another mark of Abraham's faith was, that it was severely tried. He waited for the promise twenty-four years, amid the unbelief of his carnal heart, and every other obstacle which rose in the way. Now, if I am walking in the footsteps of our father; (and if we walk not in the steps of our father Abraham, we may call ourselves believers, but we call ourselves so in vain)—I say, if we walk in the steps of our father Abraham, our faith will be of precisely the same nature as our father Abraham's was. It will not be as strong.

The Lord gave it to him as a pattern. Abraham's faith therefore was exceedingly strong; and Abraham's faith was exceedingly tried, because it was so strong. We shall not, then, have it so strong. I think the offering up of Isaac upon the altar was the greatest act of faith the world has ever seen, or will see, with one exception, and that is, the faith of the Lord of life and glory on the cross—the faith of Jesus Christ in his human nature. That was indeed the greatest faith the world ever saw, or will see. But next to that, the type and figure of it—the offering up of Isaac by his father—seems to be the greatest exploit of faith the world ever witnessed, or ever will witness. Your faith, then, will not be as strong as Abraham's was; but still you will walk in the same footsteps as Abraham; and if this be the case, your faith will deal with the word of God just in the same way as Abraham's faith dealt with the word of God. Did not Abraham's faith restrict itself to one certain definite promise, cleave to it, hang upon it, rely upon it, trust in it, venture upon the faithfulness of it? Our faith, if like Abraham's, will be exactly similar. The Lord said, in the days of old to his bitter enemies, the Pharisees, "My word hath no place in you." That was the mark of unregeneracy. To use my former illustration—there was no mortice for the tenon—no empty, no broken, no humble, no tender heart for the word of God to come into. And the Apostle, speaking of the Old Testament Hebrews—those of them who were not the Lord's people—says, "The word preached did not profit them;" and he tells us why—because "it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it." In other words, they heard the gospel preached; but not having faith mixed with it, turning it into a living reality, so as to mingle with it, and receive it in all its blessed fulness, it did not profit their souls.

If our faith, then, be like Abraham's it will not be dealing with loose generalities. We shall not read a chapter of God's word, and have faith upon every verse; but we shall believe simply what we receive into our heart and conscience. Does God speak to our soul? Does he whisper a word or two to the conscience? Does he apply

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a promise with his own divine savour and unction? Does our eye see, our ear hear, our heart feel any portion of God's word? Is it sweet and savoury? Does it drop like honey and the honeycomb? Does dew, savour, unction, and power attend it? Immediately that takes place, faith springs up in the soul, embraces it, realizes it, mixes with, enters into the beauty of it, and eventually is honoured with the full enjoyment of it. I will endeavour to illustrate this by a figure. My eye is formed to see objects—my ear is formed to hear objects—my hand is formed to touch objects. Now, as my eye sees, as my ear hears, as my hand touches, certain sensations are produced in me. These sensations produce ideas. If I look out into infinite space, I see nothing—my eye receives into it no object. In the dead season of night, when all is still, my ear hears nothing. In stretching forth my hand into the air, I touch nothing. Must not the eye, must not the ear, must not the hand have an object before each sense can act? So spiritually. Faith is the eye of the soul, faith is the ear of the soul, faith is the hand of the soul; for faith sees, hears and touches. Now if there be no object, faith cannot see any more than the eye can see; faith cannot hear any more than the ear can hear; faith cannot touch any more than the hand can touch. But when an object comes, the eye sees, the ear hears, the hand touches, and sensation is produced. So when Christ appears, his blood felt in the conscience, his love is received into the heart, and his righteousness revealed; faith is raised up in the soul. But if these objects of faith are not revealed, we can no more see them than we can touch the stars. If these objects be hidden or absent, though I may have faith as a grace in my soul, it will lie still and dormant till the object comes before it.

Now all that the Lord drops into your heart with power—all that you see of beauty and glory in Jesus—all that your soul flows out after in tender affection as to the living God—all that your conscience embraces—all that encourages, softens, impresses, revives, humbles, melts out of God's word—faith receives, mixes with, feeds upon, enjoys, turns into nutriment, digests, and issues

forth in the fruits and graces of the Spirit. The word of God is, if I may use the illustration, as food; but do we not need a stomach to receive it? You may put the word of God into a spiritually dead stomach, as the ancients put money into the dead man's hand, and it corrupts there with the corrupt corpse. So the word of God, put into a dead man's stomach does but increase his corruption, turning the doctrines of the gospel into licentiousness. Those good doctrines which in a living stomach turn to good food, and nourish the whole frame, in a dead stomach, are like good food in a corpse, which corrupts and rots in the corrupt and rotten body. We want, then, living faith in the soul, in order to receive this spiritual food. Now, thus it is that we find many of the Lord's people who are doubting, fearing, perplexed, exercised, tempted, have living faith, while many who think they have great faith have not a solitary grain. It is this which keeps them down that they dare not say they are what they are not. They dare not lay claim to anything that God does not give. They can only feed upon such things as the Lord puts into their hearts. But presumptuous professors can draw comfort from every promise and every doctrine, without knowing anything of their blessed bestowment by God the Spirit. So that, if we look at what faith is and what faith does, we shall often find in the heart of a poor trembling sinner, who will perhaps almost cut himself off as not having a grain of faith in his soul, the grace of God in active operation, while others, with high-sounding names, great pretentious, and strong confidence, are dead in unbelief and infidelity.

2. But there is another way pointed out, and that closely connected with the other, by which we become inheritors of the promise—patience. What is patience? It means waiting, endurance. Was not this the case with Abraham? “So after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” Now, my friends, wherever the Lord gives faith he tries that faith. What says the Apostle Peter? “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found

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unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 1:7.) It is “the trial of faith,” not faith itself, that is “precious.” The trial of faith is eminently precious. Wherever true faith is in the soul it must be tried. This trial is the trial of patience. It is the trial of faith which proves its reality. It is the fire that burns away the dross; the fan that winnows away the chaff; the water that drowns presumption.

Now patience is necessary in order to prove the genuineness and reality of faith. The Lord generally—I may say invariably—does not accomplish his purposes at once. He usually—I might say almost invariably—works by gradations. Is not this the case in creation? Do we see the oak starting up in all its gigantic proportion in one day? Is not a tiny acorn committed to the ground; and is not the giant oak, whose huge limbs we admire, the growth of a century? Men and women are years growing up to their full stature. So spiritually, “He that believeth shall not make haste.” Faith in the soul is of slow growth for the most part; for the Lord takes care that every step in the path shall be tried by the perplexities and difficulties that surround it. And he has appointed this that it may be a means of distinguishing the faith of God's elect from the faith of those who have a name to live while dead. They apostatize and turn away from the faith. Like the stony ground hearers, they believe for a time, but in temptation fall away. The various hindrances of nature, sense, and reason, sin, the devil, and the world get the better of them; thus they turn back, often give up all profession of religion, and die in their sins. But the Lord's people cannot so die. Their faith is of a lasting nature, because what God doth he doth for ever. Thus their faith stands every storm and endures for ever.

This, then, is the use, this the end of patience—that it enables the soul not only to plead, to beg, and to cry, but also to wait. Its work is to believe against infidelity, hope against despondency, trust in God in spite of nature, sense, and reason—look to God in the dark—hope in God when hope is well nigh lost, when the

waves and surges of despair beat upon the head. Thus there is need of patience on the one hand, and of faith on the other, to inherit the promises. Faith is necessary as the hand of the soul to lay hold of them; patience is necessary to wait for their fulfilment. Faith is necessary to give us soul possession and soul enjoyment of the glorious realities of God's truth; patience is necessary to prove to ourselves and to others that we are really partakers of the faith of God's elect.

Now this is the way in which we inherit the promises. O how different from the way of man's devising! O how different from what is usually preached up as the way to come into the possession of them! Persons would fain try to teach us that all we have to do is to take God's word, read this and that promise, and implicitly believe, and lay claim to, and enjoy it. Was that Abraham's faith? Was that David's faith? Was he not hunted upon the mountains, with his life in his hand? Was that the faith of Jesus, who learned obedience through suffering? Was that the faith of the ancient worthies—"those who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness," &c.? Was their faith of this easy, slipshod nature whom John saw with palms in their hands? Did they not wade through seas of tribulation till they came to that blessed land where the palms of victory are in their hands, and the songs of triumph in their mouths? Are you and I to get to heaven by an easy path, while they went theirs by a rough one? How, if shame could enter heaven, we should blush and hang down our heads with shame, as we stood by the side of the suffering heroes, who had waded there through seas of trouble. There is no getting to heaven without tribulation. I do not define (who can define?) how long the trial, trouble, or temptation shall last. But if we walk not in a path of trial, tribulation, temptation, exercise, and sorrow, what do we know of the promises?—what do we know of the sweet enjoyment of the promises? We have to inherit them through faith and patience; and depend upon it, if you are ever to enjoy them here in their sweetness, and hope to enjoy the blessed fulfilment of them hereafter in the realms of

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eternal bliss, we must be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit these glorious promises."

99 Blessings Imputed, And Mercies Imparted

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on
Lord's Day Evening,
August 17 1845

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

1 Cor. 1:30, 31

These words, or rather a portion of them, came to my mind this morning as I was sitting in the pulpit after I had done preaching. And as I have usually found it far better that a text should come to me, than that I should go to a text, I have been induced to take them, and endeavour to speak from them this evening.

Some of my enemies, and alas, some of my professed friends, have endeavoured to make out that it was my natural ability, or my acquired learning, which enabled me to preach; though I must say that I have but slender pretensions to either. But I know, if either were the case, I should have the whole word of God, and especially this chapter and this epistle against me: and did I look to, or lean upon either, I had better have remained where I was, in Babylon, than attempt to stand up in God's name. But, through mercy, I have a witness in my conscience, which contradicts such representations.

I believe I have the same perplexities and exercises with respect to texts, and also with respect to sermons to be preached from texts, as others of my brethren in the ministry. I know what it is to be in thick darkness, and what it is to have a measure of sensible light; I know what it is to be shut up, and what it is to enjoy a

degree of liberty; I know what the absence of life and feeling is, and at times what is their presence; I know (to use an expression of Brainerd's) 'what it is to work with stumps, and what it is to work with fingers.' So that, with respect to both my texts and sermons, I stand precisely on a level with my other brethren. I have often to cry to the Lord to give me texts from which to preach; and when I have got the text, to cry to the Lord to give me matter out of it. For I know by experience that all wisdom which does not come down from "the Father of lights" is folly; that all strength not divinely wrought in the soul is weakness; and that all knowledge that does not spring from the Lord's own teaching in the conscience is the depth of ignorance. To him therefore do I desire to look that he would teach me this evening how and what to speak. And may he grant that a savour from his own most blessed Majesty may rest upon the words that may drop from my lips.

With respect to the text, we may observe in it three leading features.

I.—The eternal purpose and counsel of God with respect to his peculiar people—"Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

II.—The execution of that eternal purpose, in what Christ is of God made unto this peculiar people—"wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

III.—The final purpose and grand result of God's counsel, and of its execution—"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

I.—But it will be first desirable to point out who the people are, concerning whom the apostle makes this declaration, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

The word "ye," though it is but a monosyllable, though but two letters compose the whole of it, yet has a vast meaning connected with it. We must go to the beginning of the epistle to know who

are intended by this little monosyllable. "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." These are the persons to whom the apostle addresses this epistle; these are the persons comprehended in that little monosyllable "ye"—the church of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints; with all who know what it is, by prayer and supplication, to call upon the name of Jesus Christ.

The "ye" then, in the text, means quickened souls, believing characters; those who, by a work of grace upon their hearts, are sanctified, and enabled, by a spirit of grace and supplication, to call upon the name of Jesus Christ as their Lord and God.

Now, in the text, the apostle traces out what brought them into this state of saintship, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." The expression refers to two distinct things: 1. The original purpose of God; and 2. The execution of that purpose. Both are "of Him."—flowing out of him, arising from him, purposed by him in eternity, and executed by him in time. "Of Him"—not of yourselves: "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth:" not by the exertion of creature intellect, not by the instrumentality of human operation, not by anything the creature has done, not by anything the creature can do. The apostle traces up the standing of Christ's people in him to its origin—the eternal purpose and counsel of God. All that takes place in time he represents as flowing out of the eternal mind, and happening according to the original purpose and covenant plan of Jehovah.

You will observe, then, that when the apostle speaks of these Corinthian believers as being "in Christ Jesus," he intends thereby to set forth their personal standing in the Son of God under two distinct points of view:

1. As originating in eternity;

2. As taking place in time. In other words, every believer has a twofold union with Christ; one from all eternity, which we may call, an eternal, or election-union; the other in time, through the Spirit's operation in his heart, which we may call a time, or regeneration-union. Let us attempt to unfold these two kinds of union separately.

1. Every soul, then, that ever had, has now, or ever will have a standing in Christ, had this standing in Him from all eternity. Just in the same way as the vine, according to the Lord's own figure, puts forth the branches out of the stem; not a single branch comes out of the stock but what previously was in the stock: so, not a single soul comes manifestatively into spiritual existence which had not first an invisible and eternal union with the Son of God. This eternal, immanent, and invisible union with the Person of Christ, God blessed his people with before all worlds, by his eternal purpose, and according to his own eternal counsel.

2. Now, out of this eternal and immanent union springs the second union that we have spoken of, which is a time union—a union in grace: a vital union betwixt a living soul and a living Head. Until the Lord quickens elect vessels of mercy they have eternal union, but they have not time union. Their eternal union never can be altered: that never can be dissolved: that accompanies them all through their unregenerate state: but their vital, spiritual, and experimental union takes place in time, through the teaching, and under the operations of the blessed Spirit.

But 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 this eternal union that brings them into time existence. 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 time-state

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are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are called; they cannot die till 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, fall they will not, fall they cannot, till 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 till 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.

But this time union, this vital, experimental union, we may speak of also under two distinct points of view.

1. Directly that God the Spirit is pleased to quicken the soul, there commences a vital union with Christ. But this vital union is not then known to the soul. What saith the scripture? "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17) One spirit! The Spirit that rests upon the soul to quicken it into spiritual life, by that very visitation, that very indwelling, gives a vital union to Jesus. But it is not at first known, it is not brought forth into the soul's enjoyment, it is not made manifest in our personal experience. It is, to use a figure that the scriptures have adopted, like the process of grafting. Now we know that the process of grafting is this. A scion is cut off an old stock, and grafted into a new one. Before the scion can be grafted into the new stock, it must be cut off from the old: but when it is cut off from the old, and applied to the new, union does not immediately take place. The wounded scion and the wounded stock are brought into close apposition: they are joined together: and yet a time elapses before the sap flows forth out of the new stock, so as to give the scion a union to the tree. This may throw a little light upon spiritual grafting. Though the soul is cut off from the old stock, and brought into close apposition with the

Lord of life and glory, yet full union is not at once nor immediately enjoyed; though the scion is cut off from the old stock, and grafted into the new, joined together never to be separated, yet a certain time is wanting that they may coalesce, that the cut stock and the cut scion may both grow together, that the sap out of the living stock may flow into the living scion.

2. When the Lord is pleased to bring the soul experimentally near to the Son of his love, and communicates a measure of that precious faith whereby Jesus is looked unto, leaned upon, believed in, trusted in, hoped in, and cleaved unto, and a taste of his love and blood is felt in the soul—that produces vital union. Then, if I may use the illustration I have before adopted, the scion and the stock are not merely in close apposition, as when first grafted; but the scion and the stock grow together—there is a coalescing between the two, a union never to be dissolved and the sap out of the stock flows out freely into the scion, so that it puts forth first its leaves of honest and tender profession, then its blossoms of faith, hope, and love, and finally those “fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”

Now the grand struggle of a living soul before he feels this vital union is to have it made manifest in his conscience. How many of the Lord’s people are in this state—cut off from the old stock, coming, as far as they are able, unto Jesus, crying to be saved by his blood and righteousness, desiring above all things to know him and the power of his resurrection; yet no divine power communicated, no inward testimony sensibly felt, no precious sap manifestatively brought into their heart, no enjoyment of the Lord of life and glory in their soul. Though there is an eye of faith to see, a hand of faith to touch, an ear of faith to hear his voice, a heart of faith to receive Jesus into its very secret chambers, yet there is not brought about a clear, manifest, experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

But wherever this vital union is brought about, it is a union of that nature which never can be broken: “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.” See how the Holy Ghost, by the pen of Paul, ascribes the

whole to God; nothing is given to the creature to do; not the weight of a straw is laid upon the back of freewill. God does it altogether. In eternity, God ordained and gave the everlasting union; and in time, by a work of grace, he cut the scion off the old stock, brought it in close apposition to the new, bound them round together, that they may never more be separated, by the cords of faith and the cement of love; and in time brought about also that close coalescing, that vital junction between the two, which causes the sap to flow freely into their souls, and make them abundant in every good word and work.

II.—We pass on to consider what flows out of this eternal, and this time union—“Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Observe again—we cannot observe it too often—how the whole is ascribed to the Lord; how completely the creature is set aside; how entirely man’s wisdom, and man’s exertions, and man’s righteousness are put into the background; and how the Lord of grace and glory reigns triumphant. The apostle had ascribed the eternal and vital union, which the people of Christ have with their Head wholly to the purpose, and wholly to the execution of the Father; and now what Christ is to his people, he also ascribes wholly and solely to the same almighty and merciful God. “Who of God”—observe, “of God”—that is first, by the eternal purpose and secret determination of Jehovah; and secondly, by the fulfillment of his eternal counsels, in the execution of his own almighty appointment—who thus of God “is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” The “us” here are the same persons as the “ye.” There is no distinction betwixt the two. We are ye—ye are we. The apostle sometimes addresses the church of God as distinct from himself, and he sometimes addresses the church of God as one with himself. But whether he uses we or ye the persons meant are the same—the saints of God, the elect unto eternal life.

Now, to these, and to these only, Christ Jesus is of God made “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” The

Lord knows the wants of his people. He knew in eternity what they would need in time. The fall did not take God unawares. It was not an interruption to his eternal purposes. It was not an unexpected hindrance, which God never foresaw, never provided for. God decreed it by his own permissive decree. There are active decrees, and there are permissive decrees. There are good things which God decrees, and which he himself performs: and there are evils which God decrees, that out of them good might come. But God does not put his hands to the execution of those evils. He decrees to permit them, not himself to do them; for God is not, and never can be the author of sin. We must make this distinction, or we shall impute to God that which he hates. At the same time, we must admit, that God decrees permissively, or the whole chain of events would be thrown into a mass of confusion. The distinction is beautifully set forth in what Peter said to those that crucified the Lord: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”—there is the decree—”ye have taken, and by wicked hands”—there is the agency of man—”have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23.)

The Lord, then, foresaw what his people would be, and foreseeing what his people would be—how completely ignorant, how deeply dyed in guilt, how awfully depraved, how entirely destroyed—he took care to provide a remedy beforehand. He set up, in his own eternal counsels, the God-man Mediator, that he might be, in his fullness, all that they should need in time, and enjoy in eternity. For instance:

1. He saw that they would be sunk into utter folly: that all the wisdom of man would be foolishness with God. “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” God saw that when man fell from original righteousness, he fell from all wisdom, and became a fool, mistaking good for evil and evil for good, sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet, light for

darkness and darkness for light. God knew that he would stumble upon the dark mountains, far away from peace and righteousness. Therefore, knowing how folly would be bound up in the hearts of his elect children, he beforehand appointed Jesus to be their wisdom.

Now, I think, with respect to these four things which the Lord of life and glory is said to be to his people, we may view them, first, as imputed, and secondly, as imparted. Some who hold imputed righteousness, object to imputed wisdom, imputed sanctification, and imputed redemption. But why should we stand aghast, as though this would lead us into the depths of Antinomian licentiousness? If we take care to state that there is imparted wisdom, as well as imputed wisdom; imparted sanctification, as well as imputed sanctification: imparted redemption, as well as imputed redemption; if we do not by imputation destroy impartation—I do not see why we should shrink from imputed wisdom more than from imputed righteousness. Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3.) Is not wisdom a spiritual blessing? and if this be “in heavenly places in Christ,” is it not a blessing by imputation? For what am I by nature? A fool: all my wisdom, out of Christ, is nothing but the height of foolishness, and all my knowledge nothing but the depth of ignorance. Can I then ever be considered as wise? I can, if Christ is made wisdom to me. If I have a standing in Christ, then I have a standing in all that Christ is to me. Is Christ wise? the only wise God? infinitely wise? unerringly wise? Is he Wisdom itself, Wisdom in the abstract, set forth by that title in the Pr 8th of Proverbs?

Then if I have a standing in him, a living union with him, I am wise in him, because his wisdom is mine. Can you find anything in the stem that is not in the branches? Penetrate the branch—does not sap ooze and flow forth? Penetrate the stem—does not sap flow forth too? Take your microscope—examine both minutely. Is not the sap in the stem and the sap in the branch identical? Is it

not so with respect to Christ and his people? Have they an eternal standing in him? Have they a vital union with him? Is he wise? Then they are wise. Not indeed wise as he is, originally, eternally, intrinsically, infinitely: but wise because he of God is made unto them wisdom.

But in what sense is Christ thus made “wisdom?” Not as the second Person in the glorious Godhead, the eternal “Son of the Father, in truth and love.” As a Person in the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the blessed Spirit, he could not be made. It is therefore by virtue of the eternal covenant whereby he became a glorious Mediator, the Bridegroom of the Bride, the Head of the church, and in due time by actual assumption of the flesh and blood of the children, Immanuel, God with us. In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ is made unto his people wisdom, and they are thus accounted wise before God, as having a covenant standing in Christ.

Now, how this sets all the Lord’s people on a level! Some of them are educated, others uneducated: some can scarcely, perhaps, read the letters in the Bible; others have had instruction in the arts and sciences: some have had deep spiritual teachings, and the teachings of others have been more shallow. But do they not all stand on one level when we view them as wise in Christ? Are not all distinctions at once abrogated? Does not the wise man naturally come to be a fool? Does not the fool naturally come to be wise? Do not all the family of God who have a standing in Jesus, by having Christ’s wisdom imputed to them, stand upon the same level—wise in Christ—because they are one in Christ?

But besides this wisdom by imputation, there is also wisdom by impartation. Without imparted wisdom, we have no manifested interest in imputed wisdom. Imparted wisdom is by the Holy Ghost making the soul wise unto salvation: and his first step in making the soul wise unto salvation is to convince it of its folly. The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and the wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. There must then be a complete

reversal—a turning of things upside down—before we can be brought into a state to have wisdom divinely imparted. But when we are brought into that spot where, I am convinced, the Lord will bring all his people, that left to ourselves we are perfect fools: that we have no wisdom whatever to direct our feet: that we are blind, ignorant, weak, helpless, and utterly unable to find our way to the city—when by painful experience we stumble upon the dark mountains, and grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes, then we value the least spark of divine wisdom communicated and dropped into our souls from those lips into which grace was poured.

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 directly it was known they were diamonds, they were eagerly caught hold of, and their value rose a thousandfold. So spiritually: until we are brought in our souls to prize the teachings of God and the communications of divine wisdom—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. But when we are brought to see and feel how, in every instance, we have erred when left to ourselves; what mistakes we have made; what backslidings we have been guilty of; what foolish things we have said, and what worse than foolish things we have done;—when we see folly bound up in our hearts, and stamped upon every word and action, then how we prize any portion of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation! and how at times we long for the droppings in of that dew and power into our souls, which shed abroad a sweet and unctuous light and lead the soul unto Jesus, to find peace in him!

2. But Jesus is also made unto us “righteousness.” Does not this imply that we are unrighteousness? For is not all that Jesus is, in exact proportion to our wants? So far as we are God’s people, we find all our wants precisely met by him. Can we find a single spot

into which a child of God can sink, to which some character of the Lord of life and glory is not adapted? Does he sink down as a fool before God? Does he feel such ignorance that he scarcely knows what he is, or where he is? Are the scriptures hidden from his understanding, his experience buried in darkness, and he himself in his own eyes, the worst of fools? How suitable, that Jesus, the Son of God, should be made unto him wisdom! Is he made to feel himself a polluted wretch, and brought painfully to know that all his righteousnesses are but filthy rags? that his iniquities, like the wind have taken him away? that he has not by nature one grain of that which is pleasing in the sight of God? that all his motives, all his thoughts, all his desires all his actions, all his words, bear upon them, bear in them, the deep-grained dye of guilt? Does he shrink into self-abasement at the sight? Does he loathe himself in dust and ashes? Does he feel that he is only fit to be trampled into hell as a polluted worm? When brought here, how suitable, how precious, is it to see that Jesus is made unto him righteousness!

Observe the word. It does not say, that the obedience of Jesus is made righteousness; but it says, that Jesus himself is made righteousness. It is perfectly true that the obedience of Christ to the law is the justifying righteousness of those that believe in his name; “for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” and “by one man’s obedience many are made righteous.” But besides that, the Lord himself is their righteousness. Is not this the sure declaration of holy writ? “In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” “This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.” What a sweet view does this give of Jesus! We look sometimes at Christ’s righteousness as distinct from Christ. Shall I use a figure? We look at the garment as distinct from the Maker and Wearer of the garment. We look at the righteousness so much, that we scarcely look at him who wrought out that righteousness. Now, we must not separate Jesus from his righteousness. We must not look merely at the garment, the imputed robe, and forget him that wrought it out, that puts it

on, and that keeps it to this day in firm possession. But when we can see, that not only the obedience of Christ, but Christ himself—all that Jesus is—all that Jesus has, as the head of his church, as the risen Mediator, as the great High Priest over the house of God—when we can see that this God-man, Immanuel, is made unto his people righteousness, how it expands the prospect! Then we look, not merely at the robe itself, beautiful, comely, and glorious; we look farther—we look at him that made it. We do not look merely at the robe as distinct from him. We look at him who made that robe what it is—Jesus, who ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us.

This, to my mind, is a sweet view. If I sink down into creature sinfulness, shame, and guilt, and see Jesus made of God unto me righteousness, what need I more? Has God made him so? Who can unmake him so? Has God made the Son of his love righteousness to my soul, that I may stand in him without spot, speck, or blemish? Who is to alter it? Can sin alter it? That is atoned for. Can the devil alter it? He is chained down unto the judgment of the great day. Can the world alter it? They cannot stretch forth their finger to touch one thread of that robe, to touch one lineament of the Redeemer’s countenance. If he is made unto me righteousness, what more do I want? If I can find a shield, a shelter, and a refuge in him as my righteousness, what more can I want to preserve me from the charge of men or devils?

But there is the impartation of righteousness, as well as the imputation of it; and the impartation of it is the communication of a divine nature to the soul. Not merely the sheltering of the soul from the wrath to come by a robe cast around it, and by the interposition of the Redeemer’s glorious Person, but also the breathing of God’s image, the raising up of a new creature, and the stamping of Christ’s likeness on the heart.

3. We pass on to another thing that Christ is made to his people—that is, “sanctification.” What am I? What are you? Filthy, polluted, defiled; are we not? Do not some of us, 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? I cannot see him, except so far as the Lord of life and glory is made sanctification to me. Why should men start so at imputed sanctification? Why should not Christ's holiness be imputed to his people as well as Christ's righteousness? Why should they not stand sanctified in him, as well as justified? Why not? Is there anything in Jesus, as God-man Mediator, which he has not for his people? Has he any perfection, any attribute, any gift, any blessing, which is not for their use? Did he not sanctify himself that they might be sanctified by the truth? Is he not the holy Lamb of God, that they might be "holy, and without blame before him in love?" What is my holiness, even such as God may be pleased to impart to me? Is it not, to say the least, scanty? Is it not, to say the least, but little in measure? But 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.

But there is not only imputed sanctification, there is also imparted sanctification. 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 because, by a gracious act of God the Father, Jesus is made unto his people sanctification, he imparts a

measure of his own holiness to them. He works in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires: in a word, he communicates a nature perfectly holy, which therefore loves holiness and has communion with a holy God; 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 exercised and troubled because he has so little of it; yet he has enough just 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 Godward? Do you never 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.

4. But lastly, he is made of God unto them "redemption." Now, whatever Jesus is to his people, he is to them precisely according to their wants. Are they fools? He is their wisdom. Are they condemned? He is their righteousness. Are they unholy? He is their sanctification. Are they captives and prisoners, who have sold themselves under sin, and become slaves to Satan? Of God he is made unto them redemption. His redemption is imputed to them, is put to their account, is considered as theirs. When Jesus died upon the cross, he purchased a peculiar people. What he did then, and what he did there, is put to their account. The debt that he paid is crossed out of the books. The sum that he laid down is transferred to their account. Thus of God he is made unto them redemption.

But besides that, there is imparted redemption, as well as imputed redemption. What do I know of imputed redemption

unless I know something of imparted redemption? But what can I know of imparted redemption, unless I have known what it is to be a captive, in bondage, in hard chains, oppressed by cruel slavery, unable to deliver myself, chained like a galley-slave to the galling oar, bound down with fetters, so that I cannot release myself? If I never have known that, how can I desire to know Jesus Christ as of God made unto me redemption? But if I catch a sight of Christ, as made unto me redemption, that communicates a gracious feeling of redemption by impartation. No sooner does the eye of faith catch what Jesus is made unto his people, than what he is to his people comes instantaneously into their heart. What he is to them, he is by imputation; and when they see what he is by imputation, then they enjoy it by impartation. Do I see redemption? Do I feel it, count it my own, and enjoy it? Then what does it do for me? Does it not break, in a measure, the chain of slavery? Does it not bring me out of captivity? Does it not, so long as it lasts, subdue my lusts, and overcome my pride? Does it not shatter the galling fetters of bondage? Does not faith in Christ as my redemption, communicate a measure of that redemption to my spirit? It does. This is the connecting link between imputation and impartation.

God has made Christ all these to his people. He has set him up as their eternal Head, made him the Bridegroom of their souls, that out of his fullness they may all receive. Then, just in proportion as they learn these two lessons—what they are, and what he is—they receive him into their hearts and they see actually what he is to them in the purpose of God. Am I a fool? Do I feel it and know it? Have I had painful experience of it, so that all my creature wisdom is turned into one mass of foolishness? Do I catch by the eye of faith a view of the risen Mediator, “Immanuel, God with us,” and see what he is made of God to us? The moment my eye sees him as “wisdom,” that moment a measure of divine wisdom flows into my conscience. Am I polluted and defiled throughout? Have I no righteousness of my own? Is all my obedience imperfect? Am I unable to fulfill the requirements of God’s holy law? If once I catch

by the eye of faith this glorious truth, through him who is the truth, that Jesus Christ is of God made unto me “righteousness”—the moment I see that by the eye of faith, that moment a measure of imparted righteousness flows into my heart? Am I an unholy, depraved, filthy wretch? Does corruption work in my heart? The moment I catch by the eye of faith Jesus made unto me of God “sanctification,” that moment a measure of sanctification comes into my heart, drawing up holy affections, casting out the love of the world, curbing my reigning lusts, and bringing my soul into submission at his footstool. Am I a poor captive, entangled by Satan, by the world, and my own evil heart? The moment that I catch this glorious view, that Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father is made unto me “redemption”—if I can believe that he is made such for me, that I have a standing in him, and a union with him, so that he is my redemption—that moment a measure of deliverance comes into my soul, and redemption imputed becomes redemption imparted; the soul receives then internally what Christ has done externally. In a word, when Christ is received as “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” he becomes all these in vital manifestation.

Now, do you see the steps? Just observe the connecting links. What do we learn first? We learn, first of all, what we are by nature. That is the first thing; there is no overstepping that. Then, just in proportion as we learn what we are by nature, and the Lord the Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the gospel to our understanding, and brings a sweet revelation of them into our conscience, do we see and feel what Jesus is made unto his people: and we see and feel that he has everything our souls want: that we have not a single necessity that there is not ample provision made for in the gospel—not a need unsupplied—not a malady without a remedy—not a sinking without a corresponding rising. But what is the effect of it? Why, no sooner is this seen, than a measure of it is communicated to the heart. First, I must see what I am; secondly, I must see what Christ is; thirdly, I must feel that Christ is all this to me: and when

I see what I am, and see what Christ is, and then feel a measure of what Christ is for my soul, then Christ becomes to me inwardly what he is outwardly. He becomes in my heart what he is revealed in the word of truth; and this is the only way whereby we can have a vital and manifest union with him.

III.—But this leads me to the grand crowning point—”According as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Man may glory. Yes: God has determined that man shall glory. But in what, and in whom? In himself? No; God has for ever trampled man’s glory under foot. He shall glory, but he shall never glory in self; for if he glory in himself, where God is, he never will come. God’s purpose is to stain the pride of human glory.

“He that glorieth”—yes, we may glory; we may have a song of triumph; if the Lord do but tune our hearts to sweet melody, we may speak in accents of glory and thanksgiving—”he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Look at the words: “Glory in the Lord.” Not glory in himself, whatever he be—however deep his experience, however great his abilities, however consistent his conduct. No creature shall ever, in the sight of God, glory in itself; but we may glory in the Lord as of God made unto us all that he has determined he shall be. what a sweet losing of one’s self there is in Christ! See how he has raised up Adam’s fallen progeny! See how he has given the elect a standing in Christ which they never had in their fallen progenitor! Adam could glory. Adam had natural wisdom, creature righteousness, native strength, and created innocence. He might glory in these. Just as a horse can, without sin or shame, curve his proud neck, and glory in his strength when he paweth in the valley, as Job speaks: so Adam, in his native innocence, could glory in what God had made him. But when Adam fell to the very depths of creature depravity, all his glory was for ever lost: the pride of the creature was for ever stained.

But God has determined that men may glory still: only he has changed the object of that glory, and put that glory upon, and centered that glory in his only-begotten Son. He turns the eyes of

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his poor needy family to look to him for salvation, and to glory in him: for “in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

Sure I am, from the little I have felt (and it is but a little), there never can be any feeling so sweet as to glory in the Lord alone. Glory in my wisdom! Why, if I were to do so, there is a worm at the very bud of that glory. There is misery in the very feeling of self-esteem. Glory in anything I am! It is nothing but “vanity and vexation of spirit.” But if I lose myself, trample myself under foot—cease from my own glory, strength, and wisdom—lose it all, put it all aside, despise it as nothing worth, and look unto him who “of God is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” to his people—I may glory then, and my glory shall be this—may it be my glory in time, and may it be my and your glory in eternity—to glory in the Lord—to glory in his wisdom, in his righteousness, in his sanctification, in his redemption—to glory in him for what he is in himself, and glory in him for what he is to his people. This is a sweet absorption of the creature into the Lord of life and glory. This is indeed taking off the crown of human pride, and setting it upon the head of him who alone is worthy to wear it.

This is indeed a sweet loss; to lose our own wisdom and obtain divine wisdom; lose all that the flesh can boast of, and the flesh can rejoice in—and find it all again heightened, shall I say?—no, not heightened, for it is of a totally distinct nature—find it all of different and more glorious kind in the Lord Jesus, as of God made unto us “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

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Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on
Lord’s Day Morning,

August 24, 1845

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, 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 dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Philippians 3:7-9

There are two instances of sovereign grace which shine forth in most conspicuous lustre in the New Testament. One is, the conversion of the thief on the cross: and the other, the call by grace and the call to the ministry, of Saul of Tarsus. I do not mean to say that every call of the Spirit is not a manifestation of sovereign grace. I do not wish to imply that one heart is a whit better than another; or that one man is more an instance of sovereign grace than another man. But there were circumstances that surrounded the call of these two men, which heightened, if heightened it can be, the superaboundings of sovereign grace. And the Lord, by these two men, seems to have given us two instances—one, of human nature in its worst form, and the other, of human nature in its best form. He has held up to our view man in the depth of profanity, and man in the height of profession: to shew, that neither the depth of profanity, nor the height of profession, is beyond the reach of almighty, distinguishing, and superabounding grace.

In the thief upon the cross, we see human nature in its worst light. We behold a malefactor stained with a thousand crimes: we view him at last brought by a strong hand of the law to suffer merited punishment: yet we see him quickened and made alive by sovereign grace, brought to believe in the crucified Lord of life and glory, and taken by the blessed Lord himself into paradise, to be for ever with him.

In Saul, we see a pharisee of the pharisees, carrying natural religion to its greatest height, adorned with everything virtuous, moral, honourable, and consistent. We see this man, who had gone

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as far to the extreme of pharisaism, as the thief had gone to the extreme of profanity, arrested by the same almighty power, and brought to the same point—to fall into the dust as a poor sinner, and be saved by the manifestation to his soul of Christ's blood and righteousness.

For the instruction and edification of God's people in all time, the apostle Paul was inspired and directed to leave his experience upon record. And this experience of the apostle we have under different phases. In three different places in the Acts of the Apostles we have his call by grace circumstantially detailed, accompanied, in his case, with a call to the ministry. In the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, we have his experience as a Christian man set forth, as distinct from his apostleship; there he describes the conflict he had with sin, the daily struggle betwixt nature and grace, and the power of these two opposing principles. In the second epistle to the Corinthians, in various portions scattered up and down, we have his experience as an apostle—the trials and consolations connected with his ministry—described. And in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians, and more especially in the passage before us this morning, we have him in three distinct points of view—three distinct appearances, or phases, as I may call them. We have Paul past, Paul present, and what he hoped to be, or what I may perhaps call Paul future.

In other words, I shall endeavour, if God enable me, to unfold this passage this morning, by shewing,

- I.—What Paul was in the time to which he referred as past.
- II.—What Paul is in the time of which he is now speaking. And,
- III.—What Paul hoped to be in time to come.

These three distinct features, for the sake of clearness, I shall endeavor this morning to unfold, as various portions of the

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experience of the apostle Paul. And in so doing, I shall try to run a parallel betwixt your experience and his experience, that you may see whether the Lord has wrought in your heart and conscience any measure of that which he wrought in the heart of Paul.

I.—Our first point will be to look at what the apostle was. This we may divide into two distinct periods: first, what he was before the Lord quickened his soul: and secondly, what he was after he was so quickened.

1. Paul, as I before hinted, seems to have carried natural religion up to its very height. Do we want an instance of what the flesh is in its most religious form? in its brightest shape, distinct from, and independent of, the grace of God? Do we want to see how far a profession of religion can be carried out? We have it in the case of the apostle Paul. What does he say of himself? He is trying to put down all fleshly confidence; he therefore points out what a child of God is: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Every child of God, he says, has three distinct marks stamped upon him: first, "he worships God in the Spirit;" secondly, "he rejoices in Christ Jesus;" and thirdly, "he has no confidence in the flesh." But some might answer, 'It is very well for you, Paul, to talk of having no confidence in the flesh; for you never had anything to trust to, or boast in.' 'Stop,' replies the apostle, 'if there be any man in the world who might have had confidence in the flesh, who might have trusted in natural religion in its highest, brightest, and best form, I am the man.' Then he tells us what those things were in which he could have trusted, and which appear to have been the grand points in those days in which the religious people, independent of the grace of God, the strict devotees of that period, trusted for eternal life. Indeed, the Jews used to say, 'If only two men of the human race were saved, one would be a scribe, and the other a Pharisee.'

He tells us then, that he was "circumcised the eighth day

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of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." These were what we may call, in the language of our day, his 'religious privileges.' Under this head, he could boast that he was "circumcised the eighth day," the traditional law allowing circumcision from the eighth day after birth till the twelfth, but attaching peculiar sanctity to the eighth; that he was not a Gentile, but a real Jew; that he was not from apostatizing Israel, but of the tribe of Benjamin, which adhered to Judah when the ten tribes departed; that he was not a Hellenistic, Gentilizing Hebrew, who had forsaken the language of his fathers, and adopted, in some measure, Grecian customs, but was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," a Jew throughout: born not only of two Hebrew parents, but following out to the very letter the strict obligations of the ceremonial law, as well as all the traditions of the elders.

With respect to his religious education and religious profession, he could boast that he was "as touching the law, a Pharisee;" the strictest of the sects; not a monastic Essene, not an infidel Sadducee; but a rigid, austere, and unbending Pharisee. And to shew that he had embraced this strict pharisaism, not from hypocrisy, but from real fleshly enthusiasm—that his heart was thoroughly in it—that it was not to deceive others, but that he was really deceived himself—to shew that he had something more than mere outside profession, that his creed had touched his natural conscience, he shewed his "zeal by persecuting the church," by abhorring, hating, and imprisoning the disciples of the Lord of life. As he told King Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth: which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:9-11).

As respecting his life and deportment before men, he could say,

“Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;” that is, outward righteousness. There are two kinds of righteousness connected with the law; one of the law, another in the law. These are not indeed distinct in their nature, for one comprehends the other; but they are distinct as regards our experience of them. For instance, the righteousness of the law condemns an adulterous look as adultery; but the righteousness in the law condemns but the outward act. He was not, then, blameless touching the righteousness of the law, in its spirituality and purity; but as touching the righteousness in the law, in its observances and commands, he was blameless—leading a most upright, consistent, virtuous, and honourable life. Surely if heaven could be gained by religious privileges, a strict life, and good works, Saul of Tarsus had, a fairer claim than anybody.

Now, you will observe that the strict religious professors of those days rested for salvation upon those things which the apostle enumerates as meeting in himself. And can we not find a strict parallel now? Things are changed with time: but man's heart is not changed, and the fleshly confidence of human nature is not altered. Can we not then find now a precise parallel? Let us endeavor to trace it out. Is it not the boast of many that they are born of religious parents? Is not that a present parallel with being—“a Hebrew of the Hebrews?” Do not others glory that they were sprinkled in infancy by a minister of the Established Church? Is not that parallel with “circumcised the eighth day?” Do not others boast, that they have had a strictly religious education, been trained up to piety from childhood, been instructed in the Catechism and all things taught at the Sunday school, and been carefully watched over by parents and guardians? Is not this a parallel with Paul sitting at the feet of Gamaliel? Do not others rely for salvation upon attending church or chapel regularly, never omitting the ordinance or the sacrament, being constant in their prayers night and morning, reading so many chapters of the Bible every day, and living according to the strictest laws that man has devised for them, or they can devise

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for themselves? Is not this a parallel with “touching the law, a Pharisee?” Are there not others who believe that they are doing God service when they speak against the doctrines of grace, when they persecute Christ's people, when they hate vital godliness as manifested in the experience, or carried out in the life of God's family? Is not this a parallel with, “concerning zeal, persecuting the church”?

And do not others expect heaven as the reward of their good works, and pride themselves upon leading a moral, upright, perfectly consistent life? Is not this parallel with “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless”?

Now upon these things, as I have observed, in their various shapes, many are resting for salvation, from the most bigoted Churchman to the most Radical Dissenter. Hundreds and thousands are resting upon these things, as a means of climbing to heaven, feeling persuaded that by their privileges and their duties they shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. And had God suffered Paul to live and die in this delusion—had he been stretched upon a deathbed the day before his journey to Damascus. I believe in my conscience, he would have gone out of life fully persuaded he was going to heaven, and never have found out his mistake till the lightnings of divine vengeance had struck his horrified soul down to eternal perdition. He was so wrapped up in a lie, that nothing but the voice of the Lord of life and glory from heaven, and the arrow of conviction from the divine quiver penetrating into his conscience, could bring him out of the delusion in which he was held so fast, and strip him out of the garment in which he was so closely wrapped.

Where Paul was, thousands are: and only a few, a remnant “according to the election of grace,” the “vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory,” are brought out of this state by a work of grace upon their hearts, so as to be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation.

But having looked at Paul as he was before the Lord called him,

let us see now,

2. What Paul was after the Lord called him. If you look narrowly and closely at the words of the text, you will observe two distinct tenses. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss." Here we have the past tense. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things." There we have the present tense. And in the last clause of the same verse, we have both the past and present: "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." The apostle, then, speaks of what he had felt, and does now feel—what he had suffered, and does now suffer, drawing a distinction between what he was in time past, and what he is in time present. Thus, when the Lord was pleased to arrest this persecutor on his errand of blood, and opened up to his conscience the spirituality of the law in those three days when Paul was at Damascus, he neither ate nor drank. The law was then doing its work in his conscience, shewing itself in all its strict purity; it was laying bare the hidden corruptions that had before been covered over with the varnish of profession and self-righteousness: it was stripping him, and opening up the chambers of imagery within, carrying a death stroke to everything boasted of and trusted in.

Now this, every child of God, every quickened vessel of mercy is, more or, less, brought to feel, though he may not be three days and nights, without eating or drinking, under the burning agonies of a broken law. The Lord appears to have done the work quickly in the case of Paul: and, by doing it quickly, made up by depth and intensity, while it lasted, for the short time of duration. I believe this is frequently the case with the Lord's people. All must be brought to the same point: but where the work is more rapid, it is usually more intense. The very same work of conviction and condemnation, emptying and stripping, wounding and slaughtering, breaking down and laying low, may be spread over a number of years: and, being spread over a longer space, is not so intense in feeling as when carried on in a shorter space of time—the duration of the feeling during a longer period making up for the intensity of the

But, however, this was the effect—"what things were gain" to him, he was brought to count "loss for Christ." He was made to see that they were not helps, but positive hindrances. He does not say, 'I count them as little value, but as absolute loss.' To use an illustration: it is like a tradesman, who is obliged to transfer a debt which he thought to be in his favour, to the opposite side of the ledger—an account to pay, instead of to receive. Thus, when the depth of his hypocrisy was laid open, when his own righteousness was thoroughly held up to his view, when he came to see light in God's light, and had the hidden corruptions of his heart made bare—then he began to see that his former acquirements, so far from being gain, were absolute loss; that so far from being so many rounds in the ladder to take him up to the Lord, they were so many rounds in the ladder to take him deeper into the pit; that every step which he took in a way of fleshly righteousness, instead of being a step to heaven, was a step from heaven, and instead of bringing him nearer to God, carried him farther from God. So that, absolutely and actually, with all his profession, he was farther from God, in a worse state, than the malefactor upon the cross, there expiring by the strong hand of the law on account of the crimes he had done.

Now, when a man once sees this, he is brought into his right spot: and he is never brought into his right spot before. When he sees that all his religious privileges, all the doctrines his head is stored with, all his piety and uprightness, all the consistency of life in which he had gloried: that all these things were absolutely hindrances instead of helps, really loss instead of gain: that set him farther from heaven than nearer heaven—then he drops into his right spot. But how should this be? I will tell you. Because he trusted in them. If I am going, say to the East end of the Town, and being unacquainted with the metropolis, take a turn leading to the West end, I may walk very confidently forward: but I have taken a wrong direction: and every step I take carries me from the wished-for point. I cannot get right till I turn completely round.

So spiritually: while a man is traveling on in self-righteousness, every step takes him farther from heaven, and farther from the Lord Jesus Christ; and becomes to him positive and absolute loss. But till his eyes are opened to see this, he never can be in his right spot. Man will cleave to the flesh in one form or another as long as he can; he never will give it up till brought to this point, to count everything connected with the flesh not merely not as gain, but absolute loss.

3. But there was another thing wrought in the apostle's mind to bring him to this spot—a view of the Lord of life and glory by the eye of living faith. He had a personal knowledge in his heart and conscience of the glorious Person, atoning blood, dying love, and justifying righteousness of the precious Immanuel.

These two things are absolutely needful to bring us to the spot where the Lord brought Paul. There are two indispensable operations of the Spirit upon the heart to produce in us a saving work. All stripping will not do; all emptying will not suffice; all slaughtering is not enough. These are necessary to bring us down; but we want something else to raise us up, and bring comfort. We want something sweet and precious, as well as something bitter and painful; the honey and the honeycomb, the milk and wine of gospel grace, as well as the gall and bitterness of sin felt in a wounded conscience. And this is summed up in the words, "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Such a sweet application, such a blessed discovery, such a divine manifestation to the eyes of the understanding, to the heart and conscience of the believer is needed, as shall bring him to know the Lord of life and glory as all his salvation and all his desire, and make him to feel in the very depths of his conscience before a heart-searching God that Jesus is in his eyes the "altogether lovely."

Now, if the Lord has made your conscience tender let me, as a friend ask you to search into your experience upon these two points. Depend upon it, they are absolutely indispensable: they are not to be smuggled over, not to be wrapped up, not to be obscured:

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they are to be plain and conspicuous in a man's soul. And only so far as they are plain and conspicuous in a man's soul, has he any solid testimony, any good hope through grace, that he has "the root of the matter" in him. These two points, then, must be stamped on every quickened sinner's conscience in order to give him an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. He must have been brought down, stripped and emptied, and have put his mouth in the dust as a poor guilty sinner. And then he must have had such a discovery to the eyes of his understanding, such a revelation in his soul of the glorious Person, atoning blood, and justifying righteousness of the Lord of life and glory, as shall have raised up a measure of faith, hope, and love towards this blessed Lord; so as to create some embraces of him in the arms of affection, some cleaving to him with purpose of heart, some delight in him as altogether precious, altogether glorious, altogether lovely.

These are the two grand jewels in a believer's heart. The work of the Spirit in stripping, and the work of the Spirit in clothing; the work of the Spirit in pulling down, and the work of the Spirit in raising up; the work of the Spirit in the law, and the work of the Spirit in the gospel; the work of the Spirit in making self loathed, and the work of the Spirit in making Jesus loved.

II.—We have looked at Paul as speaking of himself in the past tense; let us now pass on to consider him speaking of himself in the present tense, or the experience he was then going through. I have before pointed out a difference in the tenses, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." If you observe, he takes here a wider scope than he had taken in the preceding verses. He said there, "What things were gain to me:" but he goes further in his present experience; "yea doubtless, and I count all things." Before he merely counted those things to be loss that he once boasted in: but as he advanced further in the knowledge of his own heart, as he had greater discoveries of the glorious perfections of Christ, as he was led down deeper into the quagmire of felt corruption,

and led higher up into views of the glorious Immanuel, he gets into another branch of spiritual arithmetic: he embraces a wider scope of calculation: he now says. "I count all things." "There was a time when I looked at many things that I highly prized, and them I counted a dead loss: but now I am brought further: for I count everything in the world loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

You see, until a man is brought into the gospel conflict, his vision is for the most part dim and obscured. There are two conflicts: one, a legal conflict; the other, a gospel conflict. While under the legal conflict, the eye is directed to the things, which were once counted as gain; our own righteousness, our own strength, our own creature performances, our fleshly religion; and all come to nought. But when the gospel conflict comes, it is a different thing. A legal conflict is when there is no knowledge of Christ in the soul; but in a gospel conflict, we are brought to this point, not merely to count as dung and loss the things so esteemed of old, but everything in the world, however enchanting, beautiful, attractive, ensnaring, and alluring—to count all things as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Every man has his own peculiar temptations, his own natural inclinations, his own besetments; each has his various objects of pursuit, which he makes his idol. There is the studious man bent upon languages and sciences; the industrious tradesman buried in business; the man elevated a little above the ordinary mass of God's people, striving to add to, or preserve his respectability. Each person has a disposition peculiar to himself. Now, under the law, we may renounce many things, and yet not renounce these bosom idols. We may renounce our own strength, our own righteousness, our own wisdom; renounce many things in the flesh, and put them aside; but yet, after all, a whole nest of bosom idols may be untouched. Just a few hornets may have been struck down as they buzzed out of their holes, but a whole nest of them remains in the deeps of man's depraved heart, which must be burnt out, that the

Look into your heart. Have you not some idol in your bosom—your science, your business, your child, your wife, your husband? The idol self, in some shape or another? Is there not something which day after day catches your eye, entangles your feet, draws you from the Lord, overcomes you, proves your bosom idol that you cannot master? I know it is so with me. There is one thing or another working perpetually: there is an idolatrous heart, an adulterous eye, a roving mind, a lusting imagination perpetually going after something which conscience tells me is hateful to God, and hateful to myself in my right mind.

Now, in order to be brought to the point to which God brought Paul, to esteem all things as loss, to count them as dung, and trample them under foot for the sake of the Lord of life and glory, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," we need two distinct operations of the Spirit upon our soul. We need, first of all, to be put into the furnace; we need to have our faith tried as by fire; we need to have temptations, afflictions, perplexities, heartrending grief's and sorrows, in order to overthrow, destroy, put down, and subdue those cursed idols in our heart, which are the root of all sin. It is not your outward profession; your coming to chapel regularly; your going to hear a man preach certain doctrines, or liking to hear certain experiences traced out. A man may do all this, and yet wrap up an idol in his bosom all the week long; be wandering after his lusts all the day, and come with a smooth countenance on Lord's Day morning, as though all his heart and soul were with the Lord of life and glory.

Such is the heart of every man. We must go then into the furnace of affliction; we must have trials, exercises, perplexities, the sharp rod of chastisement, painful, sometimes heartrending afflictions, to pluck up these dunghill gods, and overthrow these idols in our heart. This is the reason why so many of God's people are in affliction—why one has such a suffering body; another, such trying circumstances; a third, such rebellious children; a fourth,

such a persecuting husband; a fifth, such opposition from the world; a sixth, such temptations from the devil; a seventh, such an acquaintance with the awful corruptions of his heart: an eighth, such a desponding mind: a ninth, such shattered nerves. I say this is the reason why they have this painful discipline, that they may not lean upon Egypt or Assyria because they are but broken reeds that will run into their hands and pierce them.

But besides these, there is another thing wanted, that is, greater discoveries, more openings up, sweeter revelations, more enlarged manifestations of the glory, grace, love, blood, preciousness and beauty of Immanuel: so as not merely to put down idolatry, not merely to overcome this master sin in them, but to substitute an Object of spiritual worship, and raise up in their heart the actings of heavenly affection and love.

Here then is the difference. In the legal conflict, there is the law killing, cursing, and condemning. But in the gospel conflict, there are furnaces, floods, troubles, temptations, exercises, perplexities, and sorrows. All these things lay a man lower than ever he was laid before, bring him down more into the dust, and thus make a way for larger openings up of the gospel, more glorious discoveries of salvation through Jesus, and greater sweetness, preciousness, and suitability in him. The superaboundings of grace become thus more manifested over the aboundings of sin; and this experience will purge out that which the law never touched, and clear out of the heart those idols that the commandment had not effectually put down. This lifts up the Lord of life and glory in the soul, that he may be, as the apostle says, "our Lord"—"for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"—to worship him as our Lord, to cleave to him as our Lord, to glory in him as our Lord—to give up ourselves, with all the affections of our souls, into his hands.

But to be brought here, the apostle says, "he had suffered the loss of all things." Worldly prospects, fleshly joys, human honours, lucrative gains, the esteem of my fellow-creatures, the esteem of my own heart, that more delicious morsel than the esteem of others—I

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have suffered "the loss of all these things." "But do I repent of it? do I regret it? do I murmur at it? do I kick at the hand that has stripped me?" 'No,' says the apostle, I count them all dung, that defiles my feet if it but touch them: things only fit to be cast to the dogs: mere offal in the street, that I turn my eyes away from.' O what an experience is this! How few, and how rarely those few, come to this spot to be brought in solemn moments before God to have such a taste of the beauty, preciousness and love of Jesus—to have such a going forth of holy affection to his bosom, as absolutely to count all things but as dung! Where is the man to be found who knows much of this? And if you find the man, how long is he there? It was doubtless with Paul a far more enduring feeling than with any of us. But how many of us can say, 'Such is the daily bent of our minds, such the hourly experience of our hearts'? I dare not say it. There have been times when just for a short half-hour, a transient period, a very transient one, I have felt it. But to say, that this is my or your experience daily and hourly—to count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord—where is the man? where is the woman?—in London, or the country?—who can rise up to this height of glorious and blessed experience? We must indeed know something of it, have a measure of the very same experience, though different in degree, or we have nothing. But as for rising up into a full measure of it, I have never seen the man yet who comes even up to the tenth part of it—to "count all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord!" And, for that to be his daily, hourly experience—I have never yet fastened my eyes upon either the man or the woman who could enter into such depths, or such heights of experience as this. Do not misunderstand me. There are seasons, there are moments, when it is felt; but to have it of an enduring nature, abiding with a man through the week, accompanying him all day, going with him to bed, getting up with him the morning, continuing with him through all his hourly occupations—I have not seen the man yet, who could ever come near by a thousand leagues thus to

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experience what the apostle Paul declared he felt an abiding reality in his bosom.

III.—But we pass on to consider, what Paul hoped, and what he wanted to be. If you observe, he gives us, lower down, some intimation that all God's family were not thus perfect. He says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect"—that is, adult, matured in the divine life—"be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded"—as though he saw that all to whom he wrote were not in his experience, had not attained to this height—"God shall reveal even this unto you." "Be not discouraged and cast down: God is able to reveal it in your heart, and work it in your soul's experience." "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained"—each according to his own measure—"let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Let us have our eyes fixed upon the same point. Let us not suppose there is one rule for man, and another rule for another man. We must all have our eyes fixed upon the same thing. I allow of degrees, but I allow of no difference—an experience similar, though not the same—not differing in nature, although it may differ in degree or circumstance.

He was looking forward, then, to something future. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended"—I do not know all that is to be known; I have not felt all that is to be felt; I have not experienced all that is to be experienced—"but this one thing I do"—like a racer running a race—"forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Now, what were the two things that he was aiming at? One was, that he might win Christ; and the other, that he might be found in him. These were what he hoped to enjoy. These were what he was pressing forward to obtain. This was the ultimatum of his wishes. This was the goal towards which his anxious steps were pressing.

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1. "That I might win Christ." What is the meaning of the words? Nothing short of a personal enjoyment of Christ in the soul. Nothing short of seeing him on earth by the eye of faith. Nothing short of seeing him as he is, in open vision, in the realms of glory above. I cannot allow for a single moment, that any other explanation will suffice for the expression, 'to win Christ.' Christ in the heart here—Christ in heaven hereafter. Christ seen by the eye of faith below—Christ seen by the eye of open vision above. Christ embraced and enjoyed in the arms of love and affection upon earth—Christ beheld for ever in the realms of endless bliss without a shadow between.

These, then, are the two things that every quickened soul is pressing on to obtain—"to win Christ; and to be found in him." What is my religion? Can I rest in that? What is my experience? Can I rest in that? What my consistency? Can I rest in that? What my knowledge? Can I rest in that? What my ability, my gifts, my understanding, my education, my enlightened views? Can I rest in them? If I do, it will be to my confusion. They will be found a bed too short, and a covering too narrow. On what can I rest, short of the Lord of life and glory? I never have been able to rest in anything short of him. I hope never to be able to rest in anything short of him.

But what is it to "win Christ?" It is to have him sweetly embraced in the arms of our faith. It is to feel him manifesting his heavenly glory in our souls. It is to have the application of his atoning blood, in all its purging efficacy, to our conscience. It is to feel our heart melted and swooning with the sweet ravishments of his dying love, shed abroad even to overpowering. This is winning Christ. Now, before we can thus win Christ, we must have a view of Christ, we must behold his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We must see the matchless dignity of his glorious Person, the atoning efficacy of his propitiating blood, the length and breadth, the depth and height, of his surpassing love. We must have our heart ready to burst with

pantings, longings, and ardent desires that this blessed Immanuel would come down from the heaven of heavens in which he dwells beyond the veil, into our heart, and shed abroad his precious dying love there.

Now, is not this your feeling, child of God? It has been mine, over and over again. Is it not your feeling as you lie upon your bed, sometimes, with sweet and earnest pantings after the Lord of life and glory? As you walk by the way, as you are engaged in your daily business, as you are secretly musing and meditating, are there not often the goings forth of these longings and breathings into the very bosom of the Lord? But you cannot have this, unless you have seen him by the eye of an enlightened understanding, by the eye of faith, and had a taste of his beauty, a glimpse of his glory, and a discovery of his eternal preciousness. You must have had this gleaming upon your eyes, as the beams of light gleam through the windows. You must have had it dancing into your heart, as the rays of the sun dance upon the waves of the sea. You must have had a sweet incoming of the shinings of eternal light upon your soul, melting it, and breaking it down at his footstool, as the early dawn pierces through the clouds of night. When you have seen and felt this you break forth—'O that I might win Christ!' Like the ardent lover who longs to win his bride, you long to enjoy his love and presence shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

But besides this winning him, enjoying him, having sweet discoveries of him, and swooning away in the arms of his blessed embracement below, there is a winning of him in glory; a being with him face to face; such a personal and individual enjoyment of him, in one's body and soul, as though there were not another saint in heaven; as though all the inexhaustible love of Immanuel, "God with us," were given to, and fixed upon one, and there was no other in heaven to love but that individual saint! So to win him, as the bride wins the bridegroom; so to win him, as to be with him for ever when time shall be no more! Now, nothing short of this will ever satisfy a Christian; nothing short of this will do for a living

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soul; nothing short of this will fill up the unbounded desires of an immortal spirit.

2. "And be found in him." The apostle knew a time was coming when God would search Jerusalem as with candles. He knew a day was hastening on when the secrets of all hearts would be revealed. He knew an hour was approaching when the eyes of the Lord would try, and the eyelids of the righteous Judge would weigh the words and actions of men. And he knew in his own soul's experience, that all who, in that awful day, were not found in Christ, would be consigned to the eternal pit of woe. He knew that when the Judge took his seat upon the great white throne, and heaven and earth fled away from his presence, no one could stand before his look of infinite justice and eternal purity, but those who had a vital standing in the Son of God. And therefore, looking to that awful time, and the solemnities of that day of judgment, that day of wonders, this was the desire of his soul—and towards that he pressed forward, as an active runner presses towards the goal—"that he might be found in him;" that when the Lord comes a second time to judgment, and his eyes run over the assembled myriads, he might be found in the Man who is "a refuge from the storm, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," the only Saviour from the wrath to come, which will one day burst upon the world. "Be found in him."—having a vital union to him—in him, as vitally as the branch is in the vine—in him, as actually as the limbs are in the body—in him, by an eternal, vital, and indefeasible union.

But he knew, that if he were found in him, he would have on a robe of righteousness such as the eyes of infinite Purity would accept. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,"—a cobweb garment, full of rents and tatters, which cannot shelter deep-dyed, stained, and defiled nature from the penetrating eye of infinite Purity. But as a beggar's dirty skin is seen through a beggar's tattered rags, he knew that if he stood in creature righteousness, the eye of infinite Justice would look through the rents and tatters of that creature righteousness, and see the black

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hue of depraved nature through those rents and tatters.

And he knew that if God saw sin in him—if there were no garment to cover his naked skin—the eye of infinite Purity would dash him down into eternal flames. Therefore he says, “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law”—a cobweb garment, a thing of rags and tatters, a patchwork counterpane—”but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”; that is, the righteousness of the God-man—the pure, perfect, and spotless obedience of Immanuel, “God with us,” received by the hand of living faith in the soul, and the enjoyment of it communicated to the heart through the operation of the faith of God’s elect: that I might have that righteousness “which is through the faith of Christ,” put upon my person, imputed to me, considered as my own, by my believing in Jesus, by my receiving him into my heart, by my looking wholly and solely unto him, by my implicit dependence upon him—the righteousness which is of God,” by the appointment of God, wrought out by Immanuel, “God with us,” and owned and accepted by God the Father, as a righteousness justifying all those that are found clothed in it.

Now I would ask whether you and I can lay down our feelings and our experience side by side with the experience and feelings of the apostle here? Thank God, I can in some measure find a similarity in my feelings, and a oneness in my experience with what the apostle has laid down as felt by himself in the text. ‘There was a time,’ say also some of you ‘when I trusted in the flesh, was very religious, very pious, very consistent, and was thought to be a very good Christian: and had I so lived, and so died. I had then no doubt I should go to heaven.’ But there was a change. You had the slaughtering-knife thrust into your heart to let out the lifeblood of natural religion. Then convinced, convicted, hewed down, and made to feel that in you, that is in your flesh, dwelt no good thing: and therefore, that all your righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and that you could not save yourself by anything you could say or do: you were brought down in contrition of spirit to cry, “God be

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merciful to me a sinner!”

Then, did you ever have a discovery of Jesus? some manifestation of the Lord to your soul? some gleams, glances, glimpses, and shinings in of heavenly rays? some liftings up? some sweet tokens? some comforting views of the Son of God in his beauty and glory? And did these produce this feeling in your soul?—Away with everything but Jesus! All my own righteousness, all my own attainments, all my idols, all my bosom sins, all that nature loves and the flesh cleaves to—I count them all but loss, I esteem them all but dung, that I would scarcely touch with my foot to kick it away. This, in solemn moments, is the heartfelt desire of my soul—to win Christ by a sweet manifestation of his dying love; to see him as he is in glory; and when he sits upon the great white throne, to be found in him, having a vital union to him, clothed in his righteousness, washed in his blood, and justified through the faith which is in him.’

Now, no experience short of this is worth a single thought. Nothing short of this operation of God the Spirit upon a sinner’s conscience, is worth the name of religion. It is only another form of the deceitful flesh; it is only another delusion of Satan as an angel of light; it is but a garment too short, and a bed too narrow; and it will leave the soul that lives and dies wrapped up in it, to the awful judgment of an angry God, who is “a consuming fire.”

Look to it, you who desire to fear God, whether you can find anything of this experience in your heart and conscience. A grain of it will save you, if you can find a grain; but if you have none of it, you may be the acutest critic of doctrinal truth, the most consistent character, the most confident professor in the world—it will never save you. If you live and die in a religion of the flesh, you will live and die with a lie in your right hand.

The Lord mercifully keeps us from being deluded! The Lord will keep his people: for the promise is, “He will keep the feet of his saints.” So that the Lord of life and glory will say when he stands before the Father at the last day, surrounded by his ransomed

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millions, “Behold I and the children which thou hast given me.”
“Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing!”

101 The Precious And The Vile

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, on Lord’s
Day Evening,
August 24, 1845

*“If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be
as my mouth.”*

Jeremiah 15:19

Of all the prophets in the Old Testament none seem to have walked in such a rough and rugged path respecting the ministry as Jeremiah. Four distinct circumstances met in his case, which made the prophetic office peculiarly burdensome to him. One was, the distresses of the times. The Lord at that time was bringing judgments, such as sword, pestilence, and famine, upon the house of Judah; and these judgments falling upon the people of God, as well as upon the ungodly, made Jeremiah’s lot peculiarly hard. A second circumstance was, the persecutions that he had to endure because he would not prophesy smooth things and speak peace where there was no peace. A third was, that he was left to know and manifest more of the rebellion and peevishness of his depraved nature than any of the prophets, if perhaps we except Jonah. And a fourth was, that the Lord hid his face from him, and did not appear for his comfort and deliverance in the way that Jeremiah earnestly longed to enjoy.

These four circumstances, meeting in Jeremiah’s case, made his path as the prophet of the Lord so rough and rugged. We find him, therefore, in this chapter giving vent to the passionate rebellion of his heart. He says, “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!”

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He pities his mother that ever she gave birth to a child so deeply wading in the waters of strife and contention, and obliged to stand up so boldly in the Lord’s name. “I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.” He felt it was a painful path to endure almost universal odium, when he knew in his conscience that he did not deserve it—that he was not one of those wretched usurers who deservedly met with public scorn and hatred, but a friend to Judah and Jerusalem. He therefore pours out his soul to the Lord in these peevish and fretful complaints.

Now the Lord meets the prophet on these points. He says, “Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?” that is, Shall this iron-hearted oppression that thou art passing under—shall this iron yoke thou art wearing—shall the bows of iron bent against thee—shall the gates of iron closed before thee—in a word, shall this trouble from without and within, which is to thee as hard and as strong as iron, be stronger than the northern iron and the steel of my covenant purposes, eternal counsels, and immutable decrees? Shall the stronger fall before the weaker? The northern iron being so much stronger and better tempered must break the ordinary metal; and the sharp steel must cut it utterly asunder.

This word from the Lord affords the prophet some little comfort; and therefore he answers, “O Lord God, thou knowest; remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering; know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone, because of thy hand, for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed?” And then, in a most inexcusable burst of passion, he says, “Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar?” What rash, unbecoming words for a creature of the earth, a worm of the dust, to address to the Almighty! “and as

waters that fail?” Hast thou promised, and wilt thou not perform? Hast thou declared thou wilt appear in my extremity, and shall it not come to pass? Are thy promises like a deceitful brook, dried up by the summer’s sun?’ Job 6:15-20 In answer to this passionate cry, passing over with infinite forbearance and longsuffering his unbecoming appeal, the Lord gives him this word to support his fainting spirit: “If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.”

It is as though the Lord said, ‘If thou return from this passionate, rebellious murmuring, from this unbelief and despondency, and yield thyself up into my hands, then will I bring thee again before this people as my honoured prophet, and thou shalt stand before me with acceptance as my ministering servant. And is not this thy highest honour—is not this thy greatest privilege—to be as my mouth? Dost thou want more? Have not I chosen thee for this purpose? Have I not called thee—have I not strengthened thee for the work? Is not that sufficient? Will I not stand by thee? Will I not bring thee safe through? Will I not honour my own word by thy lips? And canst thou think, when so honoured as to be my mouth to my people, that I will ever leave thee?’ Thus the Lord supports his fainting spirit, and encourages the prophet still to stand up boldly and faithfully in his name, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

Every servant of the Lord has to endure a measure of what Jeremiah went through. He has to endure persecutions, temptations, assaults from Satan, the workings of a rebellious heart, the hidings of the Lord’s countenance, and a whole train of trying circumstances. But these very things fit him for the ministry, and without them he would be but a dry breast to the Lord’s quickened family.

In considering these words this evening, I shall endeavour to take up the two clauses of the text as they lie before me; first, by shewing the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in the words,

“If thou take forth the precious from the vile;” and secondly, the promise connected with them “Thou shalt be as my mouth.”

I.—Ever since the fall of man there has been that which is “vile;” and ever since the first promise there has been that which is “precious” in the world. But let us dive a little deeper into the meaning of the words. I love to penetrate, as the Lord enables, into the mind of the Spirit. Let us see his mind in these two expressions—”precious” and “vile.” Whatever comes from the flesh—whatever springs from the Devil—whatever is tainted with the pollutions of this fallen world, is “vile:” that is, abject, refuse, contemptible, fit only to be rejected and trampled under foot. Whatever comes from a covenant God, bears his stamp, wears his mark, and shines forth out of his glorious fulness—that is “precious.” Therefore, in one word, we may say, everything connected with the flesh and with fallen man is utterly “vile;” and everything that comes from Jesus, and is connected with Jesus, is unutterably and unspeakably “precious.”

But, if we look at the words, we shall see, that “the vile” and “the precious” are apparently mingled together. And so they are in this fallen world. “If thou take forth the precious from the vile;” this implies that the precious and the vile are so apparently mingled together, so confusedly blended, and so often mistaken one for the other, that it requires divine wisdom and spiritual discernment to see what is vile and what is precious; and that it requires divine power and heavenly teaching to take forth, to separate, to draw out the tangled threads, and clearly distinguish that which is precious from that which is vile.

And if we look a little more closely at the text, we shall see it does not say, ‘If thou take forth the vile from the precious,’ but the precious from the vile;’ implying that the vile abounds in a far greater proportion than the precious. If there were a few grains of gold in a dunghill, you would not say, ‘Take the dunghill from the gold;’ but you would say, ‘Take the gold from the dunghill.’ If there were a few grains of wheat in a vast heap of chaff, you would not

say, 'Take the chaff from the wheat;' but, 'Take the wheat from the chaff.' So, the very expression, "Take forth the precious from the vile," implies not merely that the vile and the precious are lying together in one heap, but that the proportion of the vile is so great in comparison with the precious, that the precious is to be taken from the vile, and not the vile taken from the precious.

Now, we may observe, in order to clear up the subject, that there are four distinct points of view in which the precious are to be taken forth from the vile by every man of God. There are precious characters, and there are vile characters. There are precious doctrines, and there are vile doctrines. There are precious experiences, and there are vile experiences. And there are precious practices, and there are vile practices. And all these are so intermingled, apparently so confused and mixed up with one another, that it requires divine illumination and divine power so to take forth the precious from the vile, as to make them manifest to be what God has declared them.

We will take, then, a glance at these four distinct things, in which the precious and the vile are mingled together.

I.—There are precious characters, and there are vile characters. Who are the precious characters? The children of God. And who are the vile characters? The children of the Devil. With all the various ranks in society, with all the different dispositions of the mind of man, and with all their outward circumstances, there are really but two grand classes—the children of God, and the children of the Wicked One. The saints of God, we read, are precious. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" La 4:2 These are "precious," because God has made them so. They are jewels that will shine for ever in the Redeemer's mediatorial crown. They are precious, because they have an eternal standing in Christ, because God has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him, and because they are redeemed with his most precious blood "as of a Lamb without blemish and without

spot" 1Pe 1:19.

The "vile," on the other hand, are the children of the Wicked One; the tares that grow up with the wheat; the chaff that lies upon the threshing-floor with the pure grain; the dross that is mingled with the gold. And these are vile, because they are left to nature's corruption. They are vile, because they have no standing in the Son of God; not bought by redeeming blood, not justified by imputed righteousness, not quickened by the Holy Ghost, not brought into a participation of the treasures that are in Christ Jesus. God looks upon them as abject and refuse; and one day he will sweep them out of his presence, just as filth and dust are swept away out of our houses into the streets: "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them" Jer 6:30. "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts" Mal 4:3.

But these "precious" characters and these "vile" characters are intermingled. In a congregation, there are precious characters; in a congregation, there are vile characters. In a church, however pure, there are sure to be vile characters; and these vile characters are mingled with the precious, and require a discerning eye to see the difference. They are not, therefore, profane, but professing persons. If I walk through the streets, and see a man rolling in drunkenness, I know at once who he is; I am not deceived in him. When I see the men and women of this world flaunting about in pride, dress, and gaiety, I make no mistake; I do not suppose that they profess vital godliness. But when I go among the professing people of the day, then I require a discerning eye, a spirit of judgment to see and find out the difference between the mere professor and the real possessor—betwixt the "vile" hypocrite dressed up with a name to live, and a "precious," honest, God-fearing, spiritually-taught child of God. Now, whatever may be a man's consistency, enlightened judgment, gifts or abilities, if he is devoid of the grace of God, he is "vile;" he is but the chaff mingled with the wheat for a short time on the threshing-floor.

The minister of the Lord sent forth to do God's own work, is then to take forth the precious character from the vile character. But how so? By tracing out the work of grace upon the heart, by shewing the operations of the Holy Ghost in quickening, delivering, reviving, encouraging, and strengthening God's people. He will also shew, in a way not to be mistaken, the other side of the picture, pointing out with all clearness, and holding up conspicuously the distinction between the life of God in the soul, and all pretension, profession, or hypocrisy that comes short of the inward light and life of God the Spirit in the heart.

II.—Again. There are precious doctrines and there are vile doctrines. These precious doctrines and these vile doctrines are apparently intermingled; and the office of the man of God, the work of the gospel minister, is to take forth the one from the other; to disentangle and separate them; to hold up what is precious to be received in the love of it, and to hold up what is vile to be rejected and turned away from with abhorrence. Now, every man of God, sent forth to preach God's word, will set forth and hold up the precious doctrines of the gospel of Christ; and every man sent forth to preach God's word will expose and denounce every vile doctrine, however it may wear the appearance of truth, however dressed up with human eloquence, however masked and disguised by the "cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive."

1. The doctrine of the glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God, a Trinity in Unity, is a "precious" doctrine, and the foundation of all vital godliness.

2. The eternal Sonship of the Lord of life and glory—that he is the actual "Son of the Father, in truth and love;" that he is a Son by nature, and ever was a Son—is a "precious" doctrine, precious to the hearts of those who see the lovingkindness of God displayed in sending forth his only begotten Son out of his bosom to bleed and die for poor fallen man.

3. The incarnation of the Son of God, and his taking into union

with himself our nature, and yet a holy, a spotless and unsinning nature, is another "precious" doctrine.

4. The personality and operations of God the Spirit, his work upon the soul in all its various branches, his divine teachings, his heavenly leadings, his special operations, his spiritual guidings—every part and every branch of the work of the Holy Ghost as a distinct Person in the glorious Godhead, equal with the Father and the Son, is a "precious" doctrine.

5. The redemption of God's people with atoning blood, that the Lord Jesus laid down his life for his sheep,—that he made a propitiation for their sins,—that he put away all their iniquities by his own sacrifice,—and that he is the only atonement made for sin—is a "precious" doctrine.

6. The superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of our iniquity; the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life; the sovereignty, freeness, and indefeasibility of grace—is a "precious" doctrine.

7. The sure perseverance of the saints till they reach the eternal mansions prepared for them before all worlds; the certainty of their attaining to their heavenly inheritance, and that they shall stand before the Lord in glory—is a "precious" doctrine.

In a word, all the doctrines of grace that are according to godliness, are precious to the man of God, and precious to the people of God.

But there are vile doctrines. There are vile Arian, vile Socinian, and vile Arminian doctrines, that detract from, that sully and tarnish the glory of free grace and the glory of a Three-One God, which elevate the creature instead of debasing, and lower the Saviour instead of exalting him. These are "vile" doctrines.

Everything that exalts the Saviour, and humbles the sinner, is "precious;" everything that puffs up the sinner, and degrades the Saviour, is "vile." Every doctrine fraught with godliness and divine fruits—every doctrine which is according to Scripture, that bears the stamp of God upon it, that is attended with the blessing of

the Holy Ghost to the soul, that lays the sinner low, and exalts a precious Jesus in his heart—every such doctrine is precious. And every doctrine that feeds the pride of man, that exalts the creature, that invests him with some fancied natural self-righteousness, that deceives and deludes him into the belief that he is something in the sight of God which he is not—every such doctrine is “vile.” And the man of God will take forth the precious from the vile; he will, as the Lord the Spirit enables him, shew the difference between those precious doctrines that exalt the Saviour, and those vile doctrines that exalt the sinner. He will shew the difference between those precious doctrines that give the glory to God, and those vile doctrines that take the crown from the brow of Immanuel, and place it on fallen man.

III.—Again. There are precious experiences and vile experiences. Just as the vile characters and the precious characters meet in the same chapel, and often sit in the same pew; and just as the precious doctrines and the vile doctrines are often apparently mingled together: so there are precious experiences and vile experiences. And the man of God is as much to take forth the precious experience from the vile experience, as the precious doctrine from the vile doctrine.

But what is precious experience? Everything that the Holy Spirit does in the soul, everything that springs out of his divine operation in the heart, is a precious experience: and every imitation, every delusion—everything that springs from self and Satan, however it counterfeit the work of God—is “vile.” And these two things are to be distinguished; their differences are to be explained, and one is to be taken forth, separated, and discriminated from the other.

1. Now, these “precious” experiences are, first, an experience of our own sinfulness, guilt, misery, helplessness, and ruin. To know this by divine teaching; to feel that we are sinners; to have the corruptions of our heart laid bare; to mourn and sigh on account of indwelling sin; to see the spirituality of the holy law, and behold the inflexible justice of a justly-incensed God; to view his glorious

perfections, and feel our heart trembling within us at the sight of his glory., as a holy, just, sin-avenging Jehovah—this is a precious experience.

But then, there are vile experiences that counterfeit this. There is the working of a natural conscience, as there is the working of a spiritual conscience. There are convictions, troubles, sinkings, fears, which do not come from God, but spring from the flesh, or from the deceits of Satan as an angel of light.

The man of God is then to take forth the one from the other. He is to describe the difference between the two, to shew their distinct effect, to trace out the workings and to manifest the result of each. If our temptations and fears, our troubles and sorrows, our corruptions and burdens, our trials and perplexities never drive us out of refuges of lies, never lead to Jesus, never issue in gospel deliverance, never bring us to the Redeemer’s feet, never make him precious to our souls—they are “vile.” The man of God will trace them out; he will look at their result; he will describe their fruit; he will work out, as far as the Lord has taught him, their inward operations, and shew to what end they tend, and what they produce. He will shew, that if these convictions do not lead the soul out of self, do not break to pieces the arm of creature help, do not beat out of lying refuges, do not make the soul honest and sincere, do not bring it with weeping and supplications to the Lord of life and glory, do not soften, do not break down and lay low, do not humble, do not separate from the world, do not empty of self, do not make Jesus precious; if these troubles and exercises begin where they end, and end where they begin—in the flesh, they will be condemned by him as “vile.”

2. But secondly, every experience of the grace that bringeth salvation, every manifestation of mercy, every shining in of the light of the Lord’s countenance, every ray of hope, every sweet sensation of the pardon of sin, every comforting testimony from the Lord’s own most blessed lips, is a “precious” experience. But then, there is a “vile” experience that counterfeits it; there is a

carnal presumption that mimics living faith. There is a false hope, the hope of the hypocrite, that counterfeits a good hope through grace. There are fleshly affections that counterfeit the love of God shed abroad in the heart. There is a false deliverance that counterfeits the deliverance into the liberty of the gospel. There are false comforts that counterfeit the consolations of the Spirit. There are false liftings up of fleshly excitement which counterfeit the liftings up of the light of God's countenance.

The man of God will thus also take forth the "precious" from the "vile," and shew the difference betwixt "precious" experiences and "vile" experiences. But how is he to know one from the other? An experience that is "precious" softens; a "vile" experience hardens. A "precious" experience melts, subdues, lays low, overpowers, overcomes, and brings to the feet of Jesus; a "vile" experience emboldens, puffs up, exalts, draws away from vital truth, and leaves the soul upon the wide sea of error. True testimonies make the conscience tender; presumptuous claims only harden and sear it. Real teachings from God bring out of the world; mere counterfeits and imitations of divine teaching take a man more into it. Real experience leads us more into union with the people of God; counterfeit experience takes us from them. Real experience brings us down in humility to lie at the feet of Jesus; counterfeit experience lifts up into presumption to lay claim to his atoning blood, without any manifestation of it to the conscience.

A "precious" experience makes the soul meek, and fills it with unutterable sensations of brokenness, softness, and tenderness; a "vile" experience only leaves it more hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. A "precious" experience is attended with changes, ups and downs, sinkings and risings, ins and outs, withdrawals of the Lord's presence and shinings in of the Lord's countenance; alternate seasons of light and darkness, alternate feelings of life and death, alternate sensations of coldness and warmth, alternate times of breathing forth the heart into his bosom, and alternate times when all is dark, shut up, and contracted. But a "vile" experience

knows nothing of changes; it is always at one spot; like ditch water, always remaining at one level; not like a spring to refresh, but like a standing pool,—always stagnant, and often stinking.

Now the man of God is to take forth one from the other; to trace out the work of grace upon the soul, and point out counterfeit imitations. And so to take forth, so to distinguish, and discriminate between them, that every child of God may have a testimony in his conscience that he has felt the operations of God the Spirit, and that the work upon his heart is sound and genuine.

IV.—But again. There are precious practices and there are vile practices. And these "precious" practices and these "vile" practices are to be separated; the "precious" practice is to be taken forth, and the "vile" practice is to be shewn up in its true colours.

Everything that springs from the flesh is "vile," and everything that springs from the Spirit is "precious." Two persons shall do the same act: it shall be a "precious" act in the one man, it shall be a "vile" act in the other. This evening, two men shall pass the same plate; they shall give exactly the same sum; and yet the gift shall be "precious" in the one, and the very same gift shall be "vile" in the other. Why? Because it springs from different motives. When a man does what he does with a single eye to God's glory—when he is moved by the Spirit—when he is led by gracious feelings, when he is wrought upon by divine motives, what he does is "precious." But when he does the very same thing from carnal motives and fleshly reasons, from the workings of nature in its best and brightest form—that very same act is "vile" in him which is precious in another man.

But these things are often mingled together; and therefore the man of God is sent to distinguish them. There are wolves in sheep's clothing: there are goats that bleat, and sheep that grunt. The swine may be washed, and the dog may leave his vomit; but this does not give either a sheep's heart. A sheep may besmear itself; but that does not give it the heart of a dog. So a minister, who stands up in the Lord's name, is to distinguish betwixt the "precious" and the

“vile.” He is not to set down all to the Spirit’s work that appears at the first blush and merely at the surface to be of his operation: he is to enter, beyond the surface, into the depth of divine teaching in the soul, and look into the secret chambers where God the Spirit works. And then he will find, that many things are precious which apparently are vile, and many things vile which apparently are precious.

There shall be two men in this congregation; they shall come here regularly; they shall sit upon the same seat, perhaps belong to the same church, believe the same doctrines, profess the same truths; the one, perhaps, may have greater gifts than the other, more able to explain his own mind than the other; and yet the one shall be “precious,” and the other “vile.” Their appearance is the same, their conduct the same, their consistency the same; yea, the “precious” may not walk so consistently apparently, nor be outwardly so unblemished as the other; yet one shall be really “precious,” and the other truly “vile.” The man of God is to look at objects in the Spirit’s light; he is to trace out the work of God upon the heart, and separate that which is of God from that which is of man. This is the distinction he is to make, this is the line he is to draw. Whatever comes from the flesh—be it in its foulest, or be it in its fairest form—be it in its brightest, or be it in its blackest colours—is vile, abject, to be cast aside, and swept out of God’s house. And whatever comes from God—however weak, however feeble, however trembling, however scanty, however little—is to be cherished, because it has come from God. He is not to be deceived by appearances, not to jumble into one vast heap precious characters and vile characters, precious doctrines and vile doctrines, precious experiences and vile experiences, precious practices and vile practices; but he is to take them forth, to separate them, to shew what is precious and what is vile; to lay them clearly down, cast the light of Scripture upon them, and trace them out by what he himself knows of the operations of the Spirit upon his own conscience. If he vitally and experimentally do this, he will be

“as God’s mouth.”

II.—This leads me to the second part of the subject—to be “as God’s mouth.” What is God’s mouth to do? God’s mouth speaks to the heart. God’s mouth addresses itself to men’s conscience. God’s mouth does a work for eternity. God’s mouth penetrates through the ear into the very depth of the human soul, into which a heart-searching God alone can look. Now, if a man is enabled, by divine teaching, to take forth the precious from the vile, he is “as God’s mouth,” because then he speaks to men’s consciences. If all be jumbled up together in one huge heap, if no line of distinction be drawn, if no separation be made—if there be no searching, no trying, no weighing up, no speaking to men’s hearts and consciences, professor and profane, elect and reprobate, the hypocrite and the genuine child of God, are all mingled together, and the whole work of the Spirit upon the heart is made confused and uncertain. But when a man is enabled to trace out the heavenly teachings and divine operations of God the Spirit upon the heart and conscience, and say, ‘This is of God, and that is of nature; this springs from divine teaching, and that is a counterfeit imitation; this is fleshly, and that is spiritual; this is the work of God, and that is the subtilty of the Devil;’ when he is thus enabled to disentangle them, to take one from the other, hold them up, explain them, and cast the light of the Spirit upon them, then God’s children have a testimony, and will say, ‘I have felt that!’ ‘I have known that!’ ‘this I have experienced!’ ‘this has taken place in my heart!’ ‘I am sure I have felt this,’ says one; ‘I believe I have known that,’ says another. When the work of the Spirit is thus cleared up, there is a witness in the hearts of God’s people that the minister preaches God’s truth.

Now the Lord’s people have in their hearts that which is “vile,” and that which is “precious.” They have a vile nature, and they have a precious nature. They have the workings of flesh in them, and they have the workings of grace. They have a nature that is as corrupt as it can be; and they have a holy and pure nature which cannot sin. But in their feelings these two are often mingled.

They have vile desires, and they have precious desires. They have vile workings, and they have precious workings. And these are apparently mingled together, so that they often cannot tell—'Does this come from God, or does this come from the Devil?' 'I have been cast down—whence does that come? From God, or from Satan?' 'I have been raised up—whence does that come? From God, or from the Wicked One?' 'I have been comforted—whence did that spring? From the excitement of nature, or from the power of grace?' 'I have had sweet discoveries whence came they? From God, or from Satan as an angel of light?'

Thus the child of God will be exercised. He will not consider his experience is genuine as a matter of course. It must be explained and opened up to him. The light of God must shine upon it.

But when a man of God comes forth, and is enabled to take the precious from the vile, shew what is God's work, and what is not God's work, and what is the true teaching of the Spirit—then a child of God has a testimony in his conscience—'this is of God'—'this is really genuine'—'this will stand in the day of judgment'—'I have a witness in my heart, a testimony in my soul, that I am under divine teaching.' In this way a minister, as he takes forth the precious from the vile, becomes "as God's mouth." What he speaks comes with power. It does not merely fall upon the outward ear; it enters the heart, and does its work upon the conscience; it comes as from God into the hearts of God's people.

But what does God's mouth do? God's mouth does two things. God's mouth depresses, and God's mouth raises. God's mouth convinces, and God's mouth converts. God's mouth pulls down, and God's mouth builds up. God's mouth slaughters, and God's mouth heals. God's mouth brings trouble, and God's mouth brings consolation. And the Lord's people want the Lord alone to speak to their souls. It is not what man can say that comforts their hearts; they must have the Lord's own lips, speaking with the Lord's own power. Every minister taught of God, commissioned by him, equipped by him, and thrust out by him, has this work to do, and

to be "as God's mouth" to God's people; that what he speaks may have an effect—some to kill, and some to heal; some to wound, and some to comfort; some to cast down, and some to raise up; some to bring out of nature's righteousness, and some to clothe instrumentally with the glorious robe of Christ's righteousness. But if he be not "as God's mouth," he cannot do this. It will be all confusion: and there will be no separation, no heart-searching, no shewing things in their true light, no convictions, no consolations, no bindings, no deliverances.

Are these the things you love? When you go to hear, what is the prevailing bent of your heart? For amusement, from tradition, from custom? These are "vile" motives, not "precious" motives; for they do not spring out of the operations of God's Spirit. Do you go for this one purpose—that God may speak to your soul? Do you go with a single eye, looking up to the Lord, that he himself would speak to your heart—whether it be to reprove, or whether it be to comfort—whether it be to cast down, or whether it be to lift up? Do you look up to the Lord of life and glory, that he himself would speak to your heart? Now, if you do, you will want a minister who is "as God's mouth." You will not want his preaching to be all jumble and confusion; you have enough confusion and jumble in your hearts; you will want things disentangled. Sometimes you cannot see who are true characters; you will want them held up to your view, that you may see whether you are one. Sometimes in reference to doctrine, the mind will be confused; and you will want the truth held up to your view, that you may see which is the doctrine that bears the stamp of God upon it. Sometimes you will feel confused as to your own experience: it is not deep enough, or clear enough. It is a weighty matter with you, and you want to have it traced out, weighed up, and cleared up, that you may have a testimony it is the experience of God's saints. Sometimes you are perplexed as to practice—'Is this thing to be done, or not to be done? Which is right, and which is wrong? Is it consistent or inconsistent? Is it agreeable to the mind and will of God?' Now, you want a minister

who can do this for you; who can shew you who are the people of God, and who are not—what is true in doctrine, and what is false in doctrine—what is sound in experience, and what is delusive—what is true in practice, and what is wrong. If you have eyes to see what is precious, and eyes to see what is vile—if you have hearts to love what is precious, and hearts to hate what is vile—you will want to have the crooked made so straight, the dark made so light, and the perplexed so plain, that you may see clearly for yourselves where you are and what you are, and thus have a sweet testimony that God is your God.

But where shall we find this ministry? Where shall we look for it? It is a mercy if you have it here. It is a mercy if the Lord sends forth from time to time his servants into this place, to take forth the precious from the vile. And I believe the Lord has a purpose in causing this place to stand for his own glory, that there may be such a ministry among his children, according to men's different abilities, graces, and gifts. The Lord, we would fain hope, has purposed that this place may stand at this end of the town, that the precious might be taken forth from the vile, and thus God's mouth might speak from within these walls to the heart and conscience of God's people. If it were not so, I should have no wish to stand here. I know that unless the Lord has taught and enabled me to take forth the precious from the vile, I have no business in any pulpit. For a man to stand there, to confuse truth and error, to blend together the children of God and the children of the Wicked One, to throw into one vast heap truth and lies, and not to distinguish betwixt the work of God and the work of the flesh—I know this, that God has never sent him into the vineyard. And I am sure, if God has not sent him, he will never profit God's people. But those whom the Lord has thus sent, thus equipped, and thus commissioned, he will bless to his people, for they are "as God's mouth." And you that fear God's name will sometimes have a sweet testimony in your consciences, that the mouth of God is speaking through them into your heart. You will have your doubts and fears sometimes

removed: you will have your perplexities sometimes cleared up; you will have the secret feelings of your heart traced out; you will have the whole work of the Spirit upon your conscience brought before your eyes; you will have from time to time the secret liftings up of the light of God's countenance upon you, and refreshings from his presence, worth more than a thousand worms. And if you have ever felt the value and tasted the sweetness of these things in your soul, you will cleave to that ministry, and you will cleave to that people, who love these things. You will cleave to the men who, by divine grace and heavenly teachings, are enabled to set forth these things before God's own tried family; and you will say, 'To know and feel these things is all my salvation, and all my desire; let my lot be cast among this people, and let me enjoy the manifestations of the love and mercy of God to my soul. With this I can live contented, and with this I can die happy.'

Now, have you any testimony in your conscience that such is the ministry in this chapel? Have you ever felt the men of God who have stood up in this place to be the mouth of God to you? Have they ever laid bare the secrets of your hearts? Have they ever traced out the work of grace upon your conscience? Have any consolations been received into your soul from their lips? Then you have a testimony that it is the word of God. And if so, you will, from time to time, prize such a ministry, and cleave to it with purpose of heart.

102 The Knowledge Of Good And Evil

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening,
August 26, 1845

"For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Romans 7:19

Doubts will sometimes cross the mind as to the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures; but doubts will more often cross the mind as to the truth and reality of our own experience. Now there are certain considerations that are calculated to meet these doubts, whether they arise from infidelity, or whether they spring from unbelief. For instance: if we find that several children of God in distinct places, and under different circumstances, all testify to the same feelings, and if we find in our hearts the same feelings, we have so far an evidence that they are genuine. Again; if we find the experience of these people and our experience, as similar to theirs, recorded in the Word of God, it is a confirmation, not merely of the truth of the Scripture, but also of the truth of their and our experience.

I will illustrate this by what has occurred to me since I have been in London. A short time ago, I went to see a poor woman who has been bedridden more than four years, and during that space of time has scarcely ever been free from pain for a quarter of an hour. Now, she told me that all the bodily pains she had undergone were as nothing compared to the inward conflict produced by a body of sin and death struggling against the life of God in her soul. I can say the same. I have had my trials; trials of body, trials of circumstances, trials of mind, trials of different kinds; but I never found any trial equal to the internal conflict caused by a body of sin and death. A short time afterwards, I went to see another bedridden female who had been confined to a bed of languishing about the same space of time. Talking of her bodily sufferings, without my mentioning what I had felt, she said, "All this pain and languishing is nothing compared to the pain I feel from the workings of sin in my carnal mind." There was the same distinct independent evidence, and the same response in my bosom.

When I go to the Word of God, I find the Apostle Paul expressing exactly the same feelings, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When he was

suffering under persecution, there was no such piteous cry. When the stones came thick and fast round his head, we read of no such mournful groan. Yea, he tells us, he took "pleasure in infirmities, in persecutions, in reproaches for Christ's sake." They wrung no cry from his bosom. In the jail at Philippi, with his back sore with stripes, and his feet fast in the stocks, he and his fellow-prisoner sang praises unto God. (Acts 16:25.) But the workings of sin in his carnal mind, the opposition of his depraved nature to the grace of God—it was that, and that only, which made him feel himself to be truly a "wretched man."

Now is not this a confirmation of the two points I have alluded to? Is it not, first, a striking testimony to the truth of the Scripture, when we find in it our own experience traced out? And is it not, secondly, a confirmation also of the truth and genuineness of our experience, when we find it consistent, not only with the Scripture, but also with the experience of those in whom we see distinctly the grace of God?

And this, I believe, is the great blessing which the church has derived from the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. God having inspired his holy Apostle there to write down his own personal experience, and depict in vivid colours the inward work of the law and the pressure of the body of sin and death, it has met with such an echo and found such a response in the bosom of God's family, as to prove to them again and again a rich mine of comfort and strength.

In considering the words of the text this evening, I shall endeavour to speak upon them according to the two clauses, as they lie before us—"The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."

I.—When man fell, he fell utterly. He did not fall half way, but he fell completely. And, in fact, a creature that falls at all from righteousness never can fall in any other way than completely. When the angels fell, they fell to the thorough extent of angelic nature; and when man fell, he fell to very depth of human nature.

The fall of devils and the fall of man only differed in this—that the one fell to the full extent of angelic nature, and the other to the full extent of human nature. So that there is no medium, no compromise, no half way; but man in falling, fell to the very deepest point to which human nature could fall.

When the Lord is pleased, by a work of grace upon the heart, to bring his people to a knowledge of himself he bestows upon them that which is communicable of his own nature, as we read “partakers of the divine nature.” Now when the Lord communicates to the soul this new nature, he gives it a new understanding; a new conscience, a new will, and new affections. The understanding of man’s heart by nature is dark, depraved, benighted, and besotted; he therefore needs a new understanding, a new spiritual understanding, whereby to perceive spiritual things; for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” No natural understanding, however elevated or refined, can ever receive, know, or appreciate spiritual things. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” This is called in Scripture, “the opening of the eyes.”

But besides this, man’s conscience by nature is seared; it cannot distinguish between good and evil; it is unable to feel the spirituality of God’s law, or to distinguish things that differ; it is unable to believe that what God has commanded must be obeyed, and what God has threatened must be accomplished.

But further; man’s will by nature is as depraved as his understanding and his conscience. This carnal will chooses and delights in evil, revels in it, and has no desire except in the gratification of self and the indulgence of its lusts. Man therefore needs a new will, that his new will may choose what God approves of, and turn away from that which he forbids; that his new will may be enlisted upon the side of God and truth, to love the things that he loves and hate the things that he hates.

Man’s affections also, by nature are earthly, carnal, and sensual, entirely bent on the gratification of self. He therefore needs the communication of new, holy, and spiritual affections, whereby

his will not merely chooses what is good, but the affections also, the tender affections of the heart flow out toward it, desire it, and centre in it.

Now this new nature that the Lord thus creates in the soul, consisting of this new understanding, new conscience, new will, and new affections, is always enlisted upon the side of God and truth. It always must approve of that which God approves; and it always must abhor that which he hates. But so long as we are in this tabernacle, we shall have our old understanding, our old conscience, our old will, and our old affections. And these being susceptible of no amelioration, these undergoing no process whereby they are refined, purified, and made better, will always be bent upon that evil into which they fell when our first progenitor fell from original purity. Our natural understanding will always be darkened, our natural conscience always be hard, our natural will always be towards evil, and our natural affections always cleave to the world and the flesh. Hence springs the conflict. My enlightened understanding and my darkened understanding; my new conscience and my old conscience; my renewed will and my unregenerated will; my heavenly affections and my earthly affections, will always lust one against the other: “for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

The Apostle felt the conflict which springs from the inward workings of these two distinct principles in his bosom, when he said, “The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.” If you observe he speaks of the will as enlisted on the side of God; his heart, his new heart, was bent Godward—sincerely, earnestly, and spiritually desiring to know the will of God, and do it. There was his new heart, his enlightened understanding, his spiritual conscience, and his heavenly affections all enlisted on the side of God; and yet, through the depravity of his fallen nature, he was continually drawn aside from the path in which he would fain

walk, and continually diverted into that crooked road into which he ever dreaded to fall.

But let us, with somewhat more clearness and distinctness, trace out some of the particulars in which “the good we would, we do not.”

1. We would worship God in spirit and in truth. That is a good thing. It is one of the good gifts that come down from the Father of lights; it is what every regenerated man desires to feel and follow after; it is what every quickened soul loves to perform. But when we would worship God in spirit and in truth, when we would feel that his eye is upon us, when we would pour out our heart before him in simplicity and godly sincerity, when we would offer spiritual sacrifices, and render acceptable worship, “the good that we would, we do not.” Something base, carnal, filthy, or self-righteous springs out of our depraved nature which renders us utterly unable to do the things that we would. We cannot worship God as we would in spirit and in truth. It is a mercy to be able to offer spiritual worship for one five minutes—aye, shall I further limit it?—one minute! Real spiritual worship, a sensible feeling of God’s presence, a heartfelt prostration of spirit before him, the pouring out of our soul simply and spiritually into his bosom—one minute’s spiritual worship of this nature is worth a whole day’s prayer meeting without it. But we cannot do it; it is only so far as the Lord works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure that we can offer these spiritual sacrifices.

2. We would believe in the Lord of life and glory. We would receive him into our heart as our Lord and our God. We would live upon his atoning blood as our only availing sacrifice. We would trust in his propitiation for sin, as our only pardon and peace. We would look to his glorious righteousness, as the only robe in which we can stand accepted before God. But we cannot do it. No sooner does the desire to do so spring up in the heart; no sooner is there the child-like simplicity of a believing soul, to look to, trust

in, and lean solely upon the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, than some infidel, unbelieving, blasphemous, obscene, daring, presumptuous, or otherwise vile thought crosses our mind, and we are utterly unable to look to and hang upon the Lord Jesus in the way that we spiritually would.

3. We would have a single eye to the glory of God in all that we do. We would consult his will. We would act simply as the Lord has commanded in his word. We would have pure, spiritual, tender motives. We would have such sincerity and honesty of soul Godward, that all we say, all we think, and all we do, should spring out of singleness of eye to God’s glory. This is a good that our soul at times is earnestly bent upon. But “the good that we would, we do not.” Some sensual motive, some vain-glorious thought, some proud desire, some secret lusting of self after its own exaltation, springs up. Our eye becomes darkened; the glory of God is put out of sight; and we cannot do the things, we cannot speak the words, we cannot live nor act to God’s glory as we would.

4. We would (and it is a good thing to do so) make the word of God our rule and guide in all things. We would lay it down as a pattern to which our lives should be conformed; we would desire to obey its precepts, and implicitly follow its commands with childlike faith. It is a thing that we desire to do; an attainment that we breathe after in the movements of our soul Godward. But self-will often crosses the holy word of God; self-will fights against the pure motive that works in the spiritual mind, desiring that God’s will should be our will. The attempt is defeated; the flower is crushed in the bloom before it expands; it does not last long enough to become solid fruit; but a chilling blast out of the mouth of self withers the bud before it opens into blossom.

5. We would feel the Lord’s presence in our soul. We would have testimony upon testimony that we are the Lord’s. We would have smiles, kisses, and embracements from the Lord of life and glory. We would have sign upon sign, token upon token, that we are interested in his precious love and blood. This is a good thing.

It is good that the heart should thus be established with grace. But we cannot do the things that we would; we cannot procure these love smiles, love kisses, love testimonies, and love embracements. Sometimes our heart is so hard, our mind so dark, and our affections so wandering from the Lord, that we have not even a desire to feel in our souls the presence of him whose love is heaven begun below.

6. We would desire (and it is a good thing to desire it, for it is a part of that which springs from the Author of every good thing in the heart) to have the mind and likeness of Jesus stamped upon our soul. We would desire to be led into a fellowship with his sufferings, and to be made conformable unto his death. We would put on his holy image. We would be clothed with humility after his pattern. We would walk in his footsteps who was meek and lowly in heart. But we cannot do the good that we would. We cannot, as we fain would, have stamped upon our mind the likeness and image of Jesus; and if we have it for a few moments stamped upon our hearts, it is like a child writing his name upon the sand by the sea-shore; the first wave that comes blots it out, and leaves not a trace behind. So, if for a few moments we feel gentle, humble, quiet, meek-hearted, and have communion with the Lord of life and glory in his sufferings; if a trickling tear sometimes distils from the surcharged eye; if there be some melting sensations towards the suffering, bleeding Lamb of God—no sooner has the Spirit traced out that writing in our heart, that a wave of corruption comes over the marks of his gracious fingers, so that we can scarcely read the impression that his touch has left. “The good that we would, we do not.”

7. To live in every respect agreeable to the gospel; so that when reviled, not to revile again; when smitten on the one cheek, to turn the other; to live a life of communion with God, of separation from the world, of deadness to the things of time and sense, of real looking unto and living upon the Lord of life and glory, so as to live a life of faith and prayer carried on by the power of the Spirit in

the heart—this is a good thing; we would desire to do it; we would desire to feel it; we would desire it should be carried out in our life and conversation. But alas! of this we must say also, “The good that we would, we do not.”

8. That our words might be such as should not be inconsistent with our profession; that our actions should not be such as the enemies of the gospel, and even the friends of the gospel, might justly point out as unbecoming—is a good at times we desire; especially when we have been pierced by the sting of guilt, or when we have had some views of the Lord of life and glory, and have had some pantings of heart that we might know him, and the power of his resurrection. “But the good that we would, we do not.” Self, pride, vain glory, sin, corruption in various shapes and forms, intertwine with every thought, speak in every word, and run as in a stream through every action. I have compared sin sometimes to the thread that marks the cordage of the ships in Her Majesty’s service. Every rope and every sail has a red thread running through it; you may cut the rope or hack the sail into a thousand parts, still there is the red thread to serve as a mark to detect it if depredated. So it is spiritually. Cut your heart to pieces, tear it to threads, mutilate it into a thousand fragments—the thread of sin remains intertwining, interlacing, and intermingling itself with every thought, every desire, and every imagination. There it is; you may cut the heart to pieces, but you cannot cut that thread out.

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 believe in the Lord, yet are often unable to raise up any faith in his name; that they would have sweet communion with a risen Jesus, and yet have such sensual union with the things of time and sense; that they would be Christians throughout in every part, in word, thought, and deed, yet, in spite of all, feel their carnal mind, their wretched

depravity intertwining, interlacing, gushing forth, contaminating with its polluted stream every thing without and within, so as to make them sigh, groan, and cry being burdened.

II.—But there is another part to this picture. We may turn it, and look at the other side of the canvass. “The evil which I would not, that I do.” Can this be the experience of a Christian? Can this be a child of God? Can the Holy Ghost dwell in such a heart? Is this being conformed to Christ’s image? Is this being a pilgrim travelling through the wilderness? Is this a sheep of Christ’s flock? Is this a member of Christ’s body? Is this the Spouse of the holy Lamb of God? Well may men say that the Apostle did not describe his own experience, if they felt nothing of the same kind in their own souls. If they never groaned, as Paul did, being burdened, I do not wonder that they say “this was his experience before he was converted.” “Surely, such a description as this—’The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do,—surely such words are not the words of a Christian, of an Apostle, of one who had been in the third heavens, who had known Jesus, and the power of his resurrection; surely, surely this must have been the bent of his mind before he was quickened by divine grace.” So argues free-will and fleshly holiness in the heart of a pharisee. But what a mercy it is for you and me who know the plague of our heart, who sigh and groan daily being burdened by a body of sin and death, and at times feel ourselves to be the filthiest of the filthy, the vilest of the vile, and the guiltiest of the guilty—what a mercy it is for such poor defiled worms, such crawling reptiles, such self-condemned sinners, to find that the Apostle Paul had this conflict in his bosom, and was commissioned by the Father of lights to write it down, that you and I, and such as we, may suck at this breast of consolation by having it opened up in our soul’s experience.

“The evil which I would not, that I do.” If you observe, the will is enlisted on the side of God; and this is the difference between one dead in sin, and one who has the life of God in his soul. “Thy

people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” A willing people! A will toward good, a will toward God, a will for things that God loves; and whatever may befall a child of God, however sin rages in him, this will remains unaltered. If he be drawn into sin, he is drawn against his will. If he do not what he desires to do, still his will is to do it; his will remains unaltered. He may fall into the deepest quagmire of sin; but still the will of his new nature is Godward, though he may be overtaken and plunged into the slough.

Let us, then, as we have attempted to describe “the good that we would, and do not,” now reverse it, and look at the other side, “the evil which we would not, that we do.”

1. To be continually disbelieving and doubting the truth of God’s word, and the work of grace upon the soul; to be full of infidelity and unbelief—is not this an evil? is not this with some an almost continual evil? Is not this felt as a leprosy, a plague-spot in the hearts of many of God’s quickened family? Now we would not do this. Here is the difference betwixt the believer and the unbeliever; the real infidel, and the child of God who carries infidelity in his bosom. The real unbeliever loves to disbelieve; he has no will to believe the truth. The infidel doubts, and loves to doubt; he never wants to know truth; he never wants to get rid of his blasphemies, but rather seeks things to confirm them; any argument, any book, any person that will strengthen his infidelity, and confirm his unbelief, he will heartily grasp at; but he has no desire for anything to overcome, destroy, and remove it, nor for anything that is ever an antagonist to it. Now the child of God has a conflict from infidelity working in his mind. He feels unbelief and infidelity struggling in his heart; but does he seek for things to strengthen, or to overcome them? Does he seek for arguments to confirm his faith, or his suspicions and unbelief? This is the difference between a dead unbeliever and (shall I use the expression?) a living unbeliever. To have a principle in your flesh that cleaves to unbelief is an evil, and is felt to be an evil. The children of God do not glory in, and gloat over their corruptions; they do not nourish their unbelief, or dandle it as a

babe in the arms of affection; they do not pride themselves upon it, and think the more unbelief they have the greater Christians they are. That is a libel charged upon them by their enemies. It is their grief, their sorrow, their distress; rid them of that, and you would confer upon them a blessing; take that away, and you would take away that which causes them so many groans, and so deeply exercises, tries, and plagues their souls.

2. To be carnally-minded, and unable to lift our affections heavenward; but, on the contrary, to go grovelling here below, buried under a whole dung-heap of carnality and filth, is an “evil.” The children of God know by painful experience that to be carnally-minded is death; that it brings darkness into their minds, barrenness into their souls, hardness into their conscience, grief into their hearts. But they are carnally-minded in spite of all their desires to be heavenly minded. They feel carnal-mindedness to be an evil they are daily and hourly plagued with. Compare the moments that we are spiritually-minded with the moments that we are carnally-minded; weigh them in an even balance; how many are the moments during the day that we are carnally-minded? How every tie of nature; how every thing about us; every sight we see; every sound we hear; every object we touch; the whole world with which we are surrounded; how all feed our carnal minds! I cannot go into the street, without feeding my carnal mind; I can scarcely hear a sound, without feeding my carnal mind; I can scarcely open my eyes, without feeding my carnal mind; I cannot go into a shop, or take up a book, I cannot speak, or hear others speak, without more or less feeding my carnal mind. And yet I am continually plagued, grieved, and troubled by it.—”The evil which would not, that I do.”

3. That we should seek the exaltation of self in its various shapes and forms is an evil, a bitter evil, known to be so to God’s people. In our right minds we would trample self under foot; we would have Christ exalted in our own hearts; we would not do things in religion to please self; I as a preacher, to exalt self; you as a hearer,

to gratify self. Above all, that a minister in those very things that are professedly for the glory of God, should do those very things for the glory of self; that this insatiable whirlpool should suck into itself everything good; that this Maelstrom* should swallow into its capacious maw every thing gracious; that this vortex at the bottom of the heart should be drinking in self-exaltation, at the expense of every thing he loves—makes use of a holy God, a holy Christ, a holy Bible—every thing divine and sacred to feed cursed self—is not this an evil? Sometimes when I have preached to a large congregation, as I often do in London, so far from being lifted up in my feelings by seeing so many people met together, I have had to bury my head in the pulpit cushion with shame and self-loathing, because hideous self would so intrude its cursed head that I could not be sincere and spiritually-minded, could not feel a desire after the glory of God, but filthy, defiled self would want to have its portion. This wretch must have his sop, and would often lay hold of the sacred truths of God that there might be a morsel to satisfy self, the devil, and pride. And when I have gone home after preaching, instead of being pleased with popularity, I have burst into a flood of tears because my heart was so vile, as to seek after its own cursed gratification at the expense of every thing that my spiritual mind held sacred and dear. This self-exaltation and gratification in religion is an evil that we would not do; and yet it is one which daily intrudes itself. Cut it to pieces by a spiritual ministry, self will intrude its hateful head into the very sanctuary of God. There is no place, nor time, nor posture free from its intrusion. But it is a mercy to hate it, though we cannot keep it out.

*A whirlpool on the coast of Norway, which is said to draw into its bosom and swallow up the largest ships.

4. The indulgence of sin in our carnal heart is an evil, a horrible evil—and yet who dare look God in the face, and say, it is an evil he never does? I am not alluding here to outward commission of

evil. I am not speaking now of a man falling into drunkenness, adultery, or such sins as even eyes naturally enlightened see to be inconsistent with the will and word of God; but I speak of a man desiring and revelling in the inward imaginary sin. Who can say that he is pure here? who can say that he has cleansed his heart from these evils? It is an evil; we feel it to be an evil, to wallow in a wicked imagination, to feed upon the vilest garbage. But was there ever any sin that had not a counterpart in our carnal heart? We see the oak, the noble oak in the forest. Did not that oak come from an acorn? How many acorns of sin have we in our carnal heart, that would have become oaks, if permitted to come to perfection? The acorn is in the heart, and had it been permitted to grow, it would soon have sprung up, expanded its arms, and flourished aloft in all its gigantic forms.

5. Want of love and affection to God's people, picking at their faults, seeing their imperfections and magnifying them, and not observing our own—forgetting the beam in our own eye, and looking at the mote in another's—is not this an evil? What contention and strife spring out of it? What confusion in the church of God? Every man seeing so clearly the motes in other men's eyes, but so imperfectly the beam in his own.

6. How hard it is at all times and in all places to speak the truth! How hard to represent a thing exactly as it is! How hard not to give a shade of colouring; not to heighten, nor diminish, nor to pare off a corner here, nor to put on a jutting prominence there! How hard it is to speak with that simplicity, honesty, uprightness, and tenderness of conscience that become a child of God; and how often we have to lament, that with all our desires to speak the truth in the love of it, “the evil which we would not, that we do.”

Now here is the difference betwixt a living soul under divine teaching, and one altogether dead in sin, that the living soul knows what good is as revealed in the word of God; his understanding is enlightened to perceive it; his conscience is touched to feel it; his will is bent to pursue it; and his affections flow to it. This is the

state and condition of a man under divine teaching—he would, but he cannot do it. There is an obstacle, there is a hindrance; there is that which crosses every endeavour, which foils every attempt, which spreads snares in the way, entangles his feet, and throws him down, however eagerly he is bent upon running with patience the race that is set before him. 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; yet still he does, and can no more abstain from doing the evil that he would not, than he can do the good that he would. Now, mark me, I am not here speaking of a man living in sin; I am not speaking of a man falling into deep and open iniquity; such as brings disgrace upon the cause and grieves during his life-time his own soul; but I am speaking of the inward workings of inward evils. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Now these things are hid from the eye of others, though they are taking place daily in the chambers of our own hearts. Men may look at us; and they may see, or they may not see, there is a conflict. They may see little in our life to find fault with; yet all the time the inward grief and sorrow of our soul shall be, the good it would, it does not; and the evil which it would not, that it does.

Now, do you not find it so? Just look at these two points. Has your understanding been enlightened to see what good is, and do you believe that the will of God revealed in the word is the only rule of good? Have you seen a beauty and glory in that good? Have you seen that this good is the thing which every living soul desires to follow after, however cutting to the flesh, however contrary to self, however opposed to the natural bent of our mind? Does your will embrace it? Does your conscience fall beneath the power of it? Do your affections, at times, flow unto it, and settle upon it? If so, God has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. By nature, we cannot see what good is, we cannot feel what good

is, we cannot choose what good is, we cannot love what good is. We may have a good of our own—we may have some standard of our own—our own morality—our own virtue, or our own religion. But that which is heavenly, spiritual, holy, and godlike—such as the renewed understanding sees, the renewed will embraces, the renewed conscience approves, the renewed affections embrace—none but living souls can ever see, feel, and delight in that. On the other hand, none but a quickened soul, under divine teaching, can see what is evil, and mourn and sigh under the depravity, the corruption, the unbelief, the carnality, the wickedness, and the deceitfulness of the evil heart laid bare. Unregenerate men may see the principle of evil working in the hearts of others. Men like Lord Chesterfield, and others who have studied mankind, can see the workings of selfishness and other evils in the heart, and yet never grieve, groan, and cry under them. Men of keen observation may see what is natural good, and what is natural evil; and may confess in the distance, what a good man this is, and what a bad man that—how honourable and upright that man is, and how very wicked and depraved this. But as to any intimate and inward conviction, feeling, and sensation of sin, any mourning over and groaning under it, any sense of an internal conflict and heavy burden, so as to bring him to say in the depth of his soul, “O wretched man that I am!”—to cry out thus in the bitterness of a wounded heart, can only be produced by divine teaching. A man may soar to the highest pinnacle of religious profession, and yet never know anything of the evil of his own heart. A man may revel in the vilest sins, and yet know nothing of the inward corruption of human nature. But in the child of God, there are these principles—light to see, and life to feel the good and evil, a will to choose the good and reject the evil, and affections that flow unto and embrace that which God loves and commands. Therefore, this inward conflict, this sore grief, this internal burden, that all the family of God are afflicted with, is a mark and evidence that the life and grace of God are in their bosoms. This will end well. The afflicted, exercised,

distressed, burdened, self-condemned child of God will come off more than conqueror, for strength is made perfect in his weakness. He is looking to the Lord of life and glory. He knows himself to be a ruined sinner. He therefore looks to and leans upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But a dead professor overlooks the warnings of a guilty conscience, the movements of an evil heart, the workings of inward depravity, and all the mystery of internal iniquity. But one day it will be brought out, to his confusion. He is something like a person who sweeps away all the dirt of the room into the corner, where it lies hidden and covered up; but by-and-bye, it will be dragged out of its hole to his shame. As long as the hypocrite can keep the outside clean, he is like the filthy slut, who sweeps all the dirt and rubbish of the room into a closet, instead of sweeping it into the street, and so keeping the house tidy.

But the Lord will come and search Jerusalem with candles, and discover the pride, and hypocrisy, and depravity that is hidden in the corners of the heart. He who has never seen and known this inward depravity—never grieved, groaned, mourned, and cried under this body of sin and death—who has neglected, slighted, and overlooked all this—who has never felt the necessity of an application of atoning blood—never felt the necessity of the inward teaching and witness of the Holy Spirit—never felt the reality of the inward presence of God, coming down into this den, and cleansing it out—but has washed merely the cup and platter by outside profession—is he not a mere whitewashed sepulchre, which within is full of dead men’s bones and uncleanness? But a living soul, who knows what a wretch, what a monster of depravity he is, how full of everything that God hates, who desires not to indulge in hypocrisy, to have no whitewashed profession, no varnishing of duplicity, but to be honest and sincere, comes before a heart-searching God, and tells him what he is, and says, “Lord, I am vile—I put my mouth in the dust—I am a sinner; but do thou cleanse me, and uphold me, and make me what thou wilt.” None but a child of God can use sincerely such language as this; for none but he can feel the

leprosy of sin, and the workings of iniquity in his very vitals, and yet experience the counter workings of the Spirit of God. Thus, whilst the one lives and dies a varnished hypocrite, with nothing but an outside profession, the other a poor desponding wretch, perhaps the greater part of his days, doubting, fearing, distressed, and exercised, but groaning, sighing, looking up to, pleading and wrestling with the Lord from the very depth of his heart, will be taken, like Lazarus, into the bosom of Jesus while he who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, despising the poor leprous beggar at his gate, will be driven ultimately into a deserved and never-ending perdition.

With these words I desire to leave you. I am rarely led to commence with introductory, and as rarely to end with farewell sermons. Therefore, as I began without introduction, so I leave without a farewell. But I know this, that the words I have spoken from this evening will be borne out pretty well every day that we live. We shall have, more or less, of this inward conflict as long as we are in the flesh. It will be our experience, more or less, day by day. And the more we are acquainted with our own depravity and corruption the more we shall desire in simplicity and godly sincerity, to know the Lord of life and glory. And thus, we shall go softly all the days of our life, in the bitterness of our soul; though we shall still be enabled to rejoice at times in the Lord Jesus Christ, as “of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

103 The Rule Of Christian Union And Communion

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day
Afternoon,
September 7th, 1845

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained,

let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing”
Philippians 3:15,16

There are no parts of Paul's Epistles, to my mind, more sweet than those in which he speaks of his own experience. We see in them such reality, such sincerity, and, above all, so much of the special teaching of God the Spirit in the heart. And when we are enabled to trace out a similar experience in our own souls, and can lay down the path in which we are led side by side with that traced out by the pen of Paul, then we have a sweet testimony in our conscience that the same Spirit who taught him is also teaching us.

In the seventh chapter of the Romans the apostle describes his experience as one of a personal nature. He there traces out the struggle that goes on in a living man's bosom betwixt nature and grace, the flesh and the spirit. In this chapter (Philippians 3) the apostle describes his desires, what he was aiming after, what he was bending every faculty of his soul towards, rather than the personal conflict. Now this just corresponds to what takes place in the hearts of God's people. Sometimes they are labouring under a conflict betwixt indwelling sin and the grace of God; but at other times they are desiring, panting, looking forward to, and stretching forth every desire of their hearts to attain to that which they know to be all their salvation, and feel to be all their desire. Thus in both points, both in the daily conflict and in the desires and expectations of every believer, we find the experience of Paul to coincide with that of all who are taught by the Holy Spirit.

In the text we may notice three distinguishing features:

I. First. The desire of Paul's soul that those who were “perfect” might be like-minded with himself.

II. Secondly. The tender condescension of the apostle to the weakness of those who had not attained so far as himself, combined

III. Thirdly. The exhortation that weak and strong should walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing; that there should be no schism in the body, but that all members of the mystical body, weak and strong, should have the same object in view, and be guided by the same ruling principle.

I. In order to understand what the apostle means when he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded," it will be necessary to explain the meaning of the word "perfect." It is not the first time that I have endeavoured to unfold the meaning of the word in the New Testament. It does not mean fleshly perfection, nor does it signify spiritual perfection, if we are to understand by that, perfect freedom and complete deliverance from the inward workings of sin. Its meaning is rather what we may call Christian maturity, and viewed more broadly as descriptive of a state, may be defined as an attainment to that strength and ripeness which is the highest point of growth in an individual. For instance, when an oak comes to its full stature, just before it decays, it is perfect; it never will be any larger, it never will be more fit for the various purposes to which the oak is adapted. So again, a man, when he has arrived to the growth and strength of manhood, so that he will never be stronger nor taller than he now is, and will never enjoy the faculties of mind and body more than he at present enjoys, may be said to be perfect. This is the idea that the Scripture means to convey by the expression "perfect." We find the apostle, therefore, speaking thus (Heb.5:13,14): "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age" (in the margin, "perfect," the very same word that is used in the text), "even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." By the expression, then, "perfect" in the text, we are to understand those who have passed out of a state of babyhood and boyhood, and who therefore are "no more children, tossed to

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and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph.4:14); but are grown up to some ripeness in the divine life, adult men and women in Christ Jesus. Now there are many members of the living family of God who have not attained to this Christian growth and maturity in the divine life. Some of them are as yet unable to enter into the mysteries of gospel truth, and the doctrines of grace and of divine sovereignty are too strong meat for them to receive. Others again, who can receive the truth in doctrine, fall short of it in personal experience and enjoyment; they are not yet brought to know their state and standing in the family of God. They are therefore unstable, fluctuating, and wavering; they do not know the truth as it is in Jesus for themselves, nor have they received the love of it in their souls. They have not been led into the green pastures of a salvation without money and without price by the Spirit of God, and therefore, for want of this teaching on their consciences, they are unstable as water. There are many such in the church of God, who have the fear of God in their hearts, and yet are not established in the truth as it is in Jesus.

Contrasting the more deeply taught with such, the apostle says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Let those of us who know what truth is for ourselves, who have felt the power of it in our hearts, who are no longer wavering between truth and error, but have attained to a degree of maturity, manhood, and ripeness, who are grown out of that infantile state in which so many are held, "let us therefore," he says, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

But what does he mean by the expression, "be thus minded?" In order to understand this, we must take a hasty glance at what the apostle had been speaking of in the preceding verses. If you look at his experience as described in the third chapter of the Philippians, you will see that it bears stamped upon it two grand features; one the absence of all confidence in the flesh, the other a pressing forward in earnest desires to know and experience all that Jesus is and has for those that love him. He tells us there was a time

when he also could glory in the flesh; when he had something to boast of, something to lean upon. And he also tells us that he had been stripped of these imaginary attainments, that he had lost all his vain confidence, and that now his eye was bent on different objects, and his heart bent to run another race. How then shall we “be thus minded?” First, if we be thus minded with the apostle, we must, with him, count all those things to be loss which once were gain, we must pour contempt on everything which we once admired, we must be weaned from everything on which we once leaned for pardon and peace. In other words, we must be effectually stripped of all confidence in the flesh. But until a man has seen and painfully felt what the flesh is, he will never come to this point; he will be wavering and fluctuating, and thinking that the flesh can do something, that it is not altogether so bad as good men make it out to be; that there is a degree of holiness which may be attained unto in the flesh; that man can, if he will, do something towards his own salvation; that he may prepare his own heart for the reception of the grace of God; that by diligent striving in all the ways and means of God’s appointment, such as hearing the Word and searching the Scriptures, he may certainly attain to the enjoyment of gospel blessings. Now, however plausible all this may seem, it is in reality only another form of creature-strength, and if relied on, will most surely gender a spirit of self-righteousness, from which he must be completely stripped so as not to have a thread left; for the grace of God can no more mix with the creature than pure gold mix with lead, or pure grain unite with chaff. As to be a pure heap the chaff must be winnowed from the wheat, and as to be refined metal the lead must be melted out and removed, so must creature-strength, wisdom, and righteousness be winnowed and separated, that the pure grace of God may shine forth in all its beauty and glory. Now until we have had this work on our consciences (and it is often a long and painful one), and are thus effectually stripped of all our own natural and acquired holiness and goodness, we shall never see the beauty, loveliness, glory, and perfection that there is in the

Son of God.

We therefore find the apostle saying, “Yea 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 dung, that I may win Christ” (verse 8). Now see, he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; all his own attainments and acquirements, all that the world could offer or pour at his feet, riches, honours, titles, he counted them all as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. But he still felt that he had not yet got all that he aimed at; that he had not reached the goal; there was something lacking still. Therefore he says, “That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (verses 8,9). The desire of his soul as here expressed was twofold. First, to win Christ; that is, to embrace him in his arms and obtain firm, solid, eternal possession of him as his Lord and God. To win him as the joy of his heart, and to receive him into his soul as all his salvation whilst upon earth, as a sure pledge of enjoying him in heaven; and, secondly, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness. He knew that the day was fast coming when God would judge the world in righteousness; when he would sit on the great white throne and assemble all nations before him; when he would take vengeance on his enemies and all found out of Christ. And he well knew that in that awful day, if he were not found in him, the vengeance of God would blaze forth eternally against him as a consuming fire. Just in proportion as these weighty considerations pressed upon his conscience, he desired and panted to be found in Christ; as Noah was found in the ark when the windows of heaven were opened and the rains descended, so that he might be found in Christ in the day of his appearing. He desired also in that great day to be found not wrapped up in his own righteousness. That he knew was valueless; too much a thing of rags and tatters for the eye of infinite holiness

and purity to look upon with pleasure. Therefore he desired to be found clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, by which he means the righteousness not only provided by God the Father, but wrought out by God the Son, and received by the faith which is of the operation of God the Spirit.

But besides these ardent desires, which peculiarly respected his eternal salvation, he longed “to know” Christ (verse 10) by a sweet revelation of him to his heart and conscience whilst he was yet tabernacling in this body of clay; to know him in his divine Person as God over all, blessed for ever; to know him in his incarnation and humiliation as the suffering Mediator; to know him in his present exalted and glorified state as the great High Priest over the house of God; to know him in all his covenant characters and divine relationships, and especially to know him as having loved him with an everlasting love, and as having laid down his life for him. He desired also that he might know “the power of his resurrection” (verse 10), that he might enter into the mystery of Christ’s resurrection, that he might feel himself renewed by that same almighty power which raised Christ from the dead; that he might view him triumphing over death, sin, and hell, and that he might follow him up to the heights of glory, where he sits at the right hand of the Father. His affections he desired to be pure and heavenly, not to be fixed upon the things of time and sense, but to be firmly fixed on those spiritual objects which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. But he desired also to be led into “the fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings” (verse 10), to enter into the Garden of Gethsemane, and there by living faith view the suffering Lamb of God; to see the inward suffering that Jesus endured when he was bruised by the rod of vindictive wrath; that he might drink into his broken spirit, sympathise with him in his agonies, and weep and mourn at his blessed feet as having crucified him by his sins and iniquities.

He desired also “[to be] made conformable to his death” (verse

10), that is, to carry about with him day by day a crucified Jesus, so that his holy life and self-denying example might be so impressed upon his conscience that his life and conversation, his actions, thoughts, motives, and words might all be in conformity to the mind of the crucified Lamb of God; that the image of the dying Jesus might be so stamped upon his soul that it might be carried out in all his movements, both in the church and in the world. These attainments in the divine life were the goal on which his eyes and heart were fixed, and until he had fully grasped them he felt himself to be defective. He, therefore, says that he counted himself not to have apprehended. He had not reached the goal; the mark was still distant; there was an experience in which, with all his attainments, he still found himself wanting. O beautiful example! How humbly does the apostle speak of himself! He does not boast of his great attainments, nor exalt himself as one who had reached the goal and won the prize. The figure that he makes use of is that of one who runs a race, and, in his ardour to win the prize, forgets those things which were behind, and reaches forth unto those things which were before; that is, takes no note of the ground passed over, in comparison with that which he has still to run. Thus the heart of the apostle was so taken up with the things that were before that he forgot those which were behind, and he ran on, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The nature of this prize he unfolds in the words, “That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (verse 12); that is, that he might embrace in his soul the dying love of the Lord of life and glory which had apprehended or embraced him, so that he might enter into “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” that he “might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph.3:18,19).

But he adds, and this brings us more immediately to our text, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded,” that is, I have set before you what I feel in these heavenly matters; I

have told you my experience in the inward pantings of my soul; I have opened up the desires of my heart, laid before you in all simplicity and godly sincerity what my mind is pressing after. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Let those of us who are no longer children, but grown up into some degree of Christian maturity, have our hearts fixed on these grand objects of spiritual desire. How different is this perfection of the apostle from what is often understood by the word! The Arminian idea of perfection is to get holier and holier, better and better, in self; its advocates not knowing that it is only self-righteousness under another form, and that its tendency and issue is actually to set aside the righteousness of Christ and set up their own. But Christian perfection, that is, maturity and ripeness in the divine life, is to grow weaker and weaker, viler and viler in ourselves, and thus to lose all our own comeliness and strength, and to grow up into Christ by receiving supplies out of Christ's fulness. The Scripture speaks of growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus. Thus grace and a knowledge of Christ go together, and we can only grow in one as we grow in the other. But as Christ can only be known as he is made suitable to us and we are made suitable to him, we sink as he rises, and this was John's meaning when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). The outside indeed of the cup and platter may not be so garnished, but the inside is much more effectually washed. There may not be so much tinsel and gilding on the exterior of the building, but there is more solid gold in the inner chambers. There may not be so much apparent holiness in the countenance, manner, gait, or tongue, but there will be more real holiness in the heart; for where Christ is of God made righteousness, there he is also made sanctification, as an inward principle of holiness and redemption, and deliverance from the love and power of sin.

II. But we pass on to consider the apostle's condescension to those who had not attained to the same degree of perfection or maturity with himself. "If in any thing ye be otherwise

minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." How tenderly and condescendingly the apostle speaks here! In this point, as in all others, he is a pattern for ministers. He knew there were those in the church who had not attained to the same degree of spiritual knowledge and light with himself, that there were lambs in Christ's fold, weaklings in the living family who needed careful nursing. Instead, therefore, of thrusting them out of doors, or taking and throwing them over the hurdles, he would rather encourage and strengthen that in them which was gracious and spiritual by assuring them that the Lord, in his own time and way, would do as much for them as he had for him, and would bring them to the same spot of divine experience. Ministers cannot be too tender to God's people, though they cannot be too faithful to presumptuous hypocrites and dead professors. A shepherd cannot be too tender over the lambs, nor guard them too carefully from every harm, besides supplying them with the choicest and most suitable food. But what if a great dog come into the fold? What if a wolf leap over the hurdles? Or what if a goat intrude himself amongst the lambs, and rob them of the provision specially placed before them? Would he not show his faithfulness to the lambs by driving them from the fold, and not suffering them to interfere either with the flock or the food. The greatest tenderness towards God's people may thus be accompanied with the greatest faithfulness in drawing a line of distinction between the living and the dead. There always will be differences and degrees of knowledge and experience in the Lord's family. Instead, therefore, of rashly cutting off all who do not rise to the same stature, there must be tenderness and forbearance shown to them, and a hope and expectation that he who has begun the good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

But let us see how they were otherwise minded. This might be in various ways. Some might think there was, in spite of the fall, a certain measure of will and power in the creature, and this opinion they might entertain very honestly and sincerely. I believe this is the case for the most part with all God's people in early

days. They do think very sincerely that something may be done by man. I used to think so myself, and that too with all honesty and sincerity, not being then stripped and brought down. I could not bear to hear people say, "We can do nothing;" for I thought if I prayed and read more, was more watchful and circumspect in my conduct and conversation, and kept myself more from the world, surely that was something. I did not then see that the very will and power to do these things came from God. It took me some years of painful experience, and many trials and temptations, before I could heartily and really believe that I could do nothing in and of myself to please God. I have learnt, therefore, not to be so harsh towards those who are otherwise minded with what I am now myself, as believing that if they are really taught of God he will, in due time, reveal unto them all saving truth.

But how does God reveal that they can do nothing? By stripping them of all their vain confidence, by purging out of their hearts their imaginary strength, by exercising them with various trials, temptations, and afflictions, and thus removing one by one the props on which they lean. May I not ask you who have been exercised with various trials whether you have not found it so? Look at the way by which the Lord has led you these many years in the wilderness. Is it not true that years ago, in the days of your early experience, you thought there was something more holy, more spiritual, more religious in your heart than you have since found? It might have taken some time to bring you to this spot of thorough helplessness and destitution. Perhaps you lost it in some illness. At the very time when you wanted your religion most, it melted out of your grasp and left you almost in despair. Or perhaps you lost it through some sin that you thought you were of all men most far from; but by degrees, through the power of temptation, this sin, like a serpent, twined its wreathed coils round your heart and gradually lifted up its hissing head till it ended by biting you. It was then you found, by bitter and painful experience, how unable you were to keep down the viper from fixing his fangs

in your heart; how unable to overcome this lust, or to master that corruption; and it was the guilt and bondage thus produced that showed you by painful experience that sin would be your master, and that you would live and die in its fearful grasp if the grace of God did not prevent. Or you may have had some temptation working in your carnal mind, like an issue in the flesh, and this almost unceasing temptation, like a seton, gradually drained away your strength till all was lost and gone. By these or similar exercises you found to your soul's dismay that your former piety, religion, watchfulness and diligence were insufficient to destroy bosom idols; and this experience, though at the time unspeakably bitter and painful, has in the issue left you a poor sinner at the footstool of mercy. How changed are your feelings now from what they were when you were conning over your prayer-book, trying to collect your thoughts, endeavouring to gain God over by a few tears, and as regularly as the day came round, treading a mill-horse round of self-imposed duties. At this task you would have been labouring to this day, ever beginning and never ending, had not sin, temptation, and the devil proved too strong for you. And what would you have been but a blind, benighted Pharisee, instead of being, as now, a poor sinner at the footstool of mercy?

But again, a person may be otherwise minded from the divinely-taught apostle in this point. He may think (and with honesty too) that Christ may be savingly known and enjoyed without a divine revelation of him to the soul. There are many who say all we have to do is to take the promises as they stand in God's Word. It is not necessary for them to be applied to the soul. All we have to do is to act faith upon them, and thus make them our own. But this is more like stealing than receiving, and resembles a person who has crept by stealth into an orchard, who plucks an apple here, and an apple there, and throws a third half bitten over the wall. But I think if of one thing we may be certain, it is that he who believes he may pluck the promises out of the Word, as a pilfering schoolboy steals apples in a garden, he is "otherwise

“otherwise minded” than Paul, for that man of God speaks of Christ being made known to him by the revelation of God. “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” (Gal.1:15,16). So when Peter made that noble confession to Christ that he was “the Son of the living God,” what was the answer of Jesus? “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt.16:17). If you are so deceived as to think you can lay hold of Jesus and the promises without a special power of God put forth in your heart, you must learn a different lesson, if indeed you belong to the Lord’s family. This vain conceit of creature-strength will have to be burned out of you, and you will have to experience such powerful temptations that you will find you cannot lay hold of one promise, if by so doing you could save your soul. Nor will you ever have the spiritual realization of any one promise until you are most firmly persuaded that the promise must come home to you, and not you take the promise. If you still persevere in this boasting of creature-strength, you may upon a death-bed find an angry God and an opening hell; and all this may be necessary to teach you that without an application of the promise, the blessing contained in it does not reach the heart. All your taking the promises without their application to you will but resemble a boy pursuing the rainbow; the more you run, the farther it will recede, from you.

Or you may be “otherwise minded” on this point, that you do not see that the way to heaven lies through a path of tribulation; and you may have been so stirred up in your mind when you have been hearing a minister set forth this as the only way, that you may have been almost ready to cry out, “I cannot receive it, and do not believe it. What is he setting up such a narrow way for? I admit that it is the lot of some, but do not believe that it is indispensably necessary that all the people of God should pass through such temptations and trials.” We are very unwilling to admit anything that goes counter to our own experience, and especially when that

seems to cut off all our hopes. No man could or would voluntarily bring himself into afflictions; and if he did, they would be utterly valueless. But if you are an object of God’s tender care, he will bring upon you afflictions whether you will or no; and when by these means your hopes are almost cut off, your cry will be, “O, how glad should I be to have one word from God’s mouth to my never-dying soul, to assure me that he will save me from hell, and tell me with his own lips that I am his.” I believe, in my own mind, that the Lord brings all his people to the spot which Hart speaks of in his Experience, that “it was no longer with him whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether he would believe, but whether the Lord would give him faith.” And doubtless many of God’s family have to learn the same lesson in a similar way. In early days they might have said they certainly would repent; they certainly would believe, and would not perish for want of faith. But this was in the days of their ignorance, and when better and more deeply taught their language is rather, “Will God be so merciful as to give me repentance? For I cannot raise up one feeling of contrition, or cause one tear of godly sorrow to trickle down my cheek. Oh, will the Lord communicate the precious gift of faith to my heart? For I cannot raise up a grain in my own soul, with all my exertions or all my attempts.” It is in this way that God reveals to those who fear his name the secret mysteries of his will, and this seems to be the apostle’s meaning when he says, “If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”

III. And this leads us to the third point, which I mentioned as a distinguishing feature of our text, and which I may call the summary, winding up of the whole. “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” All the people of God are taught by the same Spirit; and as far as they are favoured and blessed with this divine teaching, will see eye to eye, for there is no real schism in the mystical body of Christ. But as in a family of children there are those of different

age and stature, so in the family of God there are attainments which some have reached, which others are not yet favoured with; there are depths of temptation and heights of enjoyment into which some are experimentally led, that others are at present unacquainted with. But this is no reason why they should not walk amicably and comfortably together, each according to the measure of his experience. This is what the apostle would seek to enforce by the words: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." It is something like a number of persons whose object it is to reach the summit of some beautiful mountain on which the sun ever shines, and which is lifted out of the damp mists and unhealthy fogs of the valley. One man has attained to this point, another to that point of the height, but shall there be a contention, an angry quarrel between the parties because all have not attained to the same spot? And shall he who has clambered higher than others seek to take the advantage of his higher position to thrust down those who are at present on lower ground than he?

Or take another comparison. Let me endeavour to illustrate this point by the case of a family, in which the children are of different ages, where there lies a babe in the mother's lap, whilst there are grown up sons or married daughters sprung from the same parents. Now, is the grown up son or married daughter to snatch the babe from off its mother's lap and ill-use it, or declare it is not a child of the same family because it cannot talk, walk, and act as they do? It is true that it is yet a babe in the mother's lap, but it is still a child of the same parents, and is therefore entitled to the same privileges as those who, by process of years, have grown up to be men and women.

Take another case, as I wish to throw as much light as possible on this important point of Christian forbearance and godly practice. A gardener has a nursery in which he has some plants at present mere seedlings, or only planted last year. Others are fit to be transplanted into a distant garden. Others are already grown up

into shrubs and trees, adorning with beauty or bearing rich fruit. If I were to purchase or rent that garden, should I pluck up the seedlings, or throw the maiden peach trees over the wall because they are not in bearing order and covered with fruit? Will they not in due time grow up and take the place of those which, however fruitful now, must in the course of time decay and die?

Take another illustration. A certain number of travellers set out on the same journey, and pass through the same tract of country. Of these, one travels one mile, another two, another three, another four, and so on throughout the whole journey. Now, he that has travelled one mile has passed over one portion of the same road with all the rest, and as far as he has travelled can speak of the various features of the road and incidents of the journey; but the man that has travelled two miles, and still more, he who has passed over four or six, has seen more than he whose journey has at present been limited to one. But as far as each man has come, he can talk of what he has seen, and the road by which he has travelled, and thus far all fully agree, and are of one mind as to the nature of the road. It is this friendly union of spirit which the apostle inculcates when he says, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

But what is the rule that the apostle speaks of here? I think we shall find it in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal.6:15,16). The rule, then, which the apostle speaks of as desirable for all Christians to walk by is "the new creature." Let us examine the nature of this rule. It consists in being new created by the Spirit, in being born of God and being thus regenerated and renewed in the spirit of our minds. This "new creature," or new creation, is to be our guiding rule whereby we are to walk ourselves, and whereby to direct our conduct towards others. Apply this to our walking with those who profess to fear God. Should not

this be the leading feature of our inquiry, "Is he really and truly born again? Is there life in his soul? Is his conscience tender? Is the fear of God manifestly in his heart? Does he walk as becometh the gospel? Are there clear and evident marks of grace in his life and conduct?" Then what must be the rule of our conduct? We must receive him into our affections as one of the family of God. So far as we do this, and manifest this affection for him in our words and conduct, we walk by the rule of the new creature; and if we walk in the same way, then we mutually walk by the same rule.

The second part of the exhortation is, "Let us mind" (that is, let us breathe, let us press after, let us desire) "the same thing." What is the meaning of the expression, "the same thing?" Oh, there can be no doubt, I think, what it means. It is the same thing as the apostle had been laying down as the chief feature of his own experience and desires. It is to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, to receive him into our hearts; to walk in his footsteps and be conformed to his likeness; to love and delight ourselves in him as the chiefest amongst ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Now this is the one thing in which all the people of God will eventually be brought to be like-minded. And, in fact, the people of God are really more agreed than they often seem to be, and, whatever their differences upon minor points, they are all really minding the same thing, because they are all taught to believe in the Son of God, and that out of him there is neither salvation nor happiness.

Now, do you not see how this distinguishes the family of God in all their different stages from the dead in sin, or dead in profession? These do not walk by the same rule which guides the conduct of all true Christians; they ridicule, at least, they are ignorant of, the new creature, the new birth, and they either confound it with sprinkling, thus denying it altogether, or else they treat it with contempt. As to knowing Christ and him only, and having a personal revelation of him to their souls, all such language they treat as the rankest enthusiasm and mad folly. By this, then, they are distinguished from the people of God, who, from an experience of the new creature in

themselves, and from seeing it in others, walk by the same rule and mind the same thing. This is what the apostle exhorts them to do, as though he said, "Whatever be our differences or the diversities in our experiences, whatever degrees or shades of distinction there be on minor points, let us all unite here; let the same rule guide us all, the same thing be the grand object of our desires. Let our eye be fixed upon Jesus, to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (verse 10). When this is attended to and carried out, union and communion are created and maintained.

Look at a united family; look at a disunited family. The united family walk by the same rule, the will of the parents, and they mind the same thing, the good of the family. The little children who can only pick up a few ears of corn in a harvest field are minding the same thing as the father who reaps and the mother who binds. The ears that the little children pick up help to go towards the sustenance of the family; but if they were picking up ears for any other family than contributing to its general welfare. So with God's people; when they all mind the same thing, when they are striving for the good of each other and for the glory of God, when each bears and forbears, then there will be harmony and love. But if one pulls one way and another, one wants to be master and another mistress, if they do not mind the same thing, there will be nothing but confusion and disorder. The church of God will but then resemble the disunited family, where the children rule the parents instead of the parents ruling the children; where all is disorder and confusion, and nothing but misery and strife, that rend the whole house to pieces. But as long as they walk according to the same rule, which is the will of the parents, and mind the same thing, which is the welfare of the family, there will be peace and harmony. The Lord enable us so to walk and so to act for his own great Name's sake.

104 A Prayer Of The Church

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, Lord's Day Morning,
September 14th, 1845

"Save, LORD; let the king hear us when we call"

Psalm 20:9

When a man is brought to know and feel that he has a soul to be lost or saved, nothing will then be so important in his eyes as to know whether he is a partaker of salvation. Until the Lord is pleased to quicken our souls into spiritual life, and to lay eternal realities with weight and power on our consciences, we have no care, we have no anxiety, as to our state before God; but no sooner does the Lord communicate light and life to our hearts than we begin to feel that we have a soul that must live for ever and ever in a state of torment or in a state of happiness. And when we are brought to feel these things, it will make us desire above all things to know whether indeed salvation ever will reach us. This appears to have been the feeling of the church when she breathed forth this petition "Save, LORD; let the king hear us when we call." The text consists of two clauses:

I. One, "Save, LORD."

II. The other, "Let the king hear us when we call."

These two clauses I shall endeavour, if God enable, to unfold according to the mind of the Spirit this morning. May the Lord add his blessing.

I. You will observe that the church who offered these prayers knew well in what that salvation consisted. She was not one of those that trusted in chariots and horses, but she looked to the finished work of the Son of God; and uttering this petition, "Save,

LORD," what she wanted was the manifestation, the application of that salvation to her soul. This is the grand difference betwixt one who has received the love of the truth, and one who is wrapped up in Pharisaism and error that he who has received the love of the truth knows that salvation is already accomplished by the Son of God on the cross, and wants the application, the manifestation, of that salvation to his heart with power; whereas, the other, who is wrapped up in self-righteousness, and given over to believe a lie, is looking for salvation as coming out of something to be done by himself [as to believe], something that he is to obtain by an act of his own, or that springs out of the flesh. But whence comes the difference? Why should it be that one is looking for salvation from Christ's finished work, and wanting the powerful application of it to his soul, and the other for salvation from something to be done by himself? From this, that he who has received the love of the truth has been previously emptied and stripped of self-confidence. As Paul says, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit" having had a spiritual revelation of God to the soul "and rejoice in Christ Jesus" from receiving him into the heart as a perfect Saviour; "and," as a consequence, "have no confidence in the flesh," seeing that the flesh is utterly sinful, and therefore everything that comes out of it is abominable in the sight of God. That is the reason why the people of God are looking for salvation as a reality to be applied to their consciences, whilst others are looking for it as something to be done by themselves to gain the favour of God. The people of God are more or less convinced by the Spirit that there is no good in themselves, and therefore everything they have good must be a free gift from the super-abounding grace of God.

It may take some time, it may be a process of many years, it may be the result of many painful trials, it may be the fruit of many perplexing anxieties, to bring a man to renounce all confidence in the flesh; but till he is brought to renounce all such freshly dependence, he never can be brought to rely upon the finished

work of Christ alone. He is very much where Hart says he himself was. There was a time when he thought he would repent, he would believe, and he would save his own soul; but he found to his bitter sorrow it was no longer with him whether he would repent, but whether God would give him repentance; no longer whether he would believe, but whether God would be so kind as to give him the precious grant of faith. I believe every child of God is brought there to be so emptied of self, so utterly and thoroughly brought down in his feelings before the footstool of God, as to feel unless the Lord stretch forth his hand to save him he must sink in the deep waters.

The church, then, prays, "Save, LORD." "Do favour me with an application of thy salvation unto my heart. Assure my soul of its interest in the finished work of thy dear Son" This is the language of every soul brought down so as to feel that without an experimental knowledge of the blood and love of Christ, it must sink for ever. But when the church says, "Lord, save." What does it imply? It implies that we are to be saved from something; or else it is no salvation. Salvation is not a mere negative thing; it is an actual rescue, a real deliverance, a true bringing of the soul out of distressing trouble. So that when the church says, "Save," it implies that she wanted to be delivered out of that which would else prove her ruin.

For instance:

1. There is the guilt of sin. Now, however painful and distressing it may be, I believe that every soul taught of God must painfully and experimentally know the guilt of sin. There is no feeling so miserable as that of guilt, when it is charged home by God the Spirit upon the conscience. It cuts to pieces all the sinews of merit and creature righteousness; it sinks the soul down below all creature strength and all creature wisdom. It so penetrates into the very chambers of the heart that it does not leave a single corner untouched. Guilt really felt is of an over whelming nature; it must

bow down the head, it must break the back, of every one who feels it. But whenever guilt is felt in the conscience, it will make every such guilty sinner cry to the Lord to save him. Save him from the guilt of sin. I believe every one who has felt the guilt of sin by the application of the law to his conscience, knows in time that nothing but the blood of Christ revealed to his soul by the power of God the Spirit, can ever remove it. It may sometimes seem to wear off, it may be dulled; the intensity of the painful feelings may not be so vivid; but it will come on again. And a little thing may bring it on. A passing thought, a sudden recollection of eternity, hearing the bell toll, or seeing the coffin borne to the grave, the least thing to raise up a thought of death in the mind, will bring back guilt in the conscience. So that, though it does not always lie with power on the conscience, it will come again and again, and bring burdens and trouble, until it is removed by the blood of sprinkling, until the remedy goes into the same depth as the malady, until the virtue and efficacy of the blood of the Son of God are really felt through the power of the Holy Ghost. When, then, the church says, "Save, LORD," she is begging the Lord to give her eyes to see, and a heart to embrace, the propitiation that Jesus has made upon Calvary, so that she might enter into the blessedness of pardon through the blood of the Lamb.

2. But there is not only the guilt, but also the power of sin, that every living soul feels. What a powerful thing sin is! It is something like a deep and rapid river, the deeper the stream the more rapid the current. We only know the depth of the stream by being well-nigh drowned in it; and we only know the strength of the current by feeling it carrying us away, in spite of all our strength to swim against it. Sin in the heart is this deep and rapid stream; it is not a babbling brook, but a deep, rapid current. But we do not at first know what a powerful thing it is. We have no more power to stand against it, unless God in mercy strengthen us, than the thistledown can against the wind. As a giant might carry away a child in his arms, or as a lion might seize a lamb out of the fold, or as a tiger

might run off with a calf, so we are carried away instantaneously by sin, unless God strengthen us in our souls against it. Who does not feel, that knows anything of the workings of sin in the carnal mind, how the base heart carries us away into sin in a moment, unless God in mercy prevent? Now this is one of the most painful things that a child of God can experience. The guilt and the power of sin work together. Sin first carries us away by its power, and then is felt in its guilt.

Now a child of God who has been carried away by sin, I do not mean open, flagitious, 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, 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.

But when the church said, "Save, LORD," there were many things she wanted to be saved from. For instance, the power of unbelief. Does not unbelief often carry us away? Is it not perpetually working in the heart? It is so in mine, to my sorrow. Is it not perpetually teasing, harassing, and bubbling up like a stream? Is it not perpetually drawing us aside, and entangling us in some way or other, seeking to cast us down? Now, what a child of God wants is to be saved from this unbelief. He knows what a hateful thing it is in the sight of God. Therefore, feeling the workings of this unbelief in his carnal mind, he is desirous to be saved from it. And how saved from it? By the Lord's communicating that precious faith which overcomes it.

The church desires also to be saved from self in all its various forms, to be saved from rebellion, from murmuring and fretting against the Lord; from her own wisdom; her own strength and righteousness, to be saved from self in all its various shapes and

appearances.

Now, wherever the Lord has put this cry into the soul, "Save, LORD," he will hear that cry. How very short the prayer is! And what makes it short? Extremity! We have not time for long prayers when we are in real distress. Was the prayer of Peter when he was sinking in the water very long? "Lord, save me!" comprehended all; and was he not heard? Does not the Lord say we are not heard for our much speaking? These few words of Peter's pierced the ears and entered into the heart of the Redeemer; he stretched forth his hand, and saved him. The prayer of the thief on the cross was not a long, set prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." But what a prevailing prayer was that! How immediately the expiring Lamb of God said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." The publican who went up to the temple pressed with guilt and shame, was not able to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven. Did he go with a long, set prayer? "God be merciful to me a sinner!" comprehended it all. Was not his prayer heard? Do we not read that "this man went down to his house justified?" The righteousness of God was imputed to him, and he went home to his house a pardoned, accepted believer. So the words of the text, "Save, LORD." If a man is really enabled to put up these words from a feeling sense of his need of them, as one sinking without them, perishing unless the prayer is heard and answered, that cry never was, never will be, uttered in vain. "Save, LORD!" "Save me from hell; save me from destruction; save me from being overwhelmed in the bottomless pit; save me from the floods of vengeance about to burst upon a guilty world; save me from the guilt of sin; save me from self in all its shapes and forms; save me by applying to my soul, revealing to my heart and conscience, what the Son of God has done upon Calvary."

II. But we pass on to consider the remaining clause of the text: "Let the king hear us when we call." Observe how the church fixes her eyes upon the King; how she traces the Son of God through all the parts of his mediatorial work. "Let the king hear us when we

call.” Does not this show the equality of the Son with the Father? In the first clause of the text the church says, “Save, LORD,” as though she personally addressed herself to the Father; but in the very same verse she adds, “Let the king hear us when we call.” Now this may be a relief to some here present. Have not some of you been perplexed on this point, which Person of the Trinity you, should pray to? Sometimes you have prayed to the Father, and then there has been a secret whisper in your heart that you ought to pray to the Son; and when you have done that, you have felt it wrong that you did not pray to the Holy Ghost; and at last you have been so confused as not to know how to pray at all. This is one of Satan’s devices to entangle you in prayer, to scatter your thoughts, and confuse your mind, by raising up these perplexing suggestions. But you cannot err if you pray to all the Persons of the Trinity as your soul is led. If you are led to pray to the Father, pray to the Father; and if led to pray to the Son, pray to the Son; and if led to pray to the Spirit, pray to the Spirit. We have Scriptural instances for all. Paul prays to the Father, (Eph.1:17), “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.” We have Stephen’s prayer to the Son: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And we have Paul’s prayer to the Spirit: “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ “ (2 Thess.3:5), where the name Lord, being distinguished from God the Father and Christ, shows that the blessed Spirit is addressed. Thus the church in the first clause of the text prays to the Father, and in the second clause prays to the Son: “Let the king hear us when we call.” She addresses the Lord of life and glory sitting as Monarch over the universe, enthroned as King over God’s house at the Father’s right hand. This implies that the church has given her heart’s adoration to him, that she is a loyal subject, that she has renounced obedience to all former sovereigns; as she confesses in another place, “O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name” (Isa.26:13).

This is the point, then, that the Lord brings his people to. When he listens to their desire for salvation, when he hears their cry, “Save, LORD!” “I am a perishing sinner at thy feet, and can only be saved by thy blood and righteousness, and by the personal application of it to my soul;” when this prayer is heard, when salvation comes, when the conscience is purged, when sin is pardoned, and the believer is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, he looks up to, he worships, he adores the Son of God as his King. We find this intimated in Psalm 45. “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house;” as though the Spirit said, “Turn thy back upon all thy old companions, renounce all thy old allegiance.” “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” “Thou hast received him as thy Lord; thou art, then, no longer thine own; thou art bought with a price. He is thy Head, thy Husband; he is thy Lord; and worship thou him, adore him, admire him, cleave to him with purpose of heart.” So that when the church says, “Let the king hear,” it implies that she has believed with her heart in the finished work of Christ; that she has bowed her soul down before the Lord of life and glory, and that she has received him into her soul as the Monarch of her affections.

We see this clearly developed in Thomas. Here was Thomas, as full of infidelity and unbelief as Satan could well fill him. He actually would not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead unless he put his hand into his pierced side. But when the Lord invited him to put his hand into his side, and behold his hands, faith flowed immediately into his conscience, and he fell down before him; light and life took possession of his soul; and his believing heart vented itself in these words: “My Lord and my God.” He at that moment received him as his King; he gave him the allegiance of his heart; he owned him as his once crucified, but now risen Lord; and he bowed before him as his eternal and almighty God.

Then when the church says in the text, “Let the king hear us

when we call," she speaks of Jesus as her Lord, reigning in her soul, guiding her thoughts, sitting upon her heart as her Monarch and Sovereign, and ruling over her by his own will and Word. But she was in distress and perplexity; there was that in her experience which still made her feel her need, her increasing need of him. Look at her words: "Let the king hear us when we call;" not merely when we pray, when we ask, when we desire, when we want; but the word "call" implies felt necessity, an extremity that required immediate deliverance. Persons do not call, unless they are in some extremity. We call for help, as a drowning person when he falls into the river; we call for deliverance, as a man set upon by robbers, or as a woman insulted and oppressed, that she may be rescued from her ravisher. Urgent need is therefore implied in the expression, "call." When the church, therefore, says, "Let the king hear us when we call," she means to imply that there are those distresses, those perplexities, which force a cry from her soul. Does not this beat to pieces that vain expectation of our ever arriving at a state that we shall not need the Lord? If the Lord be our Teacher, we shall want him more and more. As we grow weaker and weaker, feebler and feebler; as we get a deeper sight of ourselves, and a higher sight of Jesus, we shall want him more and more every day. Woe be to us, woe be to us, if ever we get to such a state as not to want Christ. Depend upon it, we have got into a land of death, out of the way of the Spirit's work upon our hearts, if we get into such a state as never to want Christ.

"Let the king hear us," the church then says, "when we call." "When our souls are exercised; when we are distressed through the various perplexities that we have to meet with in the way; when we want him to be a present help in time of trouble; let the King then hear us; let our prayers then reach his ears; let our cries then bring down relief from him who is mighty to save." A child of God does not pray for praying's sake; he does not pray, at least when he is under divine teaching, to satisfy conscience, and as a mere matter of form; but, when he is under the power of the spirit of grace and

supplications, he prays because he wants a blessing communicated. "Let the king hear us." "let him stretch forth his arm, let him give that blessing which we stand in need of; let him communicate mercy and peace to our souls; let him not turn a deaf ear, but let him listen to our cry." But does not Jesus always hear? Does he not always listen to the cries of his people? He does; but there is often a feeling in our hearts when he does not immediately answer our requests, that he does not hear us. "How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" (Hab.1:2). There the prophet was in a state of darkness, and could not believe the Lord heard his prayer. So the church complains in Lamentations: "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (3:44). The cloud was so dark, so dense, that her prayer could not pierce through it.

Thus sometimes the fear arises through the delay of the petition. It has been laid at the feet, and presented before the face of the King; but it is long before the answer comes. How many of the Lord's people are tried on this point! They have prayed for years for the manifestation of Christ to their souls, for the pardon of their sins, for the shedding abroad of his love; but it has not yet come down in that sweet power they want to experience. This makes them fear that it never will come again. Guilt in the soul makes us fear that we have sinned so basely against the Lord that he will not hear us. The Lord says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isa.59:2). Sometimes such feelings as these work in the mind: "I am such a sinner, so base a wretch; I am so unlike everything that a Christian should be in all I say, think, and do, that the Lord will not hear me." Sometimes through powerful workings of infidelity we may think there is no God to hear. Sometimes we are so full of unbelief as to feel it is of no use praying any longer: "I have prayed so long, and the Lord takes no notice; why should I weary him?" Sometimes we fear that our prayers are a stink in his nostrils, and that we are like those who "eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in

their vessels.”

Under these feelings, therefore, the church says, “Let the king hear us!” “Though our base idols too often steal away our affections; though our traitorous lusts run off with our carnal minds, yet our hearts are still with the King.” The citadel still remains secure. Though the soldiers of the enemy are running through the streets of the city, yet the heart, the garrison, the inmost, deepest affections of the soul still remain loyal and obedient to the King of kings, to whom they have sworn allegiance. Therefore she says, “Let the king hear us!” We have indeed treated him basely; we have departed from him; we have sinned against him; we have longed after other kings; our carnal affections have gone out towards other lovers; and we have been the basest of all wretches towards him. Yet we want him still to rule and reign in our souls. There is some beating of the tender affections of our hearts towards him, and we cannot bear the thought that he should leave us altogether, and never give us a glimpse of his glory and beauty again. The devil has not got possession of the garrison. He has not pulled down the King’s throne, and driven allegiance out of the heart. Christ is still our King. Though we confess to our shame and sorrow that there are many traitorous lusts in our hearts, that would, if allowed, sell the garrison into the hands of the enemy, yet it still remains firm to the King. We need him; nobody else can do us any good, all other brooks are dry, and all cisterns broken. The King alone can do us good; he only can save us, bless us, and make us rejoice in his love; shield us in his bosom from our enemies; bestow his loving kindness on our hearts; make us happy here, and take us to endless bliss hereafter. Then “let the king hear us when we call” when ravishers are assaulting us; when these renegades are running through the streets; when these lusts, like so many of his and our enemies, are lively and strong, let him manifest himself; let him scatter our enemies; let him come and take possession of our hearts and affections, and reveal himself as our King and Sovereign.

Now is not this the feeling of a living soul, to be full of shame and sorrow, full of self-condemnation at being such a wretch; and yet it cannot give up Jesus? Though at the ends of the earth, to be longing, looking, languishing after, and desiring him; deserving indeed to be cast into hell, yet coveting a place in heaven; often serving Satan, and yet wanting to lean upon the bosom of the King of kings; often lusting after the devil’s delicacies, and yet wanting to be fed with meat from the King’s table? “Save, LORD;” for none but thou can save such a wretch. “Let the king hear us when we call “ in extremity, in distress, in shame, in sorrow. “Let the king hear us,” not slight our petitions; not turn his offended face away, and say, “I will give thee up;” but rather, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together” (Hos.11:8). “I will not give thee up, Ephraim.” “Though he is a rebellious child; though he has proved himself a transgressor from the womb, I cannot give him up, because I have loved him.” Therefore, the King having died for his church, and having done such a mighty work for her, he cannot, he will not, give her up, but he will save her with an everlasting salvation, and prove to her that where sin hath abounded, grace doth “much more abound.”

105 The Glory Of Zion Her Sure Defence

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham on Tuesday Evening, September 30th, 1845

“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain”

Isa.4:5, 6

This chapter is closely connected with the preceding one. Indeed, the second, third, and fourth chapters of this prophecy may be said to form one series. The last verse of the third chapter reads thus: "And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground." In these words the blessed Spirit describes the desolation that was to fall upon Jerusalem. Continuing the same subject, the first verse of the fourth chapter proceeds to relate the consequences of that desolation, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." This striking prediction dwells upon a remarkable result and feature of the general desolation that should take place. The men should be so fearfully slaughtered in war that seven women should take hold of one man who had escaped the general carnage, and seize him for a husband, that they might remove from themselves that reproach so dreaded by Jewish women of having neither spouse nor offspring. They would be willing to eat their own bread and wear their own apparel if they were merely allowed to take his name to avoid this reproach. There the chapter should have ended, for though the words which follow are connected with the desolation predicted, yet they open a new feature of the subject by declaring promises of mercy to the remnant which escapes the threatened judgments.

"In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." A remnant is here spoken of as having escaped in this day of desolation. To this escaped remnant it is promised that "the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely." By "the branch of the LORD," I understand the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ; and by "the fruit of the earth," his human nature, his divine nature is beautiful and glorious to this remnant according to the election of grace, which has escaped the general

overthrow. "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:" that is, whose name is in the book of life, and who has the life of God in his soul; "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion," (by washing them in the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness), "and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." Then he adds the gracious promise contained in the text, "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

The desolation has taken place literally, and I see no reason why we may not expect a restoration to take place literally also. But that interpretation I shall not now insist upon. There is another interpretation, one of a spiritual and experimental nature, applicable to the regenerated family of God, which I shall chiefly dwell upon; and as, viewed in this light, we may take the promise in the text to refer spiritually to the household of faith, so we may take also the desolation as equally spiritually verified in their experience. In other words, that there must be a desolation in them as well as, and prior to, a manifestation. When the Lord creates upon mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, it is, or following upon that day when "she being desolate shall sit upon the ground."

In looking at these words we may consider,

I. The promise itself.

II. The result and effect which flow from the fulfilment of the

I. The promise itself. "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." You will observe the Lord here speaks of mount Zion. Mount Zion typifies the gospel and the blessings connected with it; as we find the apostle speaking in Heb.12:22, where, contrasting the law with the gospel, he says, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." When a believer is brought from mount Sinai with all its curses to mount Zion with all its blessings, then indeed he comes to Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, "and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." When he is come to mount Zion, there he wishes ever to abide; and not only so, but there he wishes to assemble with the saints who meet together in the name and fear of the Lord.

The Lord, therefore, has given a promise that he will "create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." This has no doubt a reference to the pillar of the cloud, of which we read for the first time in Exodus 13:21,22. "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." This was the manifestation of the presence of the Lord. It was a cloud to show that the Lord was invisible; as he said to Moses, "There shall no man see me, and live" (Ex.33:20). It was in the form of a pillar, to show the certainty and security of God's favour to his people. It was on high, to show that it was from heaven, and was the guide for the people of God, pointing to heaven as their eternal resting-place. It was the open manifestation to the Children of Israel of the presence of God in their midst, the glorious effulgence of the Three-One God. To it, therefore, the eyes of Israel looked night and day. At its command

We find also when the tabernacle was set up, that the cloud covered the tent of the congregation: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Ex.40:34,35). When Solomon afterwards built the temple, the same cloud came also, and filled it with the glorious presence of the Lord. "And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (I Kings 8:10,11).

This pillar, then, of the cloud spoken of in the text, the "cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night;" sets forth the manifest presence of God, his appearance unto, his dwelling among, the children of men. Now the Lord in old time, under the first covenant, restricted the pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to one spot. It rested on the tabernacle, and on that only. But in gospel times, according to the promise in the text, this pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, is not restricted to one spot, but is upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies. Now this is fulfilled when the presence of the Lord is felt in the soul; when his favour surrounds his people as with a cloud; when the manifestation of his mercy and grace is enjoyed; when his glory shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ; when his love is shed abroad in the heart. Then the Lord creates upon such a dwelling place of mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day.

There is, doubtless, some further spiritual meaning in its being the same pillar which by day appears as a cloud and smoke, and by night as the shining of a flaming fire. Now this may point typically to the different states and conditions of God's living

family. When they are travelling by night, they want something clear and conspicuous to direct their steps. Were it merely a cloud and smoke, it would not be seen; but when it takes the form of a flaming fire, it becomes a beacon light to guide their feet. The Lord's people are often in these paths of darkness, and then they want something to direct their path; they cannot listen to every voice, they want the Lord to speak to them; they want a special manifestation of his favour, and the shedding abroad of his dying love. Where these things are not given, all with them is darkness, their evidences, their testimonies, and their expectations (when this darkness besets the soul) are all beclouded. They cannot see their way, and often can scarcely believe they are children of God at all. What they want to see is the shining of a flaming fire, to have some clear testimonies, some bright manifestations, that they are the Lord's people.

Now these are given in Christ. Did not the Shechinah and the pillar of the cloud and smoke rest upon the tabernacle? What was the tabernacle but a type of the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ? This was "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb.8:2) Christ's body was the temple which was destroyed, and raised up again in three days: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jno.2:19). God has sent his only begotten Son; for in him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that the glory of God should shine forth in his face. The Shechinah and the cloud of divine glory rest upon him. In darkness, then, and distress of soul, when all is gloom and midnight, if we get a view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, if we see there is a Mediator betwixt our guilty souls and God, there is strength to look to him, and a putting forth of that secret power in the heart whereby we are drawn with the cords of love and the bands of a man. Then there is the shining of a flaming fire by night. There is then an object for faith to fix eyes on, Christ; and his grace and glory concentrate the affections of the soul. When we can see, by the eye of faith, the glory of God

shining in the face of the divine Mediator, however dark our path may be in providence or in grace, then the shining of the flaming fire by night rests upon our dwelling place. The dwelling place is, no doubt, the believer's heart; for every believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and Christ dwells in his heart by faith. Therefore, the Lord creates upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, in every one who is a temple of the Holy Ghost, in every one in whom he works to will and to do of his own good pleasure, this cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, in favouring at times the ransomed soul with his gracious presence.

The promise is made also to "her assemblies." When the saints meet together in the name of the Lord, when they come up to the house of prayer, when they assemble themselves that they may hear the Word read and preached, and unite in lifting up their hearts to God, his presence is promised. The Lord will create, there is no power in man to create it; it is a divine creation flowing out of divine operation, the Lord will create by his mighty power, by a miracle of grace, through his matchless mercy, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night upon the assemblies of mount Zion. And do not the Lord's people sometimes find it so? Do not they experience the manifestation of the cloud and smoke by day, in a sense of the presence of the Lord? Do they not find, too, the shining of a flaming fire by night in the presence of the Lord more or less bedewing their souls, and resting upon their hearts? Now, wherever the Lord has blessed a soul under the Word, wherever anyone has felt the presence of God in meeting together with his people, wherever in Zion's assemblies the Lord has touched the heart with his Spirit, and given a sense of his goodness and love, he has been fulfilling this promise, that he would "create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night."

II. But we pass on to consider what is the fruit, result, and effect of the fulfilment of this promise. The first is this, "Upon all the glory shall be a defence."

The glory here signifies the same thing as the cloud and smoke by day. Thus we read, "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 Chron.5:14). The cloud was the way in which God in early days manifested his glory; it was a visible representation of his glorious presence. Now, "upon all the glory" (margin, above all the glory) "shall be a defence. And," it is added, "there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." We gather from this that though the Lord brings his people to mount Zion, though he favours them alone and in the company of his people with his presence, yet they are not secure from enemies. They want "a defence;" and this the Lord has promised to give. If he has brought us to mount Zion, it has not delivered us, in our feelings and in our experience, from our enemies. We shall probably have more temptations after we have come to mount Zion than before we were brought there; we shall have a deeper discovery of our fallen nature; we shall have more gins and traps laid for our feet by the enemy of souls; we shall have heavier, sharper, more cutting trials; we shall have more powerful external enemies, and be compassed with greater difficulties than before.

If, then, the Lord has brought us to mount Zion, so far from being delivered from all our enemies, he will make us feel more and more that we need him for "a defence" and refuge, as well as to be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever. A defence he provides. He has not brought his people to Zion to leave them exposed to the attacks of their enemies; for the Lord is not only "a Sun," to give them light, but he is "a Shield," to defend and protect them on every side. He is a defence from the law, which curses and condemns; a defence from the fiery darts of the wicked one; a defence from the persecuting world, and from professors having the form of godliness, but denying the power. They cannot, they do not defend themselves; for they are weak and helpless, and exposed to every dart of the enemy. But when they are brought to

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mount Zion, and see and feel the cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, resting upon their souls, upon all this glory there is a defence, something to ward off the fiery darts, something to protect them that they may find security and shelter.

But there is another fruit: "And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." Can this Tabernacle be anything less than the Lord of life and glory who tabernacled here below in our nature? When he brings his people to mount Zion, there is not merely a discovery of his presence; there is a sight also, by living faith, of his Person as the Son of God. There is a sight of his glory, "(the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." He then becomes a Protection, a Covert, a Shelter to all that put their trust under the shadow of his wings.

This Tabernacle seems for two purposes.

1. It is a shadow in the daytime from the heat; and, 2. A place of refuge and covert from storm and from rain.

1. The heat in those countries is dreaded as much as, if not more than the storm and rain, and protection from it is as carefully sought. Numerous references are made in the Scriptures to the heat of the climate. Take any one, "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes" (Gen.31:40). The Lord of life and glory is therefore spoken of here as being a Tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat of the sun. Sun in Scripture not only means the Sun of Righteousness, but also the burning sun of temptation. "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me" (Song of Sol.1:6). The bride speaks here, in a figure, of the sun of temptation, which had made her black. So when we read here of "the heat," it alludes no doubt to the sun of temptation, which beats with its burning beams upon the soul. From this we

want a shelter. When temptation beats upon a man, must it not dry him up (just as the sun burns up the ground), unless he get a shelter from it? Temptation will make him like the parched heath in the wilderness, and drain away all his strength, unless he obtain some shadow and protection. This shelter is the Lord of life and glory. Does not the lust of the flesh continually work? From painful experience I am sure it does. But whence are we to obtain a shadow from these temptations? Left to them, we must utterly fall. But the Lord often nips them in the bud, and stops them in their first birth, just as I might put my foot upon a lighted match before it burnt any farther. One infidel thought might otherwise make us avowed infidels. One blasphemous imagination would make us break out into the unpardonable sin. One worldly desire would make us do things that the world itself would be ashamed of. In fact, just as if a spark falling out upon gunpowder would immediately explode a whole magazine, or a lucifer match would set on fire a whole stack of corn, the year's produce of many acres, so one vile temptation in our carnal mind might produce a total conflagration of body and soul. Those who know what temptation is, know their thorough helplessness, apart from grace, to stand against it in any measure; and unless this temptation be subdued and restrained, it must altogether carry their souls captive, and drown them in destruction and perdition.

How, then, is a child of God to escape from them and their filth, guilt, and power in his conscience? He has but one way: "a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat." That is, to hide himself in Christ; to seek refuge beneath the shadow of his wings; to wash in the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness; to take shelter under the glorious righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe. A child of God, when he feels temptations working in his heart, is taught by the Spirit to flee to the Lord, as a child flees to his mother's bosom when affrighted. He flees to the mercy of God to cover and pardon them, and to the power of the Lord to subdue and restrain them. Thus the Lord of

2. But besides the heat, there are "storm and rain." This storm and rain will one day come upon a guilty world. It was set forth in a strong figure by the deluge which overflowed the first world, and by the torrents of fire and brimstone which came down on guilty Sodom. It will burst out one day in such a way that the deluge and the destruction of Sodom will be but feeble figures of it.

Now where shall a convinced soul find a covert from this storm and rain? Have we not deserved God's wrath without measure? Do we differ from thousands and millions in hell? Are we a whit better than those who are now weltering in the burning wrath of God? Are we one whit better than those who are banished for ever from his presence? In thought, word, and action we are as bad as many there, nay, worse. There are many in hell who have not done things that we have done, said what we have said, and thought what we have thought. How, then, are we to escape the damnation of hell? There is only one place of refuge, but one covert, and that is the Lord of life and glory. His Person, his blood, his righteousness, his grace, and his love. For God has set him forth "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom.3:25) God has appointed him to be a place of refuge, a protection, and a security from storm and rain.

But besides the future storm and future rain which will one day burst upon the world, there is also from time to time a present storm in the soul. What are the flashes of a guilty conscience? What is the feeling of conviction under sin? What is any manifestation of the wrath of God against the wanderings of our backsliding hearts? Are not they like drops of the thunder storm? Are not these the manifestations of that anger which will one day burst forth? Now the Lord gives us to feel the storm and the rain; he allows these drops of the coming thunder storm to drop upon the heads of his people. He works by our doubts, fears, exercises, and perplexities. He gives us to feel his wrath against sin, that he may beat down

self-righteousness, that he may completely strip away everything in the creature, and bring us wholly and solely to trust in himself. We find this set forth in Isaiah 28:17, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." The prophet is here speaking of God's people. The hail sweeping away the refuge of lies is the manifestation of God's wrath against sin, which beats them out of their false refuges. They cannot stand against the hail of divine wrath in their consciences, for they are left exposed and without shelter, until they are driven to find refuge in Christ. Thus it is a mercy to have felt the wrath of God, convictions of sin, doubts, fears, terrors, and alarms, that we by these things may flee from the wrath to come, and find in the Lord of life and glory a place of refuge and a covert from the storm and rain.

You see how these promises are made to those that are come to mount Zion, who have really embraced the gospel, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, who know Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection, who have a work of grace on the conscience, who know the truth by the manifestation of it through the power of the Spirit, and by these teachings are brought to mount Zion. And when they come here, they never wish to leave it again, they never wish to set foot again on the barren, desolate mountain of Sinai. Therefore the Lord gives them a dwelling place, he sets them down in the gospel, he gives them a heart to receive it in love, he communicates a power to the soul whereby it looks to Christ and obtains a dwelling place on mount Zion. He gives it this "cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." He favours it at times with his sensible presence, and even in darkness there is the shining of a flaming fire, the eyes of the soul being directed to the Lord, even from the ends of the earth. They find too a defence in all this glory; and not only so, but in him a sure shelter. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Prov.18:10) They find the

Lord of life and glory to be a shadow from the heat, so that when temptation comes they are enabled at times to flee to him. When storm and rain beat upon their heads, they flee unto him for a place of refuge and a covert. All these things the Lord fulfils in the case of every The Glory of Zion Her Sure Defence ransomed and regenerated soul. Now who here can say that indeed he has been brought to mount Zion, and has felt the sweetness and power of the gospel? Who here can say, "Here will I dwell, for I desire it. This is my dwelling place, where I wish to live and die?" Who here has found the presence of the Lord and the dew of his favour resting on his spirit? Who has seen the glory of God to be a defence, so that when temptations, trials, afflictions, and sorrows came upon him, he has not looked to Assyria, not gone down to Egypt for help, but has leaned wholly and solely upon the Lord, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell? Who here has known something of the storm of hail and rain beating him out of lying refuges to flee unto Jesus with sighs, cries, desires, pantings, and groanings that he would be a place of refuge and a covert for his soul? God does not give blessings singly. He hath blessed his people with "all spiritual blessings in Christ." (Eph.1:3) If he has brought a soul to seek his face, to turn to mount Zion, and to look unto Jesus from the ends of the earth, he will fulfil every longing desire of that soul, and make it a manifest and happy partaker of his grace here and his glory hereafter.

106 Called Unto Divine Fellowship

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, Lord's Day Afternoon,

9th November, 1845

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

1 Cor.1:9

Everything in this world is changing and changeable. We ourselves are perpetually fluctuating and wavering. The things of time and sense are as fluctuating and wavering as we. Our friends are fluctuating and wavering too. All things are in a continual state of transition and change. Seeing, then, that all earthly things are passing away, and the things of time and sense vanishing like a cloud of the night, the Scripture leads us to rest upon something that is immutable and unchangeable, a foundation to stand upon which shall not waver and fluctuate with earthly, perishing things. For instance, Jesus Christ is held forth as “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb.13:8), and therefore a foundation on which to stand for eternity. Again, we read that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas.1:17). In these passages the unchangeableness and immutability of God are held forth as a foundation for our wavering, halting feet to stand upon.

In the same way the text holds forth the faithfulness and unchangeableness of Jehovah. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” The faithfulness of God to his Word and to his work is here pointed out as a foundation on which to rest. Now, unless a man rest upon this, he is continually wavering. Until he is brought to anchor in immutability, he is perpetually tossed up and down with every wind and wave of doctrine; but when he is brought to rest on things which cannot change, then he has an anchor to his soul “both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb.6:19).

There are two things worthy of notice in the text:

I. One is the declaration of God’s faithfulness: “God is faithful;” and, II. What God does in order to manifest his faithfulness: “By

whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” In considering these words I shall, with God’s blessing, change their order, and look first at what is contained in the words, “By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And then, secondly, at God’s faithfulness and unchangeability as made manifest in this special calling.

I. All God’s purposes run underground until they are manifested and brought forth; for his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known (Psa.77:19). “It is the glory of God,” we read, “to conceal a thing” (Prov.25:2). Thus God has hidden his own eternal counsels in his own bosom, and they are only brought forth in time in such a way and such a season as he has appointed. We have a wonderful instance of this in the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory. It was the eternal purpose of the Three-One Jehovah that the Son of God should die, and by dying offer up a ransom price to save the elect from the ruins of the fall. This lay hid in the bosom of God. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, he came for that special purpose; but it was hidden from the eyes of man, hidden from the eyes of his disciples, and hidden from the eyes of the Jews. Now, so it is with respect to the work of grace upon the soul. What is God’s purpose in beginning and carrying on a work of grace in the soul? It is set forth in the text, “By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” That is the object; that is the purpose of the work of grace upon the soul, to call God’s people unto a fellowship with the Son of God; to bring them into living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory. Now this work must go on; for “God is faithful.” It must go on until it result in the accomplishment of what God has purposed.

Let me explain myself a little more fully. Say (for example), you are a vessel of mercy, that God has chosen you in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and has loved you with an everlasting love in the Person of his dear Son. Jesus came and laid

down his life for you. He died on the cross that you might live for ever. He bore your sins in his own body on the tree. He reconciled you to God, and cast all your transgressions into the depths of the sea. Now, the object in calling you by his grace, is to bring you into the fellowship of his dear Son.

But when a work of grace is first begun upon the heart, the subject of it is not aware what God's purposes are. The Lord does not reveal them; nay, rather, he hides them from his eyes. His purpose is to bring the soul into the personal knowledge, spiritual enjoyment of, and divine communion with his own dear Son. But where does he find us? He finds us in what I sometimes call a sensual communion; that is, a fellowship with sensible objects. The fellowship and communion that we are to enjoy, if called by grace, is a spiritual communion with invisible, insensible objects. But the Lord finds us in a state of nature, having communion with sensible objects, buried in a sensual, as distinct from a spiritual communion. We are imbued with a spirit of the world, the things of time and sense are our element, the world is our home, and we are so swallowed up in it that we have no other object, delight, or purpose. This I call a sensual communion; that is, there is a fellowship, an intimacy, and intercourse in our carnal mind with sin, the world, and all that is evil. But this intimacy and intercourse must be broken up, that spiritual communion with the Lord of life and glory may be set up in its place. Our communion with the world, with everything short of Christ, is all to be broken in pieces, that we may be led up into union and communion with Jesus. For instance, we have in our carnal state communion with sin, we have an intimacy with it, it is our bosom companion. It is like the lamb in the parable of Nathan; it lies in our bosom, drinks of our cup, and is to us as a daughter. We fondle it as a parent does a child, we cleave to it in love. Thus there is a sensual intercourse with sin and all its baseness and filth. This, then, is to be broken.

But what is to break it? The entrance of God's holy commandment so as to manifest his purity, and holiness, and

righteous anger against sin; and this breaks to pieces that sensual communion which we have with iniquity. This is the first thing God uses, his holy commandment, his pure precept, the spirituality of his law opened up in the soul. Sin is then discovered to be sin, its evil nature is then manifested, the wrath of God is revealed against it, and the wages of sin, which is eternal death, are brought to light. The soul is thus cut off and cut away from sin by the sharp entrance of that sword which the apostle speaks of, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb.4:12). The sharp Word of God entering into the conscience cuts asunder the former communion betwixt the soul and sin.

But there is also communion with the world. We love the world by nature, our heart is in it, our affections are altogether worldly, all that our natural heart delights in is sublunary, earthly. This sensual communion, then, with the world must be broken to pieces; we must be divorced from it in order that we may have communion with holy and heavenly things. When God makes himself known as a consuming fire, and the breadth and spirituality of the precepts are opened up, the world is seen as the apostle saw it, lying in wickedness, or in the wicked one (1 John 5:19), and all but God's people are beheld as walking in the broad road that leads to eternal perdition. We thus become separated from it, and our feet are turned out of the broad into the narrow way. The Holy Spirit sets the face towards the heavenly Jerusalem; and thus our communion with the world is broken to pieces.

But there is also communion with our own righteousness. There is a delighting in what we think we have done or can do for the Lord. Our freewill, our natural strength, our creature piety, our fleshly religion, cleave closely to us; we have a sensual union with them all. Now this likewise must be broken to pieces, or else we cannot have communion with the Lord of life and glory. And this too begins to be destroyed by the entrance of the precept of God's Word, by the spirituality of God's law; our own righteousness is made known to us as filthy rags, and we abhor and loathe ourselves

in dust and ashes as the vilest of the vile. And so also there is a sensual communion with deceit, hypocrisy, and delusion; for the heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer.17:9), and out of this wicked heart there springs a wicked intimacy with all manner of lies, hypocrisy, deceit, and delusion. By nature we drink down lies like water, our hypocritical heart wallows in hypocrisy as the swine on a hot summer’s day wallows in the mud; to deceive ourselves and others is the very element of our deceitful heart. This intercourse, then, with lies, hypocrisy, and delusion, must all be cut asunder by the entrance of the light of God’s Word into the soul.

When a pure and holy God shines forth into the conscience, our hypocrisy, lies, and delusion are made manifest, and our intercourse with them begins to be dissolved. If you read Isaiah 28, you will see how the Lord speaks there of breaking up this sensual communion: “Because ye 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 unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place” (verses 15-17). This covenant with death and agreement with hell is a communion and intercourse with death and hell; and this is broken up by the hail sweeping away the refuges of lies, and the waters overflowing the hiding-place.

Only, therefore, as this covenant with death and agreement with hell, that is, this sensual communion, is broken to pieces, can there be spiritual communion with the Lord of life and glory. Now, in this God’s people are distinguished from all others on the face of the earth, in that they are seeking communion with the Son of God, fellowship with Jesus in the knowledge and enjoyment of him in their hearts. This distinguishes a work of grace upon the heart

from all fleshly counterfeits.

Now as the Lord breaks up this sensual communion, he goes on to fulfil his own eternal purpose; which is, to bring a soul into communion with his dear Son. Observe the words of the text, “By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.” It is God therefore who calls his people unto “the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.” Now he has lodged in his dear Son everything needful for our wants. “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col.1:19). And again we read, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). We read also, “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col.2:9). The Lord of life and glory is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his Person. All that God is shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ. In bringing, therefore, his people into fellowship with his dear Son, he brings them into fellowship with the Three-One God. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. None can see him and live. God is invisible. He is said to “dwell in thick darkness” (1 Kings 8:12), and also “in the light which no man can approach unto” (1 Tim.6:16). But if we have not fellowship with God we shall one day be of all men most miserable. And the way to have fellowship with God is to have fellowship with his Son; for he is the Mediator. He stands betwixt God and us; through him we have access to God, by him we are reconciled to God, and thus by him we have fellowship and communion with a Three-One Jehovah. Oh, what a mercy it is to have a Mediator to cover with blood and righteousness the guilty head of a fallen child of Adam! Not to have to deal immediately with God as a consuming fire, whose infinite holiness and eternal justice must consume us; but that there is a Mediator, one who has taken the flesh and blood of the children into union with his glorious Person, a Daysman through whom we may have access to God, one who has said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). The grand object of divine teaching in the soul is to bring us to Jesus. What says the Lord himself? “It is

written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). That is the effect of divine teaching, a coming unto Jesus. As the text says, “By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son.”

Now, every obstacle that interferes with or prevents this fellowship, God will remove. That is the reason why we have so many trials, so many sharp thorns, so many bitter afflictions, such painful exercises, such distressing temptations. They are to encourage communion with Jesus by removing out of the way all that is in opposition to it. For instance, there is the world; when this creeps in, it shuts out fellowship with the Lord Jesus. It has therefore to be removed; and is done by means of painful trials. Again, there is carnality, lightness, frivolity, worldly-mindedness; to all of which we are sadly prone. Now when these evils get possession of us, they shut out communion with Jesus. Therefore we need scourging with sharp thorns and briers, as the men of Succoth were torn by the thorns and briers of the wilderness (Judges 8:7,16), that this carnality and lightness may be torn away out of the heart. So afflictions in body, in providence, in the family, temptations from Satan, the burden of an evil heart of unbelief, the corruption that we are more or less plagued with, all these things are made profitable, in order to bring us into fellowship with God’s dear Son by emptying us of self. God’s dear Son is only suitable for sinners; all that he is and has is for such; all his glorious fulness, all his precious attributes, all his dying love, all the riches of his atoning blood, the beauty and glory of his justifying righteousness, all are for sinners, for feeling, sensible, sin-plagued, Satan-harassed sinners. As, then, we sink into felt sinnership, it leads us up into communion with Jesus. Pride, worldly-mindedness, covetousness, self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-exaltation, carnality, and lightness, all unfit a man for communion with Christ.

Jesus is a brokenhearted Lord, the Spirit of God was given him without measure, his heart is full of tenderness, sympathy,

and compassion, he is a holy Jesus; therefore there can be no communion on his part with sin. For “what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (2 Cor.6:15). What intercourse can there be, then, on the part of Christ with sin which he hates, with the world that crucified him, with Satan his implacable enemy, with that evil heart in man that is utterly opposed to his holy and pure nature? In order, therefore, to bring us into fellowship with Jesus, we need trials, exercises, afflictions, and temptations, to remove out of the way those things that hinder communion, and to bring us down to lie as low as possible in our own eyes. This fits us for Jesus. But it may be asked, “When are we fit for Jesus?” When we are all nakedness, all rags, all misery, all guilt, and all helplessness, and sink down at his feet unworthy of a single smile from his face, then we are fit for him. We are unfit for him when we are proud and covetous, when we have no sorrows, nor burdens, nor griefs, nor troubles, when sin does not lie on the conscience, when we can be cheerful and happy with the things of time and sense. All these things set us at a distance from Christ. But sorrows, griefs, burdens, exercises, doubts, cares, perplexities, and distresses, these are helps that God uses to bring us to Jesus. One is the ebbing wave that takes us away from the rock, and the other is the flowing wave that drives us on to it. One is the adverse wind that blows against the ship when she is making for the harbour, the other is the prosperous gale that urges her forward into the haven. So that the things that seem against us are really for us; and the things that seem for us are really against us.

But what is communion and “fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?” It is a sweet and blessed intimacy betwixt Jesus and the soul. How is this produced? It is produced by the Spirit through the Word; not by the Spirit without the Word, but by the Spirit of God making use of the Word as the living instrument to raise up faith in the soul, whereby through the Word are communicated power, unction, and sweetness to the conscience. If ever you have felt anything like fellowship, communion with God’s

dear Son, it has been in this way: the Spirit of God worked through the Scriptures upon your heart, secretly applying to your soul some precious truth concerning Jesus, giving you faith to receive it in simplicity and love, and then drawing your heart upward through the Word into the presence of him who sits and reigns behind the veil. This is communion with God's dear Son, what the Scripture calls the "communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor.13:14); because the Holy Ghost alone can lead us up into this fellowship. Now this is what God calls his people to, this is what God makes all his people intensely long for.

The Lord's people are all dissatisfied with everything short of communion with God's dear Son. Give them the doctrines of truth without the Spirit's sealing these truths upon their hearts, they bring no sweet communion. They cannot, therefore, rest upon them. Give them their own righteousness, it produces no communion with the Lord. Let them have the world, it does not lead their soul into communion with him. Give them sin, it draws them away from the Lord. Let them fall into darkness, and be beset with fears, doubts, perplexities, and temptations, these bring them no communion with the Lord. What they want, then, is that Jesus would sweetly whisper into their souls: Thou art mine; fear not, I have redeemed thee. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isa.49:16). Thus to have our souls raised up into the very bosom of the Lord, so as to clasp him and embrace him in the arms of affection and love, as a lover breathes his love-tale into the ears of his beloved one, that we may be able to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa.73:25), this alone satisfies a living soul. Now when a soul has enjoyed a measure of this, then it has enjoyed what God has called it to, the "fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the life of religion.

But if we have fellowship with the Son, it will bring into our hearts every fruit and grace of the Spirit. Jesus has left us an example that we should walk in his steps, and the Scripture sets forth his

holy love, his humility of spirit, his meekness, his gentleness, his separation from the world, the image of God shining forth in him. Now when God calls us into the fellowship of his dear Son, it is that we may walk in his steps, it is that the image and likeness of Jesus may be impressed upon our souls. It is that we may be conformed to the image of the Firstborn, and that the mind and likeness of the blessed Lord may be stamped upon our hearts, lips, and lives. If we are not called to this, we are called to nothing.

II. But the text adds, and it is a great mercy that it is added, "God is faithful." For consider how many things there are to interrupt this fellowship. What an evil nature you carry in your bosom, which is averse to communion with this blessed Lord! How many enemies surround your soul! What an adversary you have by night and by day to grapple with! But "God is faithful." Do you see the connection? As though the Holy Spirit implied this: God has called you unto the fellowship of his Son. That is his object; and he is faithful. His purposes are immutable. He hath purposed, and shall he not accomplish his purpose? He is faithful, and has determined you shall enjoy that fellowship unto which he hath called you. Now this, by setting forth God's eternal will and pleasure, shows that in us there is everything against that fellowship, and that God's faithfulness alone overcomes that evil tendency, perfects and completes his purposes. For instance, our carnal mind is altogether opposed to communion with the Son of God. What is the scriptural description of it? It is summed up in one expression: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom.8:7). If that be the case, can there be any fellowship or communion in our carnal mind with God? If it is enmity against him? If it is not subject to the law of God? If it is opposed to all his will, and Word, and ways? Can there be any union between our carnal mind and God's dear Son? Impossible! Now just in proportion as our natural mind works, will there be a turning away from communion with Jesus, a plunging into communion with the world and the world's sins, a cleaving to

the things of time and sense, as riches, honour, pride, and worldly pleasures. Our carnal mind understands all these things; it is the very breath that it draws into its lungs, the very element in which it swims. Its whole being is intense, implacable enmity to God and his dear Son, and therefore can never be reconciled to him. But God is a pure and holy God, and must ever regard sin with the utmost hatred and abhorrence. Do we not feel it? What is the greatest grief and burden to a living soul? Is it not the workings of his natural mind? Does not this wicked mind continually stir up unbelief, infidelity, rebellion, and fretfulness? Does it not drag him into the world? Does it not draw him away from the Lord? Does it not fill him with everything base, earthly, sensual, and devilish? But "God is faithful." And he will not suffer the carnal mind to overcome a believer. God, being faithful, has called his people unto the fellowship of his dear Son: he therefore communicates power to the soul whereby this carnal mind is overcome. There are times and seasons when it is blessedly overcome. When sharp exercises and troubles work with power in the mind for a time, the Lord at such seasons communicates a sweet spirit of faith. And where this spirit of faith is, it goes up after the living Lord. And thus "God is faithful," who will not suffer the carnal mind to prevail altogether, but gives his blessed Spirit to draw the heart up to him.

Then there is the world, and the world is opposed to communion with God's dear Son. It calls it rank enthusiasm, a bitter spirit; it is horrible in the eyes of the profane world. What! To have communion with Jesus; there is nothing that they scorn more, nothing from which the world more revolts. And the world in our hearts is just as bad. The news and gossip, politics, the chit-chat of the day, and the scandal of the town, the carnal mind has plenty of communion with that; it drinks it all down as a thirsty ox drinks down water; but the world outward and the world inward never can have communion with Jesus. He is too holy, too heavenly for the world or for our worldly heart to love. Therefore we need crosses, losses, trials, temptations, and exercises. These embitter

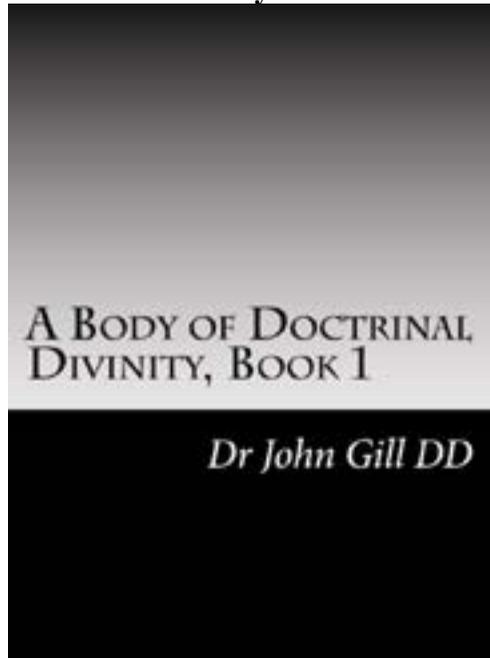
the world, they show us the world cannot satisfy us. And then the Lord takes occasion to drop a measure of divine sweetness into the heart, and gives it that solid satisfaction in Jesus which the world can neither give nor take away. Thus "God is faithful."

Then there is temptation. There is constant temptation in a living soul, and these temptations are all against communion. Have you not had all sorts of evil thoughts injected into your mind against Jesus? Nothing too bad to think about him, nothing too base, nothing too horrible. And what was the object of it all but to harass your soul, distract your mind, and destroy communion with the Son of God? And if God were not faithful, these temptations would do it effectually. But "God is faithful." He has not allowed you to be tempted more than you can bear. When enemies come in like a flood, the Spirit of God holds up the standard against them, and brings that faith into your soul whereby Jesus is looked up to, rested upon, and loved, in spite of all these suggestions against him with which the devil fills your heart. Be not surprised if you find in your heart everything whispered against the Son of God. Satan hates him with mortal enmity, and your mind is enmity against him. It is the lot of God's children thus to be tempted; but "God is faithful." He will not let you be overcome. He will in time subdue and conquer these temptations, and bring your soul into fellowship with his dear Son. Sometimes despair works powerfully, and despondency suggests that you have committed such sins as God cannot forgive; and when you give way to this temptation it hinders communion, it shuts up prayer, stops the reading of the Word, and seals up the spirit of supplication within. Then there are doubts and fears, perplexities, harassings of Satan as to the work of grace upon the heart, whether we have felt right, begun right, and continued right. All these various workings in the mind hinder communion with God's dear Son. But "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son." God's purpose in calling you is not to build up your own righteousness, not to make you think anything of yourself, not to set you to work, nor make you

in love with what you think you can do. He has but one purpose in view, and that is, to bring your soul into sweet communion with his dear Son, to stamp his likeness upon you, and to fill your soul with joy and peace in believing, “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet.1:8).

Now, how is this to be attained? Not by looking into our own hearts to find anything good there. But in a spirit of faith, by looking up to Jesus, resting upon his blood and righteousness, and receiving a communication out of his fulness. If you are a poor, needy sinner, if you are a guilty criminal, a brokenhearted wretch, if you are a vessel of mercy, and God the Spirit has humbled you in your own eyes, you want nothing but these divine blessings to bring your soul into communion with God’s dear Son. It is with these he has communion, with those who need him, with those who are troubled, harassed, and plagued without him; and all that you want is God’s faithfulness, who will give you your desire in his own time and way. All that you want is for the Lord of life and glory to come into your heart with savour; and when God the Spirit raises up faith in your soul to receive the blessing in love, this lifts you up to the bosom of Christ himself, and fills you with joy and peace in believing; and this is what it is to have fellowship with the Son of God. God has called you for that very purpose. It is his object in calling you next to his own glory, he has no other. He has not shown you your sins to condemn you, and send you to hell; he does not so deal with those he has called. But he makes you feel sin here, that you may not feel it hereafter; he makes you seek for mercy here and cry unto him for pardon, that he may fill your soul out of the fulness of Jesus and give you communion with him here. That is God’s eternal purpose. He lets you have a little communion here, to be a foretaste and prelude of eternal communion with him hereafter, “God is faithful.” If he has given you any communion here, he will give you eternal communion with his dear Son in realms of endless joy and peace. And for that purpose he takes his people out of the course of this world, that he may give them

a measure of communion here, and enlarge their souls with full communion hereafter.

Other Publications**A Body Of Doctrinal Divinity Book 1****A System of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

List Price: \$8.99

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

176 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1543085945

ISBN-10: 1543085946

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THIS IS BOOK 1 Treating The Subjects:

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2 Of The Holy Scriptures

3 Of The Names Of God

4 Of The Nature Of God

5 Of The Attributes Of God In General, And Of His Immutability In Particular.

6 Of The Infinity Of God,

7 Of The Life Of God.

8 Of The Omnipotence Of God.

9 Of The Omniscience Of God.

10 Of The Wisdom Of God.

11 Of The Will Of God And The Sovereignty Of It

12 Of The Love Of God

13 Of The Grace Of God.

14 Of The Mercy Of God.

15 Of The Long suffering Of God.

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17 Of The Anger And Wrath Of God.

18 Of The Hatred Of God.

19 Of The Joy Of God.

20 Of The Holiness Of God.

21 Of The Justice Or Righteousness Of God.

22 Of The Veracity Of God.

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26 Of The Unity Of God.

27 Of A Plurality In The Godhead, Or, A Trinity Of Persons In The Unity Of The Divine Essence.

28 Of The Personal Relations; Or, Relative

Properties, Which Distinguish The Three Divine Persons In The Deity.

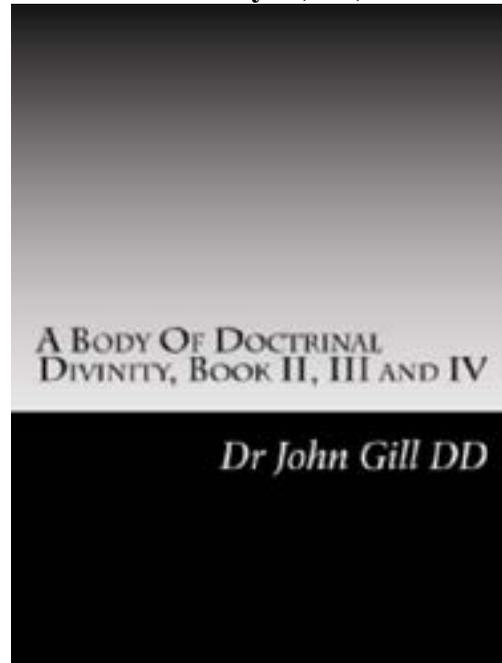
29 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of

The Father.

30 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Son.

31 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Holy Spirit.

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity II, III, IV



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The contents of Book II treats the subject of Of The Acts and Works of God

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Chapter III Of The Decree Of Rejection, Of Some Angels, And Of Some Men.

Chapter IV Of The Eternal Union Of The Elect Of God Unto Him.

Chapter V Of Other Eternal And Immanent Acts In God, Particularly Adoption And Justification.

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Book III treats the subjects Of The External Works Of God.

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Chapter 7 Of The Ascension Of Christ To Heaven

Chapter 8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of God

Chapter 9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ

Chapter 10 Of The Priestly Office Of Christ

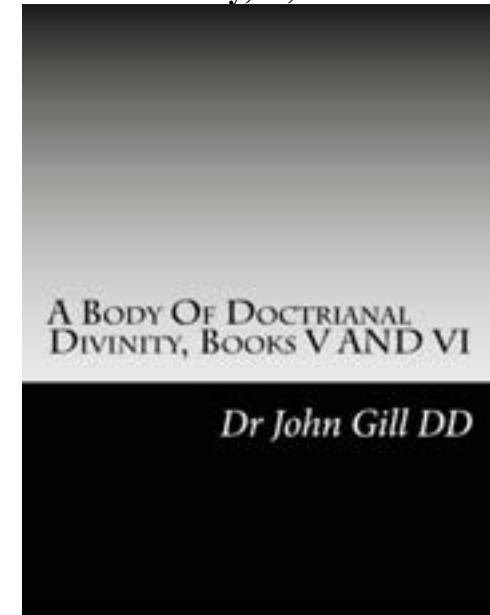
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Chapter 12 Of Christ's Blessing His People
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Chapter 13 Of The Kingly Office Of Christ

Chapter 14 Of The Spiritual Reign Of Christ

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, V, VI



A System OF Practical Truths

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Chapter 4 Of The Passive Obedience Of Christ, Or Of His Sufferings
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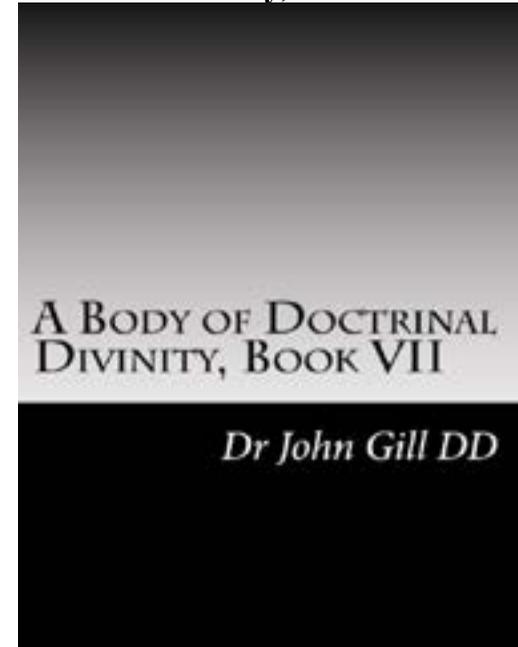
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Chapter 12 Of Effectual Calling

Chapter 14 Of Sanctification

Chapter 15 of the perseverance of the saints

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A System Of Practical Truths

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

List Price: \$7.99

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

118 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1544177342 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544177348

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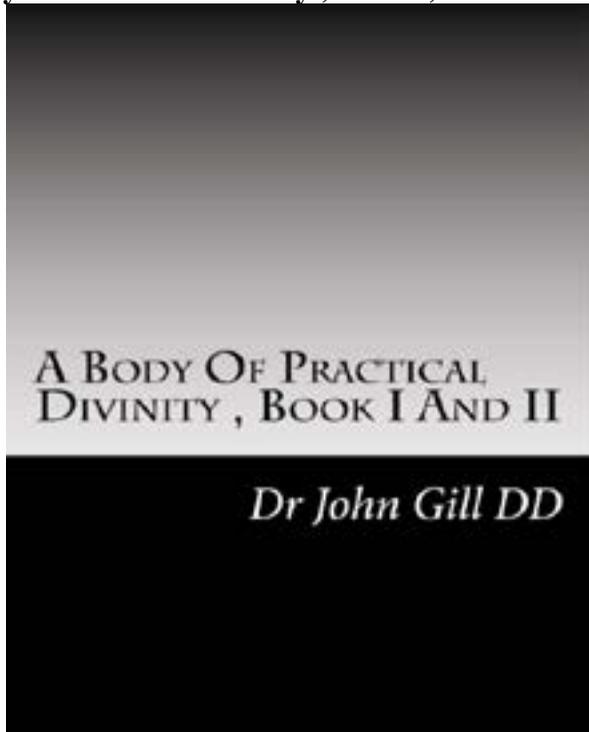
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Chapter 9 Of The Last And General Judgment

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Chapter 11 Of The Final State Of The Saints In Heaven

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A System of Practical Truths

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ISBN-13: 978-1545542088 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1545542082

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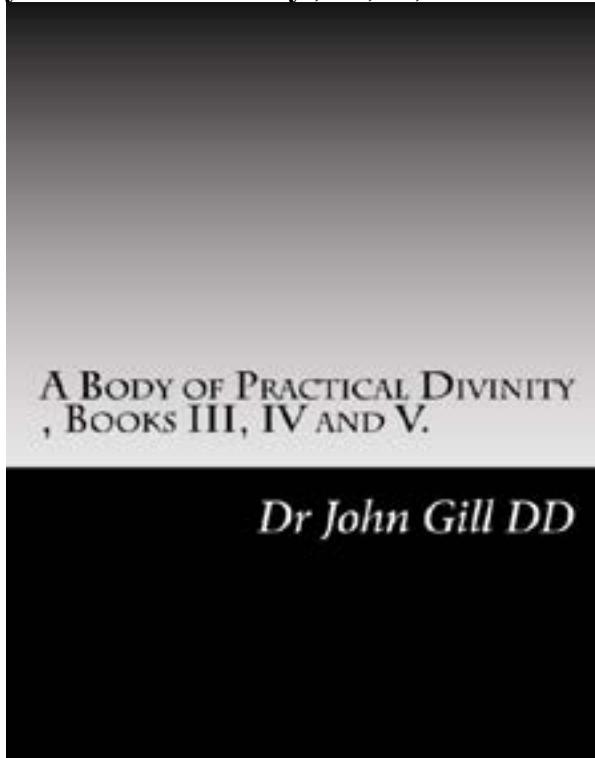
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ISBN-13: 978-1546846659 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1546846654

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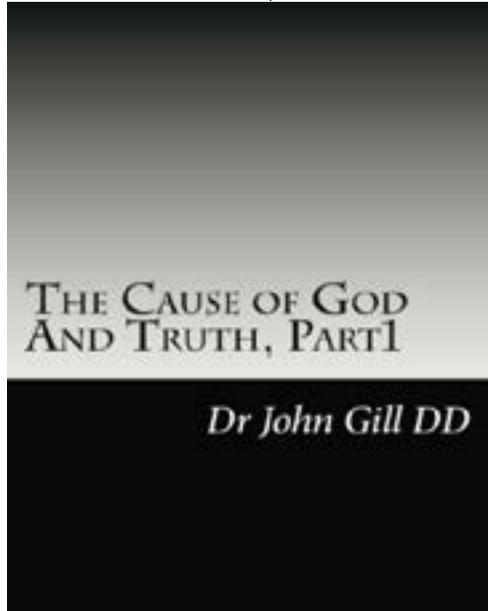
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The Cause of God And Truth, Part 1



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

List Price: \$5.90

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

94 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1544094670 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544094671

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

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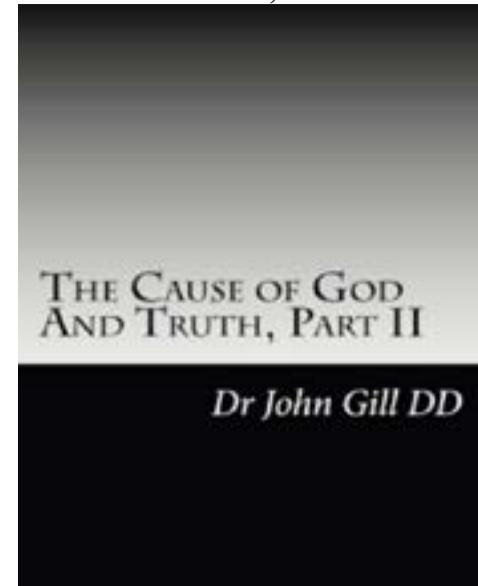
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The Cause of God And Truth, Part II



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

List Price: \$7.48

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

108 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1544648729 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544648723

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

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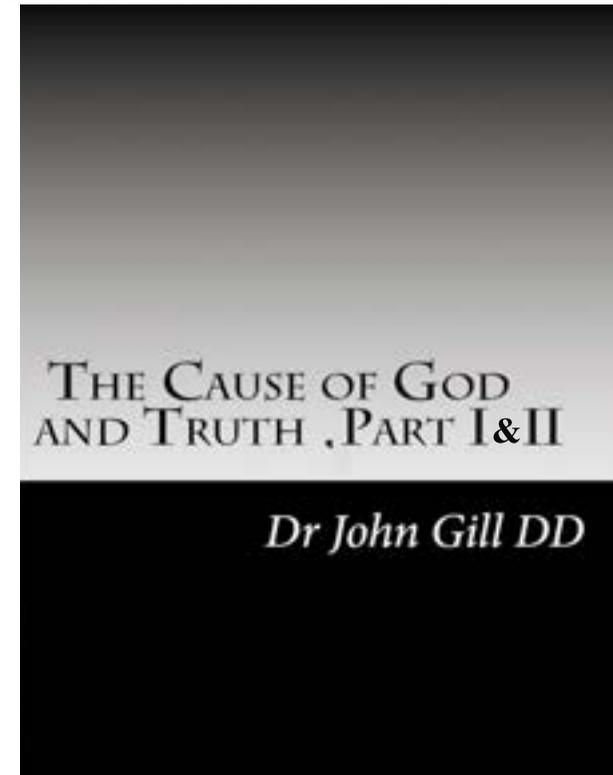
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The Cause of God and Truth Part III



The Doctrines of Grace

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Authored by David Clarke
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List Price: \$9.99

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

108 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1544810591 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544810598

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This book contains John Gill's answers to Dr Whitby objections to The Doctrines of Grace under the following heads.

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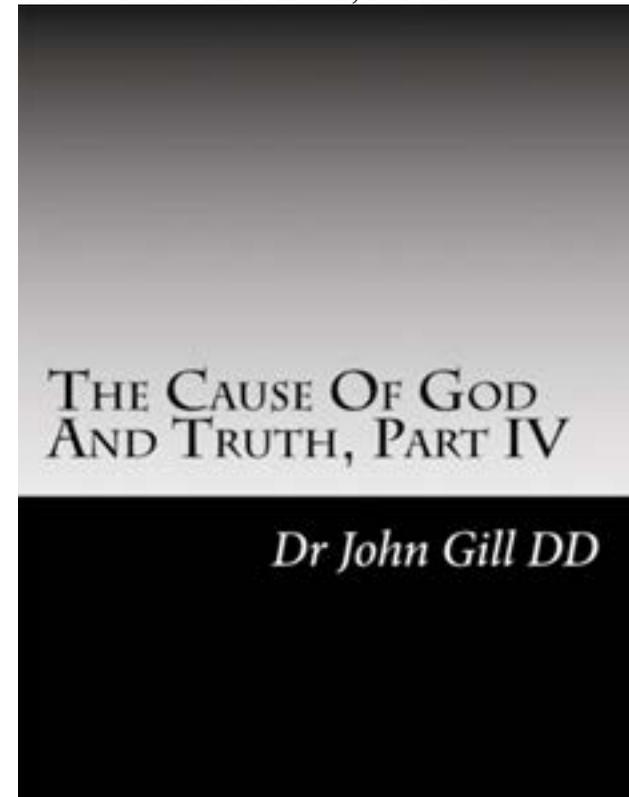
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The Third Part was published in 1737.

The Cause Of God And Truth, Part IV



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

126 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1544848709 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544848706

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It should be known by the reader, that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of

every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistic Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture.

The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminian, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

The Third Part was published in 1737, and is a confutation of the arguments from reason used by the Arminians, and particularly by Dr. Whitby, against the above doctrines ; and a vindication of such as proceed on rational accounts in favour of them, in which it appears that they are no more disagreeable to right reason than to divine revelation ; to the latter of which the greatest deference should be paid, though the Rationalists of our age too much neglect it, and have almost quitted it ; but to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.

In this part of the work is considered the agreement of the sentiments of Mr. Hobbes and the Stoic philosophers with those of the Calvinists, in which the difference between them is observed, and the calumny removed ; to which is added, a Defence of the Objections to the Universal Scheme, taken from the prescience and the providence of God, and the case of the Heathens.

The Fourth Part was published in 1738, in which the sense

of the ancient writers of the Christian Church, before the times of Austin, is given ; the importance and consequence of which is shown, and that the Arminians have very little reason to triumph on that account.

This work was published at a time when the nation was greatly alarmed with the growth of Popery, and several learned gentlemen were employed in preaching against some particular points of it ; but the author of this work was of opinion, that the increase of Popery was greatly owing to the Pelagianism, Arminianism, and other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation, This was the sense of our fathers in the last century, and therefore joined these and Popery together in their religious grievances they were desirous of having redressed ; and indeed, instead of lopping off the branches of Popery, the axe should be laid to the root of the tree, Arminianism and Pelagianism, the very life and soul of Popery.

This is Part 4 of 4 parts, and a new edition, with some alterations and improvements, is now published by request.

This work contains:

Chapter 1 Of Predestination

Chapter 2 Of Redemption

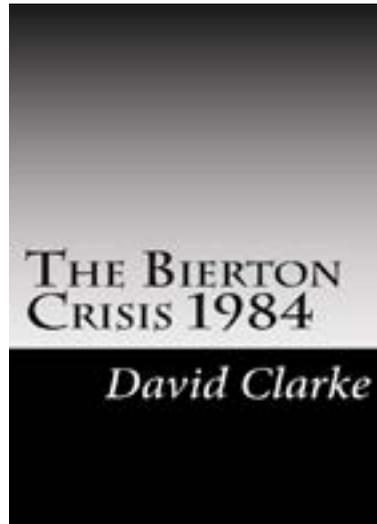
Chapter 3 Or Original Sin

Chapter 4 Of Efficacious Grace

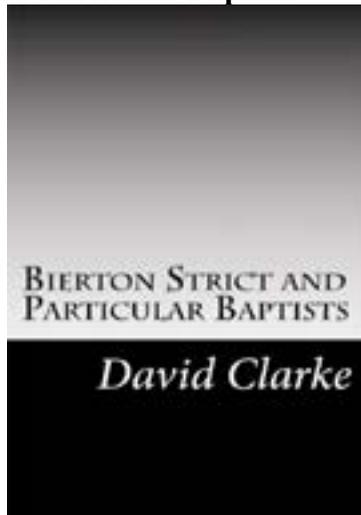
Chapter 5 Of Perseverance

Chapter 6 Of The Heathens

A Vindication of The Cause of God and Truth

The Bierton Crisis 1984

The following pages contain a collection of recorded events, which seek to explain the reason for my secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church. Bierton is a village near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The Bierton Church was a society, in law, called Strict and Particular Baptists, formed in 1831 and was presided by the son of John Warburton of Trowbridge, Wiltshire. It and became a Gospel Standard listed church in 1983. My succession from this church was not a separation from any other Strict Baptist church just the Bierton Church. I was not the subject of church discipline but rather I withdrew from the communion as a matter of conscience. And according to our church rules practice I am still a member. Conscience Free My voluntary leaving of this society leaves me free in conscience to relate my experiences, being bound only by the Law of Christ and not the rules of that society. The date of my secession was the 26th of June 1984. This is written believing this may help any persons finding themselves in similar situations and to point out the ignorance of some religious people.

Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists

My Testimony Being Set for a defence and confirmation of the Gospel Kindle Edition

by David Clarke (Author)

There are three separate accounts in the New Testament of a man who had been possessed with devils. He had been living among the tombs and the people had attempted to bind him with chains and fetters but he broke them so he would not be bound. People were afraid of him and avoided him. He had no house and wore no cloths and the devil drove him often into the wilderness.

And Jesus had just demonstrated his authority over the wind and the tempest to his disciples and now had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man and gave leave for the legion of devils to go into the swine and as a result the man was found at the feet of Jesus clothed in his right mind. The man wanted to be with Jesus and go with him, but Jesus said no but rather got to his own city and tell of all that the Lord had done for him. And straight way he went and published throughout the whole city of all that Jesus had done for him.

This book is a record of the personal testimony of the author in

which he tells of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for him it was first published on 11th February 2001 under the title *Converted on LSD Trip*. It is not written to glorify his past life but written as a testimony to what the Lord has done for him, despite his past sinful and criminal life. In this he tells of his early life before his sudden conversion from crime to Christ, him learning the doctrines of the grace of God and him joining the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists church, in 1976. He tells of his succession from the church over matters of conscience, in 1984. These matters are told in detail, in his book *The Bierton Crisis 1984*

Even the apostle Paul told of is past life as a religious man in his own defense when persecuted by the jews. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised the 8th day, Of the tribe of Benjamin, as toughing the Law blameless, not in a way of boasting but to show his past life, even though he was a religious man he considered it as worthless. He had been a Pharisee and from a religious zealous point of view persecuted the church even unto strange cities. He punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blasphemy, and being exceeding mad against them.

When the Apostle Paul was arrested by the lord on the Damascus Rod he fell to the ground and Jesus instructed him that he was to make him a minister and a witness both of the things he had seen and those things He would appear to him.

The author has written this book for this reason to inform the reader of all the that lord Jesus has done for him and to point out those important truths of the gospel of Christ.