SPIRITUAL COUNSELS

by Thomas Charles

Thomas Charles's collection of spiritual counsels and pastoral advice, offering wisdom and guidance for Christian living from the Welsh Methodist leader who was instrumental in founding the British and Foreign Bible Society.

15 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00 Spiritual Counsels
2. 02 Humility
3. 03 Operations of the Holy Spirit
4. 04 Sanctification
5. 05 Benefits of Affliction
6. 06 Tares and the Wheat
7. 07 Spiritual Appetite
8. 08 God Affording Seasonable Help
9. 09 Gift and Objects of God's Love
10. 10 Sin of Grieving the Spirit
11. 11 Infinite Greatness of Jesus!
12. 12 On Walking with God
13. 13 God Our Light
14. 14 Natural and Renewed Conscience
15. 15 Conformity to the Image of God

Chapter 1

00 Spiritual Counsels

Spiritual Counsels Thomas Charles, 1838

Pride

Humility The Operations of the Holy Spirit

Sanctification The Benefits of Affliction The Tares and the Wheat Spiritual Appetite God Affording Seasonable Help The Gift and Objects of God's Love The Sin of Grieving the Spirit The Infinite Greatness of Jesus! On Walking with God

God Our Light Natural and Renewed Conscience Conformity to the Image of God Courtesy www.gracegems.org This module was created by kotg

02 Humility

HUMILITY Thomas Charles, 1838

"Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" 1 Corinthians 4:7 In all the works of God—order, beauty, and proportion, are evidently to be seen—every particular part contributes to the beauty of the whole. This is remarkable in the human frame, as well as in every object which we behold. The different parts are beautifully ordered, connected, and proportioned. The new man in Christ is no less perfect and beautiful. A Christian is not a monster in form—but all his component parts have their being and growth together; they are beautifully connected and proportioned. Like the different members of the same body, all the graces of the spirit are connected with the head, that is, Christ. All the graces receive their supplies from him; grow together; and gain strength in some degree. It is true, one grace may be called forth into exercise more than another, and thereby gain more strength; yet all the other graces are influenced by it, and grow in some proportion to it. No one grace grows alone. For instance, the grace of knowledge cannot but influence our faith and love, our humility and repentance, our patience and meekness, etc. If it is the grace and fruit of the Spirit, all the other graces will be influenced by it, and bear some proportion in their growth. In like manner, all those graces which more immediately act towards God—will be accompanied with those corresponding graces which influence our conduct towards mankind. As our love to God is—so is our love to man. If we are humble before God—then we are humble also in our outward conduct towards our fellow-creatures. If we are thoroughly sensible that we have nothing but what we daily receive—then our conduct towards those from whom God by superior gifts has distinguished us, will be suitable to this sense of our poverty. It is in vain to pretend, that we are duly humbled before God, and that we are sensible of our spiritual poverty—if our conduct towards man is proud and haughty! This is the subject to be now particularly handled, that is: that true humility and a genuine sense of our poverty before God, will effectually influence our conduct towards all our fellow-creatures—and that the one, as it is the effect of the other, so it proves its truth and reality.

If we truly believe that we receive everything good from God—then we cannot boast as if we did not receive it. In proportion as we believe this, we cannot boast in ourselves in any respect—but in God alone, the giver of every good and perfect gift. Have we grace? We have received it. Do we believe this? Then we cannot boast against those who have it not—but our conduct towards them will be full of modesty and humility, of pity and compassion. Are we eminently distinguished by useful and ornamental gifts? Are those gifts and our labors abundantly blessed? All these are from God—but do we really believe this? If so, we shall not despise those who have them not—but we shall with all humility and industry employ them for the glory of God, and for the good of others. If we believe that we have received everything from God—then we shall not find it possible to take anything to ourselves, but shame; for there is nothing that we can call our own, but sin. As to our understanding, all that is in it which is ours, is its darkness. As to our hearts, all that belongs to us, is their wickedness and deceitfulness. If our hands and tongues have done any good—then God

has so employed them. All the light that is in our minds—is from the Father of lights. All that is good in our hearts, comes down from above. There is nothing which is our own, but sin and shame; and if we glory in ourselves, we must glory in our shame. That we may better know ourselves, and know the spirit we are of, I shall endeavor to throw some light on the subject, by contrasting the different workings of pride and humility, as they show themselves in divine things. These two principles influence the mind to think differently, the tongue to speak differently, and the whole man to act differently. They are exactly opposite to each other in all their workings.

I. Pride and humility THINK differently.

Pride is apt to think poorly of others; but humility leads a man to think poorly of himself.

While pride is observing the defects of others, their coldness and deadness, their ignorance and weakness, and is ready to condemn them without mercy; humility has work enough at home; is most jealous of itself, and most suspicious of the deceit of the heart which it occupies. The humble man knows that in him dwells no good thing. He sees sin so prevalent, and has so much to do to watch against all its motions, that he cannot at the same time attend much to others. His complaints are against himself; and with sincere grief he laments his own coldness and deadness, his great unfruitfulness and slow progress in the divine life. He is ready to think others better than himself, and is willing to hope, that there is no one so barren and so devoid of love and gratitude as himself.

Humility makes a man to see the good of others—and the evil that is in himself; and while he aggravates his own sins and deficiencies—he sets forth what is good in others to the best advantage.

If duty calls the truly humble man to mark and reprove sin in any of his brethren, he does it with humility, and restores him who is overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness. With what humility and gentleness did our Savior reprove his disciples, when they showed such coldness towards him in his hour of distress? "What! could you not watch with me one hour? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"—making an apology for them, at the same time that he reproved them. In proportion as the mind which was in Christ is in us, our conduct will be the same. But as the heart is best known by the fruits it produces, let us therefore note:

II. Pride and humility TALK differently. The language of pride is severe—but that of humility is compassionate. The one is bitter—the other is mild and gentle. The one is contemptuous—the other is loving.

Pride speaks of the sins of others—the enmity of some, the formality of others, and the delusions of the third; and speaks of them with bitterness and contempt, and it may be, with ridicule. But humility speaks, if it must speak at all, with compassion and godly sorrow, and with fervent prayer for them—well knowing, that if there is any difference between him and the vilest sinner on earth—it was grace which made the difference. The truly humble person, in all that he says and does—clothes himself with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. He makes allowance for other’s faults, and forgives anyone who offends him. As humility prevails, bitterness and wrath, anger and evil-speaking, along with all malice—will be rooted out; and the opposite graces of love, kindness and pity to all mankind, will govern the mind and guide the tongue.

Pride is apt to be revengeful and malicious—but true humility is the spirit of Christ, "who, when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly." He conquered . . .

enmity with love,

pride with humility,

persecution with prayer, and

all contemptuous treatment with, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It was the meekness of the lamb, and not the rage of the lion, that triumphed over all the rage and malice of men! The Apostles of the Lamb fought also with the same weapons. "Being reviled—we bless;" says Paul, "being defamed—we entreat; being persecuted—we suffer it". Intent on their Master's business, they passed by unnoticed, the injurious treatment they met with. By meekness and patient continuance in well-doing, their enemies were disarmed and vanquished; and the honor and interest of the gospel were greatly promoted.

Indeed nothing so highly adorns the gospel, and so effectually brings down God from Heaven in behalf of his people, as this spirit of meekness and patience under sufferings. When Aaron and Miriam, stirred up by envy, opposed Moses the servant of God; it is particularly observed of him at the time, that "he was meek above all men on the face of the earth"—doubtless because he then gave an eminent proof of his meekness; and God as eminently appeared in his vindication.

Christian fortitude does not consist in vehement passions and bitter invectives—but in maintaining steady calmness, meekness, and benevolence of mind, in the midst of all the rage and tumult of the world. It most eminently distinguishes itself in opposing and suppressing our spiritual and most dangerous enemies within, when occasions offer themselves from without, to stir up their natural fury, and give them some hopes of success.

Many a self-confident professor, under the influence of pride, may, without any fear, expose himself to the enmity of the world—for by thus losing the favor of the world, he knows that be will be more powerfully recommended to those of his own party and persuasion. But Christian fortitude, guided by humility, operates universally against all difficulties—against the smiles of friends as well as against the frowns of enemies. A single eye to God guides him in all, regardless of consequences on the one hand and on the other. The contempt of friends is far more difficult to be borne, than the hatred of the bitterest enemies. And the duty which calls us to this trial of being neglected by our friends, of being despised and disregarded by our party—is a more convincing proof of our faithfulness to Christ, than our forwardness in exposing ourselves to the reproach of opposers. When I have heard some talking of the persecutions they had met with, and the difficulties they had to pass through, with malignity of spirit and with contemptuous triumph—I have been often much grieved, and thought that such language ill suited the humble servants of a humble Master, and savored too much of Jehu's spirit, when he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord!"

True Christian zeal is the most humble, mild, and benevolent temper, that can influence the hearts of men or angels. It is the fervor of Divine love—and "love is patient and kind—it is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record

of being wronged."

Bitterness and wrath against any persons, even against avowed enemies, are as different from Christian zeal, as darkness is from light. Love and humility enter into the very essence of Christian zeal; and the more any one is influenced by it—the more loving, mild, and benevolent he is both towards the evil and the good. The force of Christian zeal is directed, not against persons but things, not against sinners, but against sin dwelling in them. It opposes sin principally in the heart where it exists, and, in the next place, sin universally, wherever it is found. The primitive Christians contended earnestly for the faith—but how? Not by the shedding of the blood of others—but by shedding their own blood. Those who bear all things with the greatest meekness and patience—contend most successfully for the faith, and make the noblest stand in time of persecution.

Revenge is sweet and gratifying to the worldly man, and is the natural and immediate offspring of unmortified pride. But not to resist evil, not to avenge ourselves, but rather to give place to anger, and to commit ourselves cheerfully to God, the sovereign ruler of all things—only divine grace can teach us; and is always the inseparable effect of true humility, according to the degree in which it prevails in the heart. The truly humble man, always suspicious of himself—improves even by the reproaches of his enemies. He seriously examines whether there is any foundation for any accusations against himsel—whether in a careless and slothful frame of mind, he has not been too remiss in watching against sin in all its motions. In everything, he who is poor in spirit and contrite in heart, trembling at God’s word—seeks and finds ample cause for self-abasement, shame, and godly sorrow—well knowing, that he has all evil in himself to suspect, and to he ashamed of—and that he has nothing good but what he daily receives from God. How can he then glory, as if he had not received it? But the spiritually proud man cannot learn wisdom. The reproofs of friends and the reproaches of enemies, have no good effect upon him. He grows more haughty and self-confident. Instead of suspecting himself of having done wrong—he is ever apt to run into greater lengths in those very things for which he is blamed. Being without a real conviction of the evil within him, he never suspects himself. Not practically believing that whatever good he possesses, he has received—he boasts, as if he had not received it.

III. Pride and humility ACT differently. In the whole of the outward conduct, there is an evident difference between spiritual pride and true gospel humility. This shall be instanced only in one particular.

Pride shows itself by a certain irreverent, self-confident boldness in approaching God, and also in the outward demeanor towards man.

Humility, on the contrary, shows godly fear and reverence towards the Almighty—and due deference and respect towards man.

Though we "have access with boldness to the throne of grace through the blood of sprinkling"—yet this free access ought to be, and always is, accompanied, in the truly humble, with holy reverence and godly fear. The ineffable glory of the Divine Majesty fills saints and angels in Heaven with profound awe and reverence. Though fully satisfied of his favor towards them, and of their love to him—yet the glory and majesty of his infinite and inconceivable perfections eternally fill them with such humility, adoration, and reverence, as bear some proportion to their infinite

distance from him.

If these are the dispositions, and if this is the conduct of the holy inhabitants of Heaven—then it is evident that those who are vessels of mercy in the Lord's hands, preparing for the same place, must have something of the same spirit in them. Though "perfect love casts out fear"—the fear of coming to God as a reconciled Father in Christ, and of walking in communion with him as such—yet this love rather augments than destroys the holy fear of God's divine majesty. Not only the submission of a creature, but also the befitting humility of a pardoned sinner, even in Heaven—will bear proportion to all other graces in glorified saints.

There will be in this respect an eternal difference between saints and angels. Saints in Heaven never forget that they were once sinners, though the remembrance of this is entirely free from pain or fear; yes rather it will be accompanied with deep humility, which sweetly enlivens all their praise and joy. But while on earth, our fear of God cannot be such as if we were already perfect, and fully delivered from all the effects of sin—but it is such an apprehension of God's glorious majesty, as constrains us to be highly jealous of his glory, and humbly fearful of every indication of his displeasure, as in times past we have offended him—and lest in future we should offend him. It therefore befits the holiest man on earth, "to serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice before him with trembling." By frequent free access to God in Christ, this holy reverence is in danger of wearing off—and spiritual pride will creep in secretly, unless our hearts are, as it were, in our hands, and our eyes be continually upon them, watching all their motions. This may be, and is often the case with the true Christian himself; but this never fails to be the case with those who have the scheme of the gospel in their heads, unaccompanied with corresponding impressions on their hearts. This wicked generation, having hearts unbroken, and spirits unhumbled, in general neither fear God nor honor man—to whom the caution of Solomon would at no time be unsuitable, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in Heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few."

If they saw the vast distance between God and them, the very thought of irreverence would make them tremble with horror and confusion. When we are taught to pray to God as our Father—we are at the same time taught to address him as our Father who is in Heaven—high above all, commanding reverence and humility, fear and obedience from the whole universe. With this irreverence before God, is always connected a bold and haughty conduct towards man. Such men in every respect "boast as if they had not first received." A spirit, truly humbled before God, will infallibly show itself in a conduct towards man that is humble and meek.

If therefore our pretensions to humility before God are unaccompanied with a suitable behavior towards one another—they are wholly vain. If we are still stubborn inferiors, haughty superiors, and self-willed equals—then it is evident that our proud hearts have never been truly humbled, and that all our religion is of no value.

True humility is known by its fruits. A true servant of Christ, however highly distinguished by gifts and graces, thinks very humbly of himself, and deeply feels what he expresses, when he says, "I am nothing." And when a man truly says this, he will naturally esteem others better than himself, and consequently will not despise a weak brother. He is one who does not boast, but is apt to

prefer others in honor.

See how humble Abraham honored the children of Heth, whom he yet knew to be far from God and accursed, "Abraham stood up, and bowed to the people of the land". See how humble Jacob, in a heavenly frame of mind, honored profane Esau, a false and persecuting brother, "Jacob bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother." He called him lord, and commanded his whole family to honor him in the same manner.

"Lord", said David, "my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in matters too high for me." Is not true humility still the same? Is not an high look, and a proud heart—as great a sin now, as in former days? Did Christ humble himself—to make us proud? Or are we not rather to learn of him, who was meek and lowly? But see spiritual pride in its effects: Haughty and bold, it little regards any honor, or deference, due to superiors in rank, fortune, natural gifts, or spiritual attainments. That amiable fear and modesty in inferiors towards superiors, is wholly laid aside. The Scripture rule is, "that others should behold our chaste conduct, coupled with fear." And there sober and humble thoughts of ourselves, and modesty, are particularly recommended. In everything, and towards all, our deportment ought to be that of the humble disciples of a humble master. But the young in years, and younger in grace, influenced by spiritual pride, will be forward and haughty; opening wide the mouth in every matter, without fear; and often giving ready decisions on points on which those who have three times their knowledge and humility, perhaps very justly and modestly entertain doubts. Always forward and haughty, they speak with decisive authority, treat the sober judgment of others with contempt, and expect that their determinations should be implicitly received and acquiesced in. While the truly humble looks to everyone for assistance—the spiritually proud, instead of showing the humble deportment of a disciple who wants instruction, is swift to speak, and slow to hear, as if everybody needed his teaching. Whatever deference is paid to him, he looks upon all as his undoubted right. Those who do not acknowledge his merits—he treats as weak and ignorant fools. I cannot forbear inserting here an excellent passage on the matter in hand from the pious Richard Baxter:

"Are you a man of worth in your own eyes, and very tender of your esteem with others? Are you one who much values the applause of the people, and feels your heart tickled with delight when others esteem you? Are you dejected when you hear men slight you? Do you love those best, who most highly honor you, and does your heart bear a grudge at those who undervalue you, and entertain low thoughts of you, though they be otherwise men of godliness and honesty? Are you one who needs have your judgment to be the rule of others, and your word a law to all about you? Are you ready to quarrel with every man that lets fall a word in derogation from your honor? Are your passions kindled, if your word or will is crossed? Are you ready to judge humility to be sordid baseness, who knows not how to submit, and will not be brought to shame yourself by humble confession, when you have sinned against God, or injured your brother? Are you one that honor the godly that are rich, and think yourself somebody, if they value and own you, but look strangely at the godly poor, and are almost ashamed to be their companion? Are you one who cannot serve God in a low place—as well as in a high place, and think yourself fittest for offices and honors, and love God’s service when it stands with your preferment? Do you have your eye and your speech much on your own deservings, and are you boasting in your abilities? Do you delight in opportunities of setting forth your abilities, and love to have your name made public to the world, and would gladly leave some monument of your worth, that posterity may admire you, when you

are dead and gone? Have you witty ways to commend yourself, while you seem to debase yourself? Do you desire to have all men's eyes upon you, saying, "This is the man!" Is the end of your studies and learning, of your labors and duties, of seeking degrees, titles, and positions—that you may be taken for somebody in the world?

"Are you unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of your heart—or know yourself to be vile only by reading and by hearsay, and not by experience and feeling of your vileness? Are you readier to defend yourself, and maintain your own innocence—than to accuse yourself, and confess your faults? Can you hardly bear a reproof, and receive plain dealings with difficulty and distaste? Are you readier in your discourse to teach, rather than to learn; to dictate to others, than to hearken to their instructions? Are you bold and confident of your own opinions, and slight the judgment of all who differ from you?

"Is your spirit more disposed to command and govern, than to obey and be ruled by others? Are you ready to censure the doctrines of teachers, the actions of your rulers, and the persons of your brethren; and to think, that if you were a judge, you would be more just; or if you were a minister, you would be more faithful in doctrine, and more faithful in overseeing; or if you had had the management of other men's business, you would have done it more wisely and honestly?

"If these symptoms are undeniably in your heart, then beyond doubt you are a proud person! Pride has seized on your heart, which is the principal fort. There is too much of Hell abiding in you, for you to have any acquaintance with Heaven—your soul is too much like the Devil, for you to have any familiarity with God."

I shall now conclude, with a caution to those whose situation lays them open more particularly to Satan's temptation, and the workings of corruption in this way—I mean, those who by their gifts and usefulness have the preeminence in the church of God.

It is not easy to have the preeminence—and at the same time not to be like Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence. It is right and proper that they should have the preeminence, whose qualifications entitle them to it—but for them to love to have it, is sinful and abominable in the sight of a jealous God! However justly they may be exalted and highly esteemed—yet what they should love, is to be the servants of all, because they are better qualified to minister, than those who have not their gifts. Whatever qualifications, by gifts and endowments, God bestows on any—they are all those of servants; that is, they ought, as servants, to serve with him. But how difficult it is for those who carry within a proud and devilish nature, to keep their place in this respect. The carnal man will be ever showing off his abilities—he would willingly borrow plumes from Heaven to gratify his pride. "Dathan and Abiram were famous in the congregation"—they were men of eminence for their gifts and usefulness; but they loved to have the preeminence, strove against Moses and Aaron—yes, says the word, "they strove against the Lord." They boasted, as if they had not received; and their pride hurled them down into Hell!

What shall we say of Moses himself? That eminent servant of God, meek above all men on the face of the earth, fell by this very sin at Meribah, and was excluded on account of it, from the promised land. He had zeal for God—but his own passions were mingled with his zeal, and he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. "Hear now you rebels!" said he. It is true, they were rebels; but his words breathe strongly of bitterness and impatience. He assumed also to himself too much, "Must

we fetch water out of this rock?" We!—what! is the Lord laid aside? Is He not needed? Was it you, or the Lord, who divided the sea, and opened the rock on a former occasion? It seems at least to me, that his eye was not so directly to the Lord, as in his former difficulties. He considered their rebellion before, as principally against the Lord; but here self seems to creep in, both in his reproof, and in performing the miracle. Let the punishment of Moses make us tremble, lest we fall into a similar provoking sin. Moses, so holy, so humble, so meek, fell by it.

"Let him therefore who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall!" Should we not tremble, when we hear that God punished his faithful servant Moses, with whom he spoke face to face, and to whom he had in a peculiar manner revealed his glory? His temptations to this sin were in various ways strong; his provocation at the time was by no means small—and yet this did not excuse him. God is above all things, jealous of his glory. When all opposition and every other temptation fail, the Devil is in this often successful against the servants of God. Satan never bid fairer for victory over Barnabas and Paul, than when, after their very successful preaching of the gospel, and confirming it by signs and wonders—he stirred up the people at Lystra to worship them as gods. It was perhaps the boldest attack that Satan ever made on the apostles. The temptation had everything in its favor. There was all the food to nourish pride which it could desire. Paul had but just before cured, by one word, a lame man, and had for some time past been eminently successful in converting many, both Jews and Gentiles. Satan also might easily transform himself into an angel of light, and persuade them, that this good opinion, which the people entertained of them, if promoted, might be exceedingly useful in gaining converts to their doctrine. But the Lord signally kept them in the hour of temptation, and made them more than conquerors over this enemy. "We are men of like passions with yourselves!" Thus is the triumph proclaimed. To conclude—he who judges rightly of himself, measures his religion by his humility, and measures his humility by the degree of influence it has on the mind, in enduing it with those mild, benevolent, and heavenly tempers, which suit a miserable sinner, who lives by the patience and mercy of God; and in adorning the whole outward man with that amiable, humble, and courteous deportment, which befits one who can boast in no good thing, as if he had not received it. May the Lord make and keep us humble.

Chapter 3

03 Operations of the Holy Spirit

The Operations of the Holy Spirit Thomas Charles, 1838

The salvation of fallen man is wholly, from beginning to end, the work of God. The Father, Son, and Spirit have jointly engaged in covenant, and by promises, to accomplish this stupendous work. In this gracious engagement there could have been no other motive but divine love, ascribed peculiarly to the Father, though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit. The love of each person is the love of the divine nature common to each; it must therefore be the same in each. The Father "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." The Son loved us, and gave himself for us. And the apostle beseeches the Romans, that "for the love of the Spirit, they would strive together with him." This free love engaged them in their respective undertakings—the Father to elect, the Son to redeem the elect, and the Spirit to sanctify the redeemed. But this love is particularly ascribed to the Father, because as he is in all things the first mover, so also in redemption. The salvation of man, and all the blessings it includes, proceed from the love of the Father, through the grace of the Son, and by the operations of the Spirit. The Spirit graciously reveals and applies the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son—which otherwise would never have profited us, any more than light can profit a blind man, or food a dead man—we have no eyes to see the one, nor appetite to feed on the other. The Spirit is promised as the gift of the Father and of the Son—he therefore voluntarily comes in the name and by the authority of both. The same love which influenced the Son, when he "took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient even unto death," influences the Spirit in his condescension and undertaking as a Comforter and Sanctifier. He is infinitely free in all his operations. Our unworthiness has no more influence on him in what he does, than it had on Christ's coming to redeem the world. Christ died for the ungodly—and the Holy Spirit comes to, abides with, and sanctifies the ungodly. He comes into the heart, when it is nothing but filth, a hellish scene of all abominations and iniquities, a horrid darkness, a miserable confusion, like the world in its original chaotic state. He so loves his people committed to him, that he abides and dwells with them forever, acting with authority and power, according to his own pleasure, as their various circumstances may require. He prepares and strengthens them for every event, reveals to them what they must needs know; in the time and way most fit, inclines their hearts in the way and degree he pleases, and controls all their inward enemies. As Christ is head over all things to the church in the outward world, ordering and directing all things, in the way most conducive to his own glory and to the real good of his people; so the Holy Spirit dwells in them, putting forth the exceeding greatness of his power in renewing, supporting, comforting; and restoring righteousness, joy, and peace. Every avenue of the soul, every one of its faculties is under his eye and over-ruling direction and control. Every rebel within, every worldly and sensual lust, and every filthiness of the spirit—he observes, restrains, and gradually subdues. He brings these by various means out of their lurking places, strips them of their false appearances, and exposes them to view in all their guilt and deformity. The Spirit's work shall now be considered; as the work of Him who leads us into all truth, particularly respecting ourselves and God—of Him who convinces of sin and of righteousness.

I. The Spirit convicts of SIN.

"When the Spirit comes," says our Savior, "he will reprove the world of sin". Sin is already in the world, but the world sees it not. "Every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually." As every imagination, and every thought is only evil—there is nothing within us, by which evil can be discovered and condemned; for it will neither discover nor condemn itself. It is light alone which can discover the hidden things of darkness; but within us, in our natural state, there is no light. We are "darkness", and we "sit" in darkness, contented and satisfied with the state in which we are—we see not the evil of our darkness, nor seek any deliverance out of it.

There are indeed, as to most, some gleams of natural light remaining in the conscience, which may be strengthened and improved by education, instruction, and example; but at best they are but faint, and the knowledge they convey, is merely intellectual, floating in the head, vague, uncertain, and unaffecting; the heart continuing still as dark and unknown as ever. This natural light never did nor can reveal sin to be sin—to be what it really is, "exceeding sinful." Both the discovery it makes of sin, and the sentence it passes on it, are unfruitful and useless—it neither truly humbles us on its account, nor causes us to flee from it. It may make us fearful and uneasy; but it will not make us repent and turn from sin, to the living God. But when the Spirit enters the heart, with the looking-glass of the law, as it were, in his hand, and shows sin in this mirror, then we see it to be sin; to be "exceeding sinful;" far beyond all imagination sinful, so that the mind is overwhelmed with the vastness of its guilt.

Sin is in general within us, without the law. So the apostle says, "I was alive without the law once;" that is, he was alive in sin and self-confidence, without any spiritual knowledge of or attention to the law, which condemns sin. But the law may also be with us—in our hands and in our heads; and we yet, not knowing its extent and spirituality, continue ignorant of the true nature of sin. It is holding a mirror before us in the dark, which cannot reveal our wrinkles and deformities. We may imagine, because we see no sin, that we have none. The truth is, we have no light to see our true nature. But when we view ourselves in the looking-glass of the law by the light of the Spirit, then we see what we are, how corrupt and deformed; we then see sin to be sin, that it is exceeding sinful. "When the commandment thus comes, and sin is beheld by the light of the Spirit—then sin revives, and appears in a far different light to our mind; and we feel it by its power working, and by the authority of the law condemning; for the strength of sin is the law. Not only some gross outward sins are discovered, but the Spirit enters the deepest recesses of the heart with the law, as it were, in his hand. He goes from chamber to chamber, searches every corner, discovers, tries and condemns secret lusts and spiritual filthiness, totally unknown and unthought of before. And as these secret lusts are discovered and condemned, the curse due to each is awfully pronounced, with divine authority, in the name of the eternal God. And as our sins are thus gradually discovered, and brought to light, as to their number, nature, and guilt—the soul sees condemnation still enlarging before it, the curses of the law sound louder and more terrible, and the scene becomes exceedingly dreadful—every sin appears far greater than was ever before thought of, and their number becomes infinitely increased! The individual would willingly turn his eyes from such wretchedness, would extinguish the light which discovers it, or would by some means take a brighter view of these dreadful objects—but all he can do is fruitless. He would forget his sins; but he cannot. He would excuse and palliate his offences, or seek some goodness to balance them; but this also is impossible. The law comes still more home; and light, clearer and

brighter, shines upon the mind, discovering and condemning every evil thought, every sinful imagination. He may and will resist these convictions; "for the flesh lusts against the Spirit"—but it will be "hard to kick against the goads," when the Spirit works effectually, making known the exceeding greatness of his power in enlightening the understanding to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin! When the Spirit thus works—then what discoveries does He make! What infinite guilt does He show to be in every spot and stain of sin! With what horror and amazement does the awakened sinner view his own pride, seeing it as comprehending all the atheism and enmity against God, which actuate the inhabitants of Hell!

Envy, malice, and revenge, the natural offspring of pride, he now sees to be the very temper and dispositions of the Devil himself!

He now sees and feels the force of the command, "You shall not covet;" and by it lust is made known to him in all its greatness and guilt. His careless neglect and disregard of God, in what light does he view it now! To live without thoughts of God—the Spirit within us condemns as practical atheism. To think of him at all without the profoundest reverence and the deepest humility, without supreme love and submission, appears not much better. When the Spirit shows sin to be sin, every frame of mind unsuitable to the divine majesty and purity, is exceedingly felt and lamented. Shame, sorrow, and indignation, the deepest self-abasement and abhorrence—now weigh down the soul, and humble it to the dust. Yes, there is a sort of infinity in the abasement of the soul, when the Spirit shows sin to be sin; he would still be more humble, and sink, were it possible, still deeper; he grieves, because he cannot grieve more; he abhors himself, because he cannot be still more detestable in his own sight. He sees an infinity of evil in sin, which he cannot fully comprehend, any more than he can the holiness of the law, or the greatness of God, against whom it is committed. He would therefore desire that his sorrow, humility, and self-abasement, should bear some proportion to it. This is not a frame of mind which is only once known, when the sinner is first awakened; but is in an increasing degree his frame of mind, as he grows in holiness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. So far is this sense of sin from being inconsistent with his comforts—it heightens his joys, sweetens his consolations, and effectually promotes holiness. Without this, all imagined joy and peace is a delusion; and all imagined holiness has no existence but in the pride and darkness of our own deceived hearts. This is the only frame of mind that can fit us to receive blessings from Christ, and to walk humbly with him, who "fills the hungry with good things, but sends the rich empty away", who "gives grace to the humble, but sees the proud afar off". This conviction of sin is, while in this world—forever deeper, clearer, and more abiding, as the believer enjoys nearer communion with God, and grows in faith, love, and peace. And without the continual communion of the Spirit, thus with us, walking humbly with God is impossible.

II. The Spirit reveals CHRIST in the fullness of his merits, and the sufficiency of his grace.

"He shall glorify me," says Christ, "for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you". "All things that the Father has are mine; therefore I said, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." Those things which the Father’s love has prepared, and which Christ by his condescension and death has procured—the Spirit receives, takes and shows unto us.

He first shows unto us our own things, our sins, "he brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and makes manifest the counsels of the heart."

Then he takes the things of God and of Christ, and shows them to us in all their glory and excellency, and enables us by faith to receive them. The Scriptures are express on the point, that without the Spirit we can neither know nor receive the things of God. We can no more know them, than we can know each others' thoughts without communicating them. "For no man," says the apostle, "knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him—even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God." Even when they are proposed to us, and we have an intellectual knowledge of them, they cannot be spiritually received; but they will ever be foolishness to us, until the Spirit shows them in their own glory and true light, and opens the heart to receive them.

"The natural man," as the apostle declares, "receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The things of the Father and of the Son are here called the things of the Spirit, because he takes of them, shows them to us, and enables us in his light to spiritually discern them. This points out to us the way and means by which the Spirit comforts and sanctifies his people—he leads them into a clearer knowledge and into a more steadfast belief of the eternal love of the Father, and of the fullness and ability of Christ to save. He reveals the things of the Father and of the Son unto us. The Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. The whole mind and will of the Father, he thoroughly knows and fully comprehends. And when we have received the Spirit of God, then we know the things that are freely given us by God, for the Spirit reveals them unto us.

He reveals them as originally the things of the Father; but he takes them as they are the things of Christ also, and shows them as coming to us in no other way but through him. He leads us to the source of all spiritual blessings—divine love. He also gives us a clear view of the channel through which they are conveyed to us—the atonement and righteousness of Christ. Thus he teaches us all things, "as the truth is in Jesus". He shows pardon, reconciliation, and grace—as they are in Jesus. These are the things of Christ which he takes; and he shows and teaches them as they are in Him, in all their infinite fullness and glory. By his light we see the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, are enabled to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The Spirit also shows grace and truth—the things of Jesus as they dwell in him, in fullness great and equal to the dignity of the Person in whom they dwell. Hence it is, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit". None can behold his glory as the only-begotten of the Father, but in this divine light. Without a spiritual apprehension of the dignity of his person—the fullness of grace and truth dwelling in him, must be forever unknown.

Thus the believer has a regular and complete view of divine things, given him as they are revealed in Scripture. There is no deficiency in any material part, no disorder, no confusion, but a beautiful connection and regularity. He sees them in their source, in the channel through which they are conveyed, in their dependence and influence. And when the Spirit thus shows them, they are sure to have the desired effect, and carry full conviction to the mind.

It is the demonstration of the Spirit and of power—it is, as if the sun shone at midnight with meridian splendor. The objects before unseen, become visible as they are, in all their glory. We clearly and distinctly see what before we could only feel after in darkness.

Together with this divine light—life and power are communicated to revive, comfort, and fructify the dead and barren soul. There is "the demonstration of the Spirit and power"—so that what we

see clearly, and we feel effectually working with the power of the divinity. When the Spirit shows the love of the Father, and sheds this love abroad in the before unbelieving and disconsolate heart—it is with such clearness and power, that all the sense of sin, guilt, and unworthiness, and the clear view of the just vengeance due to sin, shall not be able to raise a doubt within us. By the clear evidence of the Father's love and good-will, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, so that we are able to cry out, "Abba, Father!" In this case, sin and Satan, pleading against us, are overpowered, and conscience and the law are silenced, being satisfied.

Similar also is the view which the Spirit gives of the person, righteousness, and grace of Christ. The person of Christ, though before "without form or loveliness"—is now altogether lovely. The believer sees him to be such a Savior as he needs—one of infinite dignity, majesty, and power. He sees the obedience unto death of such a dignified person, forming a divine righteousness, perfect and consummate, amply sufficient to justify the most guilty, and deliver from condemnation those obnoxious to ruin! On Christ's righteousness, he rests with confidence, being fully persuaded of the Savior's ability to keep that which is committed to him, and to save to the uttermost. The fullness of grace also, which is in Jesus to sanctify and support the soul, in opposition to every inward corruption and outward temptation, appears to partake of the infinity of Christ himself. His grace is a source that cannot be exhausted—an ocean that knows no bounds.

These things of Jesus, when thus showed, and thus seen in the light of the Spirit—effectually comfort the soul. Though the burden of sin and guilt was before intolerable—though innumerable evils had compassed him about, and his iniquities had taken such hold of him, that he was not able to look up, and his heart failed him—the things of Jesus, thus seen, bring him effectual relief, so that he is surprised and astonished at so unexpected, so suitable, and so full a deliverance! The gloom of despair and the cloud of God's wrath, disappear—and he has "beauty, for ashes; the oil of joy, for mourning; and the garment of praise, for the spirit of heaviness".

Thus the Spirit is with us, as our comforter and advocate—pleading within us, with divine light and energy, our cause; answering every demand of the law, and every accusation of a guilty conscience, of sin, and of Satan.

He takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to us. Until this is the case, we have nothing but our own things to produce and oppose to these bold and forcible accusations. No marvel then if they are never silenced, and we can obtain no comfort—for our own things only strengthen and confirm still more the accusations laid against us—but alas! they cannot show them to us, they cannot cause them to shine in their glory in our hearts, any more than they can cause the sun to shine at midnight. But when the Spirit shows them and bears witness with our spirit, the dispute is at once at an end; peace is restored, and joy in the Holy Spirit abounds. And when the things of Christ are thus by the Spirit shown to us, and he by them pleads our cause against all accusers, to secure to believers their actual saving interest in them, and the sure accomplishment of all the promises, he seals them to the day of redemption. They are sealed now, "whereby," says the Apostle, "you are sealed." The things of Christ, the blessings of pardon, reconciliation, and grace—are made sure and certain to them in particular, the free grant of them having the seal of Heaven annexed to it. And they are sealed also "to the day of redemption"—whereby the promises and blessings included in them are irrevocably confirmed, and the accomplishment of them, is made certain and infallible—until they are in the full enjoyment of the purchase made for them by

Christ, when he obtained for them eternal redemption. By the same means by which the Spirit within us comforts our souls—he also sanctifies them. True spiritual comfort and holiness are inseparable. Neither of them can be alone—where one is, there the other is also. They are effects of the same cause, and produced by the same means. This work of the Spirit in teaching, comforting, and sanctifying, is aptly and beautifully set forth by the simile of anointing: "You have an anointing from the Holy One; and you know all things", "the anointing which you have received from him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you—but as the same anointing teaches you all things, and is truth and is no lie." It is an allusion to the Judaic anointings, by which persons and things were set apart and consecrated to any office or service which the Lord appointed.

Persons were thereby appointed and consecrated to offices—when at the same time they were endowed and qualified with the gifts requisite for the discharge of those offices. In allusion to this custom, true believers are said to have an anointing from the Holy One, and to know all things.

Things dedicated to the service of the Lord were also by holy oil consecrated for this purpose, and were ever afterwards regarded sacred and holy. This sets forth the Spirit as the sanctifier, separating God’s people from the unholy mass of the world, to be a peculiar people, zealous for good works.

There was also the oil of joy and gladness, to give a cheerful countenance to the sorrowful. So does the Spirit fill us with joy in believing. The anointing therefore from the holy One—teaches, comforts and sanctifies his people. Those things which he teaches them are the means of their comfort and of their sanctification. The things of Jesus are still the materials with which he works, to produce every holy and desirable effect within the soul—for he is made to us of God—wisdom, righteousness, and also sanctification. This will at once appear abundantly evident, if we consider the different parts of holiness enumerated by the Apostle as the fruits of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit", he says, "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." "The fruit of the Spirit", he says in another place, "is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." All these are the different constituent parts of holiness, the different lineaments of the image of God restored on the soul. But they are no where to be found but where the Spirit dwells and abides.

We may as well expect fruit without a tree to bear it—as look for these graces where the Spirit is not. Without the Spirit changing the inward man and abiding within us—no waterings, no skill or application, can ever produce these fruits. There is this which materially distinguishes these graces from all other gifts of the Spirit—these sanctifying graces are fruits produced by the Spirit, as from a root dwelling and abiding within them; while the gifts of the Spirit are only the works and effects of his operations on men, and not fruits of his producing in them. The fruit proves that the tree is made good, and has life and vigor in it to bring forth fruits; but the gifts only show, that they is formed and shaped for a particular use; and may, when the end is answered, become useless and unprofitable. But how does the Spirit within us, produce these fruits? Is it not by taking of the things of the Father and Son, and showing them to us?

How is love to God produced, but by his love being shed abroad in our hearts? "We love him—because he first loved us." The brightness of his love shining, by the Spirit, upon our dark and barren hearts, can alone produce this heavenly fruit. And without the things of Christ being

shown—what peace, what joy can there be for a guilty sinner? Without the righteousness, merits and grace of Christ being revealed—we may as well expect to hear the voice of melody in the mansions of eternal misery—as to find spiritual peace and joy in the sinner's heart. But when the love of the Father and the grace of the Son are shown to us—then, and not until then, love, joy, and peace, are produced.

Unsound professors, who have no root in themselves and therefore can produce no fruit of any sort, may and do receive the word sometimes with joy—like Herod who "did many things and heard John gladly." But this empty and temporary joy differs as much from true joy—as mere blossoms do from the fruit. Like blossoms, it is unsubstantial and short-lived; the least severity of weather puts an end to its mirthful appearance—and having no root, it soon vanishes. But true joy is a real fruit, solid, substantial, refreshing, and nourishing. It revives, strengthens, and establishes the soul.

Whatever is a fruit of the Spirit, has a flavor and relish in it, which nothing else, however similar, can ever have. This true spiritual joy Christ calls his joy; "that my joy," he said to his disciples, "might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It is his joy materially as the cause of it. It is a joy in believing in the Lord by the Holy Spirit. "The meek shall increase his joy in the Lord". So also, if there is true long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, etc. in the world—they are all the fruits of the Spirit; and they are no where to be found but in the believer's heart.

Without the appearance, indeed, of these, in good breeding and civility of manners, the world could not go on without utter confusion, dissensions, and misery—but the fruits themselves grow nowhere but where the Spirit of God dwells and abides. They are alone produced by his enabling us by faith to see the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering to us unworthy and offending sinners. The mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering—are only put on, when we perceive the greatness of Christ's mercies towards us. We forbear and forgive—only when and as Christ has forgiven us. It is when we see what debtors we are to him, and how freely and undeservedly we must obtain forgiveness—that we forbear with others. As he has forgiven us—so we forgive others. And the more lively sense we have by the Spirit of his continual long-suffering and continual forgiveness to us—the more ready we shall be to forbear and forgive one another.

Thus all the graces of the Spirit essentially differ from any semblance that may be of them in the world. They have a different, even a divine root—and are produced in a very different manner.

"We all," says the Apostle, including all believers until the end of time, "we all, with open face, beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord—are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." The Spirit is the great agent who effects this change, by showing to us the glory of the Lord in the face of Christ—and we are changed into the same image—the same mercy, the same compassion, the same goodness and grace—which by faith we see in him exercised towards us. These graces are produced in us by the Spirit, and exercised by us towards others.

We may vainly pride and please ourselves with some semblences of these graces—but we may be well assured, that nothing will be found to be real fruits of the Spirit, which are not produced by these effectual means, and in this way of holiness. If we have seen by the light of the Spirit, the

glory of the Lord—then we must be proportionably changed into the same image, and by no other means can the change be produced! The Spirit dwelling in our heart, as the implanter and former of every grace—is the pledge of our inheritance, which God has given to assure us of the entire accomplishment of all his promises, and of the full possession of the inheritance itself. And as the fruits produced by this divine agent are a proof and pledge—so they are also a part of the harvest which is to follow. So these fruits must precede the harvest. He who has not the first-fruits, can have no ground to expect that a harvest will ensue. Where these first-fruits of the Spirit are not, there the Spirit himself cannot be, as a pledge of our heavenly inheritance. If God has not given us a pledge of future glory—then our expectations are certainly groundless, and will in the end be disappointed.

Those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, are feeding here in the wilderness on the grapes of yonder Canaan, the land of their inheritance—and by the taste they have here, they know the excellency of the country to which they are traveling. They groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of their body, and for the full enjoyment of that country, where they shall reap their full harvest in joy for evermore. While here, they still go on from strength to strength, feeding on these fruits; the Spirit daily helping their infirmities in the midst of their inward and outward troubles, giving them strength in weakness, light in darkness, wisdom and grace to support them until they appear before God in Zion.

Thus we have seen what the work of the Spirit: he convinces of sin, making it to appear sin, even exceedingly sinful—and he also takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to us, by which means he effectually comforts and sanctifies our souls. He is thus with his people during the whole of their pilgrimage, still humbling them more in the dust, and still bringing the things of Jesus before their enlightened eyes with increasing glory.

Those who have had the things of Jesus shown them by the light of the Spirit, still long to see them more clearly. They see greater glory, yes, riches of glory, after which they stretch, and to which they would attain. And when they obtain their desire, they rest not, but would still go on to greater glory. They dig deeper and deeper into the unsearchable riches of Christ, and would comprehend more fully what they find which still surpasses knowledge—the love of the Father and the grace of the Son, in their greatness and infinity. They find an excellency in the knowledge of Christ, in comparison with which all other things are but loss and dung. This excellency is what they daily study to make progress in—to go on from glory to glory. This knowledge of Christ with them never grows old, or stale—but is always new, refreshing and more glorious. From what has been said—

I. Thenecessityandimportanceof having the Spirit appear evident. The Spirit is the life and soul of all true religion, the conveyer of all spiritual consolation, the implanter and nourisher of every grace and holy disposition Without him, whatever we are, we have only a name to live, and are indeed dead while we live. We can no more live spiritually, in fellowship with God, without the Spirit, than we can live a natural life without breathing. His light, life, and energy, are every moment wanted to enable us to see and feel spiritual things, or to produce any holy fruits of righteousness, From him only can we receive light; and unless he continues to shine daily upon us, our light will be turned unto darkness, our comforts will cease, and the graces of the Spirit will wither and die away. We may have a natural or intellectual knowledge of the things of God, by the exercise of our reasoning faculties; but to discern spiritual things spiritually, we can no more do without his continual agency,

than a blind man can see the light of the sun. The Scriptures, without the Spirit, are at best only a dead letter, unefficacious and unanimating; and we have, in our best frames, only the form of godliness without its power. Are we sensible of this? Are we looking to the Father, and praying earnestly for the Spirit of his Son to dwell in us, and to work effectually all his good pleasure in our hearts? Are we renouncing our own wisdom, becoming fools, that we may be wise? Is it not evident that we must be converted and become like children in this respect, humbly submitting in everything to be taught of God? Is the Spirit daily within us, convincing us of sin, and taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to us in still clearer light, and with more transforming efficacy? Are we going on from strength to strength, and also from glory to glory, seeing new glories and excellencies in Christ and him crucified? There is no other means of comfort and sanctification provided by the Father, nor any possible way of walking humbly with God.

O pray earnestly that God take not his Holy Spirit from us! Though he take away all your outward comforts, and make you as poor and as afflicted as Job—yet the Holy Spirit, being within you, can bring you effectual peace and comfort. Let him make the cross ever so heavy, empty you from vessel to vessel, cause you to be destitute, afflicted, and tormented, still the Holy Spirit, being within you, can until your hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Peace I leave with you," says Christ; "my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you." The world cannot give peace and joy, without removing the cross and the affliction, the cause of our trouble—but not as the world gives, give I unto you, says Christ; he gives peace in the midst of trouble, while it still continues; the Spirit within us causes us to glory in tribulation, to rejoice under the cross, and to triumph even in death. This is a blessing, which, we are sure, God never did, nor ever will, deny to any one that asks it of him, "If you being evil," says Christ, "know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." To them that ask him, be they who they will, he is surely given willingly and freely. "Ask and you shall have," is his gracious declaration—and those who seek this blessing, he will never send empty away. O seek earnestly, and plead this promise, and you are sure to succeed. "Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be on the vine; though the labor of the vineyard should fail, and the field should yield no meat; though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls; "yet ask, and you shall have a blessing, that will amply supply the want of all these things, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man, no devil, can take from you.

II. From what has been said—we see how great is thesin of grieving the Spirit.

Next to the unpardonable sin, this doubtless is the most aggravated, and the most provoking to God. The unpardonable sin is a deliberate and final rejection of the Spirit in all his gracious operations as a comforter and sanctifier; which includes a virtual rejection of the whole economy of redemption—of the love of the Father and of the grace of the Son, which the Spirit comes to reveal and seal to us.

"Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16 "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30 The grieving of the Spirit partakes also, in some degree, of the same rebellion and guilt—and we grieve Him, when we take little or no notice of his amazing condescension and love, in coming freely and willingly to be our comforter and sanctifier; when we study to make no returns of love by bringing forth, in a holy walk and conduct, the fruits of the

Spirit; and when, it may be, by careless neglect and unwatchfulness, we fall into those habits and those courses which he abhors. He cannot pass by unnoticed, the unkindness and ingratitude thereby shown; but he is grieved and greatly displeased—though in this, there is no willful rejection of the Spirit—yet there is a great disregard, and an undervaluing of his consolations; especially if we fall into such courses after long and abundant experience of his comforts.

He is grieved, because he loves us and has our happiness much at heart—for to promote our holiness and happiness is the object of the office he exercises towards us. When we put obstructions in his way, as he discharges his office, and we still promote our own misery—how is the Spirit of love grieved!

Let us therefore, above all things, attend to his motions, and beware of a barren and unfruitful profession of religion, and of defiling by secret indulgences—the temple and habitation of the Spirit. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy'—what awful words! How should they make every believer tremble before God, and cause him to take more earnest heed to the frame of his heart, and to his outward conduct and conversation.

Defile his temple, who dwells with us as our comforter—how unworthy—how base a conduct! Shall we, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, by our negligence, sin and folly—grieve him who is come on purpose to comfort us? How deservedly then do we walk in darkness and have no light. Shall we grieve him, without whom we cannot live, cannot think one good thought, nor breathe one good desire! Shall we grieve him, whose presence in the soul is Heaven, and whose absence is a Hell of corruption, darkness, and misery! Is it possible that we should make such base returns for such love, and be such enemies to our own happiness! Alas! what is man! In what dust and ashes ought even the best of us to lie down before him! Shall we not rather take notice of his love and his kindness, and thankfully receive all our comforts from his hands, and observe his love and grace in every refreshing thought put into our minds? Yes, shall we not carefully watch and promote all his strivings and motions within us, and cheerfully comply with them, however self-denying and contrary to flesh and blood? When he convinces of sin—let us set our hearts mightily against it. When he speaks comfort—let us hear him as the Lord our Comforter, making known the riches of love and grace in the Father and the Son, to our souls. And when we have no comfort, "walking in darkness and having no light," let us honor him by looking to and waiting for him only, for our light in darkness, our joy in sorrow, and our peace in trouble.

04 Sanctification

SANCTIFICATION Thomas Charles, 1838

Sanctification is aimed at by many, if not by most who are religiously inclined. Even the heathen talked much about a virtuous life and a conduct conformable to right reason. But it is understood only by a few. That holiness, which adorns God's people, greatly surpasses all the painted virtues of the heathen, and all the scrupulous morals of the Scribes and Pharisees. The boasted virtue of the heathen and Pharisees, had its rise in self and terminated in self—they meant no more than to exalt themselves and to quiet their consciences. But the Christian's holiness has its origin from God, and terminates in him—his glory animates the believer, and leads him to the performance of every action by which it can be displayed. The nature of sanctification, and the means of attaining it, are expressed in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

It consists in possessing the mind that was in Christ, and a conformity to his image. He is the pattern which we are to copy, and the perfect example which we are to imitate. He has in his own person marked the path to glory; and we are to follow his steps.

He teaches us not only by his word, but also by the example of his life. He says both by his words and by his actions, "learn of me." His word points out the way—and he having trod the road himself, we have the prints of his feet in which we may step. It is a very great blessing to have the holiness of God exactly delineated, and painted in natural colors in his written law—but it is there like a picture, without life and motion. It is a much greater blessing to have his holiness, which is portrayed in the law, living and animated, as it is in Christ. He, as man in our own nature, pure, uncontaminated with vice, holy, blameless and unspotted—is a living law to his people.

Christ is to be considered in a threefold respect; as Man, Mediator, and God.

What he did here on earth, as mediator and God—is not proposed to us for our imitation. As a mediator he was circumcised, fasted forty days, was tempted in the wilderness, offered himself a sacrifice for sins, performed the offices of prophet, priest and king—in these respects he is not to be imitated by us. Nor is he to be imitated in what he performed as God—in his miracles, in all those actions which manifested a supernatural power. But as the Son of Man he is a bright example to us, and a perfect pattern of every virtue.

Jesus was perfect pattern of HUMILITY—he who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied himself, and was found in fashion as a man, and took upon him the form of a servant. He placed himself in the lowest station in life, had nowhere to lay his head, nor had even money to pay the tribute required. His parents were poor; his friends and companions were the poor of this world. The afflicted, and those that were distressed and despised by the world, found a friend in him.

Jesus was perfect pattern of MEEKNESS—he was meek and lowly in spirit. When tribute was unjustly required of him, that he might not "give offence," he commanded Peter to discharge it. He was the meek and harmless lamb of God, and deceit was not found in his mouth.

Jesus was perfect pattern of PATIENCE—he endured willingly the contradiction of sinners. Though he was led as a sheep to the slaughter—yet like a lamb, dumb before his shearers, he opened not his mouth, but was obedient even unto the death of the cross. Though he was loaded with reproaches—yet he bore them all patiently.

Jesus was perfect pattern of UNWEARIED PERSEVERANCE IN DOING GOOD—he was continually going about doing good. Persecutions and ingratitude from the objects of his kindness, did not deter or dishearten him in his friendly purpose.

Jesus was perfect pattern of UNSELFISHNESS—he sought not his own advantage or profit, but the good of others.

Jesus was perfect pattern of ZEAL for God’s glory, which was so great that it had consumed him.

These and many other virtues, blazed forth with the most perfect splendor and glory in the person of Christ. He represented in his human nature the image of God, in which the first man was created. He possessed and practiced all the virtues of a rational creature, without any defects—so that he is in the fullest manner proposed for our imitation, and is the standard by which we are to form a judgment of our attainments in holiness and the divine life. But let us next consider the MEANS by which we may attain this most desirable of all blessings. It would afford but a very small consolation to a person cast on a desert coast, where he could find nothing to exist on, to hear that an island, a few leagues off, was well stored with all sorts of provisions, suitable to the necessities of man—unless he was able by some means or other to cross over to that island. The poor man at the pool of Bethesda found no benefit from the angel troubling the water at a certain season, for he was unable to step in; for while he "was going, another stepped in before him." Nor will it avail us anything, to have received a perfect pattern, unless we be enabled to copy it. It will be no advantage to us to hear of such a happy state, unless it be one to which we can attain. Various have been the means proposed by man’s fertile imagination to accomplish this, but all equally wide of the point. The Mystic will gravely tell us, that there is no avoiding the contagion of sin, or refusing the poisonous cup daily offered to us—but by leaving all society and running into solitary deserts, and associating with the wild beasts of the forest. The Brahmin and the monk will advise us to afflict and excruciate the body with the severest chastisements. But all these things have been found inefficient. Let us, therefore, hearken to what an inspired apostle teaches us on this subject: "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." It is by looking unto Jesus and beholding his glory, that the blessed change is produced in us. Nowhere else does virtue and holiness charm us with so pleasing an aspect, as in Christ—and the more frequently it is viewed with the eyes of the mind, the more the beholder is transformed into the same image. When Moses had been admitted into a familiar converse with God on the mount, where he spent forty days, the skin of his face shone with such effulgence, that the eyes of the Israelites could not bear it.

Thus it is with those who on Mount Zion view Jesus, the king of glory in his beauty, with unveiled face, by the Spirit of God. The rays of heavenly glory, issuing from Christ, pervade the inmost parts of the soul, and convey new vigor to the spiritual life. The oftener the believer beholds Christ by the Spirit, the more clearly he knows his perfections, of which his holiness is the ornament—and the more clearly he knows them, the more ardently he loves them; and the more ardently he loves them, the more like them he desires to be.

Nay, love is in itself of a transforming nature. You insensibly catch the habits and manners of a person you love, and you are sweetly and imperceptibly cast into his mold—and love itself, when reciprocal, produces a great similitude.

Again, the more ardently a believer loves God, the more frequently and attentively he will seek to behold him; as the more you love one of your fellow-mortals, the more pleasure and delight you find in his company, and the more you regret his absence. In the same way, the soul by beholding and loving, by loving and beholding—gains something by every act, and acquires a new feature of this most glorious image.

Nothing less than the supreme being himself can satisfy an awakened immortal soul. Could we conceive any being above God—then God would not content the soul; for it aspires after the supreme. But the perfections of God cannot be fully known or clearly seen, but in the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore the soul flees to him as Moses did to the rock, that it may behold his glory, and bask in his bright beams until his piercing rays pervade its inmost parts, and change it by degrees to his own glorious nature. By this means, a dead and dark soul is enlivened, and becomes exceedingly transparent, bright, glorious and beautiful. As looking on the brazen serpent expelled the deadly poison and healed the Israelites, and as the bright beams of the sun disperse the thickest darkness—so do glorious views of the lovely Jesus dislodge sin from its mansion, and heal the wounded soul. As our growth in holiness here, depends on the views we have of Christ; so our perfection in the state of bliss, will be in consequence of the brighter and clearer discoveries we shall have of him there. We shall be like him, "because we shall see him as he is"—like him—whom? Jesus himself! O glorious state! O happy condition! Who, considering this, would not cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

These views of Christ are necessarily attended with proper views of God. In Christ, as in a looking-glass, we shall see all the perfections of the Godhead—his unsearchable wisdom, superabundant goodness, and infinite holiness, his justice and mercy, his truth and righteousness, and especially his incredible love to mortals; which is calculated to melt down the most stubborn hearts, and kindle them into brightest flames of mutual returns of love. "The love of Christ constrains us." All these perfections meet harmoniously in Christ.

Connected also with these views of Christ, is a sense of the detestable nature of sin. It was sin which made it necessary for the Lord of glory to come down from Heaven and take on him the form of a servant. Sin was the cause of his deep humiliation, abasement, and sufferings. So oppressed was he with its ponderous load, that the blood was forced to leave its usual channel, and at last he groaned and died under its weight. Viewing sin through the cross—the believer abhors it, and regards it with perfect hatred. He therefore diligently strives against it, and strenuously resists Satan, from whose iron chains he could never have been delivered, had it not been for the death of the Son of God.

Meditation on Jesus' sufferings and death produces a hatred towards sin, and a life unto righteousness. For, while the believer seriously considers the sufferings and death of Christ, he undergoes in his own soul some of the bitterness, pain and torture, (though mingled with sweetness) which Christ suffered in a far greater degree. He views the melancholy scene, and utters groan for groan, and sigh for sigh, until his soul is overwhelmed with sorrow and grief—and this produces a kind of death within. And again, when he sees the mighty conqueror rising triumphant from the tomb, his soul is transported with joy, and ascends with him to the mansions of bliss. Thus we die and live, with and through Christ; and thus we are enabled to mortify sin—(see Romans 6 throughout.) Sin will never appear in its own deformity and horrid nature—until we see it in its effects in the Son of God—until we "behold the Lamb of God" bearing our sin on the cruel tree. Christ crucified, like a magnifying glass, exhibits to view every feature of this hideous monster. But when we consider the many and great difficulties that are in the way of the believer, while pursuing after holiness, it seems necessary that he should be animated with many and powerful motives, to overpower all opposition. Of these we will allude to some:

1. Love is a very strong motive.

Love is the leading passion of the soul. Like a general in an army, wherever it presses, all the rest will follow. Love is strong as death, overcomes all opposition, and surmounts all difficulties.

Love makes all things easy. It is said of Jacob, that when he served a hard master seven years for Rachel, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love which he had for her. Genesis 29:20. And many find it easy to do much for parents, children, and friends, because they love them. But there is no love like that which a redeemed sinner bears to Him who has loved him and washed him from his sins in his own blood!

Further, love produces the greatest effects when it is mutual. We are willing to do and suffer much to gain the affection of a person we regard, though we are not sure of success. But when the affection is reciprocal, it adds strength to every motive. Now the believer does not love at an uncertainty—he knows that Jesus loved him first. He knows that Jesus loved him when he was in a state of enmity; and that nothing but the manifestation and power of this love could have taught his hard and unfeeling heart to love Him whom he never saw. 1 Peter 1:8. This love therefore affords two sweet and powerful encouragements in his service:

First, A cordial desire to please. Love does what it can, and is sorry that it can do no more. We seldom think much either of time, pains, or expense—when the heart is warmly engaged. The world, who do not understand this heartfelt spring of true religion, think it strange that the believer will not run into the same excess of riot with them. 1 Peter 4:4. They wonder what pleasure he can find in secret prayer, or in reading and hearing the word of God—and they pity the poor mortal who has such a lives thus, and gravely advise him not to carry things so far. But the believer can give them a short answer in the Apostle's words, "The love of Christ constrains me!" 2 Corinthians 5:14. His ruling passion is as powerful as theirs, which makes his pursuits no less uniform and abiding, though the objects are as different as light from darkness. They love the perishing pleasures of sin, the mammon of unrighteousness, and the praises of men. But he loves God and the Savior and the things of another world.

Secondly, A pleasing assurance of being accepted. If we know not whether what we do will be favorably received or not, we become remiss and indifferent. But it is not so with the Lord's people; for they are assured that he will not overlook the smallest services they may be engaged in, or the slightest sufferings they may undergo, for his name's sake; and this greatly animates them. He has told them in his word, that if they give but a cup of cold water in his name, and for his sake, he will accept and acknowledge it, as if it were done immediately to himself! Mark 9:41.

2. Another very powerful motive which animates the believer, is confidence and assurance of success. The Lord considers the Christian's cause as his own, and has engaged to finish the good work that he has begun. When the children of Israel were marching to the land of Canaan to attack the strongholds of the well-fortified inhabitants, the assurance of success which the Almighty had given them, the assurance of His being with them, and delivering the nations into their hands—made them overlook all difficulties, and encouraged them to attack nations, united together by compacts and interests, each of whom were much more powerful than themselves. So it is with the believer. Though his enemies are many and powerful, the difficulties on the road great, and he himself but a feeble and weak creature—yet the Lord has promised to be his strength and shield, and however great his danger may be, his strength shall be equal to it. This consideration makes every difficulty vanish. Should the one increase tenfold—yet if the other be increased in equal proportion, it amounts to the same thing. What is hard and difficult for a child—is easy for a man. What is hard for flesh and blood—is easy to faith and grace. The power on which the believer depends is not his own, nor in his own keeping, but is treasured up in the covenant of grace, or in the Lord Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells—and it is always to be obtained by prayer.

Tempestuous indeed is the believer's passage through this world—yet his life is secured; and he is confident of reaching the happy shore to which he sails, and of entering safely into the desired haven, by and by—and this comforts him in all dangers and difficulties, be the storm ever so alarming.

We shall now consider some of the chief BRANCHES of sanctification:

1. Love to the Savior. When the understanding is enlightened to see the amiableness and loveliness of Jesus, and the glorious perfections of the Godhead beaming forth in him—the soul becomes inflamed with ardent love to Him. Nothing then is so delightful, so charming, so desirable, as to dwell on the contemplation of his glories. The soul sees Him as altogether lovely, and the chief among ten thousand. It is therefore enraptured with his excellencies, and feels an inexpressible longing after him.

God's own infinite excellencies render him lovely in his own sight. He being the chief good and possessing all conceivable perfections, He cannot but love himself; nay, it would be contrary to right and justice for him not to be filled with delight on a view of his own infinite excellencies. The more, therefore, a creature loves God, the more he acts in unison with Him—the more conformable he becomes to the Divine image. The believer also acts from a principle of love. He has no will of his own; but "Christ lives in him". Love to Christ makes the soul embrace willingly what he bids—and being enabled to run the way of his commandments, the believer avoids everything that may displease him. The glory of God is the mark which he holds in view, and the end which he aims at in everything. He considers God as the center of his happiness; and nothing

wounds him so much as when he hears God’s name blasphemed, or sees his precepts transgressed. He can say with David, "Rivers of waters flow down my eyes, because men keep not your law".

2. Deep humiliation of heart. This is an inseparable attendant of love to God. When Almighty God manifests his own perfections, as they shine forth in Jesus Christ, in such a degree as to fill the heart with ardent love—then we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes, because we have sinned against such a good and holy God. Every bright view we have of God’s perfections reflects back on ourselves—and shows to us more than ever the exceeding heinousness of our sins. The angels are said to prostrate themselves before the throne of Heaven, covering their faces—to signify their inability to bear the luster of His majesty; and hiding their feet, to express their sense of vileness in comparison with God’s holiness. But the believer’s humility differs much from theirs. He is blinded with tears of grief and sorrow—with contrition of heart and abhorrence of himself. They and he live in the valley of humiliation; but the believer waters his with the tears of repentance. "Standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume." Luke 7:38

O what self-annihilation is there in a godly man, when he has a lively sense of the Divine purity! Yes, how detestable is he in his own sight! He abhors himself as the vilest sinner, and repents in dust and ashes. Job 23:6. Genesis 18:27. When Isaiah saw God’s glory, he was ready to faint away, and cried out, "I am a man of unclean lips!" This spirit of an undeserving beggar, with which the Christian is clothed, can never be assumed by hypocrites and pretenders to religion—it being so exceedingly contrary to our nature. But it is the believer’s brightest ornament, and serves as a coat of armor to keep off many a fiery dart shot at him by his hellish foes, which would have wounded his inmost soul. When the sinner falls down at God’s feet—He spreads his mantle over him and keeps him under the shadow of his wings as in a strong tower. This man is highly valued by God himself—for He delights in and dwells with the humble and contrite in heart.

Whoever possesses this heart-humility within him, will manifest it in his life and conduct. He will no more show pride, passion, and resentment towards his fellow-creatures. Having learned of Jesus—he is meek and lowly both before God and towards man. Conscious of the manifold transgressions and numerous sins which he has to be pardoned every day and every hour of the day—he can easily forgive his fellow-sinners when they offend him. Sensible of his own frailty—he is tender and merciful to others.

We may safely say, that whatever views and feelings we have, which do not tend to humble us before God, which do not lead as to abhor ourselves, and make us compassionate and tender towards our fellow-creatures—they cannot be from God, but from Satan transformed into an angel of light. "God sees the proud afar off, but gives grace to the humble and meek"—not to make him proud of his attainments, but to make him still more humble, and still more vile in his own eyes. The believer needs not to proclaim to the world what blessed and glorious views he has, and what happy feelings he enjoys; for these will manifest themselves in his poverty and humility of spirit, if they are from God.

Hence we see, that to grow in grace, and to grow in humility—mean the same thing, and should convey the same idea to our minds. This humble state may appear to those who are superficially

religious—to be gloomy and comfortless. But if we advert to what the Scriptures say of it, we shall find it to be quite the reverse. Though it be a valley—yet it is a valley well-watered with the healthful streams of salvation; and through it, the still waters of comfort flow. Here are the rich green pastures in which the Shepherd of Israel feeds his flock, and restores their souls to the image of God.

What is said of Satan may, with equal propriety, be said of his subjects, "They walk in dry places." But God's sheep have a portion well watered with the upper and lower fountains. In this valley is the well of living waters, and through it the streams of Lebanon flow. Song of Solomon 4:15. Here is the garden of the Lord, enriched with many sweet-smelling flowers. Here is his vineyard, stored with all manner of pleasant fruits, yes, "the fruits of the valley." Song of Solomon 6:11. Here the generous vines flourish, and the fragrant pomegranates bud. It is a land flowing with milk and honey.

Here let sinners come from their dry and lofty places, and drink wine and milk without money and without price. Though the inhabitants sometimes, with David, water their couches with their tears—yet God bottles their tears, and these shall be turned into wine at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! The woman mentioned in Luke 7:1-50 was an eminent inhabitant of this valley. So full was she of the waters of life, that she poured them down in streams on the Savior; she washed him with tears—who washed her in his blood! "She loved much"—this expression shows her happiness and the excess of joy which filled her heart. Her comfort was proportioned to her grief—and her joy was proportioned to her sorrow. These go hand in hand in the Christian. If rivers of tears flow from their eyes—they drink also of that river which makes glad the city of God.

Hence it appears, that they and they only, who live in this humble and penitent state, "find pasture" and thrive. It is barren and dry everywhere else—and God's sheep go astray when they leave this valley. If it is good to walk humbly with God, notwithstanding all our eminent graces and high attainments—the contrary must be hurtful to ourselves, and dishonorable to God. If Enoch found Heaven by walking humbly with his God—then those who are encompassed about with pride as with a chain, walk in slippery places, and shall be cast into destruction. The Lord looks upon him who is "poor and of a contrite heart;" but his "face is against the proud."

Chapter 5

05 Benefits of Affliction

The Benefits of Affliction Thomas Charles, 1838

How utterly unable are all earthly things to bring us any comfort or any relief—when God's finger even slightly touches us! They are at all times equally impotent, though our thoughts of them may be very different. Time and recovery should not give them any more power or influence over our hearts. Such a season will return soon again. Sickness, and death itself—are not very far, but just at the door. And neither of them will come in a pleasing manner—the one will be painful, and the other will be most solemn, if not terrible. May we be better prepared to meet them both, by a blessed improvement of past afflictions. The sad remembrance of former sicknesses unimproved, and of the views they have had in them—haunt the dying curtains of many. They speak such heart-convictions, as they are at the time, ill able to endure.

After recovering, most of us live as if we had made a covenant with death, and seem to think that we shall neither die, nor be sick any more. But though we are reprieved, we should remember that we are not released. Death has power over us, and at the appointed time, will exercise it. "It is appointed for all men once to die"—and this appointment or decree cannot be altered! The appointed hour may be very near; and a slight illness may be sent on purpose to warn us of its coming. In the meantime, we should improve all these kind visitations for the furtherance of our growth in grace and in the divine life. "Affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground"—but they are all sent in divine wisdom and love. Every circumstance, as to time and manner, is exactly ordered by God for the best. Were every circumstance more narrowly examined, it would doubtless give us a great insight into the wisdom and love of God in all his afflictive dispensations. God does not willingly afflict any of his children—but they always stand in absolute need, at the very time, of the very affliction which he sends. The particular affliction could not be laid aside, nor delayed, nor altered for another—without great hurt and injury to the soul.

God's designs in afflictions are various—but all are gracious, and for our good. He may intend to bring us to repentance for some past sins—as the three days' pestilence was sent to humble David for numbering the people.

Or, it may be that the affliction is sent to prevent our being overtaken in some dangerous snare, into which we may be in great danger of falling—and it is better to endure the heaviest affliction, than to carry about with us a guilty conscience. 'Anything rather than sin!' is the language of the Christian's heart.

Or, it may be that the affliction is sent to exercise some grace, that it may thereby gain strength, and the soul be prepared for some trying circumstances into which it is soon to be brought; as was the case with Joseph. The trials with which he had been exercised, prepared him for his future exaltation, and some of them contributed to bring it about.

These designs may for a long season be concealed from the believer himself, as was the case with Joseph. Yet, inasmuch as God has assured us that He causes all things to work together for our good—patience and resignation to the divine will in all things, is our duty. In His good time He may allow us to see such wisdom and goodness in all of our circumstances, as to fill our hearts with transports of joy. To follow Him is our part—without murmuring or complaining.

How gracious is the design to bring us to repentance for sin—or to stop us from falling into temptation—or to prepare us by previous discipline, for some humbling service! Is not all this good?

Nothing befalls us without a cause—no trouble comes upon us sooner, or presses more heavily, or continues longer—than what God knows that our case requires. What our short-sighted ignorance calls adversities or evils—are in reality and truth, well-designed and gracious blessings, and form a part of the means employed by God's goodness and grace, to prepare us for the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Away then with all impatience and all murmurings!

All our desire in this world, should be to live holily and live usefully—and affliction, by the blessing of God, has great influence in promoting both. Sanctified affliction greatly promotes holiness, and is also a great preparative for usefulness. It is working out at the same time a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the eternal world. God always chastens us, for our profit. Though we may thereby lose earthly comforts, ease and enjoyments—yet it is a profitable loss. What we lose in these things—we gain in holiness. It is for our profit, to become partakers of His holiness. It is for our profit, to be brought to repentance for every sin, to be delivered from ensnaring temptations, or to be prepared for any service to which our master may call us.

If we cannot see the end the Lord has in view, still let us believe, that it is for our profit in some way or other; yes, and in the way of all others, by which we can profit the most, and be the greatest gainers.

What profit have we experienced? Have we become more watchful against such sins as have at any time brought correction upon us, that we might repent of them? Are we contending earnestly and strenuously against them? Are we aware of any such corruptions as might necessitate our heavenly Father to prevent us from entering into such circumstances of life, as would foster the temptation to them? Are we now more strictly on our guard against such dangerous circumstances? How have we conducted ourselves in such circumstances, places, and stations, as God has prepared us for by corrections? Have we been earnestly diligent in such duties, having in all things a single eye to his glory?

06 Tares and the Wheat

The Tares and the Wheat Thomas Charles, 1838

"Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the tares and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn." Matthew 13:30

We are taught by the parable of the tares and wheat, that there will always be a mixture in this world, of good and bad men, which no care or diligence can prevent. In every place, in every society there will be a mixture. Whatever discouragements may be given to evil, and whatever care and diligence may be taken to purge and keep out the wicked—the enemy, still more vigilant, will find an opportunity to sow his tares. And though we would often think and act otherwise—yet the Lord, for the wisest reasons, permits the tares and the wheat to grow together until the harvest. The tares and the wheat are sown in the same soil; the same rain and the same sun cause both to grow and to ripen.

It is the nature of grace to grow. Therefore it is compared to seed, to trees, to a child—things which have but small beginnings; but which, if healthy and properly taken care of, will infallibly grow. The tares also grow. The wicked are also in a progressive state, and are continually ripening, yes, ripening for destruction. They may enjoy the same means of grace, and be partakers of the same outward privileges, with the righteous—and yet they are ripening only for destruction. The same soil, the same sun, and the same rain, may nourish an unfruitful prickly thorn, as the most fruitful tree.

We are also taught how vigilant, how zealous, how industrious, the enemy is, to do harm. For it is not said, that he sowed the tares while men played or were careless, as if there had been any negligence laid to their charge—but "while they slept", without which they could not live. Sleep they must, nature requires it; but then it was that the enemy did the mischief. Watch him as narrowly as you will—yet still he will do his work in spite of all care and diligence. If you will but step aside, to do what must be done—to eat, to drink, or to sleep, he is ready to take his opportunity of sowing his tares. And the ground, which will not answer the gardener’s hope without toil, labor, and cost—will produce the bad seed of its own accord, and yield but too plentiful a crop. This is an exact picture of the human heart. What toil, what labor, what care and diligence will it cost to produce anything good in it! And when it is sown there by the heavenly gardener, what watchfulness is required to prevent its being injured! Our eye must be continually upon it, and the most diligent care must be exercised. But the tares will grow without any care—the soil exactly suits them. May this teach us to be more watchful, to prevent, if possible, the enemy from sowing his evil seed. If that is not possible, let us endeavor to distinguish between the wheat and the tares, that we may not be mistaken, and think that we have a good crop of wheat—when more than half of it is only tares, which are unprofitable, and will in the end be burned. The tares and the wheat, it appears, are to grow together. They are not to grow in a different field, but in the same field, and intermix together. Where there is a stalk of wheat, there you may find at least one tare,

or it may be, many tares. This is doubtlessly permitted, and ordered for the wisest purposes.

We are apt to complain that the world is so sinful and so wicked, thinking, that were it otherwise, we would live more holily, and be rid of many temptations, which now give corrupt nature an advantage over us. Were there none but godly people in the world, and the field free from all tares—O what a happy thing would it be! We are apt to think, how much benefit would we then derive to our souls! But the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways his ways. "Let both grow together," is his appointment. And no doubt, this is one of the "all things," which work together for good to those who love God. Let us then patiently bear the evil, and diligently seek from it some profit and spiritual improvement.

1. This is one great means ofincreasing gracein those who love God.

Living among those who are enemies to true godliness—keeps patience, forbearance, and self-denial in constant exercise. Were all humble, loving, and forbearing—then how could patience and meekness be exercised, and thereby gain strength? We would be apt to deceive ourselves; and while we enjoyed our own wills and ways, we would be ready to think, that there is no such thing as sin within us. But an evil world, the tares continually among us, show us what spirit we are naturally of, bring us in one way or another perpetually to the test, and prove to us what desire there is still lurking within us, of having things in our way. The obstinate stubbornness of the people of Israel was one great means, in the course of providence, of promoting meekness in Moses, of making him more watchful over his own heart, and thereby, of gaining greater victory over himself.

2. This state of things promotesfaith, which alone can daily give victory over the world.

If we live a sober, righteous and godly life in this present evil world—then faith will be continually exercised and tried, and tried by all the force which worldly customs, practices, and long habits can bring against it. The fewness of real Christians leaves us often to walk, as it were, almost singly in the narrow way. The number also and prosperity of the wicked, may cause us at times to search and examine the grounds of our faith—and shaking it to its very foundation, may make it more steadfast, and render us immoveable in the midst of all storms which are raised by an evil world.

We are forced continually to the most vigorous exercise of faith, and thereby it is more strengthened and confirmed. Without being strong in faith, it is impossible to "endure as seeing him who is invisible," to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. The world, lying in wickedness, calls forth faith, in one way or other, into perpetual exercise. While we live differently from the world, not swayed by its customs, not led by its maxims, not influenced by its favors, not awed by its frowns—we must "live by faith". "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the son of God." It is a perpetual warfare between the world of lost sinners on one side, and faith on the other—and victory must every day be gained, or we are enslaved. The world gives faith no rest; and faith puts forth its strength, which is Christ, continually to oppose it. The world, with its glory, pomp, wealth, and care, on the one hand—and persecution and suffering, on the other—is an enemy that cannot be easily vanquished—nothing but the

continual exercise of vigorous faith can make any stand against it. The Psalmist felt the power of this enemy, "My feet," said he, "were almost gone, my steps had well near slipped"—and why? " For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." But when he saw them thus easy, secure, and prosperous, to what did this lead him? "I thought," said he, "to understand this; but it was too hard for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God." He betook himself to the ordinances of God; and thereby his faith was called forth into exercise, and gained strength, and he was helped over a great stumbling-block to a clearer insight into the secret mysteries of God's providence, and to a more steadfast belief of his promises.

3. The intermixture of tares and wheat, of the wicked and the godly, is, by the blessing of God, one great means of mortifying our love to this present evil world, and of engaging our affections to the world above.

How strong is the love of present things in our hearts! Though we see nothing but sin in the world—yet how unwilling we are to leave it! If, when full of sin, as it is, we are in general too fond of it—then what would be the case, were it exactly according to our wishes, and were everything around us just what we would desire? What can be more suited to mortify this love, and to engage us to the pursuit of higher things—than the very sight of the evil world itself, and a little feeling of the prickly thorns with which it abounds? The sinfulness of the world, and a continual abode among the enemies of God and of godliness, has the desirable effect upon the gracious soul, of weaning it from such a scene of sin and misery. When the Christian reflects on the evil that is daily done under the sun, and when by peculiar circumstances it is brought home to him—he sets his desires after God, and after the new world, wherein dwells righteousness. His soul grows sick of this dungeon and sink of iniquity where he is confined, and he loathes himself for having set any value on the things of earth.

Thus we see how the intermixture of good and bad in this world, tends to our spiritual improvement. Corruptions are hereby weakened—and grace improved and strengthened. We have the wicked daily around us, as thorns in our eyes and scourges in our sides; and the best of men are full of daily infirmities, which call forth patience, forbearance, and forgiveness. The present state of things should not be left unnoticed, but made to minister to our edification and improvement.

Let us not be impatient and complain of our particular situations—but be our situation what it may, let us look up to that God, who can cause all things to work for our good—who can make even the sins of others to turn out to the spiritual and eternal good account of his servants!

O what wisdom does God display in all his proceedings! With what submission therefore should we acquiesce in his disposal of us! And what grounds have we in all things to depend on him, and to wait, with full assurance, for a blessing in everything. He can make the world's poison to be nourishing food; and what proves fatal to others—he can make beneficial to his people.

Well then, since this is the will of God—that the tares and wheat should grow together until harvest, let us never expect it to be otherwise—but let us look for something to exercise grace in everything, in every situation, and in every individual. God will have it so. What cause then for contentedness, and also for continual thanksgiving! Let us become more dead daily to the world, have our affections more steadily fixed on things above, and more diligently seek a better country!

Chapter 7

07 Spiritual Appetite

Spiritual Appetite Thomas Charles, 1838

There is no image in the whole Bible, more frequently made use of to express the workings, affections, and desires of the new man after spiritual things—than the craving of our bodily appetites after food and nourishment; namely, hunger and thirst. And what proper food is to a hungry man—that, spiritual things, Christ and the blessings of the Gospel, are to the renewed soul.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Hunger and thirst are the strongest of all our bodily appetites. They are also unceasing and continually more and more craving and importunate until we either eat and drink, or die. And nothing will satisfy them but food and drink. Offer a hungry man the world and all things in it, he will despise and reject them, and say, 'These are not the things I need—give me food or else I die.' Just so are the desires of the new man in Christ, after spiritual things—the grace of Christ, the favor of God, and conformity to his image. The appetites are strong and unceasing, craving after spiritual food with more and more importunity; and nothing but this will satisfy.

Riches, honors and pleasures, are all lightly esteemed. 'Give me grace, give me peace and reconciliation with God, give me holiness—or else I die', is his unceasing language. A hungry man finds in food a suitableness, a taste, a relish, and refreshment. And so do those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, find in divine things,. There is a suitableness in them to the soul's wants, and satisfaction and refreshment in the enjoyment of them which is great and inexpressible. "They are sweeter to his taste than honey or the honey-comb."

Until he feeds upon them, the soul is miserable and refuses comfort, like a person ready to perish with hunger. But when he has a sense of the goodness, power and efficacy of them on his soul—he is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He feeds upon them with joy, however any of them may be in their own nature, or in their dispensation, bitter to flesh and blood. The cross is sweet and refreshing, if under it he can taste how gracious the Lord is. Everything that is wholesome food, and good nourishment, though it be bitter herbs—is sweet and refreshing to him who is spiritually hungry. For this reason divine things are compared not only to bread and water, but to "wine and milk, to fat things full of marrow"—things that are not only nourishing, as bread and water, but also relishing, refreshing, and reviving. If the soul is in health and has strength to digest its food—if its appetite is not lost by spiritual sickness, vitiated and corrupted by any prevalent sin, and heavenly things thus become unsavory and tasteless, "like the white of an egg"—if this be not the case with the renewed soul, then spiritual things are always relishing, refreshing, and full of nourishment; and by them it grows and gains spiritual strength.

These two things are inseparably connected with the things of the Spirit of God to a renewed soul which is in spiritual health—he finds in them savor, and nourishment; he is refreshed and strengthened by them. A vitiated taste and a false appetite may relish things that are not proper food—which have little or no nourishment in them. But a man in health and vigor of body, cannot

live on such things. So a soul sickly and weak, may have a taste and a pleasing relish given to the imagination by the dispensation of the word, and in the use of the means of grace—when at the same time it is in no degree nourished and strengthened by grace itself in the use of the means; but the soul is as weak and sickly as ever, and still finds an emptiness, a craving, painful and uneasy, and a feebleness, which unfits him for every undertaking that is spiritual and difficult. But a soul in health must have the sincere milk of the word; it will be satisfied with nothing else. It grows thereby—it gains renewed strength, fresh vigor, increasing alacrity and delight in the things of God and the ways of God. The gospel and its heavenly doctrines are never stale, tasteless, or unsavory to him—but daily more refreshing and more nourishing. He feeds upon them more heartily and more frequently, and his stomach is not over-loaded, because he can digest his food; so that his appetite is keen and his soul more and more nourished.

He has increasing discernment also to know more exactly what is proper food for him, and rejects those things, which he knows, have more tendency to fill the soul with wind and vanity, than to minister nourishment and strength. "Being of full age, by means of use he has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil". No sign can be worse than a cold indifference towards the things of God—when they become as it were stale, without any relish, or nourishment, like a tale that has been told a hundred times over. In this case, the soul can have no experience of the life and workings of spiritual things, nor any comfort or refreshment from them. He, who is in this state, honors not the gospel by any fruits of love, zeal, or delight; nor is he useful in any way to others.

"He is a tree, whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the root". This is a state, which of all others, Christ is most displeased with. In temptations, the Lord, who is compassionate and gracious, pities those who are tempted. In persecutions, he sympathizes with the afflicted. He intercedes for his people in their sudden and unexpected surprises. But he severely threatens those who are in spiritual decays, who are in a cold, formal and lifeless state. Revelation 2:4-5. This he cannot bear with, because it reflects so much dishonor upon him, and on the provision he has made in the gospel. It will, if not quickly prevented by a speedy recovery, prove the certain ruin of the soul. Yes, Christ will bear longer even with those who are utterly dead, and make no pretensions to religion. "I would," he says, "you were cold or hot—because you are neither, I will spue you out of my mouth!" Revelation 3:16.

We cannot be too jealous and watchful over ourselves on this point. Everything in this world has a tendency to deaden our souls, quench the Spirit, and blunt the edge of our desires and affections after spiritual things. Our own corruptions always resist grace; and the world around us would by every way bring us unto some little compliance with it. The company of dead and formal professors also cannot but greatly damage the soul. Their company, if much frequented, will, like ice when handled, strike a chill and damp into the soul that was before alive, fervent, and active. This is the last effort of the devil; if he cannot by his temptations turn us back, or draw us aside from the ways of God, he will by all his cunning, craft and malice, endeavor to enfeeble our strength, cool our zeal, and diminish our ardor in the good way, into which the grace of God has brought us.

We should beware of these decays in our souls, in their very first beginnings; or else recovery will be more difficult and more doubtful. But here is the cause of the utter ruin of many. At first they

listen to the carnal reasonings of their own minds, strengthened it may be, by the suggestions of formal professors and lifeless Christians—until they are gone so far in spiritual decay, that their recovery becomes doubly more difficult.

Some would confine all warmth and fervency of affections about spiritual things to first convictions, to youthful days, when the heat of the physical spirits is greater. A dangerous insinuation! for does not this highly dishonor the things of God? What! Are we more affected by them, the less we know of them? Is it their novelty only, that gives them their efficacy? Is food more refreshing to a child, than to a hungry man in full strength, after the labor and toil of the day? Far from it! The objects of creation, the more we contemplate, minutely examine, and thoroughly know them—the more we are amazed with the exquisite wisdom and power displayed in them, and the more they command our admiration. Are the wonders of grace and salvation more easily comprehended—or are we less interested in them? Surely not. The reason why the works of God in creation, providence and grace are unnoticed by us, and we are unaffected by them, is because we know them so little, and our minds are turned to different objects. But the decay of the physical spirits, it may be said by some, diminishes the efficacy and lessens the effect of divine things. It ill suits any to make this excuse, who, while they are dead and lifeless about spiritual things—are alive, active and intent upon other things. For instance, the lawful enjoyments and comforts of life. If a man in his old age, grows more in love with the things of the world, and less in love with the things of God—then surely this must proceed not from the decay of nature, but from the decay of grace, and the growing strength of sin. The decays of nature, will not, cannot, effect decays in holiness of life, and in diligence in religious duties; it will never diminish the vigorous and firm adherence of the mind and will, at least, to spiritual things. And where the heat and warmth of the affections are not as lively as they were in former times, whatever the decays of nature may be—the soul, if alive to God, cannot be satisfied in this state; it is his grief and burden; and he preserves a godly jealousy over himself, lest his decays should not be outward, but inward; not in the natural, but in the spiritual man. The life, comfort, and honor of religion, is to find the things of God always new and refreshing, and our appetites keen for them. Without this there can be no real consolation of the gospel, no growth in grace, no adorning of religion, no recommending of it to others. But the soul will become barren and unfruitful—a mere walking, talking skeleton in religion. Good Lord, deliver me from this cursed state of soul! Rather empty me from vessel to vessel, put me in the furnace, let me rather die—than live thus to dishonor you and your cause.

Chapter 8

08 God Affording Seasonable Help

God Affording Seasonable Help Thomas Charles, 1838

Relying upon God's power and faithfulness to keep us in the midst of temptations, is the only way to obtain strength against them. All my best resolutions and determinations as to watchfulness, have often proved ineffectual, weak, and feeble in the hour of trial. But relying upon God's faithfulness, "that according to your day, so shall your strength be," and that "his grace is," and shall be, "sufficient for me"—this has never disappointed me. In one way or other I have always found a way of escape, but often in a way unexpected and unthought of.

There is no peace, until we can see ourselves safe from the workings of inward corruption, and outward temptations, in the hands of God—exclusive of everything we are or can do. The Lord thinks on those who are poor and needy, and is their help and deliverer. Psalms 40:17. And though his "enemies may be lively and strong"—yet the Lord will make more haste to help them, is stronger, and must prevail. Psalms 38:19-22. Faith in the living God opposes lively enemies; and to "the Lord strong and mighty"—it looks for help against strong enemies. As God is faithful and true, this faith must always prevail, for the Lord is a very present help in times of trouble to those who trust in him—not help at a distance, which we may have cause to fear will come too late, but a present help against present evil. Psalms 46:1. This is the life of faith, and the Christian's warfare; he has present help every day—against present daily evil. Help will never come too late to those who by faith look and wait for it.

David speaking of the Church's safety says, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her and that right early". Help may seem to us to be delayed, but it will surely come, "right early"—in sufficient time to bring us effectual deliverance. It will be when it comes, a morning help also. The Lord will act vigorously, as a man goes to his work in the morning with alacrity, with fresh spirits and renewed strength; and having the day before him, we may well expect something from him before night. So the Lord works for his people—he appears for their relief in good time, and carries on his work with effectual vigor, until the whole is finished. With future evils we have nothing to do; we have no more to do with the evils of tomorrow, than with the evils that will be a thousand years hence. Our danger always is from present evil. Against this the Lord is a present help, bringing us deliverance "right early". May my trust be in him alone!

It will be a help manifest and evident to all, "right early", or in the face of the morning—clear and evident to all, that God may be glorified thereby. Our safety and his glory always go together, and he will bring help and deliverance in due time to secure our safety, and in that moment also which will show forth his glory most conspicuously, "in the face of the morning"—or of the sun. So was the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea; timely help was administered to deliver them from their pursuing enemies, and at that moment of time, which served mostly to show forth the glory of God's power, faithfulness, and goodness towards his people—in the face of the morning, he caused the sea to return to his strength.

Let us have a regard to God’s glory as well as our own safety, and be contented to wait patiently for deliverance, until "his hour is come, when the Father shall be glorified".

Christ’s mother was in haste to have a speedy supply of wine; but she fixed the time too soon; "my hour has not yet come", says Christ. He meant to grant her request, and give them a supply; but much depended upon the time when this supply was granted, and the miracle was wrought, to carry full conviction into the hearts of all present—of his divine mission, authority, and power. For their good therefore he would reprove his mother, and wait until the hour was come, which would at the same time bring them timely supply, and show forth his glory more illustriously.

Thus the Lord often deals with his people. They must wait patiently and quietly for his salvation, until his hour is come to glorify himself; but he will never forget their safety, though he principally respects his own glory. His hour will never come too late, but always in due time.

Four thousand years passed before the long expected hour came, when the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent’s head; but in the fullness of time God sent forth his son, made of a woman—in full time to save his people, to bruise the serpent’s head, and to glorify himself. He came right early, in the face of the morning; his salvation was prepared or effected before the face of all people; he came forth in the morning, strong and vigorous for work, he traveled in the greatness of his strength, until the work, great and arduous, was all finished. Let us wait for him, he will come and will not tarry.

09 Gift and Objects of God's Love

The Gift and Objects of God’s Love Thomas Charles, 1838

A discovery and a belief of God’s love to us, when sinners, rebels and traitors—can only produce love in our hearts to him. But the belief in this love of God to us in all its freeness, fullness, immensity, and eternity—works by love to him with invincible strength, and with unwearied diligence in God’s service. And as the effect is always proportioned to its cause—so the clearer our comprehension of, and the more firm our belief in God’s love towards us—the more ardent will be our love to him, and the more active our diligence in his service. Here is the mystery as well as the difficulty of the faith that works by love; for mysterious indeed it is to all but those who thus live, and even they know but little of it.

Nothing can conduce more to strengthen our faith in the free love of God, than an enlarged knowledge of the dignity and the glory of the person of Christ—for by this we know the love of God, in that he gave his Son to die for us. The greatness of the gift which love has bestowed, proves the greatness of the love itself; and as we increase in the knowledge of the gift—so also shall we grow in the knowledge of the love that bestowed it. "So God loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." If you would know his love—then consider his gift; for his love is as great as his gift. And it will heighten both, if we consider the objects of this love, on whom this gift was bestowed—a world of sinners—yet in their sins, and in the very height of their enmity against God.

Let us then "behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us", by viewing attentively the objects and the gift of his love. O! the height and depth of that love that comprehends two such extremes! What can be conceived more distant from, or more unsuitable to, each other! But behold, divine love brings them both together, and gives the Son of God to man in the extreme of his guilt and misery. Here is love, free and great indeed! The Son of God—who can conceive his dignity and glory! yet so great is God’s love. Sinful man—who can comprehend the guilt, baseness, and deformity he has brought upon himself, and also the dishonor he has brought upon God by sinning! yet so deep is God’s love. What shall we say to these things, but believe and adore them, and in dust and ashes, with overwhelming gratitude confess, ’so would God have it’. And what effect will the belief of this love of God as manifested in Christ, have upon our souls? The Apostle in the following words tells us, "we all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory"! What this glass is, he tells us a little afterwards, "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the faith of Jesus Christ". Christ in his person and office is the glass which represents with such transforming efficacy the glory of God to us; and when we see his glory in this glass, we are transformed into the same image. In this glass the scattered rays of divine goodness and love are, as it were, brought into a focus; they shine, they burn, and inflame the heart held before it. Conviction overpowers unbelief, goodness overcomes unworthiness, and love subdues enmity. When in this glass we behold the divine glory, we are efficaciously changed into the same image. That love, that goodness, that mercy and condescension which we see so

gloriously manifested in Christ—produce, when viewed in him by faith, corresponding effects upon the believer. He loves God and man, does good, shows mercy, and walks humbly. He is cast into the mold of these divine truths, and is formed and fashioned according to them. The freeness and greatness of God's love to him when an enemy—sweetly constrains him to love his enemies, to do good to the unworthy, to be in his own eyes less than the least, and to be in reality the servant of all. As Christ is the only glass which thus efficaciously represents to us the glory of God's love, mercy, and condescension, so also in proportion as we view them in this glass, is their transforming efficacy on the soul.

Hence then we see the necessity of making Christ our "all in all". Would we then be holy, be changed into the divine image—would we love God, man, show mercy, do good, forgive enemies—then we must turn our eyes to this glass, and therein view the divine image, and the effect will be infallibly produced. In proportion to the clearness and steadiness with which we view and believe God's free love, grace and mercy in Christ—so also will be the degree of that change into the divine image produced upon the soul. And consequently a defect here as to the cause, will also produce a proportionable defect as to the consequence. Divine truths must be seen in the light of God's Spirit, as they are revealed in holy Scriptures, without anything added to them, to cloud their luster and glory, or taken from them, to diminish their excellency. But our souls must view them by faith, just as they are in the divine light, or they will greatly lose their efficacy, and have little or no effect upon the soul.

If a believer looks within and examines narrowly, he cannot but find daily this truth abundantly proved to him, that is, that as he believes in God's love, grace and mercy to him a guilty and depraved sinner—so do all the graces of the Spirit grow and thrive, or decay and wither. May the Lord keep the eye of faith strong, and give us divine light—to look, with more open face, and with more steadiness on the face of Christ—the glass in which the divine image is to be seen and viewed by us sinners!

Chapter 10

10 Sin of Grieving the Spirit

The Sin of Grieving the Spirit Thomas Charles, 1838

Lesser sins, habitually indulged in the heart and mind by believers, are doubtless much more grievous and provoking in the sight of God, than any great fall through the strength of some sudden temptation, as there is more deliberate willfulness in the one, than in the other; and also more of the Spirit's convictions, against which it must be committed. The Spirit's office is to convince of sin, as well as to comfort our souls by taking of the things of Jesus and showing them unto us. Repeated indulgence, though it be only in the heart, of the same sin, after repeated convictions by the Spirit, of its sinfulness and guilt, and of our danger through it—exceedingly grieves the Spirit and provokes God to wrath. This will effectually cause God to withdraw himself from us. He may not do it all at once. He will first hide himself, and give less frequent and less manifest tokens of his presence. He will convince the soul of its sin and show its danger; and it may be, at intervals, give it some token also of his love and favor. But if all will not prevail with us to reclaim us and bring us to forsake and abhor the cursed thing, if we still keep it and indulge it, the Spirit will not always strive with us.

It is much if bitter experience will not teach us how great is the sin of grieving him, who is the Comforter sent by the united love of the Father and the Son, to sanctify and gladden the hearts of his people. He who at first is only grieved, may by our continuance and obstinacy in those ways by which he is grieved, at last be vexed, as he was by the Israelites of old, by their repeated rebellion against him. Isaiah 63:10. The same love which influences the Father in sending his Son to die for sinners, for enemies and traitors—influences him to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in hearts so polluted and depraved. And the same love which inclined the Son to come to die for us, when we were yet sinners, and ungodly enemies—inclines the Spirit also to come to those, who are froward, perverse and unthankful, whom he knows, will grieve, vex, and provoke him. In his love and tenderness, he continues to do us good, bearing with our continual provocations. As Christ loved us and gave himself for us; so also the Spirit influenced by love equally great, free, and eternal—comes to accomplish the necessary work of grace and holiness in us.

Christ had his great undertaking much at heart, and how was he straitened until it was finished! From eternity, his delight was with the sons of men, and in time it was his food and drink to do the will of him who sent him. For the joy that was set before him in the salvation of his people—he endured the cross and despised the shame he had to pass through. In the same manner has the Spirit also the work assigned to him, and willingly undertaken by him, infinitely at heart. To promote comfort, holiness, and joy, in the hearts of God's people—is his great business and delight. And with what infinite patience, condescension and love, does he carry it on! We know but little of his condescension and grace, because we are so ignorant of the various workings of our inward corruptions, by which his great work is continually opposed and obstructed. But when every secret thing is laid open to full view, and we see with divine light how we have resisted the Spirit in his gracious dealings with us—the love of the Spirit will no less overwhelm our souls with

astonishment, than the love of the Father and of the Son. The Spirit has our comfort and happiness, our complete holiness and glory, so much at heart—that anything that is an obstruction to the progress of this work at any time, is said to grieve him. We are not grieved by anything that befalls a person for whom we have no concern or regard—but in proportion to our love for a person, is our grief for him in misery. Others may provoke us to indignation; but there is no grief where there is no love. So it is with the Spirit of God. He is so concerned for those to whom he is engaged by his love as a comforter, that he is said to be grieved with their sins, when he is not so with the sins of others.

Nothing grieves us more in any one whom we love, than unkindness and ungrateful returns for our love—especially after repeated forgiveness and forbearance. So it is also with respect to the Spirit of God. He is a Spirit of love, and all his actings towards us and in us, are the fruits of his love. All the joys and consolations we are partakers of in this world, arise from a sense of the love of God, given to us by the Spirit. "He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts." He expects and requires returns of love, and delights in obedience from us. And when he is disappointed, when we take little or no notice of his kindness and love, and care not to make suitable returns by showing forth in holy walk and conversation the fruits of the Spirit, and it may be by careless neglect, fall into those things and those courses which he abhors—he cannot pass by unnoticed the unkindness and ingratitude therein expressed—but it grieves and vexes him to the heart!

We are therefore to beware, above all things, of a barren, unfruitful profession of religion; and of defiling by secret sinful indulgences, the habitation of the Holy Spirit. "If any one defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy," 1 Corinthians 3:17.

How should the thought of defiling his temple, and grieving the Comforter—fill our hearts with deep humility and godly sorrow! How unworthy is our conduct—to grieve him, who comes for the very end and purpose of giving us consolation and joy! In infinite love and kindness, he has condescended to be our Comforter. This comfort he bestows willingly, freely and powerfully. Nor is there the least hope, peace or joy to be obtained—but what he works and bestows. Nor is there any relief in trouble, nor refreshment in perplexities—but what he gives freely. And shall we, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious—by our negligence, sin, and folly—grieve Him who is thus graciously engaged to give us joy? Shall we grieve him, without whom we cannot live—without whom cannot think a good thought, nor breathe one good desire! Shall we grieve him, whose presence is Heaven in the soul, and whose absence brings a Hell of corruptions, darkness, and misery! Is it possible that we should make such base returns for such love, and be such enemies to ourselves!

Ah! alas! what a creature is man! In what dust and ashes ought the best of us to lie down! Shall we take no notice of his love and kindness? Shall we not thankfully receive all our comforts from his hhands, and see his love and grace in every refreshing thought put into our minds? Yes, shall we not carefully watch and promote all his motions within, and cheerfully comply with them, however self-denying and contrary to flesh and blood? When he convinces of sin—let us set our hearts mightily against sin. And when he speaks comfort—let us hear him as the Lord our Comforter, making known the infinite love of the Father and the grace of the Son to us. When we have no comfort, but walk in darkness and have no light—let us honor him by looking to and waiting upon him for our light in darkness, and joy in trouble. And what and when he gives—let us readily

receive. Above all things we have need to pray to God that he "take not his Holy Spirit from us".

11 Infinite Greatness of Jesus!

The Infinite Greatness of Jesus!

Thomas Charles, 1838

"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is—except the Father; and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Luke 10:22 No words perhaps in the whole Scripture set forth the dignity and glory of the person of Christ more emphatically and expressively than the following: "No one knows who the Son is—except the Father."

It is not sufficient to say that he is far above all principalities and powers, infinitely above all created beings—but he is so great, and so infinite in his nature, and in the glory of his person, that none but the Father, who is an infinite Being, can know him. The imagination of a creature cannot even reach him. The distance is so great, and the glory so far beyond all comprehension—that the mind of the highest angelic being is overwhelmed with the vastness of the idea. Saints in Heaven, and believers on earth, know him to be a sufficient Savior for them—and this is a great deal; but what they know of him falls infinitely short of all that he is. The Apostle says, "He is able to do for them exceeding abundantly above all they are able to ask or think". The divine mind alone, can comprehend the divine nature. A creature is known by a creature of the same order and the same nature with himself. Man knows human nature; for "as in water face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man." An angel knows angelic nature; and so on to the highest orders of beings in the universe. But none except the Father, knows the Son; therefore he must be far above all others excepting the Father. And in the same manner as the Father knows the Son, the Son also knows the Father. Therefore their minds and their natures must be equal and the same. This gives us the largest possible idea of divine knowledge. It takes in and comprehends the divine nature in all its infinity of perfections and glory. So also nothing greater can be said of the divine nature, than that only an infinite mind can know or comprehend it. Nothing greater can ever be said or conceived of the Father’s knowledge, than that he alone knows the Son; nor anything more extensive and unbounded of the Son’s knowledge, than, that he alone perfectly knows the Father.

"The Father knows the Son." When he entrusted him with the salvation of his people and sent him into the world to accomplish the arduous work—he knew into whose hands he had committed it, and was under no apprehension about the outcome. He saw him with infinite delight entering the battle with Satan; and he was not fearful of his veracity being sullied, when he said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head." He foresaw him traveling in the greatness of his strength; spoiling principalities and powers, and triumphing over them openly. He laid our help upon one whom he knew was mighty to save. He laid on him the iniquities of all of his people, well knowing that the Lamb of God would be able to take away their sins. He knew his capacity to govern the universe, and to protect and save his people—therefore he has committed all power and authority into his hands—yes, he has committed also all judgment unto the Son. He knows thoroughly the infinite greatness of his love to his people, and that what his power is sufficient for,

that his love will forever engage him to live for them. He knows that this love is as eternal, free, and unchangeable, as it is intensely great—and therefore will with infinite delight, he will love those given to him by the Father unto the end—however many their provocations, and however great their unworthiness—and that he will never leave them nor ever forsake them.

We know a little of this love from the fruits and effects of it towards us. Yet our minds are infinitely too narrow to take in its vastness, but are at once overwhelmed with its greatness. It is like looking on the midday sun in a clear summer's day. Our weak eyes are dazzled with its splendor, and unable to look upon any longer. But the Father who possesses the same love, both in degree and duration—comprehends the love of the Son in all its immeasurable height and depth, length and breadth. O! with what infinite delight and satisfaction do the divine Persons contemplate the workings of each other's heart and mind towards redeemed sinners here on earth! As the persons are distinct—so also are the workings of their minds distinct. But as their essence is the same—so also is their love, grace, and mercy, one and the same. We can only stand on the shore of the vast ocean of love, which inclined the Son to do so much for us, who are so unworthy—but the Father knows it, and comprehends it perfectly. The Father knows also the infinite merit of Christ's sufferings, and comprehends the full sufficiency of his sin-atoning sacrifice. All we know of his merits is, that they made a full and sufficient satisfaction for sin, and that no more could be required than what he has paid. Being an infinite person—he was able to answer infinite demands. But when we talk of infinite demands and infinite satisfaction—we understand but imperfectly the meaning of the words we use. Faith rests more upon the testimony of the Father as to the sufficiency of Christ's sufferings to make full atonement for sin—than upon any knowledge we have of it. "The Father knows the Son"—he fully comprehends the value of his merits, and therefore he is infinitely well pleased with him with respect to his people. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect in whom my soul delights." The justice of God delights infinitely more in the atoning sacrifice which Christ has made for sin—than in the obedience of men and angels united. We distrust him and are afraid to rely upon his merits alone for our salvation, because of our ignorance of the value of the atoning sacrifice which he has made. But the Father knows it fully, is well pleased, and delights in it. From Heaven he bears witness that life eternal is to be obtained in his Son, by those who are most guilty and unworthy. 1 John 5:7. He is not fearful of resting the whole of the salvation of his people, upon his Son's merits. All the attributes of God harmoniously agree in him, and unitedly advance the salvation of those who believe on him, and rejoice with infinite satisfaction on the glory brought to God, and on the peace shed at the same time on earth, by the merits of his all-sufficient atonement. To comprehend the infinite value of his merits, neither men nor angels shall be able, to all eternity; but let us endeavor to believe what we cannot comprehend. The Father knows it fully; and the testimony of the Father in its behalf, should outweigh everything else, and be a stronger recommendation to us, than the united voices of all creation. By believing the Father's testimony—our joy may be as full and our comfort as great, as if we were able to comprehend its whole wondrous extent. For in believing, we rely on the testimony of one who cannot lie, and who cannot be mistaken, because of his perfect knowledge of the Son. With what joy then should we read the testimony of the Father from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In short, such a Savior has the love of God provided for us—a Savior so infinitely great and all-sufficient, whose merits are of such inestimable value, whose faithfulness is so inviolable, whose love, grace, and mercy are so great, so unsearchable and eternal, and his power so immense—that none but the Father fully knows him! And as the Father

knows the Son—the Son also knows the Father. This, if possible, adds to his dignity and glory, and shows forth the infinite comprehension of his divine mind. It would be blasphemy to say so of any creature whatever. No creatures know anything of the divine nature—but as it has pleased God to make himself known to them by some manifestation or revelation. But the Son is intimately acquainted with the Father, comprehends all the adorable excellencies of the divine nature, and understands fully his love and good-will towards sinners. He knows the Father with the same perfect knowledge with which he knows himself.

Each of the Divine persons is an express image of the other. They possess all the same perfections in an equal degree; the same Divine nature being common to them all; its properties are the same, and its workings are the same. Their knowledge, wisdom, and their power are the same—and always exerted at the same time. Their love, mercy, and patience are the same—equally great and astonishing in them all, and manifested to the same objects. In every view, each one is the image of the other, though the Son only is expressly so called in Scripture, because he alone is the image of the Father to us, and in and through him we know all we can know of the divine nature. We see the glory of God, only in the face of Jesus Christ. Were he not a divine person, of equal nature, dignity, and glory with the Father—he could in no sense be his express image, nor could he be so called—nor could he represent him unto us. For though a creature were as exalted as can be imagined or God could create—yet he must fall infinitely short of the divine excellencies, and could not possibly give a just representation of them to us. But Christ is the "express image of his person." He possesses the same identical nature and properties; and therefore is in every respect qualified to represent the Father to us. Consequently we are said to "see the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

What a wonderful mystery of wisdom and contrivance is expressed in the constitution of Christ's person! He knows the Father in the same manner as he knows himself; his mind being infinitely large, takes in an infinite object in all its perfections. But the wonder is, the manner how he has become the image of the Father to us, giving us a full and exact representation of the divine nature, bringing it down, as it were, to the level our capacities, without diminishing anything of its excellency and glory. He has become "God with us," at the same time that he continues what he was from all eternity! Yet he is the image of God to us—and God with us. He reveals the Father to us.

Others have given the world a revelation from God, but none could reveal the Father, but the Son. In him we see the Father's excellency and glory fully expressed. "He who has seen me", says Christ, "has seen the Father." The attributes and properties of the divine nature are made fully known to us in the Son; and in seeing his glory, we see the glory of the whole Trinity!

12 On Walking with God

On Walking with God Thomas Charles, 1838

There may be life, where there is little or no strength. However, in that case, there can be no walking. To walk, especially to walk usefully, so as to answer some end or purpose—there must be health and vigor of body; the different parts of the body must be healthy and sound. A person that has strength—yet if he is lame or maimed, if his head is dizzy, or his lungs unsound, or if he is altogether too fat—in either of these cases he is altogether unfit for walking. And so it is in a spiritual sense. But oftentimes there is a great deal more strength than is exercised. However, inactivity is the most effectual way to lose what strength we have, to fill the body with illnesses, and is the certain parent of innumerable disorders. From some professors' conduct one would be induced to imagine, that they think to grow in grace and to go to Heaven—merely by hearing, reading, and talking, without any endeavor to live to God in any sense. But such miserably deceive themselves, "we are created unto good works, that we should walk in them." The slothful and unprofitable professor will be cast into outward darkness, as well as the unbelievers. But a faithful servant, with a ready mind, waits upon God to know his will and execute his commands—and his obedience is like that of a dutiful child to an indulgent father, whose heart rejoices and exults in his service whom he fondly loves. A traveler has a way to walk in. He does not walk at a random, without knowing where he is, and where the path he is in, leads to the place he is going to. A person may exert himself much and walk hard—yet if he takes no care to be in the right way—he may, after all his labor and pain, be as far from the end of his journey as the first moment he set out from home. So also spiritually, there is a way, in which if we are not found, it is impossible to walk with God, or to arrive at the rest which remains for the people of God. This way is Christ. "I am the way," says he, "the truth and the life." The way that God appointed men to walk in at the beginning, was the path of innocence and perfect holiness, according to the covenant of works. But by sin, we have erred and strayed from this way, so that no one can find it any more. But God out of infinite love has found out another way—a new and a living way, through which we may have access to him, and in which we may walk with him. The covenant of works is old and out of date—but Christ has consecrated a new way which can never become old, never can be rendered impassable, and out of which we cannot err. Isaiah 35:8. The covenant of works is now dead, and those who attempt to find it and walk in it, are going down into the chambers of eternal death! But this living way is not within the dominion of the king of terrors; it gives life to those who walk in it, defends them on the right hand and on the left, keeps them in peace and safety, and fills them with comfort and joy—so that they "walk without being weary, and run without being faint."

Christ is the mediator of all communication between us and God—all influences of grace, love, and mercy from God to us, are through him alone. And all returns of faith, love, and obedience, from us to him—must be made through him alone. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; and when we are in Christ, then, and not until then, are we reconciled to him, and walk with, him, in communion and love. When we are in him, then are we with God, "who will bring the blind by a way that they know not, and lead them in paths that they have not known; who will make darkness

light before them, and crooked things straight." Isaiah 42:16.

Until we are brought this way, there will be forever an impassable gulf fixed between us and God—we being on the outside, and he on the inside. But the moment we are in Christ, the new and living way, we are with God. In proportion as we abide in Christ, and walk confidently in him—we are also enjoying communion and fellowship with the Father. But where there is life, strength and activity for walking, and a way to walk in—before we can walk comfortably with another in this way—there must yet be agreement, acquaintance, and confidence; there must be the same end in view and the same design in hand. "Can two walk together—unless they are agreed?' If they walk the same road—yet they will not, they cannot, walk together—unless they are agreed, and on peaceable and friendly terms. So God and man must be agreed, before they can have communion and walk together. Since sin has taken place, God and man are at the greatest possible distance. God declares wrath against us—and we are full of enmity against him. God reveals himself as infinitely provoked by our sins, and therefore preparing wrath against the day of wrath, when we and he are to meet in judgment. Our carnal minds also are enmity against him, and we manifest by our continual and universal rebellion, that we neither are, nor will, nor can be subject to him. We are darkness—and he is light. We are dead—and he is life. We are sinful, defiled, and abominable—but he is glorious in holiness. And what communion or agreement can there be between beings so opposite and contrary? None at all!

God and we must be at an infinite distance—until he is reconciled, and we are transformed. By Christ the new and living way, both these things are effected. He is our peace, making reconciliation for our sins by the sacrifice of himself, and also slaying the enmity in his own body on the cross. Ephesians 2:14-16.

Jesus removes our sin, the cause of God's wrath against us. He also plucks up the root of our enmity against him, which is sin. So that now God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself—he is himself reconciled, and by the ministry of the Spirit he is slaying the enmity in us, that we may be reconciled too. In Christ, therefore, Heaven and earth, sinner and God meet together and are reconciled.

God declares, "Fury is not in me"—and we are brought with delight and love inexpressible, to call him, "Abba Father!" There is now harmony and agreement, love and delight. From Heaven is proclaimed, "peace on earth and good will towards men; and on earth glory to God in the highest"—this is sounded with the voice of gratitude and love! God is now perfectly reconciled to his people, and in proportion as the enmity is gradually destroyed in them—is their communion in walking with him.

There are no means more effectual to destroy this enmity in us, and bring us to him in love—than a firm belief of his reconciliation to us in Christ. This persuasion sweetly disarms the soul, softens the heart, brings down its pride with deep contrition of heart to "walk humbly with God". In the face of Jesus Christ alone, can we see God reconciled to us. Therefore in him only, can we walk in peace and communion with him.

There may be no enmity—and at the same time no communion between two persons. They may be strangers, without any intimacy or acquaintance, and therefore can have no fellowship together. And so in a spiritual sense, the natural enmity may be in some degree destroyed—and

yet we may be without sufficient knowledge of God and experimental acquaintance with him, to walk with him daily in communion and love. As a belief in him as reconciled to us in Christ, is the most effectual means to destroy the natural enmity of our hearts against him—so an increasing knowledge of his love, grace, and mercy, in all their freeness, eternity, and immensity, can alone engage our hearts to him, and make his company above all things desirable and his presence delightful.

Without this spiritual acquaintance with him—a sense of sin and guilt will drive us from him as from an infinite enemy, almighty to revenge. We cannot walk with him in love and confidence—until we know how his heart is disposed towards us—until we are convinced that his heart contains grace and mercy more immense than our sin and guilt, and love infinitely surpassing our unworthiness!

Walking with God implies a great degree of confidence in him, as well as love towards him—confidence in him from an intimate acquaintance with the disposition of his heart and mind towards us. This knowledge of himself, God gives in us Christ, "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by faith in him," Ephesians 3:12. In giving his Son, he has given such a demonstration of his love and good-will, as far exceeds our faculties to comprehend. But we cannot take in this light, for darkness does not comprehend it, until he have given us "an understanding to know him that is true." 1 John 5:20. Our understanding must be enlightened, and our minds enlarged to comprehend the height, and depth, the length and breadth of his love! A superficial, notional or mere head-knowledge will not answer the purpose—but "he who commanded light to shine out of darkness, must shine in our hearts—to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". In proportion as the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines in our hearts—so will our confidence and delight in him increase. We shall then cleave to him with full purpose of heart—cleave to him as our only refuge and solace, as our wisdom to direct us, and our strength to help us in every time of need. Thus those who walk with him—also lean upon him as their only strength and support—their very present help in times of trouble. They follow him as their guide every step of the road—so that without him they have neither strength nor knowledge to proceed one step forward.

He is their God, on whom and to whom they live. They have his glory in view in all their motions, and they look to him as their all in all. They do not walk in the same way at a distance from him; one time running before him, and at another time lingering behind—but they walk with him, in closeness of union and nearness of communion. "They come out of the wilderness, leaning upon their Beloved." Many may and do observe great strictness and severity of living—who are at the same time far from God. They may make a great show of humility, but at the same time they never walk humbly with God.

It is to be observed also that those who are with God, are walking with him—not sitting still, and continuing in the same place and station—but proceeding forward, growing and thriving in the divine life. When we make no progress, we may be well assured that God and we have not much fellowship with each other; for we are never with him, without receiving something from him.

Those who are walking with him, he daily feeds with the bread of life, renewing their strength with new communications of grace. He draws them after him with the cords of love, and never leaves nor forsakes them. He bears them up in his arms, and carries them in his bosom as a nursing father—when they are faint and feeble. Thus those who are walking with him, are still proceeding

forward, with patience and perseverance, running the race that is set before them.

13 God Our Light

God Our Light Thomas Charles, 1838

We are commanded "to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven." But how can we who are darkness, let our light shine? Darkness may as well and as soon shine with the light of the sun, as we shine by any light in ourselves. But it must be our light, "let your light so shine before men."

Doubtless, therefore, as we have it not, we must receive it from God, and be made light in the Lord, before our light can shine. Can the moon shine when the sun does not shine upon it? No more can we, except the sun of Righteousness shines upon our souls. Why does not the earth shine at midnight? Is it not because the face of the earth is turned away from the sun? So also when our eyes are turned away from divine light, we can no longer shine.

It is a beautiful image to set forth evangelical obedience as distinguished from everything else. All besides is darkness, however fair its appearance, but what comes directly from Christ. And so long as we receive from him, so long our light shines, and no longer. All the good works of a believer are the effects of an enlightened understanding, and of his seeing the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. He must first be made light in the Lord; and as divine light shines upon our minds, showing us the things of the Father and the Son, and revealing to us those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive. In proportion to the revelation we have of these things by the light of the Spirit—so will our light shine before men, and our good works will be seen.

Others may show the appearance of good works, but there will be no light in them, nor will our Father, who is in Heaven, be glorified by them. The light which seems to be in all others, is in reality darkness itself—and their aim and intention is generally not to glorify God, but themselves. But when we live in the light of God’s countenance, and walk in the light, and in inward communion with God—then we are desirous that our light may shine, and that our Father, not ourselves, may be glorified.

God is light. God the Father is the original fountain and source of light. He is altogether light, and in him is no darkness at all. God the Son is also light—that light which shines in darkness; that true light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world. He, as a mediator, is to us as the sun in the firmament, giving us light. God is light, but this light cannot shine in darkness, but through the Redeemer, who is the Sun of Righteousness, the center in which all divine light meets, and where only our weak and dark sight can behold it.

If we do not turn our eyes to Christ the light of the world—we can see nothing but darkness, and we shall still continue to be darkness. God himself is darkness and terror to our souls, until we see him in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. When in Christ we see him, then we know him, and not until then.

Every true believer has this light in himself. He shines in his own light, not originally his own—but given to him continually from Christ. Others may have knowledge of divine things, when at the same time they have no light in them, but their foolish hearts are still darkened. But in a believer, who walks with God, universal light prevails, "the whole body is full of light, having no part dark". The shining of our light, wholly depends upon this; for if the whole body is not full of light, it cannot radiate from us—but in proportion to the darkness within, so will the darkness be without. When we have a clear view of divine things, and daily walk in the light—then our light will shine and our Father will be glorified. There will be a life and savor in our conduct which nothing else can give. Others may be as regular, moral, and decent, may know and be able to converse about divine things, but if the whole inward man is not full of light, and we see not the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—then all life and savor will be wholly lacking.

Whatever is a fruit of the Spirit, has a flavor and relish in it, which nothing else, however similar to it, can ever have. A little of this divine light in the heart, will shine brighter, and glorify God more—than all conceivable natural and acquired abilities. We may have a light, and this light may also shine; yet if it does not so shine that our Father may be glorified, it is not a true light, but a false light, which glorifies ourselves and leads to outward darkness, where no gleam of light comes through eternal ages.

O blessed Father, shine in your Son upon my soul—and then shall my light shine before men! I will not be ashamed of it; but it shall shine before those who hate it, and who hate me on account of it. There is a difficulty—the devil and our own deceitful hearts would persuade us to hide this light, because it makes us so singular in a world of darkness, and stirs up the enmity and hatred of those who love darkness rather than light. But the Lord gives us light that it might shine before men—all men, good and bad. O Lord! brighten it, and cause me to own it freely, boldly, and thankfully. Are we not arrayed in your livery, when we shine with light? And shall I be ashamed of what is your glory? Nay, Lord, sooner reduce me into nothing, or strike me ten thousand fathoms under the earth! O help me to shine to your glory; it is the very summit of my wishes, my highest glory and ambition! Cause my light to shine, though I be but a star, a very small star. But O how will you be glorified, when such a dark clod of earth shall shine forever, as the sun in the firmament! One poor believer thus shining, will reflect your glories more than all the visible luminaries in this visible creation. O what eternal monuments of grace to your glory, will each of them be! May nothing besides your glory attract my heart any more!

14 Natural and Renewed Conscience

Natural and Renewed Conscience Thomas Charles, 1838

There is a great difference between the workings of the natural conscience of an unconverted person, in the opposition it makes to sin—and the resistance which the renewed principle in a believer, makes to sin. The former may be, and is consistent with, the prevailing love of sin. But the latter is not, nor can possibly be. A man may delight in sin, at the same time his conscience every day accuses him of it. But where a principle of saving grace is implanted, there the inward man delights in the law of God, Romans 7:1-25.

Natural conscience only bears witness against sin and condemns it as being wrong—but grace hates it, as being filthy and abominable. One malefactor may accuse another and condemn evil in him, and at the same time be very far from hating evil itself. But none but a godly man can hate evil itself.

Conscience accuses the evil doer, and its accusations, strengthened by the law and its curses, the justice of God and its threatenings, may be dreadful and intolerable; but after all it will do no more. But the spirit wars against the flesh, draws effectually the soul and its faculties in opposition to it—resists, opposes with unwearied steadiness and perseverance, in every faculty, in all the workings of the soul, in all its thoughts and desires, in every imagination of the thought of the heart. The spirit wars against the flesh, meets it with courage, and entrenches itself against it.

Conscience acts as a judge—but grace acts as an irreconcilable adversary, that with implacable hatred pursues his enemy to death.

Conscience condemns sin—but grace slays sin.

Conscience bears witness against the dominion of sin—but grace dethrones it, crucifies and mortifies it, and will, in spite of all opposition, reign and rule alone.

Conscience teaches us that sin is there, and that it is evil; but grace "teaches us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly".

Grace will not allow the soul to "mind the things of the flesh", but "the things of the Spirit". Grace carries the affections upward, and "fixes them on things above". Grace leads the soul in direct opposition to the flesh, and enables it, strengthened by Christ, "to walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Grace acts universally in all the faculties of the soul, at all times and in everything, opposing evil wherever it is found.

"When I would do good", says the Apostle, "evil is present with me". When I would do good—anything that is agreeable to the mind and will of God—evil is present to oppose and resist me. So is it also with grace, when a true Christian would do evil, grace is present with him. The flesh wars against the Spirit in every faculty and every part, and so does the spirit against the flesh. They are two opposite principles in the same part, constantly acting in perfect contrariety to

each other, like heat and cold in the same water. In the same mind, there is the wisdom of the flesh—and the wisdom of the spirit. In the same will, there is delight in the law of God—and lusting after sin. In the same affections, there is love of God—and love of the world, fear of God—and fear of man—each everywhere opposing the other and lusting against it.

Sin and grace in the same faculty, resemble Esau and Jacob in the same womb, dwelling and struggling together. It is not so in unrenewed persons. They are different faculties, and not different principles which work in them—as when the will and the affections are bent on sin on the one hand, and the understanding and conscience on the other condemning it. Between these faculties there is no enmity—for the same principle rules in all. But grace and sin in the same faculty, are as opposite as light and darkness. Grace has a respect to, and loves all of God's commandments. Grace acts universally, continually, uniformly, and perseveringly in conformity to the will of God—and by it the soul bent towards God, desires after spiritual things, and is universally inclined to all duties of holiness. "It is a well of water springing up unto everlasting life."

Exactly in the same manner, sin acts in opposition to it. But the power of godliness will in the end prevail; it will not cease in its operation until every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. But this will not be the case where natural conscience alone operates, though strengthened by the law of God to condemn sin. Sin will prevail there in the end. The water may be dammed up—but it is not dried up; and it will break forth with more force than ever, bearing down all resistance before it, at one time or other. Sin is not awed by conscience's accusations against it. Conscience may condemn it—yet sin will do as it wills. In Hell, where conscience will be most faithful and clamorous, sin will rage more furiously than ever. But it is not sufficient for grace to accuse and condemn sin, it will have sin's death. God's love, power, and faithfulness, are engaged to give grace the victory. "God is faithful, who has promised", is its continual strength.

Little David, relying upon his promises, will face a great Goliath. What reason have I to praise the Lord, that his strength has hitherto been made perfect in my weakness, and that grace is still alive! Those blessed truths, which gave it being, still feed and nourish it. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes. It is so daily in an increasing degree, until they are saved from all enemies, and safe in glory!

I have good reason to hope that it is not conscience unrenewed, nor the law, which has carried me on hitherto in opposition to sin. No, but saving grace that feeds on the glorious truths of the gospel, and derives from them continual strength. This the natural conscience does not—it has in itself strength enough to condemn, and it can do no more. But grace is continually looking to Christ for strength to continue the warfare. Grace feeds on the gospel of Christ, lives upon it, and finds it to be bread that endures to everlasting life—feeding, comforting, and strengthening the soul—until he enters the joy of his Lord. This grace fed him in times past, it still endures; he finds it still the same, as nourishing as ever; and feeding upon it, he goes on from strength to strength. For ten years I have, I hope, lived upon it. And blessed be the Lord, it still endures and still nourishes. May the Lord help me to labor more after it, and feed more upon it. How infinite the mercy that I ever tasted that the Lord is gracious! O that I could feed more upon his grace, and live more to his glory!

15 Conformity to the Image of God

Conformity to the Image of God Thomas Charles, 1838

Do I find Christ indeed precious to me? Do I long to know more of him, and be filled more with his fullness? The Apostle says to the Galatians, that "he travailed for them in birth again until Christ was formed in them." Galatians 4:19. This was the end he had in view in all his labors and prayers. He was not willing that they should continue all their days as babes—but grow into manhood by having Christ formed in them, and living in them.

Paul says of himself that "Christ lived in him." He lived, though in a lesser degree, as Christ would have lived, had he been then on earth, being influenced and strengthened in all his actions by the same Spirit, which dwelt above measure in Christ. If Christ "lived in him"—then Christ was also formed in him, both as to his knowledge of him, and conformity to him. The image of God in which man was at first created, consisted, as the Apostle says, "in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." The mind of man took the exact form of God, according to its capacity; it had a just and true knowledge and comprehension of him, according to the revelation which God had made to man of himself. His love of God, trust in him, and obedience to him—were also proportioned to his clear and just knowledge of him. His moral character bore some distant resemblance to that of God himself. The law of God, which is a transcript of the divine mind, was in all its purity and extent written on his heart. Thus the true form or image of God was on his mind and on his heart. By the fall man lost from his mind, the true knowledge of God; and from his heart, the inward conformity to God's moral character. The image of Satan followed in its stead, and he became "earthly, sensual, and devilish." "Ungodliness and worldly lusts "now constitute the very essence of his character. He is now conformed to the world in heart and mind. Romans 12:2. He is now "fashioned "according to the lusts in the heart, which he follows through the darkness of his mind, 1 Peter 1:14. His mind now sees no glory in God, and consequently loves him not. Satan now shows to his mind, as he did to Christ, "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Earthly things now appear as the great image did to Nebuchadnezzar—full of glory, "a great image whose brightness was excellent." When things appear thus attractive to the mind—then the heart runs after them, and the heart cleaves to them and is conformed to them. But to destroy the work of the devil, was the purpose of Christ's manifestation. And by the preaching of the Gospel, the work of the devil within us is destroyed, the heart is changed and Christ is formed in us.

Christ is the express image of the Father. He is so originally, as the Son of God. His Person is exactly the same in all the divine perfections, common to each of the three divine Persons. He is in the form of God, essentially considered, from all eternity. And he is as God-man and Mediator—God's image or exact representation to us. In the face or person of Christ alone—can we see the glory of God and of all the divine perfections. When we see his glory as held forth in the gospel, we see the glory and image of God. And by this believing sight, we are changed into the same image, we are "renewed after the image of him who created us"—and thus it is that Christ is formed in us.

He is first formed in our minds, and we have a just and exact knowledge of him, before we are transformed in our hearts. The Gospel is the glass that exactly represents him, and holds him forth to a guilty and ruined world. Those who have their understandings renewed and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, see his glory in this mirror. Ephesians 1:18. And those who thus see him, are changed in heart, into the same image. In the law we see the glory of God—but it is a dead letter, and will not change a sinful heart. As a covenant, though not as a rule, the law is even now formed in us. But thus formed, it exceedingly hinders, instead of promoting, this change. As a covenant it must be destroyed before Christ can be formed in us. But the gospel represents the glory of God in Christ, not absolute. This representation is "spirit and life"—the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes. Here we see the glory of Christ's Person, "as the only begotten of the Father"—equal with the Father in glory, eternity, and in all the divine perfections. The gospel sets him forth in ineffable majesty, and with more than all conceivable glory. In the constitution of his person as God-man, we have the fullest manifestation of divine wisdom and power that ever was, or, it may be, ever will be given.

Those in whom Christ is formed, have a glorious and just view by faith of his person as thus constituted, and in him they see the Father also. They have a just and exact knowledge also of the offices which he, as a Savior, has taken upon him, in order to redeem and deliver his people. They see him "made of God unto them—as wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. And they see his person in each of his offices, adding worth, dignity, and efficacy, to all he has undertaken for sinners. When as a priest he atones for sin, they see him making such an atoning sacrifice as is worthy the infinite God to give, and worthy to be accepted by the injured majesty of Heaven. It is with unspeakable satisfaction they see God glorified, and man saved, in a way which in its contrivance and execution will forever be the astonishment of the whole universe. As a prophet and a king, also, they see him acting suitably to the dignity of his person. As a prophet, Christ is teaching—and as a King, Christ is ruling his people in a manner befitting himself, and in such a manner as none but himself could do. This believing view of his glorious Person in all his offices, adding efficacy to all his undertakings, is the very joy, and comfort, and support of their souls! In his amazing condescension, in undertaking these offices, they see the fullest manifestation of divine love and mercy that their hearts can desire, or God can give. When Christ is thus in the glory of his person and offices, formed in their minds—their hearts and lives cannot be uninfluenced. No, but the glorious sight is most powerful and efficacious in proportion to its clearness, distinctness, and extensiveness.

"We are changed into the same image." The gospel thus believed is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes. The glory of Christ as seen in the gospel, alone can produce this effect. Consideration of other truths, separately viewed, may restrain sin and somewhat keep it under control; but this only mortifies sin, renews the soul, and continually strengthens and enlivens all the graces of the Spirit within. The same means which produce the change at first, must carry it on. It is impossible to grow in grace, without growing in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christ in the glory of his person, must be kept in the enlightened mind, and all divine truths must be seen in and through him—otherwise they will lose all their efficacy and power.

Blessed are those who keep their eyes fixed on the sun of righteousness! They cannot but feel its enlivening warmth and quickening power. It is not sufficient that we have seen his glory formerly, a month or a year ago—no—but he must be, in the glory of his person and offices, always

immediately present with us. He is the only food of the new man, the only object faith deals with, and is conversant about. We must still continually behold his glory dwelling among us, full of grace and truth—that we may receive grace upon grace out of his fullness.

If he is formed in us, he continually abides with us wherever we are. He is in us as a Spirit of divine consolation, under the continual sense of sin in its guilt and power. He is in us and with us, as full of grace and truth. Blessed commodities—and most needed! He has come from Heaven full of them, that by distributing his grace and truth—he might fill his people with them! When they are thus filled with his fullness, he is formed in their minds and dwells there; and he will and must be formed in the heart also—the heart will be changed into the same image. His character is stamped upon them; his spirit dwells in them; and those graces which so eminently adorned his whole life, appear in a smaller degree in all his believing people. The same mind is produced in them, which was also in Christ Jesus. Php 2:5. They are humble as he was, seeking not glory to themselves—but to God—seeking not their own good, but the good of others. Those who come to Christ aright and to the saving of their souls, "learn of him who is meek and lowly." And though to the flesh it is a hard lesson—yet that grace which brings salvation, effectually and daily teaches them. Though perhaps they may have made no great advancement—yet are they willing, yes desirous, of still continuing in this school, under the teaching of grace.

They love and admire Christ's example, and endeavor faithfully to tread in his steps. Under all their sufferings, they keep him in view, and consider him daily, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that their patience may be strengthened, that they faint not in their minds. Hebrews 12:2.

He is formed in them also as to his love to God and man. Christ's love to God and his glory, to man and his salvation, which brought him down from Heaven—carried him through all he did and suffered here on earth. What an amazing instance of both do we see here! How perfectly was the divine law written on his heart! Nothing could destroy, nothing could abate his love!

He loved God and his glory, not only when God smiled upon him—but also under his frowns, under his greatest wrath and displeasure.

He loved man when an enemy, when yet wallowing in sin and every abomination. Yes, even when man hated and persecuted him to death.

While under the wrath of God, his heart was still burning with unabating fervor of love for sinful man; while sinners reviled him—he prays for them. O what a pattern is here! Lord, help me to contemplate by faith the glory of his person and character, until I am changed into the same image!

What glory did his divine conduct reflect upon the holy and righteous God! With what conviction did he prove God's right to punish sin in the face of the whole universe! And what an idea must it give to all created beings, of God's amiableness and loveliness, to see Christ love the Father, even while he feels his wrath! Were we to contrast this conduct with that of the devils and the followers of antichrist, all of whom justly suffer for their own sins—how amazing would be the difference! Revelation 16:21. The one gives glory to God by loving him still with the whole heart, because God always in everything deserves it—deserves to be loved, when he punishes, as well as when he pardons sin. The other, under the just judgment of God, blasphemes the divine

Majesty, and is filled with the bitterest enmity against him.

Here is as much difference as there is between Heaven and Hell, between God and the devil. In this respect Christ is also formed in every one of his people—grace is the same in them as in him, though in a lower degree. Their love to God and man, is of the same nature—according to its degree. They cannot but love him, because in the face of Christ, they have seen his glory—even under his rod, when he chastises them, yes, when he hides his face from them. As Jesus did—so do they also love their enemies, and pray for those who despitefully use them.

It is only in proportion as they do so, that Christ is formed in them, and that the law of God is written on their hearts. What the law requires—we see to the life exemplified in Christ. He yielded perfectly all that love to God and man which it demanded—and we see what the law in its spirituality demanded—universal, perfect love, on all occasions, in all circumstances whatever. It admits of no excuse for the breach of it. Under the wrath of God, and the enmity and hatred of man—the law still, with equal force, demands love, because God at all times and in everything, equally deserves it.

O how comfortable to ourselves, how honorable to God—to have Christ thus formed in us, and the law thus written in our hearts! How much have I still to learn here! How far am I from the perfect pattern before me! But through mercy I can say that I desire to be as he is. I see such glory in God, in all he does, as infinitely deserves to be thus loved.

God is as glorious in punishing sin—as He is in pardoning sin. He is glorious and amiable when he afflicts—as well as when he comforts. Never did God appear more glorious, than when He was pouring out His wrath on the Son of His love, for our sins. Justice and mercy, holiness and love--there shone with united and transcendent splendor. The same glory of God which shines in punishing sin in Hell, appeared in His punishing it on the cross, though not in the same degree. And does not God deserve to be loved for the one as well as for the other? Does he not deserve to be loved wherever and in whatever manner he causes his glorious justice to appear? I believe we may safely conclude that that man never had true grace, who does not love God for punishing sin, as well as for pardoning it—for chastening, as well as for comforting. Nor does he in truth, and in a gospel sense, ever love his brother, who does not also love his enemy.

Thus love showed itself in Christ, and if Christ is formed in us, the same love must operate in the same manner, according to its degree, in us. May this truth sink deep into my heart, and deeply humble me before God for my lack of conformity to Christ! And let me always remember to cast away all excuses for lack of conformity to God’s law, however plausible they may appear, and artfully dressed by the Devil or the flesh. How necessary to look unto Jesus by faith, that Christ may be formed in my heart!

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