

MEDITATIONS ON FIRST PETER

by J.C. Philpot

Philpot's theological meditations on the First Epistle of Peter, addressing the doctrine of election and demonstrating how God's sovereign choice produces holiness and obedience in the lives of believers rather than leading to moral laxity.

11 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Meditations on First Peter
1. Chapter One - Part 1
2. Chapter One - Part 2
3. Chapter One - Part 3
4. Chapter One - Part 4
5. Chapter One - Part 5
6. Chapter One - Part 6
7. Chapter One - Part 7
8. Chapter One - Part 8
9. Chapter One - Part 9
10. Chapter One - Part 10

Meditations on First Peter

Chapter One - Part 1

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part I.

We are well persuaded from our own experience from within, that there is not only a peculiar safety, but a special blessedness in the laying open of the word of truth, which is not usually to be found in any other path of private meditation or public exposition. God has himself set a special value upon his own inspired Scriptures. "You have magnified your word," says the Psalmist, "above your name;" that is, all your other manifested perfections. (Psalm 138:2.) Nor are the reasons why God has thus magnified his word far to seek. Several occur to our mind:

1. As the display of his own glory is, and ever must be, the chief object and ultimate purpose of all his works, the main reason why God puts this high value on his WORD is because, as being a revelation of his mind and will, it especially glorifies himself. CREATION manifests his eternal being, and with it his greatness, wisdom, and power; "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made" (Rom. 1:20); and PROVIDENCE displays his tender care in sustaining the creatures of his hand in life and being; but it is REVELATION which discovers the thoughts of his heart, and especially the purposes of his grace; and as this discovery of those thoughts of God's heart, "which are to all generations" (Psalm 33:11), is more precious in his sight than any external manifestation of his works, he has magnified his word above those other perfections of his nature in which consists his name.

2. But besides this special reason for magnifying his word above all his name, there is another, in that he has given therein a revelation of his dear Son, who is emphatically the Word; and as all we can now know of the incarnate Word is through the medium of the written word, God has put a special value and honor upon the inspired Scriptures as "the testimony of Jesus;" for that "is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10.)

3. Another reason is that he thereby forms a people for himself to show forth his praise. All that is done in and for the soul to conform it to the image of Christ is by the power of the word. Our gracious Lord, therefore, when he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and, as the High Priest over the house of God, offered up that memorable intercessory prayer which the Holy Spirit has recorded John 17, said, "Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." This work of sanctification includes the whole of that sacred work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, whereby it is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—which made the Apostle say, in his parting address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32.)

By the word he begets us into spiritual life, as James testifies—"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth;" and to this corresponds the language of Peter in the chapter which we have been led to propose as the subject of our present meditations, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23.) By this word, in the hands of the Spirit, is the soul first convinced of sin; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. "No," says the Apostle, "I had not known sin but by the law." And as divine life is thus communicated by the word, and with life the knowledge of sin through a condemning law, so is it maintained throughout by the same instrumentality. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby."

If we look back to the first work of God upon our soul, and it is often profitable to do so, we shall see that never until then did we feel the power of God's word upon the heart. It was with us as the Psalmist speaks, "The entrance of your words gives light." (Psalm 119:130.) And though we might have been, and no doubt were, very ignorant of doctrinal truth, and had, so to speak, to grope our way to it more by feeling than by sight, yet the word of God was not as before, a sealed book, nor were we deaf to its voice or altogether blind to its meaning, for those words were made true in us—"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." (Isa. 29:18.) It was this divine light entering the soul, and this divine life together with it quickening it into faith and feeling, that made us, like the new-born babe, desire the sincere milk of the word; and never, perhaps, was the word more attentively listened to, or the feet made more ready to run after it, than in those early days when eternal realities were first laid with great weight and power upon the mind.

By the word, too, came all our faith; for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17.) By the word came also a good hope through grace—"Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope." (Psalm 119:49.) It is by the word also that comes love—"O how I love your law! it is my meditation all the day." This is a receiving the love of the truth by which we are saved (2 Thess. 2:10), and a proof that we love God as keeping his commandments through the obedience of faith. (1 John 5:3; Rom. 16:26.) Through the word also is wrought patience—"Because you have kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10); and by the word, not to pursue the subject further, is a hard heart broken into contrition, and a cold heart fired with holy warmth—"Is not my word like as a fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29.)

But though such and similar are the effects of the word of God upon the heart, how few, speaking comparatively, even of the living family of God, get from it that fullness of blessing which is thus stored up in it. And are we wrong in saying that one cause of thus coming short of reaping from the word the blessings laid up in it is a lack of prayerful meditation, and of a seeking to enter into the treasures of grace laid up in it by diligent search? God's word is a mine of heavenly truth—"Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for the gold where they refine it." (Job 28:1.) But this vein has to be dug into; this gold does not lie loosely scattered upon the surface. We are bidden, therefore, to "cry after knowledge, and to lift up our voice for understanding; to seek her as silver, and to search for her as for hidden treasures; for only thus can we understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:3-5.)

But we need not here enlarge upon the power and preciousness of the word of truth; nor would we have dropped even these remarks upon it had we not wished to show that there was a special reason why, if we wrote at all, we would prefer to lay before our readers Meditations upon the word of God in preference to taking up any particular subject. Though the Scriptures are written with such wonderful wisdom, and are so inspired in every line by the Holy Spirit, yet it is not every reader of them, even though possessed of divine light and life, who is able either clearly to understand their divine meaning, or to derive from them that amount of profit which they are capable to impart. They need to be "opened" as Paul's manner was (Acts 17:3); and there are many of God's children who must almost answer with the eunuch to the question, "Do you understand what you read?" "How can I except someone guides me?"

If, then, we can help in any way the diligent search of the Scripture, and by opening up the word of truth may lead our spiritual readers into a clearer and deeper knowledge of it, that they may be fed as with the finest of the wheat, we shall be well repaid for our labor, be it in breaking up the clods, or thrashing out the grain; and as "the husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6), if the Lord be pleased to feed our soul while we are attempting to feed the souls of others, we shall reap a double benefit.

We have felt disposed to lay before our readers some thoughts upon the first chapter of the general Epistle of Peter; and we will preface our Meditations with some general remarks on the character and nature of that Epistle.

i. Its title demands the first place; for though this is not strictly a part of the epistle, yet it is descriptive of its character, and distinguishes it from the epistles of Paul. His, it will be observed, were written either to churches, as to that at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, etc., or to individuals, as to Timothy, Titus, Philemon. The only epistle of Paul which like that before us is of a general character, that is, not addressed to particular churches or persons, is the Epistle to the Hebrews. To show why that epistle was couched in that particular form would take us too far from our present point. Suffice it to say that all the other apostles wrote their epistles, with the exception of two short ones by John, not to churches or individuals, but to the people of God generally. Such is the Epistle of James, the first Epistle of John, that of Jude, and the first and second Epistles of Peter.

They are called General or Catholic epistles, not because their views and doctrines are, in the ordinary sense of the word, general, but because the people to whom they were written formed a part of the mystical body of Christ, irrespective of being gathered together into special and particular churches. They are therefore addressed to characters; and this feature in them makes them especially suitable to us; for either directly or incidentally the various features of divine life in the soul are thereby brought forward and presented to view, and thus, so far as we are able to recognize those peculiar features in our own case, they speak personally and individually to us. But as we shall see this peculiar character of the Epistle before us more fully brought out in the course of our exposition, we need not enlarge upon it now.

ii. The next point which demands our attention is the writer, "Peter." We may here remark incidentally that the ancients had a much more sensible way of addressing their letters than we have. Unless we know the handwriting of our correspondent, we have to go to the end of a letter before we know the writer; and as it often happens that our own name does not appear in the letter

at all, and is only written upon the envelope, the letter itself affords no evidence who the person is to whom it is addressed. Now, the ancients avoided all this liability to confusion and mistake by putting the name of the writer, with appropriate titles, if required, to distinguish him, as the very first word in the letter, and the name of the person to whom it was written as the second. We have in the Acts of the Apostles an original Roman letter; and we see in it the two features just described—"Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sends greeting." (Acts 23:26.) Here we see that Claudius Lysias, who wrote the letter, put his own name first, and immediately after the name of Felix, whom with all due courtesy he styles "the most excellent governor," or as we would now say, "his Excellency." Following this ancient and most sensible pattern, Peter puts his own name first; and to give his letter greater weight and authority, adds, "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

How much is involved in the simple word "Peter!" How it calls up to our mind the first and foremost of the disciples of Jesus Christ! How at once rush into our thoughts his warmth, his zeal, his love to his dear Master, the sweet revelation with which he was favored of his being the Son of God, and his bold declaration of it; his cleaving to him when so many went away with that earnest appeal so expressive of the faith and feelings of every God-taught soul, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." And though our admiration of Peter's zeal and warmth is somewhat tempered by his sad fall in the hour of temptation, yet it no more takes Peter out of the affections of our heart than it took him out of the love of his dear Lord. No, it rather gives us a feeling of sympathy with him, as having been ourselves in a similar, if not the same, furnace of temptation as he, and having manifested in the sieve of Satan as little strength to stand as the very prince of the apostles.

But he comes before us in this epistle as "an apostle of Jesus Christ;" and a discerning eye can see in it not only the inspired and authoritative language of an apostle, but of one also whose spirit had been meekened and softened in the furnace of affliction. He writes, therefore, not merely "as an apostle of Jesus Christ," but, as he speaks elsewhere, as one "who also is an elder," both in years and grace, "and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." This epistle, therefore, was written by him, not in that proud and haughty spirit which his pretended successors have shown so continually in their Papal bulls, but though claiming to speak with authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, yet as one who to the authority of an apostle joined the love and affection of a friend and a brother.

iii. The date of the epistle is somewhat uncertain, but as the Apostle speaks in it of "judgment beginning at the house of God," and intimates that "a fiery trial" was at hand which would try the faith of those to whom he wrote, it was probably written some little time before the destruction of Jerusalem, and not very long before his own martyrdom A.D. 64 or 65. It is not, indeed, of any great consequence, but we may not, therefore, greatly err if we fix the date about A.D. 61 or 63.

iv. The people to whom it was written is the next point to be considered; for independently of its being a general or catholic epistle, that is, addressed to the saints of God generally, it bears upon its front that it was written to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." The expression "strangers scattered" may be rendered more literally "strangers of the dispersion;" and this connects it with the general Epistle of James, which is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad;" or as it might be rendered more

literally, "the twelve tribes which are in the dispersion." A light also is cast upon the expression by a similar term which we find in John, where the Jews ask, "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" where it is in the original "the dispersion of or among the Greeks." (John 7:35, margin.)

To understand this point better we must bear in mind that there was a very large population of Jews scattered through the various provinces of the Roman Empire, or rather the eastern portion of it. We see this in the Acts of the Apostles, where we find in almost every city a colony of Jews who had their synagogue, and to whom, in the first instance, Paul used to preach. Now among this scattered Jewish population, who were generally called Hellenists from speaking Greek, as distinct from the Hebrews who lived in Palestine who spoke Hebrew, or rather a dialect of it called Aramaic, the gospel had made many converts; and Peter being eminently the apostle of the Jews, as Paul was that of the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7), he addresses this epistle to those believing Jews who were scattered through the various provinces of Asia Minor which he enumerates, and which it is not necessary for us to enter into or explain.

But as brought under the power of divine grace they were "strangers" in a spiritual and experimental sense, and were scattered not only locally, but experimentally.

It is here that the epistle meets us; here it becomes addressed to characters; here it speaks to us as being spiritually and experimentally what they were locally—scattered strangers.

The main character of a child of God is that he is a stranger upon earth. Such was David when he said, "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not your commandments from me" (Psalm 119:19); and again—"I am a stranger with you and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." (Psalm 39:12.) Such also were those blessed characters of old who are said to have "died in faith," and to have "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. 11:13.) Such also was Moses in the land of Midian, and such were the feelings of his heart when he named his eldest son Gershom, "a stranger here." (Exod. 2:22, margin.) And such before him was Abraham, who "by faith sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country." (Heb. 11:9.) Such was Jacob in the land of Padan-aram when "he sore longed after his father's house." (Gen. 31:30.)

And such shall we be in our daily experience, if the same grace which wrought in their hearts has touched ours. Indeed, one of the first effects of the grace of God upon our soul was to separate us from the world, and make us feel ourselves strangers in it. It was once our home, the active, busy center of all our thoughts, desires, and affections; but when grace planted imperishable principles of life in our bosom, it at once separated us from the world in heart and spirit, if not at first, through weakness of the flesh, in the fullness and decision of actual life and walk.

Nor has the word "scattered" a less significant meaning. It is true that those to whom the epistle was primarily written were scattered literally and locally; for in those Asiatic provinces the Jews generally were dispersed here and there, as solitary units in a population alien to them, not only on such a fundamental point as religion, but in all those observances, habits, customs, and even thoughts and feelings which sprang out of this religion as shoots from a deep root. There was a deep, impassable barrier between Jew and Gentile, as Peter well expressed it—"You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." (Acts 10:28.)

Never, therefore, at any period or in any climate has the Jew been anything but a stranger; and he is still in this country, as he was in Asia even before the destruction of Jerusalem, a solitary being, except so far as he cleaves closely to his own people. But what was true of the Jew generally, was of the converted Jew true specially. Those of the stock of Israel to whom the word came with power, that "remnant according to the election of grace" of which Paul speaks (Rom. 11:5), were in a special sense "scattered strangers." They were, speaking comparatively, very few in number, the main harvest, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles, being reaped from the Gentiles. Israel after the flesh "stumbled at the stumbling stone;" for "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." The few, therefore, of the literal Israel who were called by grace were indeed "scattered strangers;" for they were but a sprinkling here and there, two or three berries on the top of the uttermost bough; and as having to endure great persecution from their own body, who then, as now, abhorred with the deepest loathing every convert to the Christian faith, they were "strangers" as having neither brother nor friend among Jew or Gentile, and no union or communion except with those who were partakers of the same precious faith.

But we may view the words as having a spiritual and experimental bearing. Those who truly love and fear God are in our day "scattered strangers." Even literally and locally they are scattered here and there, a few in this town or in that village; but wherever they dwell separate in heart and spirit, and as far as they can in worship and service from all amid whom they dwell; and as they are strangers inwardly and experimentally by the power of divine grace making this world to them a wilderness, so are they scattered inwardly and experimentally by the breath of the Lord having blown upon their natural strength, wisdom, and righteousness, and scattered to the four winds of heaven every delusive hope, and all confidence grounded in self. Nor are they less "scattered" by the various trials and temptations through which they are called to pass, the effect of which often is to fill them with confusion, to scatter their thoughts to the wind and leave them often as the hymn says: "Half a wreck by tempest driven."

It is, however, to such "scattered strangers" that the epistle speaks; and its first word is a word of consolation and strength to gather together as it were these scattered outcasts of Israel, to plant them on a sure basis, and to give them an encouraging testimony that though strangers to man and often to themselves, they are not strangers to God; and though scattered in their bodies locally and in their souls spiritually they are gathered up into the book of life in which their names have been written from eternity as the elect of God.

v. The next word that meets our eye is "elect."

Peter, we see, "the Apostle of Jesus Christ," does not shun or keep back the doctrine of election. He counted it neither dangerous nor licentious, but puts it forward in the most prominent manner as the distinctive blessing of these "scattered strangers." "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." (1 Peter 1:2.) But it will be observed that he speaks of these scattered strangers as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." By this foreknowledge he does not mean merely that God knew from all eternity those who would believe in his dear Son. Foreknowledge of the persons of the elect in the divine economy precedes election. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate" (Rom. 8:29); and

this foreknowledge was not any eternal foreview of their faith or love in time, as if that were the ground of God's choice of them; but it implies, first, that thorough knowledge which God had of them, and of all that would concern them, of all the depths of sin and rebellion, disobedience and ungodliness, of which they might be guilty before called by grace, and of all their grievous backslidings, slips, and falls, with all the base returns that they would make for his goodness and mercy toward them after he had touched their hearts by his finger.

And secondly and chiefly, it signifies the good will and pleasure, with that everlasting love of God the Father, whereby he foreknew them with a holy approbation of them, a divine affection toward them, and a holy and unalterable delight in them as viewed in his dear Son, chosen in him and accepted in the Beloved. And thus election is not, if we may use the expression without irreverence, a dry choice of them in Christ, but a choice of them as foreknowing, with a holy approbation, each of his elect family, personally and individually, and however they might differ among themselves in the infinite variety whereby one man varies both naturally and spiritually from another, yet that his approving knowledge of each and all of them in Christ Jesus was in sweet harmony with his determinate choice. To realize this in soul feeling is very sweet and precious.

We do not know ourselves. We may have seen a little into our fallen state by nature, and may know something of the awful evils that lurk and work within; we may have had some passing skirmishes, or even some hot battles with our proud, rebellious, unbelieving, infidel, and desperately wicked heart, but we do not know ourselves as God knows us. And though we may cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," yet how shallow for the most part and superficial is that knowledge and experience of ourselves! How little do we measure our sinfulness by the holiness of God, or look down into the depths of our nature as they lie naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do! When, then, we think that he who knew from the beginning all that we ever would be in the depths of the Adam fall, and yet chose us by determinate decree in his dear Son unto eternal life, what a blessed lift does it give to the soul out of all those sinkings into which a sight and sense of sin is continually casting it.

But we may observe also that the Apostle couples with election both means and ends. The ends are "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," the means are "sanctification of the Spirit." But as the consideration of these points demands more space than we can now give them, we shall defer our Meditations upon their to our next paper.

Chapter One - Part 2

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

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Part II.

A very common objection to the doctrine of election is that it leads to licentiousness. Men will not say in so many positive words that all who hold the doctrine of election are loose and licentious characters, for the evidence of facts to the contrary is too strong for this calumny to be proved or believed, and the charge against them usually lies in just the opposite direction, that is, that they are too strict and precise, too rigid and separate from the world, and do not allow themselves to enjoy even the innocent pleasures and harmless amusements of life. But in making the charge they often draw a distinction between the doctrine itself and the people who hold it. Thus they say, "We do not mean that you are licentious, for your life and conduct plainly show the contrary; but there may be special reasons and motives which act upon you which may not influence others who hold the same views. It is not you, therefore, that we condemn, but your doctrine. You may be preserved from its dangerous influence by your education, or your natural conscience, or your high sense of duty and propriety, or even by your fear of the reproach of acting inconsistently with your profession; but if you preach it to others who may not be under the same restraints with yourself, they will most likely use it or abuse it to their own destruction. And, indeed, what can be more natural than that they would do so? If I knew certainly and positively that God had chosen me to eternal life, and that come what may, come what will, I could never perish, then I might lie, and cheat, and steal, wallow in drunkenness and all manner of filth and uncleanness, and yet be sure all the time that I was going to heaven."

Such are some of the objections of the opponents of sovereign grace to the doctrine of election; and as such objectors evidently know nothing of the secret teachings and dealings of God with the soul, and the sweet constraints of the love of Christ, and indeed do not even understand, much less believe, the Scriptures, we need not wonder that they talk so wildly and so inconsistently, not only with the power, but with the very letter of truth itself. To guard, then, against this common objection to the precious truth of election, which, indeed, would be fatal to its claims, for a holy God could never reveal an unholy doctrine, and more especially to instruct his people into the fruits which spring out of a sense of electing love shed abroad in their heart, the Lord the Spirit has written, as with a ray of light in the inspired Scriptures, not only the doctrine itself, but the gracious and spiritual effects connected with and flowing out of it; and has most plainly declared that instead of tending to licentiousness, it leads to holiness of heart and life, and that God has chosen his people in his dear Son—not that they might take advantage of the riches of his grace to sin the more against him, which would be a doctrine of devils—but that it might lay them under the sweetest and most powerful constraints to walk all the more tenderly in his fear, and live all the more worthily to his praise.

The Apostle, therefore, declares that God "has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph 1:4); and that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we would walk in them." (Eph. 2:10.) So our gracious Lord said—"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you would go and bring forth fruit." (John 15:16.) We see, therefore, that election is not a licentious or dangerous doctrine, but one which leads to holiness, and that so far from being the cause of sin, it is just the contrary, being the true and real cause of holiness; for if there had been no elect people, there would have been no holy people—for the "chosen generation" are "a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9); and, therefore, if there had been no election, there would have been no holiness. It is true that ungodly men may abuse the doctrine, and hold the truth in unrighteousness, for what is there, however holy and sacred, which the carnal mind will not pervert to its own base purposes? But this is their sin, and will, if grace does not prevent it, end in their damnation.

But it is time to return to our exposition, though our readers will probably trace the connection of these thoughts upon election with the language of Peter—"Elect unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," and will see how the Apostle unites election with obedience and the blood of sprinkling.

At this point, therefore, we now resume the thread of our exposition, and shall, with God's help and blessing, endeavor to open these two points which we termed, at the close of our last paper, the ENDS of election. It will be observed that the one of these ends refers to the heart, and the other to the conscience, those being the two main seats of divine operation.

i. "Elect unto obedience."

All true obedience is from the heart. "You have obeyed from the heart that form (or, as the word means literally, "type" or "mold") of doctrine which was delivered you," or "whereto you were delivered" (margin); the figure being taken from that of a stamp or signet where the impression coincides perfectly with the seal, or from that of a mold where the object cast corresponds exactly with the model from which it is taken. Thus, as divine truth is stamped upon the heart by the power of God, it obeys that truth in every line and lineament, and copies it into the life, in the same way as the cast obeys and copies the lines and features of the mold. This is being "like wax to the seal," or clay to the potter. (Job 38:14; Isa. 64:8.) And as "with the heart man believes unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10), this obedience is called "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26), and to yield it is to obey the gospel. (Rom. 10:16.) But the question may arise, How is this obedience of faith produced? It is by the voice of the Lord speaking with power to the soul. The promise given to our gracious Lord when he was made a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek was—"Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness." (Psalm 110:3.) David, therefore, personating the Lord, says, "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me." (Psalm 18:44.) It is, then, the hearing of the Lord's voice ("My sheep hear my voice"), which raises up faith in the soul; and with faith comes the obedience of faith; for faith and the obedience of faith are so closely and intimately connected that that faith which is not obedient is not the faith of God's elect. We see this very plainly and clearly in Paul's case. The moment that the Lord spoke to him at Damascus gate, faith was raised up in his heart, and with faith immediately came the obedience of faith, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.) The neck of unbelief was in a moment

broken, and with it the neck of disobedience, and the faith which made him say, "Lord," made him also say, "What will you have me to do?" "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and don't do the things which I say?" Our own experience also proves this. God spoke to us in various ways before he called us effectually by his grace. How often, for instance, did he speak to us in his providence—sometimes to warn, sometimes to admonish us—if we had had but ears to hear. What narrow escapes sometimes with life; what severe strokes of illness, and yet what raising up from the very gates of death! What unexpected turns at other times in our favor, as if the very goodness of God were calling us unto himself from paths of sin and disobedience! How often, too, he spoke to us by secret warnings and admonitions of conscience, telling us what the end would be of walking after our own crooked ways! How he spoke to us sometimes also by the words and example of godly men and women, the truth and sincerity of whose religion we were compelled to acknowledge! And how he spoke to us, it may be, for many have not this, in and by the ministry of the word, so that, in spite of ourselves, a ray of unwelcome light darted into our conscience to produce a momentary pang of guilt and uneasiness, with some desires to be different from what we were. But how ineffectual was all this; and how the power of sin, the love of the world, the fear of man, the pleasures and pursuits of life, and above all, the strong cords of unbelief, impenitence, and hardness of heart hold us fast bound; so that in us there was neither faith, nor the obedience of faith.

And so we would have lived and so we would have died, had not the Lord put forth another power, and spoken to us by another voice than that of providence, or natural conscience, or the outward ministration of the word, and done that for us, and in us, by the power of his grace, which has made us what we are as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

We thus see the special blessedness of being "elect unto obedience," and that God secures it by as fixed and firm a decree as salvation itself; and, indeed, it is a part of salvation; for as by grace we are saved through faith, it is by the obedience of faith that we become manifestly interested in God's great salvation. We can, therefore, no more be saved without obedience than we can be saved without faith; for the wrath of God is upon all the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:6); and as to believe the gospel is to obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16), so disobedience of the gospel is of the nature, and will have the punishment of unbelief of the gospel.

ii. The other end to which the people of God are elect is "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." This deals with their conscience as obedience deals with their heart. Wherever there is a work of grace in the soul, it makes the conscience alive and tender in the fear of God; and the application of the law to this living and tender conscience lays upon it a heavy load of guilt, under which it cries and groans being burdened. In this sore and guilty conscience the law of God and his wrath meet together, and down goes the soul, more or less, into those depths of which the Psalmist says, "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord."

Now, nothing but the blood of Christ revealed unto and sprinkled upon this guilty conscience can remove from it this heavy load of guilt. Sin after sin, crime after crime, iniquity upon iniquity, in thought, word, or deed, press the soul at times almost down into despair. But God will never allow his elect people to sink, that is, wholly and finally, into this horrible pit, for they are elect unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Not only, therefore, has he chosen them in Christ that they would be holy and without blame before him in love, made them accepted in the Beloved, and

forgiven them all their sins, but he has determined, in the riches of his grace, that the atoning blood which was shed for them upon the cross, and by which they were redeemed from death and hell, would be sprinkled upon their conscience, so as to cleanse and purge it from this load of guilt, that they might draw near to him with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, as having their heart sprinkled from this evil conscience. (Heb. 10:22.)

We now see the connection between obedience and the blood of sprinkling, and how and why the elect are chosen unto both. By the special gift and power of God they believe with the heart unto righteousness, and thus render the obedience of faith; and by the blood of sprinkling obtain a manifestation of the forgiveness of their sins, and thus serve God with an obedient, loving heart, in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, and with a conscience purged from guilt, filth, and dead works. And though there are many of the dear family of God who have not yet attained to an experimental knowledge of the blood of sprinkling revealed and applied to their conscience, yet being elect unto it, and already favored with the first blessing of obedience to the gospel, this second blessing will in due time also be revealed unto them.

We need hardly remark that the expression, "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," has reference to the practice of the ceremonial law in which the blood of the victim was first shed and then sprinkled. It was so in Egypt at the institution of the Passover, when the blood of the paschal lamb was first shed when the animal was killed, and then struck or sprinkled on the lintel and the two side-posts of the houses. (Exod. 12:7, 22.) So it was when Moses sprinkled the blood on the altar, on the book, and on the people. (Exod. 24:6-8; Heb. 9:19.) So also he first shed and then sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. (Heb. 9:21.) And we may here observe that the blood was always sprinkled while warm, when, so to speak, the life was still in it, for it was never allowed to become cold or clotted; and thus was a lively type of the life that is in the blood of Christ when it is sprinkled on the conscience.

But more especially was this the case on the great day of atonement, when Aaron took the blood of the bullock and of the goat and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat. (Lev. 16:14, 15.) We thus see that, according to the ceremonial law, the blood was first shed and then sprinkled. In a similar way, in the antitype, it was through the blood shedding and death of the gracious Lord that sin was atoned for, put away, and blotted out. This was the shedding of the blood, and accomplished our redemption. In this redemption by blood all the elect of God are interested, and therefore by virtue of this redemption all their sins are forgiven them. (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.)

But in order to enjoy the manifestation of this forgiveness, the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ must be sprinkled upon their consciences, that they may have a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. And as doubtless there were many to whom Peter wrote, who "as new-born babes had tasted that the Lord was gracious," but had not yet attained unto a personal, experimental knowledge of pardoned sin, he encourages them to hope and patiently wait for the promised blessing, by assuring them that they were elect unto it, and that, therefore, they could not fail of obtaining it at God's appointed season.

The Apostle also opens the instrument through whom these blessings are communicated, and thus instructs us into the means as well as the ends. If we are elect unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ as ends, we are put into personal possession of them by the Holy Spirit as the means. He, therefore, says, "through sanctification of the Spirit." It is desirable to

observe how we have here in the compass of one verse the three Persons of the blessed Trinity brought before us, that is, God the Father, his Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier; and mark also the three blessings ascribed to these three distinct Persons—that the Father elects, the Son atones, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. Observe also from it how we are brought into the personal, experimental possession of these blessings, and how we are made to know our election, our redemption, and our sanctification; and that it is the Holy Spirit moving in sweet accordance with the electing love of God, and the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who sanctifies the soul by leading the heart into the obedience of faith, and applying to the conscience the blood of sprinkling. We thus see that election is a holy doctrine, because it moves in accordance with the sanctification of the Spirit, and that redemption by blood is a holy doctrine, because attended by the Spirit's sanctifying grace; that the obedience of faith is a holy obedience, as produced by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, and that the blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled upon the conscience both cleanses and sanctifies it, by not only revealing pardoning mercy, but by making sin exceedingly sinful, and holiness the very element of the renewed soul.

We shall not dwell upon the apostolic prayer which closes what we may call the address of this epistle—"Grace unto you and peace be multiplied," as we endeavored to open the words in our Meditations upon the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and shall, therefore, pass on to what may, in fact, be considered the real commencement of the epistle—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3.)

We may call this, then, the true commencement of the epistle, and it is remarkable how Paul and Peter, though writing to different persons, and most probably without any communication with each other at the time, both begin their letters in almost the same way. Thus Paul, writing to the Ephesians, begins with blessing God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the manifested riches of his grace—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.) So similarly Peter blesses the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ for the display of his mercy and love. The blessings for which Paul praised him were all those spiritual blessings with which he had blessed the Church in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; but the blessing for which Peter here thanks and adores his divine Majesty is for having begotten them again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This, then, is the first feature which we shall now have to consider.

Three things are observable in it—1, the blessing of being "begotten again;" 2, the fruit and result of this new birth, which is "a lively," or as the word means, a living "hope;" and 3, the cause of this new birth, which is "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

1. The epistle was written to those who were partakers of a new and heavenly birth. They are, therefore, said to be "born again" (1:23), and are addressed as "new-born babes." (2:2.) For this act of his grace the Apostle blesses and praises God on their behalf. And well may this unspeakable blessing call forth every power and faculty of the soul in praise and thanksgiving, whether of an apostle, or of the lowest believer; for it is the introduction into, as well as the sure pledge of every other spiritual blessing for time and eternity. To possess divine life, to be born of God, is to have him for our Father, and thus have every blessing which a Father's heart can conceive, and a Father's hand bestow. It is to be delivered from death, and made partaker of a life

which can never die. It is to live through every storm; to be brought through every trial, temptation, sorrow, and affliction; to obtain victory over sin, Satan, death, and hell, and to reign with Christ in the light and blessedness of one eternal and glorious day. On this point, however, we need not dwell, as it is one which, however sweet, does not require any special opening.

2. Let us pass on, therefore, to see the fruit and effect of this new and heavenly birth—a living hope. There are other fruits of the new birth, but that which the Apostle has brought forward here is one eminently sweet and suitable to the new-born family of God. One peculiar feature in this epistle seems to be that it does not, so to speak, take very high ground; that is, it does not address itself to very advanced believers. If, for instance, we compare it with the epistle to the Ephesians, we shall see that though both are equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, yet that a higher, fuller, and more exalted strain animates, as it were, the epistle of Paul. It was written to a deeply-taught, highly favored, and well-established Church, and, therefore, able fully to receive, and experimentally enter into, the grand and glorious truths unfolded to them. But Peter's epistle was not written to any particular Church, much less to one so far advanced in the divine life. It is, therefore, styled a "general epistle," as being addressed to the people of God generally, and was sent not to a specially-favored, long-established Church, but to "strangers scattered" here and there, and therefore widely differing in experience, both from one another and from a Church which, like that at Ephesus, had been for three years specially favored with the benefit and blessing of Paul's personal ministry.

Peter's epistle, therefore, takes what we may perhaps call a lower tone of experience. The doctrine preached in both is the same, the grand truths of the gospel, such as election, redemption, regeneration, are just the same; but the people to whom it is written not being, for the most part, so far advanced in the things of God as the Ephesians, Colossians, and the churches generally to which Paul wrote, milk, rather than strong meat, is set before them.

This may explain why Peter blesses God for begetting them again unto a living hope. He does not tell them that God had begotten them unto the full assurance of faith, or unto the clear enjoyment of manifested pardon, or to the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart by the Holy Spirit, but unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There is much wisdom, mercy, and condescension in this.

Now, there are very many of the family of God who cannot rise much beyond a living hope. It is called a living hope to distinguish it from a dead and carnal hope, such as the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish (Job 8:13); or of the wicked, which shall be as the giving up of the spirit (Job 11:20); or of the Pharisee who is under the curse of God, as trusting in himself and making flesh his arm (Jer. 17:5); or of that numerous throng, dead in sin or dead in a profession, who hope in God's mercy because they have never experimentally felt or feared his wrath. The living hope to which God begets his dear children by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is very different from any such dead hopes as these. It is raised up in the soul by the power of God—the same power by which he raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. It has, therefore, life in it, which makes it always living and sometimes lively.

It may, indeed, sink very low, and seem at times almost if not wholly gone, as one complained of old, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lam. 3:18); and another cried out, "My hope has he removed like a tree" (Job 19:10); and yet the one could say as soon as it was revived,

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lam. 3:24); and the other could declare, "I know that my Redeemer lives." But however low it may sink through temptation, darkness, bondage, and guilty fear, yet it can never wholly perish, fail, or be disappointed, for it is "in hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," and is built upon two immutable things, God's promise and God's oath, in which it was impossible for him to lie.

It is also a fruit of the Spirit in union with faith and love, and, therefore, like them, abides in the Church and in the soul when all gifts, such as of prophecy, of tongues, and of knowledge, fail, cease, and vanish away. (1 Cor. 13:8, 13.) It has salvation in it, for by it we are saved (Rom. 8:24); is the gift of God's free grace (2 Thess. 2:16); and, therefore, must reign through righteousness unto eternal life. (Rom. 5:21.) It is an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and is firmly fixed within the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, and hopes to the end for the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, a precious grace; and though it may not have the sweet enjoyments of the assurance of faith, or the casting out of all fear which has torment, which is the special blessing and high privilege of love, yet it equally secures the soul in the firm possession of the grace of the gospel and the gift of eternal life.

3. Now, it is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that God begets us again unto this living hope. We showed in our Meditations upon Eph. 2:5, 6, that the resurrection of Christ was not only the pledge; but the initial cause of our regeneration. When Christ rose from the dead all his elect rose virtually in and with him. It is impossible, therefore, that their souls would always continue dead in sin, and so pass out of life unregenerate; for as none can enter the kingdom of God but those who are born again, they would be excluded from eternal life if they departed in their unregeneracy. But it may be desirable to trace out this connection a little more plainly and fully.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's grand attestation to the truth of his divine mission and Sonship, for by it he was "declared to be the Son of God with power." It therefore set a divine stamp upon his sacrifice, blood shedding, and death, showed God's acceptance of his offering, and that sin was thus forever put away. Now, just think what would have been the dreadful consequences if Christ had not been raised from the dead, or if we had no infallible proofs (Acts 1:3) of his resurrection. There would have been, there could have been no forgiveness of sin (1 Cor. 15:17); and, therefore, when the conscience became awakened to a sense of guilt and condemnation, there could have been nothing before it but black and gloomy despair. But Christ being raised from the dead and having gone up on high to be the High Priest over the house of God, and the Holy Spirit bearing witness of this both in the word and through the word to the soul, a door of hope is opened even in the very valley of Achor. The Holy Spirit, who would not have been given had not Christ risen from the dead and gone to the Father, now comes and testifies of him to the soul, takes of the things which are his, reveals them to the heart, and raises up faith to look unto and believe in him as the Son of God, and thus, according to the measure of the revelation, it abounds in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13.)

If you will look back to the time and way in which God was pleased to beget you again unto a living hope, you will clearly see that it sprang out of some discovery of Christ, some view by faith of his Person and work, some dropping in of a promise or of a word that testified of him, and through

which he was presented to your faith as the Object in whom every hope of salvation centered, and round whom it closely entwined. It was because you saw his suitability, blessedness, blood, and righteousness, what he is in himself, and what he had done and suffered as the Son, the Christ, and the Lamb of God, that you were lifted up out of guilt, bondage, and condemnation, so as to feel a sweet persuasion that what the Lord had done and suffered, he had done and suffered for you. This hope admitted your faith and affections within the veil where this risen and exalted Christ sits in his grace and in his glory. You saw that he was a Mediator between God and men, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, an Intercessor able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. And as this hope waxed stronger and stronger and became more and more lively, it took a firmer hold of the Lord of life and glory. Nor did he reject, discourage, or frown upon it, but rather fed it with promise after promise, until it rose almost, if not wholly, to "the full assurance of hope" (Heb. 6:11); and though there were many things which seemed to damp it, yet, like Abraham, you could and did against hope believe in hope. Nor have you ever sunk so low since, for this experience of the mercy of God in Christ has wrought a hope which makes not ashamed, and, therefore, abides steadfast, and is ever looking out for better things; for it is of the very nature of hope to wait with patience for that we see not, that is, in present possession. (Rom. 8:25.)

And we may observe also that as the life of God is in it, it will have its revivals and its renewals, and these will be very sweet and precious, for they are always attended with faith and love, and enable the soul to rise up out of its troubles and sorrows, its trials and temptations, and to say with the Psalmist—"Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalm 42:11.)

But we have said enough for the present on this living hope, and must defer to our next paper the blessed end which lies before it, and unto which it looks, that is, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away."

Chapter One - Part 3

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part III.

How difficult, for the most part, it is, and we may add, how rare to be able to realize for ourselves, with any degree of abiding permanency, a sweet experimental sense of, and an assured interest in those spiritual blessings with which, so far as we are believers in the Son of God, we are blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Glimpses, glances, transient views, sips and tastes, drops and crumbs, sweet beyond expression while they last, but rarely given and soon gone, are, generally speaking, all we seem to get after much hard labor, many cries, earnest entreaties, and vehement longings before the Lord, as he presents himself to our faith, seated on the throne of his grace. How many, for instance, there are among those whose eyes are now resting on these pages who are daily and sometimes almost hourly crying out, if not in the exact words, yet in the substance of them, "O come, much expected guest; Lord Jesus, quickly come!"

And yet how long he seems to delay his coming! How continually are they looking upward until eyes and heart seem alike to fail, waiting for his appearing more than those who watch for the morning; how willing to make any sacrifice, to do anything, be anything, or bear anything, if he would but manifest himself to their souls. How often are they searching and examining their hearts, lips, and lives, to see if there be any evil way in them which makes him hide his lovely face, and not drop one word into their longing bosoms, whereby they might hold sweet communion with him! How they desire to be blessed with real contrition of heart, and godly sorrow for their sins, and be melted and dissolved at his feet, under a sight and sense of his bleeding, dying love!

But whence spring all these longing looks and waiting expectations? Do not all these earnest desires and vehement longings show that those in whom they so continually are found are begotten again to a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? It is divine life in their souls which is the spring and source of these inward breathings, lookings, and longings; and this divine life arises out of a new and spiritual birth, which is itself the fruit of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is not the still-born child which cries; it is the cry of the living child which so goes to the heart of the mother. Thus the cries of which we have spoken show that there is life.

But with life, there is hope; for why would a man be ever crying after, waiting for, and anxiously expecting a blessing which he has no hope ever to obtain? If, then, these had no living hope, would they cry? There are no cries in a dead hope. It is because the grace of hope in their bosoms is, like every other grace of the Spirit, alive unto God, that it acts in union with faith and love, to bring them and keep them earnest, sincere, and unwearied before the throne, expecting and anticipating what God has promised to bestow on those who wait upon him.

We thus see in a living hope three things—1, An origin; 2, A foundation; 3, An object.

1. Its origin is a new and spiritual birth—"Being begotten again unto a living hope." 2. Its foundation is the sure promise of God—"Remember the word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope." (Psalm 119:49.) 3. Its object is eternal life as revealed in Christ, and assured by the word of promise—"In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2.)

We see all these very clearly marked in the case of ABRAHAM, who is set before us in the word, as a pattern of hope as well as a pattern of faith. (Rom. 4:18; Heb. 6:15.)

1. What was the origin of Abraham's hope? A new and spiritual birth, of which he was made a partaker when specially called of God. (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 51:2; Heb. 11:8.) 2. What was its foundation? The promise given that he would have a son by Sarah. 3. What was its object? The promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Now apply all this to 1 Peter 1:3, 4, and it will be seen that the living hope there spoken of has, in a similar way, 1, An origin; 2, A foundation; 3, An object.

But as we have sufficiently unfolded the two former constituents of a lively hope, we shall now, taking up the thread of our exposition, proceed to consider the third, that is, the OBJECT. This is declared to be "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away."

Observe, first, that it is "an INHERITANCE," and therefore a blessing for the future, not for the present, a treasure in prospect, not in possession. It is, indeed, this peculiar feature which makes it the object of hope, as the Apostle argues—"For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24.) We do not hope for what we see and enjoy, but for what we see not, that is, in present possession, but look for and anticipate as a future blessing. Hope is, therefore, compared to an anchor which, unseen in itself, enters into that within the veil, and therefore in things also unseen. Thus hope deals with an unseen, yet not unknown, inheritance; for as the heir of a large property has, during his minority, a foretaste of his future possessions by being fed, clothed, educated, and furnished with pocket-money out of them, so the heir of God has in this life foretastes of his inheritance in having every need supplied out of it, and being sometimes able to look forward to it as his eternal portion, though to mortal sight now invisible.

1. The first thing said of this inheritance is that it is "incorruptible." Being eternal life, it is not capable of diminishing or decay. An earthly inheritance is corruptible, and it is so in two ways—1, in itself; 2, in its consequences. When an heir succeeds to his father's property, whether land, or houses, or money, all is alike corruptible, because all is alike earthly. We need not stop to prove how transient and uncertain all earthly possessions are. Every day bears witness that the most splendid estates, finest houses, and largest sums may be all dissipated by gambling and personal extravagance on the part of the owner himself, or lost for him by others through the fraud or failure of bubble banks, speculative companies, or dishonest trustees.

And as earthly possessions are thus corruptible in themselves, so are they often ministers of corruption to their possessors. Wealth feeds the lusts of the flesh by giving its possessor the power to gratify them; nurses his pride by making him, so to speak, independent of the providence

of God; fosters the love of the world by giving him a portion in it; and sets him at a distance from the poor children of God as unsuitable companions, he thinks, for a man of position and property. How different from this is the inheritance which is the object of hope. It is "incorruptible" in itself, and every prospect or foretaste of it feeds and nurtures that new man of grace which is born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God. And, indeed, this inheritance must needs be incorruptible, for it is no less than God himself. Of this the tribe of Levi was a type—"But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them." (Josh. 8:33.) The Apostle, therefore, calls believers "heirs of God and joint heirs with (or of) Christ." All, therefore, that God is in his infinite perfections, in all his love, blessedness, and glory is theirs by heirship; and thus as he is essentially incorruptible, and knows neither change nor deviation, but is ever the same great and glorious I AM, their inheritance is incorruptible, and can no more suffer loss, decay, or corruption than the Lord himself.

And as it is "incorruptible in itself," so it brings into the heart which entertains it by faith and hope a portion of its own incorruptibility. John speaks of the effect of this lively hope as anticipating its inheritance—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:2, 3.) There is in God an everflowing, overflowing fountain of grace as well as of glory, and thus, as he is looked to, believed in, waited on, sought and served, obeyed and loved in his dear Son, there is a flowing into the soul of those graces of the Spirit which purify the heart from the love of the world, and sanctify and fit for the enjoyment of its eternal inheritance.

2. It is also "undefiled." Earthly inheritances are sometimes ill-gotten, and seem to have the curse of God upon them. The hands of those who got them were defiled with blood—the blood of orphans and widows ruined by gambling and speculation, raising the winner to wealth and often driving the loser to suicide. Or even when honestly and honorably gained, property and wealth are of that nature that few escape being in some way defiled by them. Even in those who fear God, wealth has a strong tendency to defile the conscience, either by the love of money, issuing in covetousness, or by spending it improperly and selfishly, or to defile the feet by walking too much after the fashion and spirit of the world.

But this inheritance of the saints is "undefiled." It is eternal purity in itself, and every fresh glimpse, foretaste, or enjoyment of it here brings purity with it. After you have been speculating, contriving, plotting, planning, and scheming how to manage this or that concern, employ this or that money, or invest to the best advantage this or that nice little sum which has just come rolling in, how defiled your conscience often has been with guilt on account of your carnality and covetousness. But when for a few minutes you have looked forward to your eternal inheritance, spent a few sweet and happy moments with the Lord, and felt your faith, hope, and love to flow forth toward him, there has been no defiled conscience or burdened mind; no sighs or groans over your wretched covetousness and worldliness; no condemnation for coveting the Lord as your happy and enduring portion; no gloomy day nor restless night. How at such moments you desire you could be in that blessed frame all the day long, and ever feel that holy calm, that heavenly tranquillity, and that sweet spirituality of mind which is truly life and peace.

3. And "it fades not away." Whatever you may have in this world, be it much or little, you must leave it. You will pass away from it, and another will possess your land, your house, or your money. And if you have no other inheritance than earth gives, where will be your portion in death, and to all eternity? But if you are begotten again unto a lively hope, even if you do not enjoy the full assurance of faith, you have before you an inheritance which fades not away. We imagine sometimes how happy we would be if we had this man's fine estate, or that man's large property; how much better we would spend it than he does, and what good we would do with it. And do you think that these men are happy with all their possessions, and that you would be happier or better if you had them? It is not in nature to be happy. These rich men have a canker which eats up all their happiness. And even if free from the heavier troubles of life, all satisfaction of the flesh fades away, for possession of itself rubs off all the bloom, and with wealth come all the anxieties and cares connected with it.

But this eternal inheritance "fades not away." The sweetest flowers fade and are thrown away as they become nauseous to sight and smell. But there is an abiding freshness, a constant verdure, a perpetual bloom, an unceasing fragrance, a permanent sweetness in this eternal inheritance, so that it is never flat or stale, but remains ever the same, or rather is ever increasing in beauty and blessedness, as more known, believed in, hoped unto, and loved.

4. But it is as SECURE as it is unfading. It is "reserved in heaven," and is thus kept for the predestined heirs in the safest, as well as the happiest, of all places. The word means preserved as well as reserved—preserved so that it cannot be touched by the hands of the spoiler, and reserved that the heir may enjoy it at the appointed time. It is, therefore, out of the reach of sin, death, and hell, secured from all the storms of time, all the waves and billows of affliction and tribulation, all the assaults of Satan, and all the fears, sinkings, misgivings, anxieties, and perplexities of a heart dismayed at every breath.

It is a point which we would touch cautiously and reverently, but it is a truth which, however abused by ungodly men, is full of comfort to an exercised soul, that as it is reserved in heaven we cannot sin away our interest in this inheritance. We may through sin sadly lose our enjoyment of it, sadly damp our assurance of an interest in it, sink almost into despair under a load of guilt and self-condemnation, and go mourning all our days at the bitter recollection of our filth and folly; but we cannot, if chosen in Christ, sin away our eternal inheritance in him.

5. It is therefore added of these heirs that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The word translated "kept" means properly garrisoned, that is, kept as if in a fortified place, so as to be guarded from all enemies. Thus, as the inheritance is reserved for them, and they are preserved for the inheritance, both are equally safe, the inheritance as reserved in heaven, and the heirs as preserved on earth by the immediate and mighty power of God; for he himself in his glorious perfections surrounds them as with a wall of fire. "For I, says the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." (Zech. 2:5.) They are therefore kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation. There may seem to be but a step between them and death; their feet may be almost gone; Satan may roar against them as if he would utterly devour them; the grave may yawn for them, and almost all hope of being saved be gone. But with all this they are kept by the power of God. His unseen hand holds them up, keeps back their enemies, says to Satan, "Thus far shall you go, and no further, and here shall your

proud waves be stayed," and thus he maintains the work of grace in their souls.

It is therefore beautifully added, "through faith." Though kept effectually by the power of God, the heirs of salvation are not kept mechanically, as a child in a nursery is kept from falling into, or playing with the fire, by a tall iron fence, or unwillingly, as a horse or a mule is held in with bit and bridle, but are kept spiritually through the medium of a special grace of the Spirit, the grace of faith. As unbelief is the parent sin of all disobedience, so faith is the parent grace of all obedience; and as the outcome of unbelief is destruction, so the outcome of faith is salvation. In and through this faith, his own gift, God works, communicating by it strength to the soul, and feeding it continually by his own word, so that it lives and acts. Thus it is through faith that the power whereby God keeps his people, acts and is made known. In your saddest moments, sharpest exercises, and most trying conflicts, do you not find a something in you which will not give up the fight? Or if for a short time you seem out of breath, and lie helpless on the ground, still you are up and at it again. Faith draws another breath. Its language is, "Yet will I look again toward your holy temple." "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise." It knows he is able to deliver, and thus it keeps pleading promises, confessing sins, calling on the Son of God to appear, and determined, if it dies in the battle, to die at his feet.

It is very instructive and encouraging to be able to trace in our own hearts the connection between the power of God and the actings of faith. We are not carried to heaven as passengers are carried by the express train, so that if once in the carriage they may go to sleep, look out of the window, or read the newspaper without fear of losing their way, or not reaching their destination. Such travelers may find themselves surrounded in a moment by everlasting flames of fire, as those found literally who perished so lamentably last summer, near Abergele.

Though kept by the power of God, we have to fight every step of the way. It is this living, fighting, struggling, and yet eventually conquering faith, which sets the tried and exercised child of God at such a distance from the loose and careless doctrinal professor, who is hardened and emboldened to presume, and even walk in ways of sin and death by holding the doctrine of 'being kept by the power of God', without knowing anything of the secret way by which this power works and keeps. To such we may adapt the language of James. You believe that the elect of God are kept by his Almighty power unto salvation. "You do well; the devils also believe and tremble"—which you do not if you be one of these loose professors.

But does God keep you? Does he keep you from evil, that it may not grieve you? Does He keep your eye single, your conscience tender, your heart prayerful, your life and walk circumspect, your eye from adultery, your tongue from folly, your hands from covetousness, and your feet from the ways of pride and worldliness? You have no evidence that you are an heir of God, and are being kept by his power unto salvation, unless you have some experience how he keeps, and that as it is by power on his part, so it is through faith on yours. Whenever we slip, stumble, or go astray, it is through the power of unbelief; and whenever we stand, fight, or prevail, it is by faith. If you will only look at those various instances in which you have gone astray, brought a load of guilt on your conscience, or cut out work for bitter regret and self-loathing all the days of your life, you will see that the first step toward evil was unbelief. You distrusted the providence of God, or neglected to wait upon him for his counsel, or disbelieved a warning given in his word against the thing you were desirous and almost determined to do, or preferred your own will and way to his, or had

gradually sunk into a careless, cold, lethargic state of soul, in which unbelief was strong, and faith so weak that it seemed scarcely to have in it life or motion.

When Nathan was sent to David, to expose to him his crime, he said to him, "Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?" (2 Sam. 12:9.) David despised the commandment of the Lord, first by disbelieving, and then disobeying it. When we say "disbelieving it," we mean practically, not speculatively so; for a man may not actually disbelieve a precept, but if he breaks it, he shows plainly that he acts as if he did not really believe God spoke to him in and by it. And on the other hand, if you will look back to see how your feet were kept in the hour of temptation, and preserved from, or delivered out of a snare of Satan, you will find that it was through faith that God kept you by his upholding power, and that by taking hold of his strength, as made perfect in weakness, you obtained the victory.

We have drawn this point out at some length, as being of such deep and daily importance, and from the conviction also that the best way of expounding the word of truth is to show the saints of God, from their own experience, its spiritual meaning.

Chapter One - Part 4

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part IV.

As heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people (John 14:2; Isa. 43:21; Col. 1:12), so, according to Peter's testimony, it is a reserved inheritance for preserved heirs. The firm decree of God, which fixed the inheritance itself, secured the possession of it to those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life. But these "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" have to pass through such a wilderness before they reach their heavenly inheritance that, to use an expression of Bunyan's, "had they a thousand souls, they had in reason been cast away" but for the mighty power of God, whereby they are kept through faith unto salvation.

Here, then, we resume our exposition—"Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." (1 Peter 1:6.)

"Wherein you greatly rejoice." According to the strict literal and grammatical interpretation of the words, the expression "wherein" or "in which" refers to the antecedent word "time," mentioned in the preceding verse. The salvation unto which they were kept by the power of God was "to be revealed in the last time," that is, at the second coming of Christ, when he will come in the glory of his father, with the holy angels. (Mark 8:38.) In the anticipation of this time they greatly rejoiced, for then salvation in all its blessedness and glory will be revealed, not merely as now inwardly and partially to the soul, but outwardly and fully, in the appearing of all the saints with Christ in the glory of their resurrection bodies, all fashioned like unto his glorious body. (Zech. 14:5; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:20, 21.)

But we need not limit the expression, "wherein" to "the last time," thus spoken of, but may extend its meaning to include the salvation itself, for it is not so much the time that is to be greatly rejoiced in, as what will be revealed at that time. This is salvation—the salvation unto which the elect strangers are kept by the power of God!

Now, in this salvation there is matter to fill the hearts of the saints with joy. Its freeness, fullness, completeness, and suitability to all their wants and woes, the way in which it comes down to them in their low estate, comforts their hearts, supports their minds, and soothes their sorrows, affords matter to fill their souls with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and the Apostle no doubt assumed that those to whom he wrote were greatly rejoicing in this salvation from a knowledge and an enjoyment of their personal interest in it.

In those early days, when the Holy Spirit was poured out in so large a measure upon churches and individuals, we may well believe that there was a stronger assurance and a fuller enjoyment of the blessings of salvation than is often or usually given now. The salvation is the same; as full, as free, as complete, as suitable to our lost state and case, as glorifying to God, as reaching down to every

individual's case and state as then; but not being revealed to the soul in the same powerful way, the faith which embraces it is weaker, and therefore has less assurance and less joy.

And yet with all this, there are times and seasons when the weakest believer who has ever had a view of this salvation or a taste of its sweetness and power greatly rejoices in it. It so lifts him up out of sin and self, out of bondage, guilt, fear, condemnation, and apprehension of the wrath to come; it so shines in his eyes as bringing the highest glory to God, and the greatest of all blessings to man; it is so sweet in the sips and tastes which are given of it, in the glimpses and glances of Jesus whom it reveals, in the breakings-in of light, life, liberty, and love which attend it; it is so sanctifying in the spirituality of mind and heavenly affections which it produces, as tasted, felt, and handled, that even the weakest believer can rejoice in it as opened to his enlightened understanding, commended to his conscience, sealed upon his heart, and made life and spirit to his soul.

But we see also that the partakers of this salvation, though they greatly rejoice in it, are very heavily weighted. "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." If these early believers had their abundant joys, they had their surpassing sorrows. God usually sets one over against the other. A path of joy without tribulation the Scripture knows nothing of; nor can a saint be found in the word of God or out of it who ever had very great joys without either very great sorrows, or very great trials, or very great temptations, or very great persecutions.

Now, the effect of these sorrows and afflictions is to weigh down the soul with heaviness. It is literally in the original "being grieved, or pained, or made sorrowful;" and we know what a weight upon the spirits is produced by sorrow and trouble from whatever quarter it may come. That lightness of mind, cheerfulness of disposition, buoyant sense of pleasure and happiness in the enjoyment of health, strength, and good spirits; that loving life for life's sake, and what it gives or what it promises; that seeking for amusement or delight in things—apart from God; that eager pursuing of the natural bent of our mind; that running with eagerness in the path which promises most success or most advantage—all this which in its highest or lowest state, in its most refined or most sordid character, is, after all, but the very breath of the carnal mind, the very spirit of the world, and the very spawn of the worldly heart—has in the child of God to be subdued, crucified, and mortified.

And for this simple reason, that the spirit of the world which is born with us, grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength, is utterly opposed to the life of God in the soul; and as the Spirit of God will never sanction or countenance any joy or happiness which is not of himself, he has to crucify this eager bent of the carnal mind, for where it reigns and rules there is neither a knowledge of salvation nor a rejoicing in it.

But the Apostle opens also the reason why those who greatly rejoice in God's salvation are often in heaviness. "It is through manifold temptations." By the word "temptations," we may understand not merely temptations in the usual sense of the word, such as those which proceed from Satan, or an infidel, unbelieving heart, but what is meant also by the word "trials." So, in a similar way, the word "manifold" means not only that these trials and temptations are very numerous, consisting, as it were, of many folds, like a folded-up garment, of which fold after fold becomes successively drawn out—but varied in nature and degree—as well as many in number and quantity. Thus we

may render the words, through "many and various trials and temptations."

By thus extending the meaning of both terms in full harmony with the original, we find them to comprehend all those numerous, varied, and diversified trials and temptations which are allotted to the family of God in this time state. We may add, also, that, in our judgment, there is a special blessedness in the wide comprehensiveness of this expression, as it takes up and takes in every trial and every temptation—from whatever source it may come, or of whatever nature it may be.

Each child of God has his own peculiar trials allotted to him by a wise, unerring hand, precisely adapted to his spiritual state and case, and just what God designs to make of special profit to his soul. It is impossible, therefore, to lay down a certain path in which each and all of the family of God must walk. It is true of all the heirs of salvation that "through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom of God;" but each has his own peculiar trial, his own daily cross, his own special temptation, his own much tribulation through which he enters the kingdom.

Thus one child of God cannot say to another, "You are not tried, because you have not my trial;" or, "You are not tempted, because you have not my temptation." Could heart discern heart as in water face answers to face, each would see that his trial was the right trial for him, his temptation the right temptation for him; and that as infinite Wisdom had appointed to each his peculiar trial and his special temptation, we should rather look at the effects produced by it than at the nature of the trial or of the temptation itself.

But these trials and temptations are almost as various and as diversified as the people who are called upon to pass through them! Thus to some are allotted most painful family afflictions, either by bereavement of beloved objects—or by what is almost worse than death—grievous and disgraceful misconduct of those who have been brought up with the greatest care and tenderness. Job, Jacob, and David drank deeply of this cup. How deep the grief of the heart-broken father when he said, "Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

To others is appointed that almost greatest of temporal afflictions, shattered health, entailing with it inability to follow any profitable employment, and thus often adding poverty of circumstances, to bodily affliction.

Others, again, nearly all their days have to grapple with trials in their circumstances. Whatever they do seems to fail; however they strive with honest industry to earn an honest livelihood, loss upon loss, disappointment after disappointment, scatter their "little all", so that they seem only held on, day by day and week by week, from sinking into debt and disgrace.

Others, again, who are, perhaps, exempt from severe temporal trials, are more deeply exercised with those of a spiritual nature. Their spiritual life seems as if ever to hang in doubt and fear; guilt, bondage, darkness, gloom, and desponding sensations continually rack their mind; and though they are continually crying to the Lord under their burdens and sorrows, yet, for the most part, they get but little relief; or if now and then a gleam of light shines upon their path, or a ray of love and mercy break in upon their soul, yet it is soon gone, and they sink again into the old spot of calling everything into question.

But we observed that the word included, as, indeed, it is rendered, "temptations," as well as trials. Now, it would seem as if some of the Lord's family were comparatively exempt from temptations, in

the usual sense of the word; at least, they are not so continually or so painfully exercised by them as others who are called to fight more strongly, and as if more desperately, the good fight of faith. Thus many who are deeply tried as to their own state and standing are not tempted to infidelity, to question the whole truth of God, nor are they exposed to such suggestions as we shall not name, lest we kindle a secret fire, and thus help Satan to harass and distress those whom he cannot destroy. But there are those among the living family of God who know what is meant by "the fiery darts of the wicked one;" who painfully feel what it is to have every corruption of their carnal mind stirred up as if to its lowest depth, and set on fire of hell. There are those who on their knees, or in reading the word, or under the preached gospel, or even at the ordinance, are so tempted with everything that is vile and villainous, foul and black beyond description, that they scarcely know what to do with themselves, as these fiery darts are shot fast and thick into their soul.

But we shall not further enlarge upon those points, and if we have thus far touched upon them, it is to show that they are such temptations as, to use the Apostle's expression, "are common to man." (1 Cor. 10:13.)

We shall, therefore, observe that, as the Apostle tells us, there is a needs-be for those trials and temptations—"Though now for a season, if need be." And, indeed, as everything by nature in us is contrary to the life of God, there is a needs-be for these manifold trials and temptations to bring us out of those things which are opposed to the grace of God, and to conform us to the image of his dear Son. Thus we need trial after trial, and temptation upon temptation, to cure us of that worldly spirit, that carnality and carelessness, that light, trifling, and empty profession, that outside form of godliness, that spirit of pride and self-righteousness, that resting short of divine teachings, heavenly blessings, and spiritual manifestations, that settling on our lees and being at ease in Zion, that being mixed up with all sorts of professors, that ignorance of the secret of the Lord which is with those who fear him—all which marks of death we see so visibly stamped upon the profession of the day. There is a needs-be to be brought out of all this false, deceptive, hypocritical, and presumptuous profession, whether high or low, sound in doctrine or unsound, so as to be made simple and sincere, honest and upright, tender and teachable, and to know something experimentally of that broken heart and contrite spirit in which the Lord himself condescends to dwell. And as the Lord works this spirit of humility and love for the most part through trials and temptations, there is a needs-be for every one, of whatever nature it may be, or from whatever quarter it may come.

Look at the light and trifling professors whom you may occasionally meet with, and let them be a looking-glass for you. What a poor, empty religion is theirs! What death and bondage, what darkness and misery, their company and conversation, if you are for any time with them, bring into your soul! How glad you are to get away from them, and be alone by yourself, that you may breathe out your very soul before the Lord, and get from him, if he will but speak it, a word on which you may hope! Do not you see that they are not "in heaviness through manifold temptations," as you often are, and that this is the reason why their profession sits upon them so lightly and easily?

Asaph well describes them, for they plagued him, as, probably, they have often plagued you—"There are no bands in their death;" living and dying, they are just the same, full of presumption and vain confidence, which even a deathbed cannot destroy; "but their strength is

firm. They are not in trouble as other men (that is, good men—the Lord's men), neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish." (Psalm 73:4-7.) Now, compare with such as these the afflicted family of God, who are "in heaviness through manifold temptations," and we may add, if you are one of them, compare also your feelings, and what is brought into your soul, by their company and conversation. What savor and power attend their word, and how you feel your soul blessed and profited by what drops from their lips, and by what comes out of their broken and exercised heart!

But we will say no more on this point. You that know the things of God in their life and power, judge for yourselves whether these things be so.

But observe also it is but "for a season." With some, indeed, this season may be a very long season; it may last a life, and that, perhaps, a long one. With others the season may be shorter, and the trials and temptations may, as it were, come and go. There are remissions, times of relief, a cessation for a while from the trial, or, at least, the severe pressure of it. But even if those trials and temptations be spread over the whole life, they are still but "for a season." They will cease when life ceases; and death; which is to the ungodly only the entrance into endless misery, will be to the righteous an entrance into endless joy.

But the Apostle himself explains very clearly the reason of these manifold temptations—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7.) They are meant for "the trial of faith," and are, therefore, compared to a furnace used for the purifying of gold from the dross which is mixed with it in its native ore. We thus see that faith is compared to gold, and this chiefly for two reasons—1. On account of its value; 2. For its indestructibility.

It is the testimony of the Scripture and the experience of all the saints of God, that wherever the Lord gives faith, he sends trials and temptations, to manifest it as his own gift and work. We see it in Abraham, in Jacob, in David—that every promise which was given them and on which their faith was built, was tried as by fire; and we also see that the stronger the faith the sharper was the trial, and the hotter was the furnace. It is in this way that the faith of God's elect, the faith which is of the operation of God, the faith of which the Lord Jesus is the Author and Finisher, as well as Object, Subject, and End, is proved to be wrought in the heart by a divine power.

The furnace consumes and burns up all imitations of gold. Like much modern jewelry, a false faith may appear more bright and shining, more glittering, more polished, more bulky, more artistically worked, more attractive to the eye, more calculated to adorn and set off its possessor—than that true and genuine faith, which is often small and scanty in size, dull in appearance, worn and wasted, or deficient in attractive beauty. But put the two articles, the two faiths, side by side into the same crucible; let the burning furnace try which is the genuine metal; let the hot flame play around them both and penetrate into their inmost substance, their very pores—then the false faith will melt away into a shapeless mass of base adulterate metal—and the true faith will come forth untouched and uninjured by the flame, and having lost nothing but what it may well spare—the alloy with which it may have been mixed.

But it will be observed that the Apostle, in comparing faith with gold, puts upon it a higher stamp. It is "much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be tried with fire." The last words, according to the construction of the original, refer not to faith, or to the trial of faith—but to the gold with which it is compared. It is as if he meant to convey this idea; faith, like gold, must be tried in the fire to prove whether it is genuine; but gold, though tried with the fire, and though it comes safely out of this ordeal, is yet but of a perishing nature. It may be tried by fire and come uninjured out of the fire, but it may be worn out; it may be broken to pieces; it may be lost; at any rate, being but of earth, coming out of the of the earth, and only fitted for earthly pursuits, it perishes. It dies to us when we die; no man can take it with him into a future life; nor will it be of the least avail on a dying bed or on the great day. How "much more precious," then, than all the gold which men so dearly love is that faith which leaves us not on a dying bed, but "the end of which is the salvation of the soul!" How much more precious is that faith which, instead of, like gold, leaving its possessor under the frowns of an angry God, will "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ!"

But the point to which we would call special attention is that it is not so much the faith itself as "the trial of faith," which is more precious than of gold which perishes. Nor is the reason why, so far to seek. Trials and temptations are the means which God employs to manifest to the soul the reality and strength of the faith which he bestows upon it; for there is in every trial and temptation opposition made to the faith that is in the heart; and every trial and temptation, so to speak, threatens the life of faith. And they threaten it in this way. Under the trial God for the most part hides himself. He puts forth, indeed, a secret power whereby the soul is held up, or otherwise it would sink into utter despair and be overcome and swallowed up by the power of unbelief. Hence comes the conflict between the trial that fights against the faith and the faith which fights against or rather under the trial.

Now, when in this trial, in this sharp conflict, in this hot furnace, faith does not give way, is not burned up, is not destroyed, but keeps its firm hold upon the promise and the faithfulness of him who has given it, this trial of faith becomes very precious. It is precious to the soul when God again smiles upon it, and becomes thus manifested as genuine. It is precious in the sight of God's people who see it and derive strength and comfort from what they witness in the experience of a saint thus tried and blessed; and it is precious also in the sight of God himself, who crowns it with his own manifest approbation, and puts upon it the attesting seal of his own approving smile. But above all things, it will be found precious at the appearing of Jesus Christ, and that not only in his various appearings in grace, but in his final appearance in glory, for of that the Apostle mainly speaks when he says that "it may be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Chapter One - Part 5

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part V.

There is a day of which all the inspired prophets of the Old Testament, from Enoch to Malachi, and all the inspired evangelists and apostles of the New, from Matthew to John, have alike testified as the greatest of all days. Thus the very first note which was struck on the golden harp of prophecy and the very last were one and the same, that is, to sound forth the coming of the Lord in power and glory to the joy and salvation of his saints, and to the confusion and destruction of his enemies. The first recorded prophecy is that of Enoch, which belongs virtually to the Old Testament though preserved to us in the New. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14, 15.)

And as the coming of the Lord with his saints, and to execute judgment upon the ungodly was the grand theme and subject of the first prophecy, so it is of the last, both in the Old Testament and the New. The last prophecy of the Old Testament is, "The Lord Almighty says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day. They will be consumed like a tree—roots and all. "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." (Malachi 4:1-2) And the last promise and prophecy of the New Testament is, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. 22:12.)

As then between these two covers, so to speak, of the word of God lie all the promises and threatenings from the mouth of the Almighty, with the eternal destinies of all the children of men, so will this day, this great and terrible day of the Lord, be God's final decision and determination of the great controversy between good and evil, the vindication of all his ways, the fulfillment of all his counsels, the avenging and glorification of all his saints, and the banishing from his presence of all impenitent and unbelieving sinners. This day is spoken of by Peter in the chapter now before us as "the appearing," or as the word literally means, "the revelation" of Jesus Christ—"that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7.)

The trial of faith, though exceedingly precious in the sight of God, has no praise, honor, or glory now. The work of faith with power in a believer's heart, the various ways in which his faith is tried as with fire in the furnace of affliction and temptation, and yet shines all the brighter as the dross and tin of creature strength and wisdom are purged away, the deep and painful exercises which

are carried on in secret between God and his soul, in which his faith often seems at the last gasp and yet is continually revived from its lowest sinkings and is strengthened once more to look and live—all these more or less daily fightings and fears, defeats and victories, ruin and destruction of self, and yet being held up in life by the power of the Lord, as they are little understood and less experienced by a generation settled on its lees and at ease in Zion, meet with little praise and honor from men. Those who are thus exercised and who are weaned and separated thereby from the careless, the indifferent, the slothful, the contentious, the erroneous, the proud, the covetous, and the worldly-minded professors of the day are considered bigoted, bitter-spirited, and narrow-minded, and are more hated and despised than the very ungodly.

But a time is coming when the trial of their faith will be found unto praise and honor and glory. At the appearing of Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge, the faith of those who have glorified him in the fires, cleaved to him with purpose of heart in the furnace of temptation, looked to him and to him alone, and been determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, will receive his solemn approbation. It was his own work, and he will praise it, and smile upon it, and crown it also with honor and glory. When all whom and all what man has praised, honored, and glorified will sink and perish under the frowns of the Almighty, when shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2) will be the portion of the great ones of the earth, who have boasted themselves in the abundance of their riches and honors, titles and distinctions, and walked in pride and self-indulgence, the Lord will crown with praise, honor, and glory his poor, despised people. The trial of their faith will then be seen to have been more precious than of gold that perishes, for it will be found unto praise and honor and glory.

And this will be true in two senses. This once tried and tempted but now glorified people will praise him, and he will praise not them; but his own work in them; they will give him all the honor due unto his name, and he will put honor on his own grace, and crown the faith of his own giving and maintaining with eternal glory. And thus the trial of their faith will be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Will not this be a sweet reward for all the troubles and trials of the way; and should not the hope of this expected end, which shall not be cut off, animate and encourage every tried and tempted saint to hope to the end for the grace which is to be brought unto him at the revelation of Jesus Christ?

This we believe is the primary meaning of the words before us, the chief mind of the Spirit in them. But, as the scriptures from their fullness often admit of more than one signification, we may allow a secondary meaning of the expression "the appearing or revelation of Jesus Christ" as indicating his appearing and revealing himself in grace here, as well as in glory hereafter. Thus, whenever the Lord appears in and for the soul, revealing himself to the heart in and after seasons of affliction and temptation, the trial of faith is found to praise and honor and glory; for praise is given to his name, honor put on his brow, and glory ascribed to him with the whole heart and soul.

But we pass on to the words so full of sweetness and power which immediately follow—"Whom having not seen you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8, 9.) What a note is here struck by the hand of the Apostle which finds at once an echo in every believing heart! "Whom having not seen you love." Peter had seen him both before and after his resurrection—and indeed the last was necessary to qualify him to be an apostle. (Acts 1:22.)

Peter had been with him in the holy mount, had seen him transfigured, when his face shined as the sun, and his clothing was white as the light, and heard the voice from the excellent glory which so testified of and ratified his divine Sonship, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (2 Peter 1:17.) Peter had been with him in Gethsemane, and seen him condemned by the Jewish council, but saw him not on the cross, for he had basely denied him, and as all the disciples forsook him and fled, it would seem that none but John witnessed his crucifixion. But Peter saw him after the resurrection, when he was sweetly restored from his backsliding, and witnessed his glorious ascension.

But those to whom Peter wrote had never thus seen Jesus in the flesh, and yet they loved him as much as if they had actually beheld his bodily shape and heard his natural voice. But how could this be? How could they love one whom they had never seen? Is not sight necessary to love? O but they had seen him—but not by the eye of flesh and sense. Thousands saw him with the natural eye who saw no beauty in him that they would desire him. To them he was "without form or loveliness," and "his visage was more marred than any man;" no, what was worse, they hated him for what they saw in him, according to his own words—"But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." (John 15:24.) Hundreds saw him hanging on the cross who only reviled and derided him. Why then would these elect strangers love him whom others hated, and love him too though they had never seen his face or heard his voice? Because they had seen him by faith. "In whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

But how this speaks to our hearts; and cannot some, if not many of us say too, "Whom, not having seen, we love?" Do we not love him, dear readers? Is not his name precious to us as the ointment poured forth? But we have not seen him. No, not by the eye of sense and nature; but we have seen him by the eye of faith; for he has manifested himself to us, or to some of us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It is, then, by faith that we see Jesus. We read of Moses that, "by faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27.) So by faith we see Jesus who is invisible; for as faith is "the substance of things hoped for," so is it "the evidence of things not seen." When our gracious Lord was leaving the world, he said to his disciples, "Yet a little while and the world sees me no more; but you see me. Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19.)

But how could they see him when he was gone away from them? He himself shall answer the question—"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." (John 14:18.) "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21.) Thus we see that it is by Jesus coming to the soul and manifesting himself unto it that we see him. And as he always comes with his love, and in manifesting himself manifests himself in his love, that manifested love kindles, raises, and draws up a corresponding love in the believer's heart.

It is the express, the special work of the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ (John 15:26), to glorify him, to receive of the things which are Christ's, and to show them unto the soul (John 16:14); and thus in the light of Christ's own manifestations of himself, and the blessed Spirit's work and witness of him, what faith believes of the Person and work of Christ, love embraces and enjoys. We find, therefore, the Apostle speaking in the words before us—"In whom, though now you see him not,

yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Here we have linked together faith, love, joy, and glory. The word translated "rejoice" means a high degree of joy, and signifies, literally, to leap with joy. It is, therefore, rendered by our translators, "be exceeding glad" (Matt. 5:12), and in the epistle before us, "greatly rejoice" (1 Peter 1:6), and "exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:13.) Spiritual joy, holy joy, is therefore distinguished from earthly joy, natural joy, not only in nature, but in degree. Natural joy can never rise very high, nor last very long. It is of the earth earthy, and therefore can never rise high nor long endure. It is always marred by some check, damp or disappointment; and as in the bitterest cup of the righteous "there's something secret sweetens all," so in the sweetest cup of the ungodly there is something secret embitters all. All their mirth is madness (Eccles. 2:1); for even "in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." (Prov. 14:13.) God frowns upon all the worldling's pleasure, conscience condemns it, and the weary heart is often sick of it, even unto death. It cannot bear inspection or reflection, has perpetual disappointment stamped upon it here—and eternal sorrow hereafter.

But how different is the joy of faith and love. It is unspeakable, for it is one of the things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man; and therefore human language, which can only express human thoughts and feelings, has no words for this. Those who have experienced it understand it when spoken of by others, but not from the words themselves, but because those words are as if broken hints, dim and feeble shadows, imperfect and insufficient utterances, but interpreted by their own experience.

"And full of glory." It is literally "glorified," that is, the joy is a joy which God especially honors by stamping upon it a divine glory. Our blessed Lord said of his disciples, "And the glory which you have given me, I have given them." This he had done by giving them of his grace, of which it has been well said that it is "glory begun, as glory is grace perfected." So we read, "And whom he called, those he also justified, and whom he justified, those he also glorified" as if even now, when they were still in the flesh, God had already glorified them by the pledges and foretastes of glory which he had given them in and by his grace.

The sight of Christ by faith, and beholding his glory, has a transforming efficacy, as the Apostle beautifully speaks—"But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) This glass is the glass of the gospel, the word of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ; and thus as the Person and work, beauty and blessedness, love and blood, grace and glory, condescension, suitability, pity and compassion, infinite loveliness and desirableness of the Son of God are viewed therein by faith, the sight has a transforming power and efficacy, so that the soul is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is, therefore, a blessed preparation for, and foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed.

Now compare with this all earthly, carnal joy. It is in its highest and best form but a sowing to the flesh, and it therefore can only reap corruption. Take the highest success in life, the crowning of every ambitious wish, the full swing of every earthly pleasure, the utmost gratification of everything which health and strength, wife and family, house and home can give; add to it all that money can buy, rank command, love supply, or heart enjoy—a lot which has never been any man's, and not likely even in part to be yours; and yet how soon old age or sickness may mar, and death put an end to all. How blessed, then, it is to have a joy which death will not put an end to—but rather

consummate, by liberating the soul from the present bondage of corruption, to enjoy forever the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Peter therefore adds, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." What a blessed, what a glorious end is this; what a prize to win, what a victory to gain, what a crowning consummation of all that faith has believed, hope expected, or love embraced! Whatever doubts and fears may have harassed the mind, whatever sore temptations may have distressed the soul, whatever deep afflictions, painful trials, heavy guilt and hard bondage may have sunk it low, so low sometimes, as if it never would get over them or rise out of them, still that faith, which is God's gift and work, lives through all, and there is a blessed end in store for it—the salvation of the soul.

And O, what does this not comprehend and imply? Think of what salvation is from—think of what salvation is unto. Neither the one nor the other can be fully known on this side of eternity. You may have had some glimpses of hell—you may have had some glances of heaven; some taste of the wrath to come—some taste of the glory that shall be revealed. But you have had only a small taste of either. The wrath of God—the horrors of a guilty conscience—the terrors of despair—the falling into his hands who is a consuming fire—you may have, in some small measure, felt or feared; but you have never known, for nature could not bear it—the full and terrible extent of those dreadful realities. And so you may have had glimpses and glances, pledges and foretastes of the glory that shall be revealed; but you have never enjoyed, for nature could not bear it, what saints enjoy in the immediate presence of God. But if you have seen, tasted, handled, felt, and enjoyed a little of what you are saved from, and a little of what you are saved unto, it will make you bless God for having given you even a grain of that true and living faith, the end of which will be the salvation of your soul.

But here we must pause for the present.

Chapter One - Part 6

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part VI.

What is to be compared with the salvation of the soul? What are riches, honors, health, long life? What are all the pleasures which the world can offer, sin promise, or the flesh enjoy? What is all that men call good or great? What is everything which the outward eye has seen, or natural ear heard, or has entered into the carnal heart of man—put side by side with being saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation? For consider what we are saved from—as well as what we are saved unto. From a burning hell—to a blissful heaven; from endless wrath—to eternal glory; from the dreadful company of devils and damned spirits, mutually tormenting and tormented—to the blessed companionship of the glorified saints, all perfectly conformed in body and soul to the image of Christ, with thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels, and, above all, to seeing the glorious Son of God as he is, in all the perfection of his beauty, and all the ravishments of his presence and love!

To be done forever with all the sorrows, troubles, and afflictions of this life; all the pains and aches of this poor clay tabernacle; all the darkness, bondage, and misery of the body of sin and death; to be perfectly holy in body and soul, being in both without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, and ever to enjoy uninterrupted union and communion with Father, Son, and Blessed Spirit—O what a heaven lies before the believing children of God as the end of their faith in the salvation of their soul.

Now it was of this salvation that the prophets of the Old Testament inquired and searched diligently. To them it was but dimly revealed, nor did they perfectly understand the meaning or extent of their own prophecies about it. They knew from the power of the word in their own heart, and the way in which it was spoken in them and unto them that it was the word of the Lord, and that they were but penmen of the Holy Spirit, simply writing down, as bidden and influenced by him, what he inwardly dictated. They were, therefore, we will not say altogether unconscious agents in the hands of the Holy Spirit, for doubtless they not only felt the power, but also to a considerable extent understood the meaning of what they wrote. But such is the depth of the word of God, it is so enriched with treasures of grace and truth, it so contains stored up in its bosom the fullness of God's wisdom so far as it can be revealed to man, that they were but as little children now who when they are taught their lessons may to a certain extent understand their meaning, but not the whole or the fullness of their meaning, that being reserved for their riper years.

To these ancient prophets, then, a salvation was revealed to be accomplished and brought to light in God's own time and way, and this they inquired and searched diligently into both as to its nature and the time of its fulfillment. When, for instance, Isaiah wrote such a prophecy as, "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry, and I will place salvation

in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isaiah 46:13), he would see that there was a righteousness, which God called his righteousness, to be brought near, that it would not be far off, and that he would "place salvation in Zion for Israel his glory." He would, therefore, search and inquire in his own mind what this righteousness would be, as distinct from the righteousness of Moses, and what was this salvation which would be placed in Zion for Israel, in whom he would be glorified.

So when that wondrous chapter (Isaiah 53.) was dictated to the prophet by the Holy Spirit, he would have a foreview of the blessed Redeemer as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he would see that there was One to come who would be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," and that "the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all." He would see, also, how it would please the Lord to bruise this man of sorrows, and yet that he would make his soul an offering for sin, and that this blessed Sin-bearer would "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Now all this foreview of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that would follow—for he would behold that glory as the necessary fruit of Christ's seeing his seed, prolonging his days, and the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand—all this revelation of the mind and counsels of God would be to the prophet a subject of deep and solemn meditation; and though he would not fully understand the whole meaning of what was thus revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, he would inquire and search diligently, and would sedulously compare Scripture with Scripture, to ascertain the mind of the Spirit in them.

He would, for instance, look back to his own prophecy that "a rod would come out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch would grow out of his roots," on whom the Spirit of the Lord would rest. He would see his mighty power in smiting the earth with the rod of his mouth, and slaying the wicked with the breath of his lips; and yet he would see righteousness and faithfulness cleaving to him, and worn by him as the belt of his loins. He would see also in this wondrous Redeemer the child born of a pure Virgin, and the Son, God's own only begotten and eternal Son, given, would view the government upon his shoulder, and that "his name would be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father (or Father of the everlasting age), and the Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6.) The Spirit of Christ was in him, and in dictating those prophecies, not only testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow, but enlightened his understanding and fed his faith by a personal experience of what he thus revealed.

And what was true in Isaiah was doubtless true in all the other prophets, for the same Spirit of Christ which was in him was in them, and testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. The incarnation of the Son of God, his sufferings, blood shedding, and death, with his resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and present glory there, were all revealed by the Spirit of Christ to the prophets of old, and were embraced by them by a true and living faith. It is true that these heavenly mysteries were dimly seen by them—but not the less really. The faith of the Old Testament saints looked forward to the Christ who was to come—as ours looks back to the Christ who has come. But as the Object of their faith was the same, so their faith was the same, for there is but "one faith." And as Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and saw it, and was glad, so these ancient prophets saw that same day of Christ and rejoiced in it with believing Abraham.

But the point which they chiefly inquired into and searched diligently was at "what, or what manner of time" the promised Messiah would come. It was with them as we read in Daniel—"How long will

it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" (Dan. 12:6.) They had a kind of holy impatience for the day of Christ's appearing, a longing for the time when he would come "to put down rebellion, to bring an end to sin, to atone for guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to confirm the prophetic vision." (Dan. 9:24); and thus as Daniel "understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:2), so these Old Testament prophets searched and examined what indications they could find in the internal testimony of the Spirit of Christ which was in them, as to the time when he would come to finish the work which the Father had given him to do, and what manner of time that would be. Their spirits were often bowed down and burdened by the wickedness of the generation in which their lot was cast; they mourned over the unbelief, infidelity, obstinacy, and determined resistance to every admonition, warning, or reproof, manifested by the people to whom they spoke in the name of the Lord. They saw the general oppression of the people of God, marked the groans and tears of the widow and the fatherless, and longed for the appearance of the promised Redeemer, for they foresaw by the eye of faith that there was a grace to be revealed in and by him; for as the law was given by Moses, so grace and truth were to come by Jesus Christ. He was to reveal the hidden counsels of God, and to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel. Upon him the Spirit of the Lord was to rest, and as he would be anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, as he would be sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, so would he save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor. Before their eyes lay outstretched the glorious scroll of prophecy, and contrasting the happy, holy, and peaceful times there shadowed forth which would flow from the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that would follow him, in his sitting at the right hand of the Father in majesty and power—their spirits yearned for those blessed days.

But they also searched and inquired "what manner of time" it would be. Would it be a time of great distress to the children of Israel? Would the season be favorable for the appearance of the Messiah? Would Israel nationally be under a foreign yoke? and how would all this harmonize with redemption, and the work which the Redeemer would accomplish? These to them were doubtful points; but one thing was to them abundantly clear, and on that they chiefly fixed their eyes in subordination to their view of the Redeemer himself. The Spirit of Christ which was in them spoke plainly of a "grace which was to be revealed" under a preached gospel, of the power which would attend it, and of the blessings which would follow a large outpouring of the Holy Spirit after the ascension and glorification of the Son of God. They therefore clearly and distinctly prophesied of the grace that would come unto those who would believe in the Son of God; and it was revealed unto them that the gift of prophecy was bestowed on them was not so much for their own benefit and blessing—as for those more highly favored ones to whom the gospel, as preached by the apostles, would be made the power of God unto salvation.

From those words of the Apostle we may gather several important and instructive LESSONS—

1. We see with what singular wisdom and with what heavenly and holy inspiration the Scriptures are written; for we may apply to the whole word of God what is here intimated as regards prophecy, and expressed by the same apostle in another place—"For prophecy came not in old times by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21.) The Holy Spirit inspired the words in which the prophets clothed their testimony, and

in so doing framed those words with such a depth of heavenly wisdom that the writers themselves only partially understood their meaning. But they understood this—that the two points which were the grand ends of all their prophecies were the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that would follow. In his sufferings they saw redemption accomplished, sin put away, and all Israel saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. How far they saw Israel after the flesh rejected and set aside for unbelief and disobedience, and the Gentiles, as the spiritual Israel, called to inherit national Israel's blessings, we cannot pronounce; but they clearly saw that there was a glory which would follow the sufferings of Christ, not only as regarded his own Person after the resurrection, but as regarded the glory of that grace which would be manifested as the fruit and consequence of his sufferings.

In that grace to be thus manifested, whether to Jew or Gentile, they rejoiced. The glory of the Redeemer was dear to their heart, and this glory they saw to consist in the riches of his grace which they knew would not be fully manifested until after his entrance into his glory. This corresponds and harmonizes with the words of our gracious Lord to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus—"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things—and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27.) The Lord here clearly showed that all the prophets, beginning at Moses, prophesied of his sufferings—and of his entrance after his sufferings into his glory. These were the two grand subjects of all prophecy to which every other part was subordinate; and well might their hearts burn within them when such a gracious Interpreter opened to their wondering minds the Scriptures which, under his explanation, came with such warmth and power to their souls.

If our readers will examine the sermons preached by Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, they will see how fully they correspond with his words now before us. Thus in his sermon on the day of Pentecost he quotes the prophet Joel to show that the pouring out of the Spirit then witnessed was foreshown by him (Acts 2:16-21), and he brings forward the testimony of David as a prophet to the death and resurrection of Christ. (Acts 2:25-31.) So in his sermon in Solomon's porch he thus speaks—"But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ would suffer, he has so fulfilled." (Acts 3:18.) And again—"Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." (Acts 3:24.) "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10); and "to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.)

2. The second thing worthy of notice is the sweet spirit of union between Old and New Testament saints. It was revealed unto these ancient prophets that the grace of which they spoke, and the blessings which would follow the sufferings and glorification of Christ, would not be bestowed on themselves, or at least only as a foretaste of the fullness of those mercies which would be manifested to believers in the ages to come. And yet such was their union of spirit with the whole of the Church of God that they could, without envy or jealousy, rejoice in the blessedness which was to be given to those who would hear and believe the gospel which would be preached unto them by the apostles and ministers of the New Testament with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

It was the same Spirit, whether called the "Spirit of Christ," as coming from, and sent by him, or "the Holy Spirit," as especially distinctive of his divine Person, who testified in them as prophesying of a suffering and glorified Christ to come, and testified to New Testament believers, who saw these prophecies fulfilled, of a suffering and a glorified Christ who had come. They know that God had provided some better thing than they themselves then enjoyed, or could enjoy, for the New Testament saints—and that this was necessary for the edification of the whole body of Christ, and that the Old Testament believers without the New could not be made perfect. (Heb. 11:40.)

Thus they could stretch forth the right hand of fellowship over all the intervening years, and grasp in a loving embrace those more highly-favored souls who would live under the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost; and they could feel an honor in ministering to them that food in its fullness, of which they had, in Old Testament days and under a legal dispensation—but crumbs and tastes. And thus they meditated on their own prophecies, fed on what was revealed in them of the sufferings and glory of Christ, and looked forward in faith and patience to the day when Messiah would come to suffer and to reign. They saw with him of the travail of his soul in a rich harvest of called saints, in whose blessings they could rejoice; for they knew that a fullness of blessing could not be given except by the fullness of a preached gospel.

These, we confess, are somewhat difficult and intricate subjects to understand, but they are full of blessedness when we can see and enter into the depth of their spiritual meaning. And do not these things deserve our thoughtful examination and meditation? Surely they do, for they are the subject not only of prophetic—but of angelic inquiry and examination. "Which things the angels desire to look into." It is literally, "stoop down and look into," as the word is translated, John 20:5. There seems to be some allusion here to the posture of the cherubim on the mercy seat or the ark of the covenant—"And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be." (Exod. 25:20.) Whether it be so or not, for there is a considerable difficulty as to the spiritual meaning of the cherubim in Scripture, one thing is abundantly clear—that the holy angels are engaged in contemplating and admiring the riches of God's grace as revealed in his dear Son to the members of his mystical body, the Church. Thus the Apostle says "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) Nor are they mere admiring spectators of the wisdom and grace of God, but ministering messengers to the suffering saints in this their day of tribulation—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14.)

But we shall reserve our thoughts on this point to a future paper.

Chapter One - Part 7

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part VII.

In our last paper we paused at the words, "Which things the angels desire to look into." As there is much in this expression that demands and will repay reverent and thoughtful meditation, we resume at this point our exposition of 1 Peter 1.

In the Scripture we obtain glimpses and glances of that order of created intelligences known to us by the name of angels, that is, messengers. In both the Old and New Testaments this is their revealed name, as if God would, in his infinite wisdom, present them to us under that aspect as adapted to our capacity to understand and to our faith to receive and believe, without giving us any information of their nature, which, indeed, were it revealed in the word, we might not be able with our present limited faculties to comprehend. That they were created by our blessed Lord, is plainly revealed (Col. 1:16), and that they were created holy and pure is equally plain; for it is impossible that he who is infinite purity and holiness could create any unclean thing. That from this purity and holiness a multitude fell, and by this fall became what they now are, and ever will be, wicked devils, enemies of God and man, is also clearly revealed in the word of truth.

We thus gather from the inspired Scriptures that there are good and bad angels, those who kept and those who kept not their first estate. (Jude 6.) The first are known as "the elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21), to denote that they were chosen in the secret purposes of God to stand when others were allowed to fall; as "the holy angels" (Matt. 25:31; Acts 10:22; Rev. 14:10), to distinguish them from the fallen, unholy, and unclean angels; as "the angels of God" (Luke 12:8; Heb. 1:6), to distinguish them from the angels of the devil. (Rev. 12:7.) They are said also to be "an innumerable company" (Heb. 12:22); for Daniel saw in vision "thousand thousands ministering unto the Ancient of days, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him" (Dan. 7:10), and John declares, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." (Rev. 5:11.) They are also declared "to excel in strength" (Psalm 103:20), to be "mighty" (2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 18:21), as indeed the works they have already done sufficiently show (2 Sam. 24:16; 2 Kings 19:35), and as will one day be more clearly seen when they shall come forth at the end of the world to sever the wicked from among the just. As regards their office now, they are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:14.) But as it is not our present object to dwell upon the character and ministry of angels, we shall confine ourselves to what is here said of them by the Apostle that they "desire to look into" the mysteries of salvation. The expression is 1, one of reverent inquiry; 2, of holy wonder and admiration.

Now what is it that draws forth this reverent inquiry and this holy wonder and admiration on the part of these angelic beings?

1. They desire to see in the mysteries of salvation the infinite wisdom of God. The Apostle therefore speaks, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) The elect angels had seen their non-elect brethren fall, and in their banishment from heaven and being "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," witnessed a display of the tremendous justice and indignation of the Almighty. But as viewing the mysteries of redemption, they see a display of an attribute of God before unknown, or at least not manifested in act—mercy. How to reconcile this newly-discovered attribute of mercy with that strict justice of which they had seen such a dreadful example, they knew not. But the explanation of this deep and blessed mystery is presented to their inquiring minds in the Person of Christ, and especially in his sufferings, death, and resurrection, in his atoning blood, justifying obedience, and dying love. In this, as in a glass, they are ever desiring to look, that they may, with the utmost stretch and penetration of their pure angelic minds, see and gather up more and more discoveries of the infinite wisdom of God, that they may forever admire and adore it.

To the carnal, earthly, debased, degraded mind of man the mystery of the Person of Christ, of the cross, of the sufferings, blood shedding, and death of Jesus, whereby he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, is foolishness. He sees no beauty, blessedness, or glory in the Person of the Son of God, nor any wisdom or grace in atoning blood and dying love. But not so with these bright and pure intelligences. They see far better than we can, as being of a higher order of understanding, the wisdom of God in creation and in providence, for in both these domains of divine wisdom much is plain and clear to them which is obscure to or unobserved by us. They have greater opportunities of observation as standing ever in the courts of heaven, and able to fly swiftly (Dan. 9:21) from spot to spot, as well as possessed of an intelligence both high and exalted in itself, and undimmed, as ours, by sin.

But all these outward witnesses, so to speak, of the wisdom and power of God which they see in the light of his countenance, as ever beholding his face (Matt. 18:10), are as nothing compared with what is revealed to them of the inward actings of God's mind, and the discovery to them of those peculiar attributes whereby he reveals himself to their adoring observation, not only as a God of infinite wisdom, but a God of mercy, grace, and love.

2. For they see in the Person and work of Christ not only the depths of infinite wisdom in the contrivance of the whole plan of redemption, and of power in its execution and full accomplishment, but they see, as reflected in the Person and work of the God-man, such lengths, breadths, depths, and heights of love as fill their minds with holy wonder, admiration and praise. For bear in mind what they are whom the angels see to be the objects of this love. Not pure holy beings, such as they themselves are, but vile, degraded, and ungodly sinners. They could well understand the free flowings forth of love to the pure and the holy, for of that they have a personal experience in their own case, and that God can punish and take vengeance upon transgressors they can also comprehend, for of this they saw an instance in the fallen angels; but that the love of God would be fixed on any of the guilty sons of men is beyond the grasp of their natural faculties.

But it is presented to their inquiring minds in God's gift of his dear Son for poor guilty sinners, and in the coming of the Son of his love in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, both to put it away and to condemn it. (Heb. 9:26; Rom. 8:3.) And knowing who the Son of God is as "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person," they see in his incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, blood-shedding, and death, such unspeakable treasures of mercy and grace as ever fill their minds with wonder and admiration.

3. They see also in the mysteries of redemption the way in which Satan, the arch-fiend, the leader of millions of angels into sin and rebellion, the successful tempter and destroyer of man, the proud, self-exalting god and prince of this world, rearing his throne and power in this lower creation as the open antagonist of God and man; they see this prince of the power of the air, we say, defeated, not by force of arms, and cast out of his usurped dominion by the mighty majesty of the Son of God and the brightness of his manifested glory, as they will one day see when he comes again the second time without sin unto salvation, but they see him who had the power of death, wielding it as a weapon of terror and alarm over the redeemed when in bondage, destroyed through death, and behold in the wondrous mystery of the dying of the Lord of life the prince and god of this world, defeated by that very thing, death, of which he had been the introducer through sin into the world. They see with holy wonder and admiration how by the cross the suffering Son of God "spoiled principalities and powers," the thousands of fallen spirits who in league with and under the control of Satan their head set up their dominion in this lower world, and how he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, or himself. (Col. 2:15, margin.)

What moves their adoring admiration is the way in which this victory over sin in its accursed author and introducer and his associate legions in wickedness was accomplished; that sin was not, as it were, swept out of the world by an act of sovereign power, and its head cast into the lake of fire at once by the arm of the Almighty, but that sin would be atoned for and put away by the blood-shedding and death of the Son of God in our nature, death overcome by his dying the just for the unjust, and Satan judged, dethroned, cast out, and destroyed, as to his dominion, though not as to his being, by his obedience unto death; this act of obedient submission to the will of the Father by the Son of his love fills their minds with holy admiration and astonishment.

4. And as witnessing also the gradual unfolding of the purposes of his grace in the repentance unto life of each successive vessel of mercy, they ever find new matter of praise and joy; for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

Now these and other mysteries of redeeming love the angels desire to look into, that they may learn from them fresh lessons of the grace and glory of God's incarnate Son and see more and more in him, as the image of God, to admire, adore, and love. What a pattern to them of obedience to the will of God and of diligent, active, unwearied love to the sons of men! What a continual presentation to their inquiring minds of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! And should that be no object of inquiry and admiration to us, which is such an object of inquiry and admiration to them? Are we not much more deeply because personally interested in these mysteries than they are? Redemption was not for angels but for us. They stand round about the throne in the outward circle; but we, if interested in redeeming love, stand, as represented by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, close to and before the throne, in the inner circle. They have no new song to sing as the redeemed have; no pardoned sin to bless God for, no deliverance from going

down into the pit, no manifested mercy to make their souls rejoice.

And yet so pure and holy is the flame of their love to God (Heb. 1:7), and such delight do they take in knowing and doing his will, of which they give the perfect exemplar, according to the well-known petition in the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:10), that they admire, love, and adore what they have no personal interest in; and so far from feeling pity for or sympathy with their fallen brethren, or any jealousy at the promotion of man into their place, and even over their own head in the Person of Christ, they rejoice in the will of God simply because it is his will. What shame and confusion should cover our face that we should see so little beauty and glory in that redeeming blood and love which fill their pure minds with holy and unceasing admiration; and that they should be ever seeking and inquiring into this heavenly mystery, that they may discover in it ever new and opening treasures of the wisdom, grace, mercy, truth, and love of God, when we who profess to be redeemed by precious blood, are, for the most part, so cold and indifferent in the contemplation and admiration of it.

But we must not linger on this deeply-interesting subject, but pass on to the next point which the Apostle brings before us—"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:13.) The Apostle now comes to practical exhortation. Having laid down the grounds of our faith and hope, and encouraged us by the example of the angels to look more closely and inquire more deeply into the mysteries of redeeming love, he enforces upon us such a path of holy obedience as will be for our own establishment and comfort, and for the glory of God.

1. He bids us first to "gird up the loins of our mind." The ancients wore loose garments; and these, though cool and well adapted to the climate, yet had various inconveniences which they sought to remedy by, as it were, tightening or girding them up with a strong belt that went round the loins and was fastened in front. We need not refer to the various passages of the Old Testament where the expression occurs in its literal sense. Here, of course, it is used figuratively and spiritually. To gird up, then, the loins of the mind is to do spiritually in the matters of the soul what was done naturally by such a bodily act in the matters of the body. It implies, therefore,

i. Readiness. The first thing the wearer of loose garments would do to prepare himself for action would be to gird up his loins, so as to be ready to move at the word of command. "Gird yourself," said the angel to Peter, "and bind on your sandals." (Acts 12:8.) There is a readiness of mind to receive the word (Acts 17:11), a readiness to will (2 Cor. 8:11), a readiness to revenge, not oneself, but all disobedience in oneself (2 Cor. 10:6), a readiness of spirit even when the flesh is weak (Mark 14:38), a readiness to every good work (Titus 3:1), a ready mind to serve the Church willingly, and not for filthy lucre. (1 Peter 5:2.) This readiness of a willing spirit to run the way of God's commandments, when he enlarges the heart, seems denoted by the expression, "Gird up the loins of your mind."

ii. It also implies strength to do and suffer the will of God. "Those who stumbled," says Hannah of old, alluding to her once tottering steps, "are girded with strength." (1 Sam. 2:4.) "It is God," said David, "that girds me with strength." (Psalm 18:32.) We have much to do and much to suffer in the path of tribulation, and in this path we cannot properly or safely walk with loose disordered affections, unstable, unfortified minds, with a faith and hope not braced up and strengthened to fight the good fight, and lay hold of eternal life.

iii. It implies also that we should not let our garments trail in the dirt, so as to soil our profession, get them entangled in the thorns and briers of the cares of this life, or of strife and contention, and thus have them rent and torn; but to walk through this world as a meticulous woman picks her way through a miry road, avoiding every puddle, and gathering her clothes carefully round her that they be soiled as little as possible by the mud.

If we let our thoughts and affections fall, as it were, where they will, they will soon fall into the dirt. Our thoughts, our words, our looks, our movements and actions, must be held in and held up from roving and roaming at their wild, ungoverned will, or we shall soon fall into some evil that may cover us with shame and disgrace. If we are to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, we must stand "having our loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14); and this will keep our garments from being defiled with either error or evil.

2. "Be sober," adds the Apostle, or, as the word might be translated, be "watchful." Sobriety in religion is a blessed gift and grace. In our most holy faith there is no room for lightness. The things which concern our peace are solemn, weighty matters, and if they lie with any degree of weight and power on our spirit, they will subdue that levity which is the very breath of the carnal mind. Some men are naturally light, and as a man's natural make and disposition will sometimes, in spite of his better feelings and judgment, discover itself, some good men and acceptable preachers have fallen into the snare of dropping light expressions in the pulpit. But it is much to be lamented that they have set such an example, for many have imitated their lightness who do not possess their grace, and have availed themselves of that very circumstance as a recommendation which in those good men was but an infirmity. How different was the testimony which Burnet gives of Leighton—"I can say with truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him for above two-and-twenty years, I never knew him speak an idle word, or one that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper but that which I wished to be in the last minutes of my life."

But sobriety implies not merely the absence of all unbecoming levity in speech and conduct, but the absence also of all wild, visionary imaginations in the things of God. It denotes, therefore, that "spirit of a sound mind" which the Apostle says is the gift of God. (2 Tim. 1:7.) Few things are more opposed to that wisdom which is from above (James 3:17), and to that anointing which teaches all things, and is truth, and is no lie (1 John 2:27), or to the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope—than those wild flights of imagination, and those visionary ideas and feelings which so many substitute for the solid realities of the life of God. These are some of the strongholds of which Paul speaks and which he had to pull down. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:4, 5.)

These vain "imaginations," these speculative ideas and enthusiastic visionary ramblings, often the fruit of a disordered mind, or produced by Satan as an angel of light, which some seem to think so much of, Paul would pull down as strongholds of delusion. Hart seems at one time to have been nearly caught in this snare—"But, after many a gloomy, doleful hour spent in solitude and sorrow, not without strong and frequent cries and tears to God, and beseeching him to reveal himself to me in a clearer manner, I thought he asked me, in the midst of one of my prayers, whether I rather

chose the visionary revelations, of which I had formed some wild idea, or to be content with trusting to the low, despised mystery of a crucified man?"—Hart's "Experience."

He therefore says in one of his hymns:

"His light and airy dreams

I took for solid gold,

And thought his base, adulterate coin

The riches of your blood."

Hymn 775, v. 5, Gadsby's Selection.

Vital godliness, it is true, has its mysteries, its revelations, and manifestations, its spiritual and supernatural discoveries and operations; but all these come through the word of truth, which is simple, weighty, and solid, and as far removed from everything visionary or imaginative, wild or flighty, as light is from darkness; and therefore every act of faith, or of hope, or of love, will be as simple, solid, and weighty as the word of truth itself, through the medium of which, by the power of the Spirit, they are produced and called forth. If any doubt this, let them read in some solemn moment the last discourses of our blessed Lord with his disciples. How simple, how solid, how weighty are these discourses. Must not, then, the faith which receives, believes, and is mixed with these words of grace and truth, the hope which anchors in the promises there spoken, the love which embraces the gracious and glorious Person of him who spoke them, be simple and solid too? What room is there in such a faith, hope, and love for visionary ideas, wild speculations, and false spiritualizations of Scripture, any more than there is in the words of the Lord himself?

2. But to be "sober" means also to be wakeful and watchful, as we find the word used by the great Apostle—"So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet." (1 Thess. 5:6, 7, 8.) Here sobriety is opposed to sleepiness, and is connected with walking in the light and in the day, as sleepiness and its frequent cause, drunkenness, are connected with darkness and night.

One of the greatest curses God can send on a people and its rulers, its prophets and seers, is a spirit of deep sleep, as the prophet speaks—"For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers has he covered." (Isa. 29:10.) But to be sober is to be awaked out of this sleep, and, as a consequence, to walk not only wakefully but watchfully. It implies, therefore, that careful, circumspect walking, that daily living, moving, speaking, and acting in the fear of God whereby alone we can be kept from the snares spread for our foot at every step of the way. How many have fallen into outward evil and open disgrace from lack of walking watchfully and circumspectly and taking heed to their steps. Instead of watching the first movements of sin and against, as the Lord speaks, "the entering into temptation" (Luke 22:40), they rather dally with it until they are drawn away and enticed of their own lust, which as unchecked goes on to conceive and bring forth sin, which, when it is finished or carried out and accomplished in positive action, brings forth death. (James 2:14, 15.)

Here, however, we must pause in our exposition of the chapter before us.

Chapter One - Part 8

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part VIII.

HOPE is a blessed grace of the Spirit, and stands in firm and lasting union with faith and love. Its main blessedness consists in the support which it gives to the soul in seasons of trouble, and specially in enabling it to look beyond the present trial and affliction, whatever it may be, and to anticipate a deliverance from it, and a future time of rest and peace. It is, therefore, compared in Scripture to "an anchor" (Heb. 6:19), which holds the ship in the storm, and preserves it instrumentally from falling upon the rocks on which it might otherwise be dashed to pieces, enabling also and encouraging the mariners quietly and confidently to wait in expectation of a change of weather, and of obtaining a prosperous voyage to their desired haven. It is also compared to "a helmet" (1 Thess. 5:8), which guards the head, that vital part, from killing strokes in the day of battle, and as a necessary piece of defensive armor, brings the warrior safe off the field. (Eph. 6:17.) We are, therefore, said to be "saved" by it (Rom. 8:24); that is, not saved by it as regards eternal salvation, which is only through the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, but saved by it as regards present salvation, inasmuch as it preserves us from being carried away by despair, the assaults of Satan, and the overwhelming power of temptation, in the same way as the ship is saved by its anchor in the storm from falling on the rocks, and the soldier by his helmet in the battle from death-dealing blows.

We find, therefore, the Apostle in the chapter before us, the exposition of which we now resume at this point, exhorting the saints of God "to hope to the end." "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:13.)

He knew well what difficulties they would have to encounter, and that their faith would be tried as with fire. He, therefore, would encourage them, whatever storms of temptation they might have to endure, never to give up their hope; for if that were abandoned, it would be like the sailor throwing overboard his anchor in the face of a storm, and the soldier casting aside his helmet just before he went into battle.

But there are two things which he specially says of this hope—1. He bids them hope "to the end;" and 2, to wait "for the grace that was to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Both those expressions will demand some little explanation.

1. "Hope to the end." This is what hope chiefly regards—the end; for that is "better than the beginning," the crowning consummation of all that faith believes, hope expects, and love enjoys. But through what dark and gloomy seasons has hope often to look before this end comes, being sometimes sunk so low as almost to despair even of life! How it has in these low spots to muster

all its evidences, look back to this and that Ebenezer, this and that hill Mizar, this and that deliverance, manifestation, and blessing; how it has to hang upon the word of promise, cry out for help, and that mightily, as if at its last breath, and hope against hope in the very face of unbelief, infidelity, and despair.

An end must come to all our struggles, trials, exercises, afflictions, and conflicts. We shall not be always struggling and fighting with a body of sin and death. We shall not be always exposed to snares and temptations spread in our path by sin and Satan, so as hardly to escape falling by them as if by the very skin of our teeth. Every day reminds us with warning voice that an end must come. But now comes the question, and often a very anxious question it is, What will that end be? Here hope comes in to sustain and support the soul, enabling it to look forward, that it may prove to be a hope that makes not ashamed, a good hope through grace, and not the hope of the hypocrite that shall perish. It is also rendered in the margin "perfectly," by which we may understand that it would be a hope of such a complete and enduring nature that the end may prove it was a grace of the Holy Spirit, and as such, stamped with his own perfecting power.

2. The Apostle therefore adds, "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

There is a little difficulty here which we shall, however, do our best to explain. The interpretation of the words chiefly depends on the meaning which we attach to the expression, "the revelation of Jesus Christ." Does it mean his future revelation from heaven when "he shall come a second time without sin unto salvation," "to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all those who believe?" (Heb. 9:28; 2 Thess. 1:10.) Or does it mean his present revelation in the manifestations of himself to the soul? (John 14:21; Gal. 1:16.) According to our view, it is more in harmony with the general drift and bearing of the Scripture, and especially of the Epistles of Peter, to explain it of the former; but we see no reason why we should not extend its meaning so as to include the latter also.

We shall examine both of these interpretations, commencing with the former.

Nothing is more evident from the Scriptures of the New Testament than that the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is there set forth not only as a revelation of him from heaven, but is continually held up as a special object of faith and hope to the saints of God. For proof of this see 1 Thess. 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:16-18, 5:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 1 Cor. 1:7 (margin); Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:14, 15; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13. In all these passages the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only clearly set forth, but is dwelt upon as a special topic of hope and comfort for the afflicted saints. In a similar way, in the epistle now before us, Peter dwells often upon the same blessed truth. Observe, for instance, the following testimonies—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7.) The word rendered "appearing" here is the same as is translated (ver. 13) "revelation." So again, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12, 13.) Is not the revelation of Christ in future glory here held forth as a topic of support and of joy?

So also in his second epistle he devotes the whole of the last chapter to the same subject, reproving the infidel scorn of the scoffers and encouraging the family of God to look forward to "the day of the Lord" in faith and hope.

With all these testimonies in its favor we cannot well hesitate to interpret the revelation of Jesus Christ in the passage now before us of his future revelation from heaven in glory.

But there is an objection to this interpretation which, as faithful expositors of Scripture, we feel bound to mention. The objection to the interpretation which explains "the revelation of Jesus Christ" as his future revelation at the last day in glory is the expression, "grace to be brought unto you," for it is argued that it will not be grace then which is brought, but glory." This, however, we do not consider an objection of any great force, as the word "grace" means literally "favor," and is frequently so rendered in our translation, as Luke 1:30, 2:52; Acts 2:47, 7:10, 46. We may therefore render the expression, "the favor which is to be brought unto you." And what favor is to be compared to the manifestation of God's eternal favor to his chosen and redeemed saints which will be openly manifested at the last great day, when Jesus shall be revealed from heaven and shall come in all his glory? Will not this be the crowning favor of all favors, when the Lord shall say to his redeemed, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" Besides which, as grace is the beginning of glory, so glory is but the consummation and crown of grace. We see, therefore, no real difficulty in the word "grace" as applied to the last and greatest and crowning manifestation of it at the Lord's coming—certainly no difficulty so great as to make us reject that interpretation.

But, as a further confirmation of this view, besides the testimonies from Scripture, which we have already brought forward, observe how the general drift and tenor of the New Testament favor this interpretation. Hope especially looks to the end, as the Apostle bids us do; but this end is not a present blessing by the way, but the grand consummation of every desire in a full participation of the glory of Christ. We therefore read, "In hope of eternal life" (Tit. 1:2); and again, "Looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior (or, as it might be rendered, "our great God and Savior") Jesus Christ." (Tit. 2:13.) "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:2.) To the same point tends also the whole argument of the Apostle (Rom. 8:18-25), where "the earnest expectation of the creature" is represented as "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," and "waiting for the redemption of the body," which will only be accomplished when it shall rise in glory at the second coming of Christ. Aided, then, by the light of all these testimonies, we cannot well hesitate in believing that the revelation of Jesus Christ in the glory of his second appearing is the primary meaning of the passage, and most in harmony with the general drift of the Scriptures, the analogy of faith, and Peter's own express declarations.

2. But we freely allow that it will admit of another interpretation, as referring to the present revelation of Christ to the soul; for in the same way as present grace is the pledge of a participation of future glory, so a present revelation of Christ is a pledge and earnest of an interest in that future revelation of him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven. In this point of view we shall now, therefore, consider it.

Those who feelingly know the plague of their heart will confess that their daily experience is often one of great darkness of soul, and a sensible lack of that grace which we well know can alone make us fruitful in every good word and work. But what is to work that blessed change in us? How

are we to be brought out of this miserable state of barrenness and death? Grace, and grace alone, can do it. But how is this grace to come? Now, as we well know from past experience that a sweet revelation of Christ to the heart brings grace with it, and that so sunk are we in carnality and death that nothing short of his own manifestations can move and melt a hard heart, give faith to an unbelieving heart, quicken and revive a dead heart, water and make fruitful a dry and thirsty heart, and that when Christ comes, every grace of the Spirit comes with him, it makes the poor, needy, naked, barren soul long for his appearing.

Everything else has been tried and found lacking. Praying, and preaching, and reading, and meditating may have brought at times a little change, a little relief, a little reviving in the hard bondage, which, so far as they go, are highly prized; but the soul feels that it must be a sweet and blessed revelation of Christ himself, which alone can make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. It sensibly feels that he alone can, by his presence and power, make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

We often think that we must repent, we must believe, we must be spiritually minded, we must love, we must spend our days in prayer and meditation, hang over our Bibles night and day, never give way to slothfulness, hardness, carelessness, and indifference, but be in the sensible fear of the Lord, so as never to lose his presence and power. And then, we think, if we are all this, and if we do all this, we shall have clear evidences of our saving interest in the blood of the Lamb, and have a right religion. Let us not say a word to encourage carelessness, or damp diligence; but is it not often too true that with all this looking to SELF we are too apt to forget that it is only the Lord's presence and power in the gracious revelations of himself which can produce that repentance, that faith, that love, that spirituality of mind, and, in a word, all that blessed state of soul in which we feel so sensibly deficient?

Now Peter, according to the interpretation of the words that we are now adopting, bids us hope to the end for the grace which is to be brought us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that we are not to look at and into our miserable selves to produce that grace there of which we feel so sadly deficient, but to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought us, not produced by us, nor maintained by us, but to be brought by the Lord himself in his own blessed revelations of his Person, his blood, his righteousness, his dying love, his faithfulness, his tenderness, piteous compassion, and unfailing mercy and goodness.

Now it certainly is most blessedly true that as we hope for this grace, and that to the end (or completely, as the word might be rendered), this very hoping for grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, this logging and looking out for it, this waiting for and expecting it, will sustain and support the soul as an anchor in a storm, and protect our head as a helmet from the killing strokes of despair. It was in this way that David encouraged his soul to hope and wait for the Lord's appearing—"I wait for the Lord; my soul waits, and in his word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." (Psalm 130:5, 6.) And again—"Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalm 42:11.)

But why should we hope for it? What ground of encouragement have we to expect it will ever come? Because we have had it; in some measure at least, before, and found that when Christ was

revealed to our heart he brought grace with him—grace to repent of our sins with godly sorrow, evangelical, not legal repentance, grace to believe in the Son of God with a living faith, grace to love him with a pure heart fervently, grace to walk in his fear, and live to his praise. "Therefore," says the Apostle, "hope, keep on hoping, and that to the end, that he who revealed himself once will reveal himself again, for his reward will ever be with him, as his work was before him."

But we must pass on to the practical exhortations which immediately follow—"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who has called you is holy, so you be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16.)

Grace lays us under the greatest of all obligations to its free and bountiful Giver, and especially to render a believing obedience to his revealed will and word. It is his free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace alone which makes and manifests us to be his children, and therefore it demands of us, as a feeble and most insufficient tribute of grateful praise, that we should walk worthy of the vocation with which we are called, and glorify him in our body and spirit which are his. He who has never known and felt this knows nothing of the riches of God's grace in the manifestation of mercy and love to his soul. Such a one knows, that do what he can, he can never do enough to show forth the praises of him who has called him out of darkness into his marvelous light; and his grief and burden ever are that, through the power of indwelling sin, he cannot do the things that he would, but is always falling short, always sinning against bleeding, dying love. To such a one, therefore, the precepts of the gospel are as dear as the promises, and he sees that they are set in the word of truth as "a lamp to his feet and a light to his path," a guiding rule by which, if he could but direct his steps, he would glorify God, walk in peace and love with his people, preserve a good conscience, and adorn the doctrine which he professes in all things. Obedience, therefore, to him is a sweet word, and is viewed by him as a precious portion of that free and everlasting gospel which, in restoring fallen man to God's favor, restores him also to an obedience acceptable in his sight.

The expression "as obedient children" will, however, require a little explanation. It is literally "children of obedience,"—it being a Hebrew idiom to express a certain quality or condition. Thus we read in the Old Testament of "children of transgression," that is, transgressors (Isa. 57:4); "children of iniquity" (Hos. 10:9), that is, so given up to iniquity, as if iniquity itself were their father; and in the New Testament of "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6); "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3); "children of light" (Eph. 5:8); "cursed children," literally, "children of the curse" (2 Peter 2:14), all which expressions imply a kind of heirship in the things of which they are said to be children, and that they are ruled and governed by them as a child by his father. By "obedient children," therefore, we may understand such obedient believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as if obedience herself were their parent and were so training them up in all her blessed ways that as her loving and dutiful children they would not soon or easily depart from her careful nurture and gracious instructions.

The foundation of this obedience is laid in love. It is not a legal duty, or forced, unwilling, compulsory service, but a willing, grateful, unreserved obedience of the heart, under the constraining influence of the love of Christ (John 14:15; 2 Cor. 5:14); a knowledge of redemption by his atoning blood (1 Cor. 6:20; Heb. 9:14); and a deliverance by grace from the curse and

bondage of the law, the service of Satan, and the dominion of sin. (Gal. 3:13; 1 John 3:8; Rom. 6:14.) The law works wrath, bondage, and death, stirs up and puts life into sin (Rom. 4:15; 7:7, 8; 2 Cor. 3:7; Gal. 4:24); but gives no deliverance from it, either as regards its guilt or its dominion. It curses and condemns for disobedience, but there it leaves the guilty sinner, and can neither justify nor sanctify him.

But now here comes in the precious gospel of the Son of God, which, proclaiming pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb and as made the power of God unto salvation, giving what it proclaims, lays the soul under the sweetest constraints and most grateful obligations to obey his precepts, keep his word, seek his glory, and live to his praise. This is the only obedience acceptable to God as the fruit of his Spirit and the operations of his grace.

But as the proof and effect of this obedience there will be a thorough change both of heart and life. The Apostle, therefore, adds, "Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."

Sins of ignorance widely differ from sins against light and knowledge. Paul, speaking of his experience of pardoning mercy, says, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Tim. 1:13.) Had he committed the same sins of blasphemy and persecution against light and knowledge they would have been, we dare not say wholly unpardonable, but generally speaking they are only committed by those who are given up to fill the measure of their iniquities and are the last sins of apostates. The Apostle, therefore, bids us "not to fashion ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance." The word "fashioning" yourselves is the same as rendered (Rom. 12:2) "conformed," and means literally taking the shape of, or adapting oneself to the outward visible form of anything, as if it were a model in likeness of which we are to be framed and molded. He warns us, therefore, against yielding ourselves to the power and practice of any of those lusts which had dominion over us in the days of our ignorance, such as the base and sensual lusts of the flesh, or the more refined lusts of money, power, pleasure, fashion, pride, worldliness, and fleshly ease—those, as it were, more fashionable sins in which a man may live and walk and yet preserve his character and good name.

Let the children of disobedience follow after and be conformed to all these worldly lusts; but let the children of obedience shun and abhor them as hateful to God, deceitful and dangerous to themselves, and contrary to a holy, godly profession.

But for the present we must lay down our pen.

Chapter One - Part 9

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part IX.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16

It is a very significant circumstance, and no less sad than significant, that the very words "holy" and "holiness" seem almost lost out of the churches of truth. If the correctness of this assertion be doubted, let us appeal to our readers' own experience, and ask them how often in the course of the year do they hear the words in the mouth of the ministers of truth under whom they usually sit. Or if such a word as "holiness" is ever sounded in their ears, is it not more as a term of reproach and an arrow aimed against what is termed "progressive sanctification"—than brought before them and insisted on as a part of the gospel of the grace of God, and in harmony with the Scriptures of truth and the work of grace upon the heart?

The cause, however, of this omission, if what we have stated is correct, is not far to seek. One extreme often leads to another; and thus, as in other cases, because ignorant men have erred in one direction, the advocates of truth have been tempted to err in another, and to overlook or ignore the express language of Scripture, lest it should seem to countenance views to which they are opposed. And what has been the necessary consequence? That it has come to pass, lest they should be thought to favor a 'fleshly holiness'—men of truth have almost dropped the word itself altogether. But because men ignorant of the depths of the fall, and of the distinction of the two natures in those born of God, advocate what every child of God knows, from his own experience, to be false as to the 'gradual sanctification' of what in itself is and ever will be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, is it right, is it consistent with faithful stewardship of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1, 2), and the solemn trusteeship of the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:4), that not only the Scriptural language, "holy" and "holiness," should be tacitly dropped; but what is worse—the thing itself should be neglected and passed by? These may appear to be grave charges; but they are not advanced without some observation and consideration, and their truth or falsehood we shall leave to the judgment of our discerning and experienced readers.

But if our judgment in this matter be correct, and founded on indisputable facts, we need not be surprised that as the neglect of any important part of God's truth must always bear evil fruit, such has been the practical consequence of this omission; and thus, as regards hearers as well as preachers, it has much come to pass that all such exhortations to holiness in heart, lip, and life, as we meet with in the chapter before us, were they now found in the mouth of ministers, would be viewed by many of their people as legal and bondageing, and inconsistent with the purity of gospel truth in its doctrine, if they dare not altogether say with its experience and power.

But if we are brought in any way to this pass—that plain and positive Scripture precepts and exhortations are to be set aside, or thrust out of both pulpit and pew, because they do not suit our views and feelings—may we not justly suspect that there is something wrong somewhere? And should we not search and examine to see whether such an omission may not be founded on some misconception of the truth, even in those cases where there would not be a willing or willful neglect of the revealed will and word of God?

According to our view, the exhortations in the Scripture to holiness are in perfect harmony with the doctrines of grace and the teaching of the blessed Spirit in the soul; indeed, so much so, that they grow upon the Gospel tree as necessarily as good grapes upon the vine of the Lord's right hand planting. In these exhortations, rightly understood, spiritually received and interpreted, there is nothing legal, nothing that genders to bondage, nothing inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, the freedom of truth, and the blessedness of the love which casts out fear which has torment; for they are all fully impregnated with the dew, the unction, and the power of the Spirit of life—and are full of sweetness and blessedness to those who can receive them in the power of that grace out of which they spring, and of which they form the crowning fruits.

But we resume at this point our exposition of the chapter before us. "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written—Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16.) Let us then see what is the meaning and force of these words.

They remind us, first, of our high calling, and address themselves to us as those upon whom God has had special mercy, and whom, therefore, he has laid under every gracious constraint and spiritual obligation to walk worthy of it. And does not this fully harmonize with other similar passages, such, for instance, as, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called?" (Eph. 4:1.) By our very calling we are called out of the world, that we should be no longer conformed to it—out of sin, that we should no longer serve it—of self, that we should no longer please and indulge it—out of darkness, that we should no longer walk in it—out of evil in every shape and form, that we should be no longer under its power and influence.

And if any say, "Our nature is so corrupt, our heart so vile, our lusts and passions so strong, sin so alluring, and flesh so weak—that we cannot come out of those things in which we once lived," all that can be said to such persons is, "What then has God done for you by his Holy Spirit, and what evidence do you give that you are partakers of that grace that brings salvation and which teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? Did not the Lord give himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" (Tit. 2:11-14.)

There is a holiness of which the Scripture speaks and of which it declares that "without it no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); and though this does not consist in the sanctification of the flesh, or any spiritual improvement begun or progressing of our corrupt nature, yet there is such a thing as being made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:4.) The Lord Jesus Christ is of God made unto us sanctification as well as righteousness and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30); and those who are called by his grace are not only washed and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus—but are sanctified by the Spirit of our God. (1

Cor. 6:11.)

This holiness, then, consists mainly of two points—

1. Being made a partaker of the Spirit of holiness whereby, as born of God, we—are made fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12); set our affection on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God (Col. 3:1, 2); have our conversation in heaven (Phil. 3:20); put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him which created him (Col. 3:10); live a life of faith in the Son of God (Gal. 2:20), and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18.)

To be thus spiritually-minded, to be thus brought near unto God through his dear Son, to walk before him in the light of his countenance, and to know something of spiritual communion with the Lord of life and glory as sitting on his mercy-seat in the fullness of his risen power, and in the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of his dying love—thus to taste, to handle, to experience, and to enjoy—is to be made a partaker of true holiness and to be sanctified by the Spirit of God as an indwelling teacher, guide, advocate, and comforter. And if we know nothing of these things, at least in some small measure, or are not looking after and longing for them to be brought into our heart by a divine power, we give but little evidence that the grace of God has reached our heart and renewed us in the spirit of our mind.

2. The second branch of holiness is a life, conduct, and conversation agreeable to the precepts of the gospel; and the one springs out of the other. "Make the tree good," said our blessed Lord, "and his fruit good, for the tree is known by his fruit." Gospel fruit must grow upon a gospel tree, and thus the fruits of a holy and godly life must spring out of those divine operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of which we have just spoken. Thus to speak, live, and act is to be "holy in all manner of conversation," that is, in our daily walk; and is a fulfilling of the precept which God gave of old to his typical people Israel (Lev. 11:45), and here quoted to show that it is spiritually fulfilled in that peculiar people whom he calls by his distinguishing grace under the gospel.

But though Peter, as speaking for God, thus lays down in his inspired word what would be a precept to last through all time, yet, under the guidance of that holy and divine Teacher who guided his pen and knowing experimentally the weakness of the creature and the power of prayer, he adds—"And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." (1 Peter 1:17.)

Prayer is the breath of the new-born soul, and the blessed Spirit who kindles it in the heart, and from time to time draws it forth into living exercise, teaches the child of God whose body he makes his temple, and in whom he dwells, as a Spirit of grace and supplications, to pour out his heart before God. Thus he calls on the Father, approaching him through his dear Son; and presenting, as enabled, his supplications before the throne of grace, seeks after those blessings of which he is made to feel his deep and daily need. This gracious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Father also of all who believe in his name, even though they cannot always or often see and claim that sweet and blessed relationship, is here said "to judge without respect of persons, according to every man's work."

"Without respect of persons" has a somewhat wide bearing, and one especially suitable to the exhortation with which it stands in connection. It does not, then, merely signify that God is no respecter of persons as regards rich or poor, educated or uneducated, and such other distinctions as now separate man from man in mere social relationships; but it has a bearing also on what is more peculiarly personal and experimental.

Thus when we look sometimes at gospel precepts, and such a one especially as that which here calls upon us to be holy as God is holy, our very heart sinks at what is thus brought before us; and taking a view of what we are as fallen sinners, and being made deeply conscious of our own helplessness and inability, and that everything in us by nature is contrary to God and godliness, it seems to us impossible that we can ever be what we read a Christian should be, or ever do what we believe a Christian should do. By thus looking into our own hearts, and measuring our strength by our own ability, we view the precepts of the gospel with an approving eye as right in themselves, but with a desponding look as regards our own performance of them. We may also be under the power of strong and peculiar temptations, be placed in circumstances in which obedience to the gospel seems almost an impossibility, or so sensibly feel the presence and pressure of a body of sin and death as to think that of all people who ever had a hope in God's mercy we are by nature the vilest, and in power to do that which is good the very weakest. Now this is having respect of persons, and especially of that person whom we know best, with whose every feeling, thought, movement, propensity, inclination, words, and actions, we are most intimately conversant, and with whom all we are and have is bound up for time and eternity—one's own self.

But the Father judges according to every man's work without respect of persons. He does not altogether view us as we view ourselves. Our good deeds are no recommendation to his grace, and our bad deeds, if mourned over, confessed, and forsaken, shall be no hindrances to it. Are we sinful, yes, of sinners chief? God judges us according to our work. By this expression we may understand two things—1, the work of God upon the soul, and 2, those works of righteousness which flow out of it and are brought forth by the special operation of his grace.

1. In looking, then, upon us and judging us without respect of persons as we stand in his sight, God views his own work of grace in the heart, and fixes, so to speak, his eyes upon that. Now this work of his own grace in the heart does not appear in his eyes as it often does in ours. From us the work itself is often hidden. It seems so buried and, as it were, lost out of sight amid our corruptions—sin has so darkened our mind, and unbelief so obscured our judgment, that we often cannot see—not only what God has wrought in us by his Spirit and grace—but that he has wrought in us anything at all.

We may illustrate this by the judgment which we ourselves sometimes form upon those children of God with whom we are brought into some degree of union and communion. Of these some, if not many, are continually doubting whether they are possessed of grace. But we can see through their doubts and fears, and through their darkness and unbelief, clear and plain marks of the work of God upon their soul. This commends them to our conscience, unites them to us in the bands of love and affection, and we receive them as children of God from seeing that grace in them—which they cannot see themselves. How much more, then, can he before whose eyes all things are naked and open see in his children that grace which he himself has wrought in their heart! And by

this grace he judges them "without respect of persons"—without any respect to what they are in their own feelings or their own judgment, but as they stand in his sight, not only as "accepted in the Beloved," but as also brought to believe in his dear Son to the salvation and sanctification of their soul.

2. But we may explain the words as applicable also to those works which are the fruit of his grace. All that we do is marred with sin. Our motive may be good, our eye single, our desire sincere; but as the word or action passes from us it becomes marred and defiled by the sin that dwells in us. And the clearer our discernment is of the nature of grace and of our own sinfulness—the more we shall see that nothing really good was ever performed by us. But the great Judge of all, who can read in us what we cannot read in ourselves, looks at those words and actions which spring out of his grace with an approving eye—and separates them from all that sinfulness and selfishness which in our view mar and pollute them.

Thus we see that in the judgment at the great day, when the Lord sets his sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left, he mentions as evidences of his grace to those whom he bids come and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Matt. 25:35, 36.) But the righteous who saw in what they had done for him little else but sin and defilement could hardly call to mind that they had ever done anything to show their faith in him or love toward him. "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" (Matt. 25:37-39.) But the Lord assured them that inasmuch as they had done it unto one of the least of his brethren they had done it unto him. So he said upon another occasion—"And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded." (Matt. 10:42.) In giving the cup of cold water in the name of a disciple they could not see that it was a work of faith and love, and as such was approved of by the Lord. But he who could read his own grace in their heart and could separate the faith and affection which dwelt there from all its surrounding pollutions judged them according to that work.

But how is this connected with that holiness to which the Apostle exhorts us? In this way—that we are not to be cast down and discouraged, still less give up heart and hope, because we find in ourselves everything which is sinful and unholy. We are rather to call upon the Father out of the depths of our own sinfulness, our shortcomings, our many and frequent backslidings, our darkness and unbelief, our sin and guilt, our shame and confusion of face, our helplessness and inability, our many discouragements, sinkings, and castings down—out of all these things we are to sigh and cry, look and long, supplicate and pray, fight and wrestle, strive and struggle—as seeking help from the Father, who will deal with us as dear children, and who, without respect of persons, whatever we may think of ourselves, or others think of us, judges us according to his own work, and not according to our own doubts and fears.

Thus we see the basis on which these exhortations to holiness rest, and that we are not left to work in ourselves that holiness without which no man can see the Lord; but that the Father himself will have respect to his own grace, and, having begun, will carry on and complete the work of faith

with power.

But the Apostle adds—"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Our life here is but a vapor. We are but pilgrims and strangers on this earthly ball, mere sojourners, without fixed or settled habitation, and passing through this world as not our home or resting-place. The Apostle, therefore, bids us pass this time, whether long or short, of our earthly sojourn under the influence and in the exercise of godly fear.

We are surrounded with enemies, all seeking, as it were, our life, and therefore we are called upon to move with great caution, knowing how soon we may slip and fall, and thus wound our own consciences, grieve our friends, gratify our enemies, and bring upon ourselves a cloud of darkness which may long hover over our souls. Our life here below is not one of ease and quiet, but a warfare, a conflict, a race, a wrestling not with flesh and blood alone, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to dread ourselves more than anything or anybody else, and to view our flesh as our greatest enemy.

This fear is not a slavish, legal fear, such as that which John speaks of, and of which he says that "it has torment," but that holy, godly, and filial fear which is the first fruit and mark of covenant grace, and is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. Where this fear is absent, or even if not wholly absent, not in full exercise, we are sure to go wrong, for "by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." How needful, then, is it to pass the time of our sojourning here in the exercise of this godly, reverential fear! And let no one think that this filial fear is inconsistent with faith even in its highest risings, or with love in its sweetest enjoyments. In fact, it is only to those who fear his great name that the Lord manifests himself in his beauty and blessedness, for "the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and to them (and to them alone) does he show his covenant." Hart, therefore, sweetly says of the men who fear the Lord:

"His secrets they shall share;

His covenant shall learn;

Guided by grace shall walk his ways;

And heavenly truths discern."

We may observe also that there is a very close and intimate connection between this godly fear and being "holy in all manner of living." When do we drop into levity of conversation? When do light and frothy words fall from our lips? When do any of those hasty bursts of temper, or those fretful expressions, or that more carnal, worldly talk to which we are naturally prone hover upon our lips and break forth, more or less unguardedly, from our tongue? Is it not when this godly fear is not rolling its streams as a fountain of life to water the soul and soften it into humility and love, and is not springing up in wholesome checks and godly admonitions to keep the tongue as with a bridle, and to rule that little member which, though so little, if untamed, defiles the whole body?

But if this fear be in exercise it will restrain that levity of speech which not only grieves and wounds our own conscience, but is often a stumbling-block to the world, a bad example to the family of God, and a weapon in the hands of Satan to bring death into their soul. We would do well to ponder over those words of the Apostle and to carry them with us when we are brought into conversation with others in the daily walks of life—"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of

your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:29, 30.)

But we may observe also the strong ground of obligation under which we are laid thus to act—"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18, 19.)

The foundation of a gospel walk and conduct is laid in redemption. We received from our fathers by tradition and example "an empty way of life," in the case, at least, of those of us who had not godly parents, and to whom religion was a thing utterly unknown, even by name, until by a special act of sovereign grace the Lord was pleased to drop it into our hearts. We might have been brought up carefully, strictly, morally, and even been taught certain forms of outward religion. But, viewed in the light of divine teaching, it was "an empty way of life." It began and ended with the world. Every thought, motive, word, and action was bounded by this life; and even if this empty way of life were free from outbreaks into positive evil, still death was stamped upon it throughout. Nor could we have redeemed ourselves from it. Were we even made sensible of the future misery which was entailed thereby, we could not "with corruptible things," the only things which our heart could produce within, or the corruptible things, as silver and gold, without, redeem ourselves from this empty way of life, so as to deliver our souls from the wrath of God due to it.

But O the unspeakable depths of the goodness and mercy of God! O the riches of his superabounding grace! When there was no other way of redemption, God sent his only-begotten Son, that by his precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, we might be redeemed from all the consequences of our empty way of life received by tradition from our fathers; and not only from all its consequences, but what the Apostle is here especially aiming at, from its power and practice. You know, he says, that you were redeemed from this empty way of life not with silver and gold, as slaves are redeemed by man from man. Such perishing, corrupting, and corruptible things, torn out of earth's mines, as men employ for purposes of redemption, could make no atonement to God for your sins and crimes; but the precious blood of Christ—precious in the sight of God as the blood of his dear Son, precious in the sight of the saints as their full and sufficient ransom, could and did redeem you from all iniquity, and by doing so, laid you under the deepest obligation to walk no more in that empty way of life which you received by tradition from your fathers, but to be holy in all manner of living.

It will be observed also that it is a knowledge, a personal, experimental knowledge of this redemption, which lays us under a spiritual obligation to walk worthy of our high calling. And it acts in this way. A view by faith of the bleeding, dying Lamb of God, a seeing and feeling what he suffered in the garden and on the cross to redeem us from hell, will ever make sin hateful in our eyes, and holiness longed after as the soul's happiest element. If ever sin is ever mourned over, hated, confessed, and forsaken; if there are ever ardent desires after a conformity to Christ's image; if there is ever a longing after union and communion with him, it is at the foot of his cross. By it and it alone is the world crucified unto us, and we unto the world; and well may we say that our highest attainment in grace is to have the experience of the Apostle—"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the

Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.)

But to show the firmness and stability of this foundation, the Apostle tells us that Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world," and therefore that the whole plan was laid in the counsels of infinite wisdom and grace.

But as the consideration of this point would take up too much of our present space, we must defer our thoughts upon it to the next paper.

Chapter One - Part 10

Meditations on First Peter Chapter One

by J. C. Philpot, 1869

Part X.

It is truly blessed to see by faith the strength and firmness of the foundation which God has laid in Zion. We have this firm and strong foundation brought before us in those words of the Apostle with which we closed our last article, and in which having spoken of Christ as of "a lamb without blemish and without spot," he adds, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." He would thus direct our minds to those eternal transactions before the world itself had birth or being, and to that everlasting covenant in which the whole plan of redemption was laid in the Person of the Son of God. As thus set up in the mind of the Father, and as in due time to assume a nature in and by which all the purposes of grace and love which were in the bosom of God to a guilty race might be accomplished and manifested, he is the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8.) But as we have almost pledged ourselves to close our exposition of this chapter with the closing year we cannot enter further upon this blessed subject.

The main point in it to which we would call the attention of our readers is the stability and firmness which were thereby given to all the thoughts of God's heart and all the counsels of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy in the gift of his dear Son. We live in a changeable, ever-changing world. All outside us is stamped with mutation, death, and decay; and as regards ourselves everything within us tells us how frail, weak, and mutable we are. Thus, as viewed by the eye of sense and reason, uncertainty and changeability are ever seen to be deeply stamped, not only on every event of time, but on all we are and have in body and soul; and this experience of what we feel in ourselves and see in all around us often greatly tries both our faith and hope, for we are apt to measure God by ourselves and judge of our state before him, not according to his word, but according to the varying thoughts and exercises of our mind.

But when we can look by faith through all these mists and fogs which, as resting on the lower grounds of our soul, so often obscure our view of divine realities, to the fixed purposes of God as manifested in an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, and have at the same time some testimony of our interest therein, ground is thus afforded both for faith and hope as resting, not on our ever-changing feelings, but on the word and promise of him that cannot lie. It was thus David was comforted on his bed of languishing when the cold damps of death sat upon his brow. Much trouble had that servant of God had in his house, and much of it, we may add, procured by his own sins. But what were his last words as he lay upon his dying pillow when the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him and his word was in his tongue? "Although my house be not so with God; yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure—for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." (2 Sam. 23:5.)

In a similar way the Apostle lays the foundation for faith and hope, not in ourselves, but in the hope and promise of God—"Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." (Heb. 6:17, 18.) It was then in this "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," that even before the world was formed, man made, or sin committed—a Savior was provided, a Redeemer set up, and the persons of the redeemed chosen in him and given to him. How can we think, then, that any changing and changeable events in time can alter and frustrate what was thus absolutely fixed by firm and sovereign decree, or that any mutable circumstances in ourselves or others can defeat and disannul the eternal purposes of God?

But we would have known nothing of these eternal realities had not these counsels of infinite wisdom and grace been brought to light in the Person and work of the Son of God as manifested in his appearance in the days of his flesh, and here spoken of by Peter as "a lamb without blemish and without spot," in reference to the sacrifice he was to offer, and of which the Paschal lamb was the type and figure. He, therefore, says, "Who was manifested in these last times for you."

Of this manifestation of the Son of God, the Scriptures, in the New Testament, everywhere speak. It is, indeed, the sum and substance of that special revelation of God which we call the New Testament, for every line of it testifies to the appearance of Christ in the flesh. How striking, for instance, on this point, are the words of John—"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) And what a summing-up of the whole gospel is that testimony of the Apostle—"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Tim. 3:16.) All the difference, in fact, between a believer and an unbeliever, between being saved and being lost is summed up in the belief in the Son of God as thus made manifest, according to those striking words of our Lord himself—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) And how well with this agrees the testimony given by him who leaned his head upon the Lord's loving bosom—"And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; and he who has not the Son of God has not life." (1 John 5:11, 12.)

By "these last times" is meant this present dispensation, the dispensation of grace under which we live, and they are called the last times chiefly for two reasons—1, Because Christ was manifested in the last days of the legal dispensation of the old covenant, which now, as decaying and waxing old, was ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13), which it did when at the destruction of Jerusalem the whole of the temple service, including the sacrifices offered there, was brought to an end.

But 2, Another reason why the dispensation under which we live is called "the last days" is because it is the final revelation of God. We cannot here enlarge upon this point. Suffice it to say that under this dispensation we now live. It is "the time accepted," the "day of salvation," of which all the prophets have spoken. (2 Cor. 6:2; Acts 3:24.) Christ is now upon his throne of grace; the great, the glorious, the only Mediator between God and man is now at the right hand of the Father; the Intercessor who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him—seeing he

ever lives to make intercession for them, still lives to plead, as an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, as the great High Priest over the house of God. But he will leave the throne of grace to take his seat on the throne of judgment; and then "these last days" will close in all the glories of salvation to his friends—and in all the horrors of destruction to his foes.

But this leads us to a very important question, that is, to show, with the Apostle, who they are for whom Christ was thus manifested. "Who by him believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." Several things here will demand our attentive consideration.

1. Observe, first, the special mark which is here given of those for whom Christ was manifested. It is said of them that "by him they believe in God." If this be their distinctive mark, we may well inquire what is intended by it. It must surely be a very great thing to believe in God with a faith that brings salvation with it. It is easy to believe that there is a God in nature, or a God in providence, or a God in grace, according to the mere letter of the word, and this is what thousands do who have no manifested interest in redeeming love and atoning blood. In fact, it is the great delusion of the day, the religion of that religious multitude who know neither God nor themselves, neither law nor gospel, neither sin nor salvation. All this is a believing about God, or a believing of God, such as that he exists, or that he is such a God as the Scriptures represent him to be; but this is a very different thing from believing in God. This is a special and peculiar faith, and implies a spiritual and saving knowledge of God, such as our Lord speaks of (John 17:3); and as none can thus know him unto eternal life but from some discovery of himself, some personal manifestation of his presence, some coming near of himself in the power of his word and the operations of his grace, so none can believe in him without a faith of divine operation. The Apostle, therefore, says, "Who by him do believe in God," that is, not only through the merits and mediation of Christ as the Mediator between God and men, but by his special grace, as the Author and Finisher of faith. To believe, therefore, in God is not an act of the natural mind, but it is the gift and work of God, bestowed upon us through the mediation of Christ, and, therefore, as the Apostle says, "given in the behalf of Christ." (Phil. 1:29.)

2. But observe further, that thus to believe in God is to believe in him as he has manifested himself in his dear Son in all the fullness of his love, in all the riches of his grace, and in all the depth of his mercy. "No man," says John, "has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." (John 1:18.) God must be seen, not in the terrors of a holy law, but in the mercy and truth of the glorious gospel of the Son of God, and thus be approached and believed in as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him. How few see and realize this, and yet how severely exercised are many of the living family upon this point! To believe in God in such a way as to bring pardon and peace into their conscience; to believe in God so as to find manifest acceptance with him; to believe in God so as to call him Abba, Father, and feel that the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are his children; to believe in God so as to find him a very present help in trouble; to receive answers to prayer, to walk in the light of his countenance, to have his love shed abroad in the heart, to be manifestly reconciled to him and feel a sense of his manifested goodness and mercy—this is to believe in God through Jesus Christ. And O how different is this from merely believing about God from what we see in nature that he is the Creator of all things, or from what we may have realized of his footsteps in providence that he watches over us as regards the things that perish, or from

seeing in the letter of the word that he is the God of all grace to those who fear his name!

3. But observe, also, the firm foundation which the Apostle has laid for this faith in God, and how needful it is that this foundation would be strong and good. We build for eternity. Our faith, if it be the faith of God's elect, rests not upon a notion or an opinion, or what the Apostle calls "the wisdom of men," however clear, deep, logical, or refined. (1 Cor. 2:5.) It rests upon a solid foundation—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us never forget this. Our faith may ebb and flow, it may sink very low or rise very high; but its ebbings and flowings, its sinkings and risings do not touch or affect the foundation. That foundation is Jesus Christ, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4.) This is the witness of God as distinct from the witness of men, as John speaks—"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he has testified of his Son." (1 John 5:9.) Now, when this witness of God to his dear Son, by raising him from the dead, meets with the witness in our own bosom that this blessed Jesus is the Son of the Father in truth and love, this witness in our own bosom to the Son of God as revealed in us, raises up and draws forth a living faith first in the Son of God, and then by him in the Father, who has sent him. This is the witness of which John speaks—"He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10); and by this double witness the soul becomes assured of, and established in the truth as it is in Jesus.

"And gave him glory."—There is a close and intimate connection between the sufferings and death of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, and his entrance into glory. Our Lord, therefore, said to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" First the cross, then the crown; first "being made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," then "crowned with glory and honor." (Heb. 2:9.) This "glory," which God is here said to have given Christ, is his mediatorial glory, the glory which he now has as wearing our nature in union with his own divine Person in the courts of heaven. Our faith, then, has to embrace Christ, not only as suffering and dying on the cross, and thus delivered for our sins, and Christ as risen from the dead for our justification, but as crowned with glory and honor in the presence of the Father. This is that glory of the Lord which we with open face behold as in a glass, that is, the glass of the gospel on which it shines, and by which it is reflected into the heart, and by beholding which we are, says the Apostle, "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

Now, if we watch the movements of faith upon and toward the blessed Lord, we shall see that it embraces Christ mainly under these three points of view as revealed in the word, and through the word revealed by the Spirit to the heart—1, Christ crucified, as putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself; 2, Christ risen from the dead as declared to be the Son of God with power; and 3, Christ in his present heavenly glory as our Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor above. It is only thus in the actings of faith that we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (Heb. 10:19, 20.) Now, it is this faith in Christ that draws forth and maintains both faith and hope in God.

Out of Christ God is a consuming fire! Our sins are so great, our backslidings so repeated and aggravated, our nature so vile, our hearts so deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that as we view the infinite Majesty of God, his unspeakable holiness, purity, and justice, and thus

see our sins in the light of his countenance, our heart sinks within us with guilty fear, and we can neither believe in him with any comfort, nor even hope in his mercy with any sweet assurance. It is only, then, as we view God manifesting himself in the Person of his dear Son, and for his sake and through his blood and righteousness pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, and accepting us in the Beloved in a way of free and sovereign grace, that our faith and hope can so be in him as to enable us to believe that he is our God, our Father, and our Friend.

And surely there is every encouragement for poor, guilty sinners, "self-condemned and self-aborred," thus to believe, and thus to hope in God, as having sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, as all such will, sooner or later, find to the joy of their soul.

Having thus spoken of a living faith and hope in God, and having pointed out the firmness of the foundation on which they rest, through Whose mediation they are bestowed, and by Whose power they are wrought, the Apostle goes on to show that this faith and hope will have their attendant fruits—"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto sincere love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently." (1 Peter 1:22.)

Three fruits of faith and hope in God are spoken of here—1, obedience to the truth; 2, a purifying of the soul; 3, sincere love of the brethren. We shall now, then, with God's help and blessing, attempt to show the connection of these fruits with faith and hope.

1. The first is, "Obeying the truth through the Spirit." By "the truth" we are to understand the whole truth of God connected with the Person and work of Christ as distinct from the law or any scheme of the wisdom of man. The word "truth" has often this meaning in the New Testament. Thus, of our Lord it is said—"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) Our Lord is himself emphatically "the Truth" (John 14:6); he came that he would bear witness of the truth, and every one that is of the truth hears his voice. (John 18:37.) But it is in the gospel, in the word of his grace, that this truth is revealed to us. All truth is in Christ; and there is no truth but what comes from him, testifies of him, and centers in him. But this truth is made known to us only in the gospel, and, therefore, the Apostle says—"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which has come unto you, as it is in all the world; and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you since the day you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." (Col. 1:5, 6.)

Now, when this truth is made known with a divine power to our hearts, when, as our Lord says, we know the truth, and the truth makes us free (John 8:32); when we receive it by the teaching and testimony of that Holy Spirit who guides into all truth, then we are said to "obey" it; for the first act of obedience is to receive it implicitly, and to submit to it. The Apostle says of Israel of old, that "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Submission, then, to the truth, a reception of it into the heart, an embracing of it in faith and affection, a yielding of ourselves to it as exceedingly precious, is an obeying of it, and is, therefore, called by the Apostle, "the obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:26.) This is receiving the kingdom of God as a little child in humility and love; and those who do not so receive the kingdom of God cannot enter therein. This is "an obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which is delivered to us"

(Rom. 6:17), by which is meant that the heart obeys the mold of truth in the same way as in casting metal the copy obeys the model. But this obedience which the Apostle calls "obeying the gospel" (Rom. 10:16) is "through the Spirit," who by his secret teachings, not only brings the truth before the eyes, but sealing it upon the heart by his divine power, produces that obedience of faith whereby the truth is received in the love of it.

2. Now, the effect of this is to purify the soul. Speaking of the Gentiles, Peter said in the council at Jerusalem—"And God, who knows the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:8, 9.) Thus we see that there is it purifying of the heart by faith. This purifying consists mainly in four things. 1. In purifying the understanding by the shining in of divine light, so as to cleanse it from error; 2, in the purifying of the conscience, to cleanse it from guilt; 3, in the purifying of the will, to cleanse it from self-will and self-seeking; and 4, in purifying the affections, to cleanse them from the love of all that is evil.

Our space will not allow us to trace out the various ways in which the soul is thus purified, nor how a believer may be said, according to the language of the Apostle, to purify his soul by acting in sweet co-operation with the blessed Spirit. The point on which the Apostle seems chiefly to dwell in this purification of the soul by obeying the truth, through the Spirit, is the purifying of the affections from selfishness, so that the third fruit of which we have already spoken may be brought forth—"sincere love of the brethren."

3. Love to the brethren is the first evidence of having passed from death unto life, and will ever be found to rise or sink with faith in the Son of God and with receiving the love of the truth into an obedient heart. In our day there is little "sincere love of the brethren," and the reason is because faith and love in and toward the Lord himself are at so low an ebb. There is a great deal of feigned love, hypocritical love, as the word "feigned" means in the verse before us—many soft, smooth, honeyed words—but little real, sincere, spiritual affection. In a similar way, says Paul, "Love must be sincere." (Rom. 12:9), where it is the same word as is here rendered "sincere," and in both places means literally, as we have hinted, "without hypocrisy."

The Apostle, therefore, here bids us put away all this hypocrisy, all this pretense of affection, often worn as a cloak of real dislike and hatred, all these words smoother than butter when there is war in the heart (Psalm 55:21), all this "How are you, my brother?" before the dagger was plunged into his belly (2 Sam. 20:10); and "to love one another with a pure heart;" that is, a heart purified by grace and the love of God shed abroad in it from selfishness, self-seeking, carnal preferences, and every other corrupt affection which may mar the purity of spiritual love.

Nor is he satisfied with a cold, half-hearted love. He says, "See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently." Let there be warmth and fervor in your love to the brethren as well as sincerity and truth. Do not content yourselves with a poor, base, pitiful, half-dead love, a love that bears nothing, suffers nothing, and does nothing; a love which neither warms your own heart nor anybody else's, and which is so feeble and so faint that, like a fire almost gone out, we can scarcely tell whether it is alight or not, and which neither blowing nor poking will make to burn up.

He thus urges on us a love to the brethren which has these two qualities—purity and warmth, or, as the word might be rendered, intensity. Let your love first be pure and then fervent or intense,

not slack and loose, like a let-down musical string, but tense and tightened, so as to give out a clear and definite note. Let heart be joined to heart with a tender flame of pure affection; let all impure motives be hated and abhorred, such as loving the rich for what you can get, "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16); or the respectable as reflecting a little of their station on you; or the amiable because they are so kind and gentle; or the young, the handsome, and the well-dressed because they please the eye, and thus, perhaps, mingle the lust of the flesh with the love of the Spirit. Hate and abhor all this filth of the flesh, and not only so, but let your love be fervent as well as pure, and let the fervor of your mutual love break forth and burst through all those hindrances which so dampen and obscure it. Alas! alas! how deficient are we all here! What little real brotherly love there is in the churches! What strife, contention, and division in many! What coldness, shyness, and deadness in nearly all! A few here and there may seem closely knit together and to walk in love and affection; but taking the churches generally, never was love to the brethren, as it appears to us, sunk lower than now.

But we must not linger here; but as we wish to close our Meditations with the closing year, pass on to the next point dwelt on by the Apostle—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23.)

It is only those who are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word of God who can and will love one another. All that is born of the flesh is flesh, and therefore corrupt and corruptible; and such ever must be the feigned love of mere professors of religion. It is corrupt in its very birth, has the taint of mortal disease in it from the beginning, and usually manifests itself in its true character as false, deceitful, and hypocritical before it dies its natural death in open enmity and dislike. But that which is born of God, the new man of grace, of which love is the distinguishing feature (1 John 4:7; 5:1), is, like himself, incorruptible. It is a new, holy, and heavenly nature, and therefore cannot be stained with sin, though it lives and dwells in a body which is nothing but sin; nor can it ever die or see corruption, for as God himself lives and abides forever, so will that which is born of God live and abide forever, for it lives in death, through death, and after death, and has its eternal home in the bosom of God.

Now, none but those who are thus made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) are born again, and as such possess a life which can never die; for as their first birth introduced them into this lower world, so their second birth introduces them into the upper world. Our Lord, therefore, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who believes in me has" (not "shall have" hereafter, but "has" now) "everlasting life." (John 6:47.) And similarly to the woman of Samaria—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14.) All around us is fading away; but the life which Christ gives to those whom the Father has given unto him is eternal. (John 17:2; 10:28.)

He, therefore, adds, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away. But the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:24, 25.) All flesh, and everything that springs from the flesh, and is connected with the flesh, is as grass, which, for a time, looks green and flourishing; but touched with the mower's scythe, or scorched by the midday sun, soon withers and fades away. Such is all flesh, without exception, from the highest to the lowest. As in nature, some grass grows thicker and longer than others, and makes, for a while, a brighter show,

but the scythe makes no distinction between the light crop and the heavy, so the scythe of death mows down with equal sweep the rich and the poor, and lays in one common grave all the children of men. No, all the glory of man, everything in which he boasts himself, all his pride and honor, pomp and power, are but as the flower of grass.

You have seen sometimes in the early spring the grass in flower, and you have noticed those little yellowish "anthers," as they are termed, which tremble at every breeze. This is "the flower of grass;" and though so inconspicuous as almost to escape observation, yet as much its flower as the tulip or the rose is the flower of the plant which bears each. Now, as the grass withers, so the flower thereof falls away. It never had, at its best state, much permanency or strength of endurance, for it hung as by a thread, and it required but a little gust of wind to blow it away, and make it as though it never had been. Such is all the pride of the flesh, and all the glory of man.

But is there nothing that endures amid all that thus withers and falls away? Yes, the word of the Lord. We need hardly observe that the Apostle here is quoting and commenting on a well-known passage in the prophet Isaiah—"A voice said, "Shout!" I asked, "What should I shout?" "Shout that people are like the grass that dies away. Their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of flowers in a field. The grass withers, and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord. And so it is with people. The grass withers, and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever." (Isa. 40:6-8.) Upon this prophetic declaration the Apostle puts his comment—"This is the word which, by the gospel, is preached unto you;" as if he would say, "The word of our God, of which the prophet declared it would stand forever, is the word of his grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is now preached by us apostles unto you. It was to this preached gospel that Isaiah referred, and you yourselves who hear it are witnesses of its accomplishment."

Now, the same gospel which was preached unto them is preached unto us in the word of truth which we have in our hands; and if we have received that gospel into a believing heart, we have received for ourselves that word of the Lord which endures forever. And thus, though all our own flesh is as grass, and all in which we might naturally glory is but as the flower of grass, and though this grass must wither in death, and the flower thereof shall fall away, when the place which now knows us shall know us no more, yet we have an enduring substance in the gospel of the grace of God, and, so far as we have received that gospel, and known it to be the power of God unto salvation, when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

With these words we close our exposition of 1 Peter 1; and if we have in any way been favored and blessed to throw any light upon this part of God's word, or brought forward anything which may have been for the edification, encouragement, and consolation of our spiritual readers, to the God of all grace be ascribed all the honor and glory!

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