

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

by Thomas Reade

Reade's devotional exploration of the Apostle Paul's spiritual journey and experiences as recorded in Scripture, emphasizing that Christianity is fundamentally a religion of the heart and displaying the beauty of evangelical religion through Paul's example of faith, love, and service.

24 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00 CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, as Displayed
2. Chapter 1
3. Chapter 2
4. Chapter 3.
5. Chapter 4 .
6. Chapter 5.
7. Chapter 6.
8. Chapter 7.
9. Chapter 8.
10. Chapter 9.
11. Chapter 10.
12. Chapter 11.
13. Chapter 12.
14. Chapter 13.
15. Chapter 14.
16. Chapter 15.
17. Chapter 16.
18. Chapter 17.
19. Chapter 18.
20. Chapter 19.
21. Chapter 20.
22. Chapter 21.
23. Chapter 22.
24. Chapter 23.

00 CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, as Displayed

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, as Displayed

in the Life and Writings of Paul by Thomas Reade, 1841

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

PREFACE.

This little treatise has no pretensions to novelty, being on subjects which form the daily meditation of the devout Christian, and from which he derives his purest enjoyment; neither does the Author presume to vie with those, whose works on the life of Paul, have enriched the stores of Sacred Literature.

His design in publishing these thoughts on the Experience of the Apostle, is, in some feeble measure to exhibit the beauty of Evangelical Religion: by bringing into one view, the varied excellencies of Paul's character; and by unfolding those principles of faith and love, which, through the Spirit, made him so great a blessing to mankind.

Christianity is the religion of the heart. Every doctrine of the Gospel is a sacred spring of holiness. In these pages, the author has therefore endeavored to treat these mysteries of grace, not controversially, but practically: not as subjects for speculation, but as sources of peace and joy.

To the spiritual reader, no apology would be requisite, for the numerous extracts which are inserted from the writings of Paul. These form the intrinsic value of the work. They are precious Jewels, however humble may be the casket in which they are conveyed.

What language can so well describe the inward joys and griefs of the Apostle, as his own heart-felt addresses to the churches of the saints. By them he being dead yet speaks.

May He, whose Power is manifested the weakest instruments, be pleased to render this humble tribute of affection to His cause subservient to the purposes of His glory.

The author is indebted to W. H. Bathurst, for several original hymns, extracted from his collection of "Psalms and Hymns, for public and private use;" which are as spiritual to feeling, as they are beautiful in composition.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"Blest is the Book whose leaves display,

Jesus the Life, the Truth, the Way;

Read it with diligence, and with prayer;

Search it, and you will find Him there."

At a period like the present, when knowledge is rapidly increasing, through the prevalence of education and the facilities of the press; when infidelity, alive to these advantages, is insinuating its

poison in every form; when errors are unhappily springing up, and divisions are weakening the Christian Church- what a treasure is the Word of God.

Here we have Light, to dissipate our darkness- Truth, to guide us amid the mazes of error- Consolations, to gladden us in a world of misery.

The Bible is the Revelation of a Father's love- the Expression of Jehovah's grace to sinners- the Depository of heavenly blessings- the Charter of our highest privileges. The Bible is the religion of Protestants- the glory of our churches- the Poor Man's Friend. Every thing sublime in conception, and tender in expression, it is to be found in the Sacred Scriptures.

The Eternal Jehovah has there revealed Himself as clothed with majesty and honor; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; in whose sight the heavens are not clean. And there, he has manifested forth his glory, as mighty to save; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

In that blessed Volume, Mercy is seen to arrest the arm of Justice, and all the tenderness of the Father is displayed in the person of the Son. Love breathes throughout its sacred pages; for even when he declares. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,"- the severe reproof is but "the graver countenance of love." Can we then neglect the Scriptures, which contain the richest treasures, compared with which, all else is poor indeed.

When the Creator of the world becomes an Author, his word must be as perfect as his work. The heavens declare the glory of God, and so does the Volume of his Truth. To the humble seeker after God, the Lord makes himself known as a God of grace and mercy- for the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit no sooner applies the truth as it is in Jesus with power to the heart, than the desert is made to rejoice and to blossom as the rose; the soul is beautified with salvation, and all its powers are consecrated to the service of its Redeemer; "for the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Hence, David, from happy experience could say, "By them is your servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Before his resurrection Jesus prayed in behalf of his disciples, "Holy Father, sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." And after his resurrection, by his own Almighty Power, he opened their understanding, to understand the Scriptures. Happy then shall we be, if, in unison with the Psalmist we can say, "O how I love your law, it is my meditation all the day. Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Your word has quickened me."

Everything around is given to change. Sickness impairs the hue of health; adversity, the prospect of pleasant years; earthly friends may vary in their aspect towards us- at one time, bestowing the testimony of affection, at another, grieving us by a chilling slight. But in the Volume of his Truth, our heavenly Father gives the sweet assurance, that He Changes Not. His Love, his Faithfulness, his Power, are infinite. To all his adopted children his promises in Christ are yes, and in Him amen, to the glory of his grace; for Jesus is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever; having loved his

own, he loved them unto the end. Blessed Truth! Consolatory declaration! How animating, how supporting to the tempted and tempest-tossed believer. O my soul, are you resting upon this immutable rock? Is the unchangeableness of Jehovah-Jesus, your sure foundation? What can disturb your peace beneath the smiles of infinite, everlasting love? Nothing but sin, indulged in the heart, ought to trouble you. If Jesus dwells within you by his Spirit; if you are united to him, and are abiding in him by a living faith; if your guilt is removed through the merit of his blood, and the efficacy of his intercession; then fear not, for nothing can harm you; do not be afraid, for nothing shall be able to separate you from his love. He who saves you is unchangeable, none can pluck you out of his hands.

When Ishmael was dying from thirst in the wilderness of Beersheba, God opened the eyes of Hagar, and she saw a well of water, which imparted strength to her child.

We also are perishing in a thirsty land, where there is no water. God graciously opens our eyes to behold that well of salvation which he has provided for perishing sinners. With joy he enables us to draw forth its restoring water, and receiving in faith this gift of grace, our souls are quickened, renewed in holiness, and strengthened to serve God in the Gospel of his Son. O! how can we sufficiently praise our loving Savior, for the blessings which he reveals and imparts to us in his Holy Word.

Whatever man touches he defiles, because his nature is corrupted through the fall. All that proceeds from God is holy. "Every word of God is pure." So David found it. "The word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it." It was a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path. He rejoiced in the Word of God, as one that finds great spoil. In his estimation, it was more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold; to his spiritual taste it was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. He treasured up the Divine word in his mind, and had it ready on every occasion. "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Through your precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way."

There is no situation in which a believer can be placed, however dark or intricate, however slippery or perilous, but in the Bible he will find appropriate guidance and adequate support. For, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Word of God is wonderful in its operation on the heart and conscience, through the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit, being quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. "Is not my word like as a fire," says the Lord, and "like the hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" As fire hardens the clay, and melts the wax; as it consumes the dross, and purifies the gold; so does the Word of the Lord. Pharaoh was judicially hardened; David was graciously softened. The former, being left in righteous judgment to the natural working of his heart, resisted the Divine Word, and was destroyed; the latter, being deeply humbled through grace, under the pointed reproofs of the Prophet, confessed his sin with penitential sorrow, and obtained forgiveness.

Some do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, and perish for lack of knowledge. Others, being unlearned and unstable, twist the Scriptures unto their own destruction- while others

again, hold the Truth in unrighteousness, and perish in their own corruption. But in the midst of all this ignorance and perversion, "the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein." All who will not submit to the authority of God's Word, shall be broken by the power of his wrath; but, "to this man," says the Lord, "will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

The Word of God and prayer are the divinely appointed instruments, in the hand of the Spirit, for defeating the machinations of Satan and establishing the kingdom of righteousness in the earth—that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man. This was strikingly verified in the success of the Apostles, who, having declared— "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," saw the immediate fruit of this devotedness to their work; for Luke informs us, that the Word of God increased, that the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Our hearts are evil; we are surrounded by temptations to evil; and the Evil One is ever on the watch to destroy us. Where then must we flee, and to whom must we look for safety? Jesus is our refuge— His love and His power can shield and save us. He is the Captain of our salvation; the mighty Conqueror over sin and death. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus repelled his assaults by wielding the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. To each temptation addressed to his mind, he answered, "it is written," and the Scripture thus powerfully applied, drove back the enemy, until he departed from him, foiled and vanquished.

How strengthening, how consoling is the Word of Truth. With this spiritual armory, this divine treasury, we shall be fortified for the conflict, equipped for our pilgrimage, and upheld amid the dangers of this evil world. As the traveler, in an unknown land, needs a faithful guide; as the mariner, traversing dangerous seas, requires a chart and a compass: so we need a guide and a directory while passing through this world of peril. God has mercifully given us this help.

In his Holy Word, our loving Father has made ample provision for the needs of Zion's pilgrims; while the Spirit, shining into our hearts, enables us clearly to perceive, through his revealed truth, the consecrated way to heaven— Jesus Christ, the righteous. With what fervor then should we bless our God and Savior for all these tokens of his kindness towards us.

Are we bowed down under a sense of the guilt of sin? It is written, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Do we dread a repulse from the mercy-seat? It is written, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Is our heart trembling, under the consciousness of utter helplessness at the sight of Satan's power? It is written, "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right-hand of my righteousness. My grace is sufficient for you. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Are we groaning under the workings of indwelling sin? It is written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death; I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Do we long for faith, and love, and every grace? It is written; "He shall give you the desires of your heart. Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Whatever you shall ask in my name, believing, you shall receive."

Are we panting after the Savior's presence? It is written, "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings. If any man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Do we feel our need of spiritual wisdom and divine direction? It is written, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

Are we afraid of temporal calamity? It is written, "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover you with his feathers; and under his wings shall you trust; his Truth shall be your shield and buckler. Call upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

Does the world frown upon us, and persecute us for Jesus' sake? It is written, "Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law. Do not fear the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings. I, even I, am He that comforts you. Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be as grass, and forget the Lord your Maker. But I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear Him who, When he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, fear him. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Do we tremble at the thought of death, and an approaching judgment? It is written, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name."

What a precious book must that be, which can thus provide for every trial and need of the Christian. There is no conceivable state of mind which we may be in, no circumstance in which we can be placed, no exercise of faith and patience which we may be called to endure, but in the Word of God we shall find direction, comfort, and support equal to our day. Surely then, we should daily prize this Word of Salvation, which reveals Jesus in all his fullness, the world in all its emptiness, and heaven in all its glory. There, as in a mirror, we are taught to know ourselves; and with this lamp, we are enabled to walk in safety, amid the dangers which surround our path. O that

we may have grace to receive the Truth into our hearts, and to embrace it in the simplicity of faith. The doctrines and precepts, the histories and characters, the promises and threatenings, contained in the Bible, are all designed to enlighten and purify the soul.

Blessed will that period be, when every human being shall possess the Word of Life, and when every heart shall feel its regenerating power. Lord, hasten on this long-expected day; a day of peace and joy, when all mankind shall love as brethren, and unite to glorify your name. O send out your Light and your Truth, let your Word have free course and be glorified, by the conversion of the world unto you.

Jesus, who is the Light of the World, shines to us through the pages of Eternal Truth. The Bible is full of Christ. It leads our souls to him as the source of its promises, the subject of its prophecies, and the substance of its revealed glories; for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell- fullness of light, fullness of love, fullness of power, fullness of glory.

"Jesus, my Savior, in your face

The essence lives of every grace;

All things beside which charm the sight,

Are shadows filled with glowworm light.

Your beauty Lord, the enraptured eye

Which fully views it, first must die;

Then let me die, through death to know,

That joy I cannot taste below."

It has been well remarked, that "there are peculiarities belonging to Sacred History, so remote from everything seen among men, and such an unearthly character is given even to its relation of ordinary concerns, that the most superficial observer can scarcely fail to distinguish it from every human production." Its true and faithful portraiture of our own nature, its appeals to the heart of the reader, alone suffice to establish the observation. "There is a knowledge of the human heart, a master key to its subtlest recesses, which not only surpasses human penetration in its origin, but astonishes, while it terrifies the individual, whose bosom is laid open to his own inspection, and who finds himself a stranger, where he had thought himself most at home. Not a lurking passion is suffered to remain undetected in its living pictures. Motives, which we should be ashamed to avow, are dragged before our conscience in the history of another; and while his sentence is passed, we feel a personal condemnation." Thus the Bible speaks to the heart through the understanding; for these things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Thrice happy then is the heart in which the Word of Christ dwells richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Such a heart shall be kept in perfect peace, while passing through this valley of tears. Trials may assail, and griefs may pierce its tenderest part, but all shall still be well. "Faith and hope will sustain the believer amid the swelling billows, until Jesus shall place his servant beyond the reach of sorrow."

Does the Lord of glory speak
To his creatures here below;
And may souls so frail and weak
All his gracious dealings know?
Does the blessed Bible bring,
Tidings from our heavenly King?
O with what intense desire,
Should we search that sacred book;
Here, our zeal should never tire,
Here, we should delight to look
For the rules by mercy giv'n,
To conduct our souls to heaven.
Shall not he, that humbly seeks,
All the light of truth discern?
Do we not, when Jesus speaks,
Feel our hearts within us burn?
For his soul-reviving voice
Bids the mourner to rejoice.
Lord, your teaching grace impart,
That we may not read in vain;
Write your precepts on our heart,
Make your truths and doctrines plain;
Let the message of your love
Guide us to your rest above."

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

ON THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS.

Of all the records of Divine Grace, which are treasured up in the Holy Scriptures, none more strikingly exhibits its sovereignty and power, than the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. To the believer in Jesus, it must be a source of edification and encouragement, to trace the experience of this chosen vessel, from his first reception of the Savior, to the close of his eventful life. When writing to the Christians at Corinth, he could say, through the grace bestowed upon him, "Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." May we have grace to resemble this holy man, in his spiritual mindedness and devotedness to the Redeemer.

Here, is the faith and patience of the saints. As grace brings them out of darkness into light, so will grace conduct them to the realms of glory. Entering the celestial city with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall see the King in his beauty, and raise the head-stone of the spiritual temple with shoutings, crying, "grace, grace unto it."

While viewing the character of the Apostle in his UNCONVERTED state, we must be struck with that more than Egyptian darkness which beclouded his mind. He was of the strictest sect of the Pharisees, who, in general, were bigoted, cruel, and high-minded and proud. For the appearance of greater sanctity, they not only fasted often, and made long prayers, but separated themselves from the herd of mankind; from whom they were distinguished by the badges peculiar to their sect— as, long robes, broad phylacteries, and large fringes and borders of their garments. They were active and diligent in what cost them little; and so contrived the scheme of their religion, that what they did might be seen by men to the best advantage. They coveted, and obtained the praise of men. All their religions and kindness were confined within the bounds of their own party; and the first principle which they taught their new converts was- That none but they were godly, and that all other people were worthless. They therefore endeavored to inspire them with zeal and fierceness against all who differed from them, so that if anyone dared to speak favorably of Jesus of Nazareth, he was put out of the synagogue, and persecuted, even unto death. Such was the character, and such the religion of Saul the Pharisee.

Being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, he was well acquainted with the writings of Moses and the Prophets; but he knew not the true spiritual meaning of those prophecies which relate to the character, work, sufferings, and glory of the Messiah. So true it is, that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Is not this our condition until taught of God to know the misery of our fallen state? We never value the Savior until we feel our need of him; for those who are whole need not a physician, but those who are sick. What cause then have we to bless God, if the Spirit has graciously opened our eyes to see our guilt, and made our hearts to feel a genuine sorrow for sin. Jesus will then be dear, yes,

infinitely precious to our souls, His name will be as ointment poured forth.

Saul was zealous for the Law, as a covenant of works; but he saw not the glory of Jesus, who is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes. Though scrupulously exact in Pharisaical observances, he could overcome his scruples, and unite with infidel Sadducees to suppress the religion of Jesus, just as Herod and Pilate overcame their mutual enmity when combining to effect his crucifixion.

In the fullness of time, the Sun of Righteousness arose to bless the earth, with healing in his wings. By good old Simeon he was hailed as "a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." But, "the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." The promised Deliverer "came unto his own, and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The kings of the earth took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

And in this our day, how many are fighting against Christ and his Gospel. Satan has his emissaries, who are busily employed in attacking Christianity, by bold assertions and daring blasphemies; while others, under the garb of orthodoxy, are opposing the humble, yet zealous preacher of the Truth, that real friend and builder of the Church, as if he were nothing better than a troubler in Israel. The Gospel of peace is the innocent occasion of this fiery opposition, agreeably to our blessed Savior's own declaration, "I have come to send fire on the earth. Do you suppose that I have come to give peace on earth, I tell you no, but rather division. Do not think that I have come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword."

The real cause of this warfare, lies hidden in the enmity of the carnal heart, and in the influence which Satan exercises over the minds of them who believe not the Truth. How frequently is this verified in worldly families, when any of their members have been brought to a deep concern for the salvation of the soul. No sweetness of spirit, no humility of mind, no act of self-denial, no endeavor to oblige, can render the obnoxious individuals pleasing in the eyes of their carnal relatives. A frown, a sneer, or a laugh, is frequently employed to intimidate or shame the young believer in Jesus. Sometimes this hatred manifests itself by expulsion from the paternal dwelling, and exclusion from the father's will. Even a mother, in her blinded enmity to the Truth, can deliver her once beloved child into the bloody arms of the Inquisition. Superstition, bigotry, and worldly hatred, have in all ages ravaged the sheep of Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples, "You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. They shall put you out of the synagogues, yes, the time comes, that whoever kills you will think he does God service; and these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. You shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Such has been, and such is the spirit of the world- a determination to retain the forms of Christianity, and to crush its power. The offence of the cross has not ceased. In many countries, where Papal darkness reigns, the old enmity is still in vigorous operation. The Man of Sin cannot endure the light of Truth, nor those who shine as lights in the world. Even in this favored land- this land of Bibles; from where the true light shines with such a glorious luster into surrounding nations,

the spirit of persecution is not extinct. It still works in the bosom of the bigoted, the carnal, and the infidel opposer of the Truth.

Through the mercy of our God we have long been protected from open violence, and are yet privileged to serve him without bodily fear. But who can tell how soon the 'concealed evil' may be permitted to break forth into action? Nothing but Almighty Power can restrain the malice of Satan and the bitter enmity of the natural heart. Are not dark clouds gathering around us? Do we not hear the awful sounds of an approaching storm? A persecuting spirit is not from above. Urged on by the powers of darkness, it springs from ignorance of the true God, from pride, and from that deadly root of all evil, unbelief.

James and John felt its workings, when they desired that fire might descend from heaven, and consume a Samaritan village, because its inhabitants refused to receive their Divine Master. Jesus rebuked them, and said; "You know not what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." This blinded state of heart, which fills the earth with misery and bloodshed, was awfully displayed in the spirit and conduct of Saul. Luke, the inspired writer of the Acts of the Apostles, informs us, that when Saul was a young man, the clothes of those who stoned Stephen were laid at his feet; that he consented to the death of this holy disciple; that he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and binding men and women, committed them to prison.

Whether Saul was any further engaged in the death of Stephen does not appear. However, the circumstance recorded by Luke, of his guarding the clothes of his murderers, loudly proclaims his approbation of the deed. Let us never forget, that God looks chiefly at the heart; and if the vote be passed there, he writes the man guilty, though he stir no farther. It is easy to murder another by a silent wish, or a passionate desire, as Jesus has declared, in his searching Sermon on the Mount, and John, in his first Epistle. In all moral actions, whether good or evil, God regards the will; and accounts the man a companion in sin, who, though he may never actually join in it, yet inwardly applauds and likes it.

The storm thus begun, increased rapidly. A violent persecution afflicted and dispersed the Christians at Jerusalem, who went every where preaching the Word. Like all the dispensations of God towards his Church, it was over-ruled for the more rapid extension of the Gospel, just as a scattered fire increases the conflagration. The rage of Saul was so fierce at this period, that, in the strong language of the sacred historian, he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. Not satisfied with his own anathemas, he went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them to Jerusalem.

How wonderful is the Divine forbearance. Truly God is strong and patient. Though in his wisdom he may permit the persecutor's fury to rage for a season, yet, through his power, he makes the wrath of man to praise him; and in his love, he over-rules all for the purifying and enlargement of his Church. He who said to the mighty ocean, Hitherto shall you come, but no further, and here shall your proud waves be stayed- can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. All hearts are under the divine control, and can be chained or changed according to His purpose, who works all things after the counsel of his own will. In every age, God is pleased to manifest his power either in the conversion or the destruction of sinners; for He, who rules over all, must and

shall be feared by all intelligent creatures. Oh that the prayers of his Church may speedily be answered, by the ushering in of that period when His name shall be hallowed; His kingdom come; and His will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

The time was now arrived when Infinite Love purposed to make such a manifestation of its glory, as would fill heaven with joy, and earth with praise. The enemy had come in like a flood, but the Spirit of the Lord was about to lift up a standard against him. While Saul was hastening to Damascus, full of persecuting fury, and intending to strike a deadly blow at the infant Church of Christ, thinking thereby, "to do God service;" Jesus met him in the way. Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about him, greater than the brightness of the sun. The fiery bigot, checked in his career, fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? He said; Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said; I am Jesus whom you persecute. But rise, and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of those things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will show unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith that is in me." Saul, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what will you have me to do? And the Lord said; Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do." Being unable to see because of the glory of that light, he was led by the hand of those who were with him, and came to Damascus.

What a display of sovereign grace is here presented to our view. The bloody persecutor now lies prostrate at the feet of Jesus. Though his bodily eyes were darkened, the film of ignorance was removed from his mind, the enmity of his heart was destroyed, the strong-holds of unbelief and pride were thrown down, and he became teachable and submissive like a little child.

"Over the raging waves of human will,

The Savior's Spirit walked; and all was still."

Have we ever experienced this converting grace of Jesus? Has a divine light ever darted into our minds, showing us, by its irresistible power, the wretchedness of our condition, and the glory of Emmanuel? Have we been brought in humble submission to the foot of the cross, and there found pardon, and peace, and joy, and rest to our souls? Until this great work be done, we are exposed to the curses of the Law, and the eternal vengeance of a Holy God. But love invites us to his throne, and all who touch the scepter of his grace shall live.

To prepare the way for Saul's admission into the Christian Church, Jesus appeared in a vision to Ananias, a disciple dwelling at Damascus, and commanded him to enquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul, that he might put his hand on him, and restore him to sight. Ananias, dreading the interview, replied, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem and here, he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on your name." Jesus graciously dissipated his fears; "Go your way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Then Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, Jesus, who appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The God of our fathers has chosen you, that you should know his will, and see that JUST ONE, and should hear the voice of his mouth. For, you shall be his witness unto all men, of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you tarry? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

Saul, thus adopted into the family of God, through faith in Jesus, was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; "He immediately preached Christ in the synagogues; that he is the Son of God; showing first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works fit for repentance, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

Can we then be surprised, that all who heard him preach the unsearchable riches of Christ should be amazed, saying "Is not this he that destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

The conversion of the heart to God is the work of Omnipotence. It is described in Scripture by the boldest figures, being compared to a transition from darkness to light, from death to life; to a new birth, and a new creation. The heart of stone is changed into a heart of flesh, and the haughty rebel is converted into an obedient child. O let us adore the infinite loving-kindness of our God and Savior, who delights in mercy, not desiring the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his way and live.

Lord! what is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you visit him. Wretched fallen man, whose heart rises in rebellion against you, might justly have been left to perish in his sins. But Oh! how infinite is the love which rescues us from deserved woe, and raises us to the highest seat in glory.

Can we meditate on this grace, and not feel humbled and thankful? Alas! so hard are our hearts, that even the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion of our loving Savior, can be viewed without emotion. Grace alone can melt the rocky heart. Saul was softened, his obduracy was removed, and his darkness dissipated by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Who then need despair, when the bloody Saul is accepted and saved? Oh! that the Eternal Spirit may descend in all his saving influence on this ruined world; then will earth once more resemble heaven, where Jehovah is loved, and honored, and obeyed, with constancy and delight.

Lord! look upon the covenant of peace, that rainbow which surrounds your throne of mercy, for the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations. Stir up the wills of your faithful people, subdue the wills of your enemies; draw all hearts to yourself, until all the kingdoms of this world shall acknowledge Christ to be the Lord.

The sacred historian informs us that Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that Jesus is very Christ. Thus his growth in grace, and in

the knowledge of his God and Savior, evidenced the soundness of his conversion, and the reality of his faith.

The scriptural evidence of saving faith is love; love to Christ, and love to his people. How heart searching was the question of Jesus to Peter; "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?" How distinctive the badge which he has given us of our discipleship, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." The conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the faith of the Gospel, is a standing testimony to the truth of Christianity; and will remain to the end of time, a monument of Almighty Power. With gratitude, he himself declared to the Galatian church this act of the divine sovereignty; "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The whole was from Him, who will be gracious to whom he will be gracious. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can also shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Like Saul, we may be zealous for our own views, and jealous for the interests of our own party; like him, we may blindly attach merit to a spirit of persecution, and think to exterminate those who differ from as is to do God service; but is this the spirit which should dwell and rule in the children of God? Would not such a state of heart prove us to be carnal, however flaming our religious profession might be?

Nothing could be less prepared for a cordial reception of the Gospel than the mind of Saul, when journeying toward Damascus. At this memorable period he was utterly destitute of true repentance and saving faith. He saw in Christ no beauty that he should desire him. The Lambs were daily sacrificed upon the temple-altar, but he never felt the need of a better sacrifice to take away sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness- The high-priest entered every year into the holy place with the blood of others, but he never looked beyond the type to the true Melchisedek, whose atonement and intercession alone could open the gates of heaven, and procure for him an admittance there; the Scriptures were read every Sabbath-day, but to him they were a sealed book- expecting a temporal prince, whose reign should surpass that of David in victories, and that of Solomon in splendor, he spurned at the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to the office of the Messiah- full of overweening thoughts of his own excellence, he could not brook the idea of being saved through the righteousness of another, and especially through Him whom the rulers had condemned as a malefactor, and crucified between two thieves. Scrupulously observant of the letter, he was indifferent to the spiritual requirements of the Law. Hence he felt no humbling convictions on account of the inward workings of evil. His conscience was at ease, so long as he could maintain a decent exterior, and enjoy the reputation of superior sanctity. Every unholy passion, directed against the Son of God, and his redeemed people, was extolled as praise-worthy zeal and meritorious service. The more he ravaged the despised sect of the Nazarenes, the higher he rose in his own estimation, and in that of the rulers.

Such were the self-righteous feelings of Saul, when arrested by the blessed Jesus in his mad career. What power, short of Omnipotence, could have effected so sudden, so great, so universal a change! It was truly the work of that Eternal Word who said, amid the darkness of chaos- "Let there be light, and there was light." He was made a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things passed away, and all things became new. His proud heart was humbled; his breast, so lately filled

with rage, now overflowed with love; his mind, once so dark, was now enlightened to see his vileness; and so earnest were his cries for mercy, that the Searcher of hearts himself bore testimony to his sincerity, by declaring to the fearful Ananias, "Behold, he prays."

Strictly moral in his conduct, and well versed in the traditions of the elders- zealous for God, and ready to extinguish every spark of supposed heresy; Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion, was like the whited sepulcher- beautiful to look at. Yet, with all these Jewish attractions, his heart was not right with God. While he made many and long prayers, he never breathed the contrite sigh; while he thanked God that he was not as other men, he never cried from a broken heart- "God be merciful to me a sinner." In this state of blind unbelief and spiritual insensibility, rejecting the mercy of God, and the Savior of mankind, he would have filled up the measure of his iniquities, had not sovereign grace snatched him as a brand from the burning, and made him a vessel unto honor, sanctified and fit for the Master's use.

Is the case of Saul an uncommon one in this our day? Alas! no. Thousands possess the Bible, who are ignorant of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer; thousands attend the ordinances of the Gospel, who never feel its power; thousands are very zealous for the religion of their fathers, who yet ridicule such of their brethren, as excel them in the spirituality of their affections, and the holiness of their lives. During the reign of Papal darkness, what thousands glutted themselves with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, exulting, with Princes and Bishops over the sheep of Christ, rejoicing to see the sacred fires of the Inquisition lighted up, to consume the bodies of the faithful, who protested against the errors of the Church of Rome. The Beast, though wounded, is not yet dead! The ancient enmity to the light of Truth is still in active operation!

In every age, the heart of man is the same unvarying spring of evil. Under every covering, whether it be that of outward morality, or amiability of temper, it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Every garment of nature's weaving, how beautiful soever its texture or coloring, is too scanty wholly to conceal the inbred corruption. Divine Truth, with unsparing hand, tears away the flimsy veil, and discovers the heart in all its vileness. "You say I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But while he who is THE TRUTH, thus exposes to herself the fallen church of Laodicea, he most graciously adds, "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see."

This exposure, however humiliating, was the fruit of covenant love; "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." And now, behold a display of condescending mercy, which should move every heart, and awaken every Christian feeling; "Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends." O! that all may listen to the voice of mercy, inviting the soul to sweet communion with the Savior, before it be exchanged for the thunders of the day of Judgment. Nothing will abide the fiery trial, but the gold which Jesus promises to bestow. True faith, producing its happy fruits, shall be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, who, like the refiner's fire, shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.

How painful is the thought, that the hearts of dying creatures should be so averse from that religion which breathes nothing but peace and good-will toward man. The religion of Jesus is emphatically the religion of love- Divine Love embodied in its most endearing form. True happiness increases, as the power of the Gospel in the heart increases. The more we resemble Christ- in his meekness and humility, in his love and obedience, the more we shall enjoy the presence of God, and the sweeter anticipations we shall have of future glory.

Our aversion to holiness proves us to be the children of the fall. Our nature is radically corrupt. We may respect the decencies of religion, while pride, yes, even hatred to real godliness, rankles in our breast. Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus, and so it is with every merely nominal Christian, who is a stranger to the plague of his own heart, and has never felt the need of a better righteousness than his own, to justify him in the sight of God.

There is a little flock, saved by grace, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. Saul was brought into the fold, and so will all who betake themselves, through the Spirit, to the good Shepherd. Writing to these redeemed ones, Jude gives this affectionate exhortation; "But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." May all who read these pages drink deeply into the spirit of this apostolic exhortation, that receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, they may join the glorified Church in heaven, in ascribing blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.

Chapter 3.

Chapter 3.

PAUL'S HUMILIATING CONFESSION.

THE OPPOSITION HE MET WITH FROM THE JEWS.

HIS RECEPTION AT JERUSALEM BY THE APOSTLES.

THE NATURAL ENERGY OF HIS CHARACTER.

PRIDE is the great opposer of regenerating grace, and would, if unsubdued, forever close the heart against the entrance of the Spirit. By an act of sovereign love, the proud sinner is made sensible of his guilt and helplessness. The Spirit, through his convincing light, empties him of all haughty thoughts of his own righteousness and strength; while the Law, in which he trusted, affords him no shelter from the arm of Justice. By its spirituality and extent, reaching to the inmost motions of the will, the Law pronounces his condemnation; and extorting from him the anxious cry- What trust I do to be saved?- becomes a schoolmaster to bring him unto Christ, that he may be justified by faith. Thus, through grace he renounces all dependence on his own works, and is resolved to be saved in God's way, or to perish at his feet.

Such were the feelings of Paul, now that he was baptized with the Holy Spirit, and made a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ -SELF was crucified. With heart-felt sorrow he confessed his guilt, bore the most open testimony to the former enmity of his heart, and magnified that grace which brought him out of darkness into marvelous light. O happy change! the fruit of everlasting love.

Many striking instances are recorded of his self-abasing acknowledgments. When standing on the stairs of a castle at Jerusalem, he said to the infuriated multitude, who were ready to tear him in pieces for his boldness in preaching Christ, as the King and Redeemer of Israel; "I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women, as the high-priest bears me witness, and all the estate of the elders, from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring those who were there, bound to Jerusalem to be punished." With this usual sincerity, when pleading his cause before King Agrippa, he unhesitatingly declared, "I thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which things I did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints I put in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them; and I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them, even unto strange cities." To the Galatian converts, he told the same humiliating history; "You have heard of my life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and devastated it." In his Epistles to the Christians at Corinth, he thus abases himself; "I am the least of the Apostles, and am not fit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God."

Enumerating to the believers at Philippi his Pharisaical merits, of which he was once so proud, he ranks as one of their number, "his zeal in persecuting the Church." To the Ephesians, in a strain of sweet humility, he thus extols his grace which was so richly manifested in his conversion; "I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

How beautiful is true humility; it is the very image of Jesus. This heavenly grace gives such a sweetness to him who possesses it, that even the world attempts to imitate so lovely an attainment. The essential difference between Christian and counterfeit humility is soon discovered, by the patient endurance of the one, and the petulant nature of the other. The haughty Saul, when he became a Christian, was humbled by every view of himself; but his humility was blended with gratitude, as is beautifully instanced in his Epistle to Timothy; "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was once a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

After this exhibition of free unmerited mercy, no poor sinner need despair. To the heavy laden soul crying out for help, the converted Saul gives the cheering intelligence, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." How blessed is the assurance, that with the Lord there is mercy, that with him there is plenteous redemption. Delightful truth! He is good and ready to forgive, full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Happy then is the man who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; for the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. What can exceed the richness of this divine promise, made to every humble believer in Jesus; "Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him, I will set him on high, because he has known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver and honor him; with long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

As Paul, like a ravenous wolf, devoured the sheep of Christ, so he himself, when made one of the Savior's flock, became the object of bitter persecution. How true it is, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Even natural affection cannot restrain the violence of this deep-seated enmity against Christ and his people; for, "the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." With what faithfulness did Jesus forewarn his disciples, that through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom. But, did he leave them comfortless? Oh! how gracious are his parting words- "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

"After that many days were fulfilled," the sacred historian informs us, "the Jews at Damascus took counsel to kill Saul." They watched the gates of the city day and night, so intent were they on their purpose. But their laying wait was made known to Saul, and the disciples took him by night, and let

him down by the wall in a basket, by which means he escaped out of their hands.

How secure is the believer in Jesus. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people. Behold, he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Jesus guarded the life of his servant, to whom he had appointed a great and glorious work. He could therefore say to King Agrippa; "Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day." Blessed are they, who are actively engaged in the Lord's service; they may have many trials by the way, but He, who for their sakes endured the cross, despising the shame, will uphold them by his grace, and at length give them a crown of glory that fades not away.

We might naturally expect, that a powerful opposition would be excited against a man, whose conversion to the faith of Christ afforded such an overpowering evidence to the truth of Christianity, and whose holy life in Christ condemned the worldliness of the Priests and Pharisees. The more Paul, by his life and doctrine, demonstrated the power and excellency of the Gospel, the more inveterate was the enmity manifested against him. The minds of the Jews, as a nation, were judicially blinded. They knew not the day of their visitation. The Lord would have gathered them, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and they would not. Their language towards Jesus was; "We will not have this man to reign over us."- and to his faithful servant; "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." No arguments could convince them, no reasoning could persuade them, no miracles, wrought before their eyes, could remove the stubbornness of their unbelief. Nothing, no nothing but the Almighty Power of the Spirit of God could bring them, as humble penitents, to the foot of the cross, make them to rejoice in the atonement of Jesus, and cause them to glorify God, by an entire submission to his will.

"Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart, nevertheless, when they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." When that reviving period shall arrive, a new impulse will be given to the Christian Church; and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

In reading the history of the infant Church, we might naturally expect that the disciples, on hearing of the conversion of Saul, would instantly hail it as a glorious triumph of Christianity. But, how faithfully does the sacred historian describe the feelings of the primitive Christians, who, knowing that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, the more effectually to deceive and to destroy, dreaded lest they should be betrayed under the mask of friendship. "When Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

What could be more natural, than that Saul, having tasted the grace of Jesus, should be anxious to join himself to his beloved people. The Apostle mentions this visit to Jerusalem, in his Epistle to the Galatians; "You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted the Christians. I did my best to get rid of them. I was one of the most religious Jews of my own age, and I tried as hard as possible to follow all the old traditions of my religion. But then something happened! For it pleased God in his kindness to choose me and call me, even before I was born! What undeserved mercy! Then he revealed his Son to me so that I could proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When all this happened to me, I did not rush out to

consult with anyone else; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. No, I went away into Arabia and later returned to the city of Damascus. It was not until three years later that I finally went to Jerusalem for a visit with Peter and stayed there with him for fifteen days. And the only other apostle I met at that time was James, our Lord's brother. You must believe what I am saying, for I declare before God that I am not lying. Then after this visit, I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. And still the Christians in the churches in Judea didn't know me personally. All they knew was that people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us now preaches the very faith he tried to destroy!" And they gave glory to God because of me."

When Saul first introduced himself to the church of Jerusalem, in the new character of an Apostle, we cannot be surprised at the tardy reception he met with, as the disciples would well remember the caution given to them by their Divine Master- "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." How exactly does this accord with our own experience. Any sudden change of character generally excites a degree of suspicion in our minds, and makes us cautious, lest, by coming too hastily to a favorable decision, we should become the dupes of artful deception; and more especially, if an avowed enemy, suddenly professes himself to be our friend.

But, if there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents, is there no feeling of delight in the hearts of believers, when sinners, and especially persecutors, are converted to the faith of Christ? Assuredly there is- and such holy joy was experienced by the saints at Jerusalem, when Barnabas had dissipated their fears, by bearing witness to the grace of Jesus manifested towards this bloody persecutor. The Apostles admitted Paul to the fellowship of the saints; they rejoiced over him; he was with them coming in, and going out of Jerusalem; and in their Epistle to the Gentile converts on the subject of circumcision, they styled him and Barnabas; "Beloved- chosen men, who had hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus." Thus they bore testimony to the truth of his conversion; and they glorified God in him.

During his stay at Jerusalem, the zealous Paul was actively engaged in the work to which Jesus had appointed him. He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians; but so violent was their enmity to the Truth, that they went about to slay him; which, when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied."

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. This ancient aphorism, founded upon experience, proves the truth of David's declaration; "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." The disciples, who were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, went everywhere preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them, and there was great joy in that city. Many traveled as far as Venice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. Some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus; and the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

When tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, the hearts of the disciples overflowed with joy. Being anxious to ascertain the reality of these conversions, they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. This good man, who was full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith, gladly undertook the journey. When he came to Antioch, and saw the grace of God, as displayed in the spirit and conduct of these converts to the Truth, who were first honored by the name of Christian, he was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord. His visit and labors were greatly blessed; for much people was added unto the Lord. O that we could now behold a renewal of these gracious manifestations of the Spirit; that this ancient promise might now be experienced in all its fullness- "I will cause the shower to come down in his season, there shall be a shower of blessings." May we never cease to pray, until God shall make our Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Christian love is of a peculiarly cementing nature; it binds those together by the sweetest ties whose hearts are filled with the Spirit of Jesus. This uniting love was felt in all its delightful influence by the early Christians, whose trials and consolations were derived from the same sources. From the world, they experienced contempt and persecution; from Christ their Divine Savior, they received strength and peace. This union of heart was enjoyed by Barnabas and Paul, whose lives were now devoted to the glory of the Redeemer.

Having introduced Paul to the church at Jerusalem, and feeling his heart knit to this monument of the Savior's grace, Barnabas was desirous to have him as a fellow-laborer. He, therefore, departed to Tarsus, where Paul had been sent by the brethren to escape the fury of the Jews; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. For a whole year, these honored servants of Christ, assembled themselves with the Church, and taught many people. Paul, being called by special grace to the apostolic office, was not permitted to remain in obscurity. He was a chosen vessel, and had a great work to do. Jesus, therefore brought him into his vineyard, which the Apostle cultivated with unwearied labor, and watered with many prayers and tears.

When the Lord bestows his gifts, he designs them for use, and not for idle display. The faith which he gives, is a working faith, and must be tried. The patience which he imparts, must have its perfect work. Thus wrote James to the twelve tribes who were scattered abroad; "Brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience; but let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

O what an honor does God put upon poor mortals, when he employs them in his service. The highest archangel derives his honor and happiness, from fulfilling, without any mixture of sin, the commands of the Almighty. Jesus, who is in the bosom of the Father, has taught us to pray, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Were our views of Jehovah's greatness and glory, such as they will be when we see him as he is, how lowly would every human distinction appear, compared with that honor which rests upon the saints of the Most High.

Shall a worm of the earth, a rebel sinner, a hell deserving creature, be made a child of God; yes, an heir of God through Christ? Nothing but infinite Wisdom could have devised- nothing but infinite Power could have effected- nothing but infinite Love could have revealed, and applied, in all its fullness, so vast a blessing. Darkness, despair, and destruction would have overwhelmed our apostate race, had not infinite Mercy rejoiced against judgment, through the atoning blood of the

Lamb of God.

With never-ceasing delight Paul and Barnabas declared these glad tidings of great joy to the listening crowds at Antioch. They spoke from the heart, to the heart, having themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, and living in the daily enjoyment of his presence, through the influence of the Holy Spirit. O that our hearts felt this glow of holy love, which rendered the primitive believers so abundantly useful, and caused them to shine as lights in the world.

In tracing the life and character of Paul, there is one feature of peculiar prominence, which cannot fail to strike every attentive observer- THE NATURAL ENERGY OF HIS MIND. He pursued no half measures, he entered into no cold calculations; what he did, he did with all his heart. This he intimated, when pleading before King Agrippa; "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" -and he fully acted upon that conviction. Being dark in his views of prophetic truth respecting the Messiah, he stumbled at that Stone which God had laid in Zion. Jesus was to him a rock of offence. Hence all his energies were called into action to suppress the growing Church of Christ, and to silence those who proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. But, when enlightened by the Holy Spirit to see the glory of Emmanuel, and, to behold in the virgin's Son, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; a total change took place within him. His native energies were then directed into anew channel. Being brought under the influence of holy love; his ardor, though unquenchable, was tempered by mildness.

With incessant toil he labored to promote the cause of his beloved Savior, esteeming no sacrifice too great to advance his kingdom. Forbearance and charity shed their sweetness over his character, while decision and courage proved the firmness of his faith. He was truly a burning and a shining light— a city set on a hill, which could not be hidden. The sacred historian records several instances of his boldness in declaring the truth of the Gospel.

At JERUSALEM, as we have already seen, he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians. At ANTIOCH, Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and, judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." At Iconium they abode long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. At EPHESUS, Paul went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Lukewarmness and faint-heartedness are traitors in the camp of Israel, and do more to weaken the cause of truth than the fiercest opposition from its determined enemies. Faith and love, patience and prayer, are mighty weapons in the hand of the Spirit. The weakest saint, when exercising these graces, shall come off more than conqueror over the powers of darkness.

The reason why so many shrink from suffering for Christ's sake, arises from the coldness of their love. Their faith, being weak, cannot bear them up against that stream of persecution which so powerfully sets in against them. Through fear, they yield to the attacks of the enemy, and thus bring distress into their consciences, as well as discredit on the Gospel. The realities of Eternity seem to be forgotten; or, at least, but faintly impressed upon their minds. Looking more at present

inconveniences connected with a bold attachment to Christ, than at the glories to be revealed, they flag in their Christian course, and would forever perish, if not restored through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The undaunted Apostle was a stranger to that fear of man, which brings a snare and causes multitudes to shrink from the cross. Paul being convinced of the truth of Christianity, through the immediate teaching of his divine Savior, and the inward witness of the Spirit, feared not the face of man, nor the fury of the oppressor. Whether in Jerusalem, amid the bigoted Jews, or at Athens, among the philosophers of the age, he gloried in the cross of Christ; and drew all his peace and joy from a believing reliance on the power and grace of Jesus.

The poison of popularity, the prospect of some temporal advantage, a false shame, the love of ease, a dread of suffering; in a word, the love of the world, concentrating all these evils within itself, causes many a minister of the Gospel to betray his trust, and many a promising professor to droop and wither.

Faith in the atonement of Christ, is the victory that overcomes the world. This divine principle made the faithful Apostle always to triumph in Christ. Through the power of the cross, the world had lost its charms, and death its terrors. A heavenly light filled his mind, and an all-constraining love his heart. He saw in Jesus, all that was precious, and he found in him all that he needed; hence he disregarded the frowns of men, and was willing to bear shame and reproach for Jesus' sake. Being filled with the Spirit, he preached the word of life with the fullest confidence of success; well knowing, that through the combined power of Truth and Love, the stoutest hearts would be humbled, the hardest softened, and the most polluted rendered pure.

When Jesus was seated at the right-hand of the Father, in fulfillment of his promise, he graciously poured out the Holy Spirit on his Apostles. With this Divine unction, they went forth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation; and nothing could exceed the fortitude which they displayed. Their courage astonished the Jewish rulers; of whom it is recorded, that, "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled, and took knowledge of them- that they had been with Jesus."

To encourage his disciples before his departure, Jesus said, "Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Being now as sheep in the midst of wolves, they needed strength and protection. With a believing reliance on this promise, "Then all the believers were united as they lifted their voices in prayer: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them... Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. In fact, everything they did occurred according to your eternal will and plan. And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give your servants great boldness in their preaching. Send your healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God's message with boldness."

It may well be said, that the prayer of faith moves the hand that moves the world. Happy, thrice happy would it be for the Christian Church, if all her ministers were men of a kindred spirit, who, in the fullness of their faith and love, could sacrifice reputation, ease, wealth, yes, even life itself, for

the Gospel's sake. But alas! the spirit of the world has made sad inroads into the visible Church of Christ; for many are slumbering on the lap of ease, who should be watchmen on the walls, and champions in the camp of Zion. Still, there are many blessed witnesses, who are valiant for the Truth, whose light shines in the midst of darkness, and whose labors are rendered effectual in spreading the knowledge of Christ. May their numbers be abundantly increased, until Zion shall become a praise in the earth.

To every such faithful laborer, Paul gives this most important charge, "Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them. Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right, and God will save you and those who hear you."

How rousing was the Divine commission given by Jehovah to his servant Jeremiah; "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land--against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you."

With equal force is the command to Ezekiel, "Son of man, do not fear them. Don't be afraid even though their threats are sharp as thorns and barbed like briars, and they sting like scorpions. Do not be dismayed by their dark scowls. For remember, they are rebels! You must give them my messages whether they listen or not. But they won't listen, for they are completely rebellious!"

The great Apostle of the Gentiles entered fully into the spirit of these Divine charges. He was no timid, no time-serving shepherd of the flock. His character is beautifully described by Malachi, under the general description of faithful pastors; "They passed on to the people all the truth they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin. The priests' lips should guard knowledge, and people should go to them for instruction, for the priests are the messengers of the Lord Almighty."

May all the friends of Christ be stirred up to fervent prayer at this eventful period, that a spirit of revival may be poured out on all our Churches, lest the Lord, in righteous judgment, should fulfill on us, his threatening to the church at Ephesus; "Remember from where you are fallen; and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent."

In pity to a dying world,

Almighty Father, send your grace;

And let your banner be unfurled,

And faith's slow triumph speed its pace.

What millions of immortal souls,

Still live unmindful of your way
And as death's fearful torrent rolls,
Hundreds are daily swept away.
O Lord, must creatures be undone,
Who from your hand receive their breath?
Shall they be lost, for whom your Son,
Came down to suffer shame and death?
Let sovereign mercy interpose,
To rescue sinners from their doom;
And send your Word to heal their woes,
And light their passage to the tomb.
O spread your Truth through every clime,
Teach stubborn souls to weep and pray;
Let this be the accepted time,
And this salvation's glorious day.

Chapter 4 .

Chapter 4.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PERSECUTIONS WHICH PAUL ENDURED FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL.

When Daniel stood before Nebuchadnezzar to explain his dream, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, however galling it might be to the ambition of this haughty conqueror. He told him of the fleeting nature of his own dominion; that empire would succeed empire, until the period of the fourth monarchy should arrive, when the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed; that it would break in pieces and consume all the former kingdoms, and that it should stand forever. This kingdom was represented to Nebuchadnezzar by a stone cut out without hands- to signify, that it would be established in the earth by an Almighty Power, and not through human skill. While other empires were to pass away, this stone was to increase, until it should become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. In another vision, Daniel saw one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven; he came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given to him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all the people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Jesus, the Prince of peace, the Lord of glory, is this Son of Man, this King of Zion. All who truly believe in him, are the subjects of this spiritual kingdom; for it was revealed to Daniel, that "the saints of the Most High should take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." In fulfillment of this glorious prophecy, Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." As his kingdom was to be erected upon the ruins of idolatry, and whatever exalts itself against the glory of God, the world would naturally oppose its establishment and enlargement. And so it was revealed to Daniel. He saw a persecuting power in his emblematical vision, which should make war with the saints, and prevail against them, until the Ancient of Days should come, and judgment be given to the saints of the Most High; and the time arrive, that the saints should possess the kingdom.

From this Prophecy, in connection with those contained in the Revelation of John, we are made acquainted with two important facts- the one is, that the Kingdom of Christ shall finally prevail, and become an universal Dominion, blessing the earth with peace and righteousness; the other, that the true Church of Christ will have to contend with the powers of darkness, and to endure persecution from an ungodly world, until the period shall arrive when Christ will tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and break his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel.

With these prophetic declarations before us, we need not be surprised at the multiplied trials of Paul, and those of true Christians in every age, who devote their lives to the service of Christ, and

to the destruction of Satan's kingdom. But it will not be always so. The period of the Church's glory is rapidly advancing. The Lord will hasten it in his time.

To trace the various trials which the Apostle endured, his many privations, and never-ceasing cares, will, no doubt, be interesting as well as profitable. The view of his sufferings should shame us out of our slothfulness. Can we remain indifferent to the interests of Christ's kingdom, and the eternal happiness of mankind, when he underwent so much for the same Jesus, whom we profess to worship; and out of love to such perishing sinners, as now surround us; and who are continually passing into eternity, regardless of the torments which await them?

It is painful to think, how little our hearts are affected by the wickedness which overspreads the earth. There is an indolence on this subject, which indicates great lack of spiritual feeling. We are not sufficiently alive to the evil of sin, even in our best moments; but could we see, as God sees, we would be overwhelmed by the view of human depravity.

While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Law, written with the finger of God on two tables of stone, the people were corrupting themselves, by making a golden calf and dancing round it with idolatrous worship. The Almighty acquainted Moses with this act of rebellion, and threatened to destroy them instantly. Anxious for the honor of God and the preservation of Israel, he interceded in their behalf, and prevailed. But no sooner did Moses descend from the mountain, and become himself a witness to their abominations, than his anger waxed hot against Aaron and the congregation. He cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the Mount; he ground the golden calf to powder; and in the name of the Lord God of Israel he commanded the sons of Levi to slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

How far beyond our conception is the patience of God, who beholds, at one glance, all the evil which is perpetrated, yes, all the evil which is devised, by all the millions of human beings throughout their successive generations! Truly his mercy is infinite. He is God and not man, therefore we sons of men are not consumed. But the Lord is also a God of judgment, who will by no means clear the guilty; for he has declared by his prophet, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God."

We live in a day of rebuke and blasphemy; in a day when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth; a day in which the enemies of Christ are awake and active. Infidelity is unfurling its standard, and spreading its poison. Satan is mustering his forces against the saints of the Most High. If ever the people of God were called upon by the voice of Providence to be up and doing, it is now. This is not the time to slumber, when the foe is in the breach; it is not the season for rest, when the Lord calls his soldiers to the spiritual combat. The weapons of our warfare, though despised by the world, are mighty, through God, to destroy the empire of Satan and to establish the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

O that the Spirit of love may descend upon us from on high. Then will ministers and people, like the early Christians, labor for the conversion of sinners; cultivate personal holiness; sit loosely to the world; and gladly suffer the loss of all things for Jesus' sake.

What the great Apostle of the Gentiles cheerfully endured, out of love to the souls of men and for the sake of his Redeemer, would daunt the stoutest heart, if destitute of Gospel principles. Nothing but Divine Love, shed abroad in the heart, could have produced such astonishing acts of patience

and self-denial; such cheerfulness in suffering; such preparedness for death.

When writing to the Corinthians, he says, "But sometimes I think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike. Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you are so wise! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are well thought of, but we are laughed at. To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, without enough clothes to keep us warm. We have endured many beatings, and we have no homes of our own. We have worked wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. We respond gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment."

Where is the worldling who would endure such accumulated sufferings and contempt, for any promises of good beyond the grave? Worldly men will bear many privations, connected with some earthly advantage, which they hope before long to enjoy; it is the true Christian only, who can suffer for eternal glory. Much consolation was mixed with the Apostle's tribulations, he could therefore say, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

Following the steps of his Divine Master, who endured the cross, despising the shame, he told the Corinthians, "In everything we do we try to show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. We have been beaten, been put in jail, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. We have proved ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, our sincere love, and the power of the Holy Spirit. We have faithfully preached the truth. God's power has been working in us. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are well known, but we are treated as unknown. We live close to death, but here we are, still alive. We have been beaten within an inch of our lives. Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything."

As if this weight of suffering were insufficient to manifest the strength of his faith and patience, there were teachers in the church of Corinth, who, through envy, sought to undermine his usefulness, by insinuating doubts respecting the validity of his claim to the office of an Apostle. This aspersion excited a holy indignation in the breast of Paul; for nothing could be more abhorrent to a heart hating pretension, than such a false assumption of character. With peculiar energy, he thus writes to the Corinthian church, "Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn't it because of my hard work that you are in the Lord? Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you, for you are living proof that I am the Lord's apostle." What a striking instance is this, of self-abasement. While he was compelled to magnify his apostolic office, he beautifully invests it with the robe of humility. Then he adds, "Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you, in patience, in signs, in wonders, and mighty deeds."

Referring to his traducers, he says; "They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me

thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along."

With a heart supremely fixed on heaven, and despising the coveted things of the world, he makes this Christian declaration; "If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong." O! how wonderful is the grace of God in its operations on the human heart. How softening- how subduing. No worldly motive could have effected such a change in the mind of this once bigoted Jew. What had he to gain from the world by embracing Christianity? Nothing, but a series of sufferings, and a bitter death.

Like Moses, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. The true Christian, like the lowly-minded Apostle, must be contented to have his good evil spoken of. His labors of love, undertaken with the purest intention, may be attributed to some mercenary motive; and his very sufferings, patiently endured for the Truth's sake, may be ascribed to the vainglorious desire of getting himself a name.

Let us cease from man. Our eye must be simply fixed upon God; his Will must be our Law; and his Glory the end of our actions; for not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. While doing his will in the simplicity of faith, and in a spirit of love, we must bear with patience the oppositions of sinners, the uncharitable aspersions of religious professors, and even the unkind surmises of Christian friends.

The admonitions of Peter are very important to the tried believer in Jesus. "For God is pleased with you when, for the sake of your conscience, you patiently endure unfair treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing right and are patient beneath the blows, God is pleased with you. This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps. He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly."

Can we thus return good for evil? Under every species of trial, can we patiently endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. To do so, is practical Christianity; it is being imitators of Him who was meek and lowly in heart; and who has commanded us to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and follow him. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Do we then study the character of our blessed Lord as revealed in the gospel; and pray without ceasing, that our souls may be transformed into his holy image? The more we drink into the spirit of Jesus, the more we shall experience peace and rest in our souls.

Suffering is the lot of all, but the afflictions of the righteous are sanctified afflictions; they conduce to their growth in grace, and mark out the way to the heavenly kingdom. Paul knew this well; for Jesus had told him, what great things he must suffer for his name's sake. In the midst of the furnace, his Savior stood near him, giving him the blessed assurance, that if he suffered with him, he should also reign with him. Hence, soaring on the wings of faith and love above this darkened scene, he could exclaim with holy triumph, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When Jesus drew near to the time of his crucifixion, how sweetly did he comfort his little flock, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Peace is the legacy which Jesus left to his Church; a precious gift, more valuable than the wealth of the Indies. It is the fruit of his Spirit, the portion of his saints; whose peace, flowing like a river, widens as it approaches the ocean of eternity. In the midst of trouble, they are kept in perfect peace, because their minds are stayed on Him; resting with unshaking faith upon his atonement, righteousness, and intercession, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Are they called to endure affliction? They can praise their Savior in the fires. The flame which loosens the earthly cord, like a fiery chariot, bears their unfettered spirits to the realms of bliss. None are exempt from trials; all must prepare to meet them; come they will, in one shape or other. There are trials peculiar to a state of poverty, and to a state of wealth. Some have family burdens, with the blessing of health; others are free from domestic cares, but are oppressed with sickness; some enjoy the blessedness of personal piety, while their immediate relatives are far from God; others are laboring to benefit their fellow sinners, but meet with little else than ingratitude and opposition. The poor man is tempted to think harshly of God; the rich man to forget him. Even the believer finds a constant need for watchfulness and prayer, by reason of the sin which dwells in him.

Thus each one has to bear his own burden; and oh! how often does our merciful God, "stay his rough wind, in the day of the East wind," that his people may be able to carry their cross with comparative ease, through the sustaining power of his Holy Spirit, until they all meet around his throne, wearing the crown of glory, and ascribing all their salvation to Him who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them Kings and Priests unto God.

"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there, at night, shall rest his head.
Just as a hen protects her brood
From birds of prey that seek their blood,
Under her feathers; so the Lord

Makes his own arm his people's guard.
But if the fire, or plague, or sword,
Receive commission from the Lord
To strike his saints among the rest,
Their very pains, and deaths are blest.
The sword, the pestilence, or fire,
Shall but fulfill their best desire,
From sins and sorrows set them free,
And bring your children, Lord, to thee."

Chapter 5.

Chapter 5.

A SHORT HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE TRIALS OF THE APOSTLE.

Let us now trace the Apostle's journey of mercy, as recorded by his fellow-laborer and historian Luke. It is highly instructive to pursue such a tour of benevolence, "to contemplate a man, who renounced the comforts of home, not to amass wealth, or gratify curiosity, or acquire knowledge, which might be ostentatiously displayed on his return; but to perform the unsolicited offices of love to strangers; to impart to them the best of all gifts, the blessings of salvation; to do good to others not only at the expense of time and labor, but at the risk of his life. It was thus that Paul, like his Master, went about doing good." While we travel with him from city to city, we shall find that every where bonds and afflictions awaited him. He was a flame, kept alive in the midst of raging waters. By the preserving care of his Savior, he was immortal, until his work was done.

At JERUSALEM, the theater of his bloody persecutions, he no sooner began to preach salvation through the cross of Christ, than the unbelieving Jews went about to kill him.

At ANTIOCH the people flocked in such numbers to hear the Gospel, that the Jews, filled with envy, spoke against those things which were spoken of Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, until they succeeded in raising a persecution against him, and in expelling him out of their coast. But he shook off the dust of his feet against them, and came unto Iconium, being filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit.

At ICONIUM, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against Paul and Barnabas, so that an assault was made both by the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them spitefully, and stone them.

At LYSTRA, certain Jews, who came from Antioch and Iconium, persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, they drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead; but while the disciples stood round about him, he was miraculously restored. At this place the Apostle gave a striking proof of the purity of his principles. Having performed a miracle upon a cripple who had never walked, being lame from his birth, the astonished multitude cried out, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." It was with much difficulty that Paul restrained them from offering sacrifices unto him, saying, "Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach to you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God." How different was the spirit and end of Herod, who drank in the poison of popular adulation. Being arrayed in royal apparel, and seated upon his throne, he made an oration to the people. They gave a shout, saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten by worms, and gave up the spirit."

At PHILIPPI, when traveling with Silas, the multitude rose up together against them. The magistrates rent off their clothes in anger, and commanded to beat them; and when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely, who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Here, the Almighty appeared in behalf of his suffering servants; for, while they were singing praises to God during the hour of midnight, suddenly there was a great earthquake; so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Through the wonder-working power of grace, the jailor was made to cry for mercy, to believe in Jesus, to show kindness to the Apostle, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

At THESSALONICA, Paul reasoned with the Jews three Sabbath-days out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that Jesus whom he preached unto them is Christ. And some believed and joined with him and Silas. But the Jews who believed not, moved with envy, took certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar.

At BEREIA Paul had no rest; for when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached by him at this place, they came here and stirred up the people. Yet his visit was not without some fruit; for the Jews at Berea, were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. And the happy consequence was, that many of them believed- also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

At ATHENS, he had to endure the strife of tongues, In the synagogue he disputed with the Jews, and in the market daily with those who met with him. Certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him; while others, mocking, said, "What will this babbler say? You bring strange things to our ears." The opposition which Paul met with from these philosophers, most strikingly shows the holy and humbling nature of the Gospel. The Epicureans derided him, because the pure and self-denying precepts of Christ condemned their loose and exorbitant course of life. The Stoics assailed him, because the meek and lowly spirit of the Gospel was directly opposed to their immoderate pride and love of praise. All, both philosophers and plebeians, ridiculed him, because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection, and exposed, by arguments drawn from Creation and Providence, the folly of idolatry, and their gross superstition in worshipping an unknown God.

At CORINTH, when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat. But here the Apostle received strength and consolation from on high. The Lord spoke to him in the night by a vision "Do not be afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace, for I am with you, and no man shall set on you, to hurt you, for I have many people in this city."

At EPHESUS, a violent tumult was raised by Demetrius, who made silver shrines for Diana. The whole city was full of confusion, and so great was the danger that, when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples did not allow him.

At MILETUS, Paul expressed his feelings to the elders of the church of Ephesus with inimitable tenderness. "And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn there irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit has told me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love. And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again."

At CAESAREA the Apostle manifested a noble firmness. A certain prophet from Judea, named Agabus, took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." When the disciples heard this, they besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But was such a man as he to be intimidated, through fear of suffering? Could he, who gloried in tribulation for Christ's sake, be induced to shrink from the cross? Paul answered; "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." And when he could not be persuaded, they ceased, saying- the will of the Lord be done!

Can we thus surrender into the hands of our heavenly Father, without a murmur, whatever is dearest to us? Not daring to cavil at his inscrutable Wisdom, do we cordially acquiesce in all the arrangements of his Providence and rejoice in the manifestations of his glory, even when He requires the sacrifice of our most valued comforts? Under every bereavement, can we say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord?" "The will of the Lord be done?"

At JERUSALEM, the Apostle did indeed experience the full accomplishment of the predictions of Agabus. All the city was upset; and when the people ran together, they took Paul, and dragged him out of the temple, and went about to kill him. The chief captain also commanded him to be bound with two chains. But Jesus did not forsake his faithful servant. In a vision of the night, the Lord stood by him, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified of me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome." With such divine assurances of support, with such favored manifestations of his Savior's love, he might well say to Agrippa, in his eloquent defense, "I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains." Having appealed to Caesar- Festus said to Paul, "Unto Caesar shall you go." All this was over-ruled, to lead this faithful ambassador of Christ to Rome, that there also he might testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

With such unceasing trials the Apostle might well say to the Corinthians, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But his hope was founded on the Rock of Ages; his life was hidden with Christ in God; therefore he was safe and happy.

Being put into a ship at Adramytium, this faithful minister of Christ proceeded on his voyage to Rome. He, whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, was pleased to raise a storm, which should manifest his power, promote the spread of his Truth, and procure respect for his suffering servant. When neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest threatened their destruction, all hope that the crew would be saved was taken away.

Any religion will stand in a calm. In a storm, in the moment of imminent danger, the true Christian alone exhibits the strength of his principles. When the worldling is filled with dismay, he is full of comfort, yes, exceeding joyful in all his tribulation. Amid the raging elements, the Apostle stood as the messenger of mercy- "Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, and not have left from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship alone. For there stood by me this night the Angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God has given you all those who sail with you. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me."

Happy Paul! to be thus honored by God, and blessed with his presence! Caesar, surrounded with all the splendors of an imperial palace, was poor indeed, when compared with this despised prisoner of Jesus Christ. We may here learn to form a just estimate of human happiness. It does not consist in the abundance of wealth, the dignity of power, or the fascinations of pleasure; but, in the enjoyment of the Divine favor, and in an uniform loving obedience to the Divine Will.

Can we, like the holy Apostle, in filial confidence declare, "Whose I am, and whom I serve?" To do this is happiness upon earth; to feel this, is the commencement of heavenly felicity. If our hearts assure us that the Lord is our portion, we are truly rich, under every outward privation. Faith is the key which unlocks the store-house of divine bounty. Possessing this gift of grace, the believer can hope against hope, and repose upon the promises under every discouragement. When all is dark around him, and dangers threaten his destruction, he can even then rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation. How sweetly does David sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble- therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

Faith is a triumphant principle. It supported the royal Psalmist under all his varied trials, and upheld the undaunted Paul amid the storms which every where assailed him. To the affrighted crew, the Apostle manifested its supporting influence, when he declared, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." This is faith in its native simplicity. It is taking God at his word. It is trusting in a naked promise, believing that God will do as he has said. It is confidence in the faithfulness, power, and love of Christ. It is reliance upon the Truth of Him who cannot lie, whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure. Such faith, as it honors God, so it brings peace and purity into the soul.

Being cast upon the Island of Melita, the Apostle would no doubt preach among its inhabitants the unsearchable riches of Christ. Publius, the chief man of the island, lodged him three days courteously; to whom he rendered a signal benefit through the power of Jesus, by the restoration of his father to health. The common people also were directed to attend unto the word of salvation, by his miraculous escape from death; for when a viper fastened itself upon his hand, he shook it off without receiving any harm. Thus they saw in Paul the prisoner, a dignity far surpassing an ordinary character; and they honored him with many honors.

At length the Apostle came to Rome. When the brethren heard of his arrival in Italy, they came to meet him, as far as Appian Forum, whom, when Paul saw them, he thanked God, and took courage. After he had been three days at Rome, he called the chief of the Jews together, to whom

he made known the reasons for his thus appearing as a prisoner among them; and when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodgings, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning until evening; and some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. Through the preserving care of his Almighty Savior, Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house; and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching them those things which concern the Lord Jesus, with no man forbidding him. The same God who quenched the violence of the burning fiery furnace, and shut the lions' mouth, restrained the power of Nero, and the fury of the Jews.

How divine was that principle which enabled the Apostle to undergo such a series of cruel mockings and scourgings. Blessed be God! the same faith is now imparted to every earnest seeker after Christ. We all need it, and we may all obtain it. "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money. Whoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely. Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth. Incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your soul shall live." Such is the freeness of redeeming love. The poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are invited; while the proud, who make light of these blessings, are sent empty away.

With these invitations of mercy, the unwearied Apostle went forth into the highways and hedges, seeking out the lost sinners of mankind, and compelling them, through the force of Truth and Love, to come to the Gospel-feast. As a loving heart makes willing feet, so he considered no distance too great, no road too rough, if only he could be the means of saving sinners from the wrath to come. He delighted in his work; his whole heart was engaged in it, and his whole life was devoted to it. But the time now drew near, when this servant of Christ was to seal the Truth with his blood, and to receive the crown of martyrdom; a crown, in his estimation, infinitely surpassing in glory, all the diadems of the world.

From Rome, in what appears to be his last Epistle, Paul feelingly and triumphantly writes to his beloved Timothy; "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner; but be partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God. I am appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For which cause I suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Remember, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel, wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound; therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. You have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me."

"All they which are in Asia be turned away from me. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains. When he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, you know very well. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. At my first answer no

man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God, that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen."

How sweet, how serene, how full of hope are his parting, his almost dying words, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"

Thus sank to rest this bright luminary of the Christian Church; but he only sank beneath the earthly horizon, to rise, with resplendent glory, in the morning of the resurrection. Like his Divine Master, he was forsaken by his friends in the bitter hour of persecution; and like him, he prayed that it might not be laid to their charge. Thus did Stephen, and so will all who possess the spirit of Jesus, and who feel the influence of that love, which covers, as with a mantle, a multitude of sins.

As Paul felt the blessedness of the promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you;" so he could boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." He was not afraid to die, for he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ. His heart was in heaven, because his treasure was there. When, therefore, the appointed hour arrived which was to convey his waiting spirit into the presence of his God, he cared not by what instrument this blessedness was to be attained, whether by the wild beast, the fire, or the sword; knowing that He, who had never forsaken him, would carry him in safety over every wave of trouble. O! the blessed triumph of the cross! Death is the believer's consecrated road to glory; for Jesus has led the way, he has opened the gate to everlasting life, and ever lives to guide and guard his people through the darksome valley to his throne above.

Happy then is the true believer. The world may smile, or sneer- he heeds it not. His eye is fixed upon an endless glory; he sees the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off. By faith he brings its glories near. He already enjoys them by sweet anticipation, and can say, "The Lord is mine, and I am his." Is this our delightful experience? If so, then death will be an everlasting gain; we shall hail its approach with gladness, and bless the hour which brings us into the presence of our God.

"O for a martyr's glowing zeal

He fears no danger, shuns no pain;

He stands opposed to earth and hell,

And tells them all their threats are vain

See where the faithful champion stands!

Undaunted by his numerous foes;

He listens to his Lord's command,

And life itself for Him foregoes.
The kindling flames around him blaze;
His courage stands the awful test;
The dying saint, no fear betrays,
Nor does he ask his foes for rest.
His treasure they can not destroy;
And while they think to cast him down,
They do but hasten on his joy,
And brighten his celestial crown.
Farewell, he cries, to all below;
I mount to yonder blest abode;
To join the saints in heaven I go,
To dwell forever with my God.
How blest are they whose work is done
Who now enjoy the glorious prize;
Be this our care, the race to run,
That we may know, and share their joys."

Chapter 6.

Chapter 6.

ON CONVERSION.

PAUL'S DELIGHT IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE TO WHOM HE WROTE.

HIS THANKFULNESS FOR SUCCESS IN HIS MINISTRY.

We have beheld a glorious display of Almighty power in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who, from a fiery bigot was made a zealous disciple of Jesus Christ. In the great work of conversion, the Almighty acts upon us as rational creatures. When man fell from his original state of innocence, and lost the image of his Maker, he did not lose those powers of his soul which distinguished him from the brute creation. Being endued with understanding, will, affections, memory, and conscience, he still remained a free agent, a responsible being, subject to moral obligations. But he became a sinner, and as such, he was obnoxious to infinite justice, lay under the curse of a broken law, and having lost both righteousness and strength, was utterly unable to regain either holiness or happiness.

In this state of spiritual death, despair would have made Adam its wretched victim, had not the Throne of Grace appeared, from where, in sweetest sounds Mercy proclaimed salvation through the Virgin's Son. What wonder must have seized the heavenly host, when love, uprising from the bosom of the Eternal Father, in the person of the Everlasting Son, thus expressed his willingness to save our ruined race, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God."

Jesus, the promised Savior, came into our world, and bled and died that guilty man might, through his death, be made an heir of glory. A way of escape is now opened for us. All, who believe in Jesus, shall be saved. All, who are found in Him, are accepted and blessed of the Father. But as the mercy of our God is great, so also is his justice. Out of Christ, we are hopeless and helpless. We fell in Adam. Through his fall we lost all spiritual strength. We cannot save ourselves. No parental discipline, no human law, no system of education, no influence of friends, no moral persuasion, no ministerial labor, no afflictive dispensation, nor any other earthly thing, can, of itself, turn a soul from darkness unto light; from the power of Satan unto God. All these may be, and often are, blessed as means; but the Holy Spirit is the sole efficient, free, and sovereign agent in the regeneration of the soul. God will, and must, have all the glory of our salvation, through Jesus Christ. The proud sinner must be humbled, and brought as a little child to the foot of the cross. Fallen man fancies himself to be something, when he is nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. But this is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches. Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who is just and righteous, whose love is unailing, and that I

delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

Through the Gospel of his grace, the Almighty persuasively, yet powerfully, addresses the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. He reveals to us our danger as apostate rebels; our madness in preferring sin to holiness; the road to hell, rather than the way to heaven. He unfolds to us the redeeming love of Christ, to melt our hearts, to captivate our affections, to move our wills to choose him as our only Savior. And when His Divine Power thus accompanies the Word of Truth, great and glorious is the change produced- the darkened understanding is enlightened, the crooked will receives a new bias, the wayward affections are fixed upon Christ, and the wretched outcast is made a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

"The human heart is naturally shut against the Truth by spiritual blindness, and the influence of sinful affections. The unregenerate man is incapable of perceiving its excellence, and dislikes it, because it aims at humbling his pride, and would detach him from the unhallowed objects of his love. External means are not sufficient to remove those obstacles to a cordial reception of the Gospel. You may describe colors, in appropriate terms, and with glowing eloquence, to a blind man; but no distinct idea of them will be excited in his mind, while he is without the organ of sight, by which only they are perceived.

"In what manner God acts upon the soul when he renews it, it is impossible to explain. The Scriptures informs us, that, he opens our eyes, enlightens our understandings, changes our hearts, makes us willing, and fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. With these and similar declarations we should be satisfied. In the economy of grace and of nature, we must be content with the knowledge of facts. There is a veil upon the mode of the Divine operations, which presumption may attempt to remove, while humble piety will be employed in observing and admiring the effects. Happy is he who can say with the man whom our Savior cured, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.'

"There is not a principle of our religion more clearly taught in the Scriptures, and which should be more steadfastly maintained, than that the conversion of a sinner is the effect of supernatural influence. It is a principle which is in unison with all the other parts of the system, and contributes, in concert with them, to promote its ultimate design, the glory of Almighty and Sovereign Grace. To God is reserved the exclusive honor of our salvation; and the proper sentiments of man are humility and gratitude. The scriptural doctrine of grace as the efficient cause of conversion, takes away from man every pretext for alienating himself from his Maker, who should be the constant and supreme object of his love, and trust, and gratitude. It annihilates his boasted dignity and excellence, and leaves nothing to be seen and admired but the Divine goodness. This is true religion; for, in harmony with all the works of God, it terminates in the manifestation of his glory."

Jesus, when pouring his heavenly light into the benighted mind of Nicodemus, made him acquainted with this all-important truth, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again." John, the beloved disciple, informs us, that when Jesus "came unto his own, his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

To the multitudes who followed him because they ate of the loaves and were filled, Jesus said, "All who the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father who has sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me." James, in perfect unison with his Divine Master, says; "Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth." And so does Peter, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold- but, with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever."

John attests the same divine truth, "whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Paul, taught by the same Holy Spirit, proclaims in all his Epistles, the doctrine of free grace, abounding to the chief of sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. When speaking of himself in his ministerial capacity, he says, "By the grace of God, I am what I am- and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, which is Jesus Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

With feelings of gratitude the Apostle ascribed all his ministerial usefulness, and personal holiness, to the grace of God, and to that unction from the Holy One, which is the pledge of future glory. It is beautiful to see with what humility he seeks, on all occasions, to magnify the love of God, which shone so brightly in his conversion. If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our hearts, like that of Paul, will overflow with thankfulness and praise.

With the same faithful pen, guided by the unerring Spirit of Truth, he shows to the various churches, the source of all their blessedness; "You has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; having forgiven you all trespasses. For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light. Know you not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have of God; and you are not your own, for you are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

O! that the pure Gospel of our salvation were sounded throughout the earth; then would the nations rejoice and be glad; then would this waste howling wilderness become the garden of the Lord. Blessed is that minister, who, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, is able to say to his flock, "Brethren, be followers of me, and mark those who walk so, as you have us for an example." An awful neglect, yes more, a marked dislike, is often manifested to the doctrines of grace, under the specious but false pretense of vindicating the interests of morality. Pride lurks at the bottom of such opposition, or at least a dangerous obscurity veils the minds of many, respecting the true nature of the Gospel of Christ. These opposers may be amiable in their manners, benevolent in their dispositions, and correct in their conduct; yet, being dark in their views respecting the Gospel

way of salvation, they consider the zealous preacher of the cross as an enemy, rather than a friend to practical Christianity. They do not see that all practical godliness springs from a living faith in a crucified Savior, through whom the sinner is freely and fully justified, "without the deeds of the law."

Were all our churches filled with such men as Paul the Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ, our island would become a Goshen, full of the light of Gospel Truth. A day is fast approaching, when each must give account of himself to God. We are all stewards of the manifold gifts of grace. All have some talents committed to their trust, and for those talents all will be responsible unto God who gave them. When the command goes forth, "Give an account of your stewardship," may we do it with joy, and not with grief. Dreadful, in that day, will be the doom of slothful pastors, blind guides, negligent hearers, and wilful abusers of Divine mercy. Has the Father so loved us, as not to withhold from us his Son, his only Son? Has the Son so loved us, as to purchase our souls with his own blood? Has the Eternal Spirit so loved us as to condescend to dwell in our polluted hearts? And shall none of these things move us?

This love of God in Christ was the delightful theme which inspired the tongue, warmed the heart, fired the zeal, and impelled the progress of the indefatigable Apostle into the darkest regions of the earth. He knew no happiness separate from that of preaching Christ crucified, as the Savior of sinners, the Justifier of the ungodly, the Purifier of the unclean. When he saw the divine blessing accompanying his labors, in fulfillment of his Redeemer's promise, his heart overflowed with joy. He knew whom he had believed; he inwardly felt the consolations of the Gospel; he realized by faith the glory to be revealed; and was desirous that all around him should partake of the same felicity.

The Epistles which he wrote, afford abundant evidence of his unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus, and his fervent love to all the saints. As letters are directed to certain individuals, so the Epistles of Paul describe the people to whom they were addressed. The following directions are so plain, that no one can well mistake the character of the people for whom they were intended. "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints." "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." "To all the saints and faithful brethren which are at Colosse." "Unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

From these addresses, with which his several Epistles commence, it is evident, that the Apostle did not write to a set of carnal, ungodly, worldly, unbelieving men, who cared nothing for Christ, or for the salvation of their souls; but, to those who had been convinced of sin, converted to God, united by faith to Jesus Christ, in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt, and who, by their holy lives, were so many shining lights in the midst of a dark and polluted world.

Are these beautiful letters, which contain such consolations and directions, addressed only "To the saints, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus?" Then let not the carnal professor of the Gospel, whose heart is glued to the world, for one moment think, that these glorious promises in Christ Jesus are his, merely because he has been sprinkled with water at the baptismal font, or because he bears a Christian name, and outwardly adheres to the visible Church of Christ! While in a state of unregeneracy, all the denunciations of wrath contained in these Epistles are against him; for thus

says the Apostle, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha." However much it may offend his pride, yet such a nominal Christian, destitute of the Spirit of Christ, while conforming to the ceremonials of religion, is on a level with the poor benighted heathen; yes, in a condition far more awful.

For what says our blessed Lord himself, respecting the highly-favored Jews of his day, whose privileges were not so great as those which we enjoy since his glorious ascension, and the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit? "Woe unto you, Chorazin, woe unto you, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Let each one then, with deep solicitude, ask himself this serious question- Do I bear the character, and manifest the spirit, of those primitive believers to whom Paul wrote with such paternal affection? To ascertain this important point, still further inquire- Do I believe in Jesus with all my heart? Is my love to him supreme and fervent? Am I reposing all my hopes of glory upon his atonement, righteousness, and intercession? Do the fruits of the Spirit appear and abound within me? Am I delivered from the pollutions and vanities of the world? Is holiness the element in which I desire to live? Do I crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body?

If our hearts can give the faithful affirmative; if we can truly say that we love Jesus, and long to be forever with him; and if our daily walk bears witness to the sincerity of this our profession- then we may read these beautiful Epistles, as if they were addressed to ourselves, and take all the promises of forgiveness, reconciliation, strength, and consolation, which are contained in them, to our personal comfort; and in the fullness of faith, and hope, and charity, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The praising Christian is the happy Christian. God wills the happiness of his people, and is Himself the source of their happiness. The heart of Paul was peculiarly susceptible of grateful emotions. Divine grace shone forth with such a loveliness in all his actions, as renders the contemplation of his character and experience most interesting to the Christian mind. Let us hear some of his sweet accents of praise, as expressed to the churches which he had been instrumental in forming, in the midst of idolatrous abominations.

To the Christians at Rome, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." To the Corinthians, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" To the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now." To the Colossians, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints." To the Thessalonians; "We give thanks to God always for you all, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father,

knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fit, because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds."

Having himself tasted the goodness of the Lord, the Apostle was delighted, when he saw other poor sinners, led by the Spirit, to the same fountain of grace and mercy. What a happy feeling is holy gratitude, when it expands itself toward that Savior whose bounty is ever affording fresh occasion for its rapturous emotion. Those cold hearted Christians lose much spiritual enjoyment, who would exclude the exercise of the affections from their system of religion. As some people, through the corruption of their hearts, "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness;" and others let their passions run mad into the wilds of enthusiasm; so many, to avoid these evils, as they think, oppose the glorious freeness of Gospel grace, and the lively exercise of sanctified affections. But, unless the affections of the heart be engaged, little progress will be made in the Divine life by the mere knowledge of the head. With the heart man believes unto righteousness; Christ dwells in the heart by faith. True faith is not a cold assent of the understanding; it is a divine grace wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which exercises the highest powers, and the best affections of the soul. It unites the believer to Christ, works by love, and binds all the members of his mystical body together, by the indissoluble bond of charity.

Are we in possession of this Gospel grace? If not, are we seeking after it, with an earnestness which will ensure the blessing? Faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it. Jesus, who bids us ask, will never fail to bestow the gift which his Spirit stirs us up to seek. How encouraging are the words of David, "Lord, you have heard the desire of the poor; you prepare their heart, and your ear hearkens thereto."

Chapter 7.

Chapter 7.

THE PRAYERS OF PAUL FOR THE CHRISTIAN CONVERTS.

HIS LABOR TO PROMOTE THE STABILITY OF BELIEVERS.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST HIS GOVERNING PRINCIPLE.

HIS BENEVOLENT EXERTIONS FOR THE POOR SAINTS IN JUDEA.

The heart of Paul glowed with holy love, and was ever sending forth its fervent aspirations to a throne of grace, in behalf of the objects of his affection. He knew the value of prayer. To thanksgivings for the spiritual blessings imparted to the Gentile Christians, he added earnest supplications, that they might grow in grace and hold fast the beginning of their confidence, firm unto the end. What a beautiful example of ministerial faithfulness is thus afforded by this tender-hearted shepherd, to all succeeding pastors in the Christian Church. How sublime and energetic, how full of life and unction, are the prayers which he poured out in behalf of those newly converted believers, to whom he wrote his Epistles.

He has left us a most precious specimen of that fervent prayer which avails much. May all who read these holy breathings of the Apostle, experience the fullness of the blessings which he so ardently implored for all the churches.

Being filled with the spirit of grace and supplication, he thus expressed the inward feelings of his heart, "I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people."

"When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

"I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until Christ returns. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring

much glory and praise to God."

"So we have continued praying for you ever since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you a complete understanding of what he wants to do in your lives, and we ask him to make you wise with spiritual wisdom. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and you will continually do good, kind things for others. All the while, you will learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with his glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. God has purchased our freedom with his blood and has forgiven all our sins."

"And may the Lord make your love grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love overflows toward you. As a result, Christ will make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy when you stand before God our Father on that day when our Lord Jesus comes with all those who belong to him."

"Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God, who calls you, is faithful; he will do this."

"And so we keep on praying for you, that our God will make you worthy of the life to which he called you. And we pray that God, by his power, will fulfill all your good intentions and faithful deeds. Then everyone will give honor to the name of our Lord Jesus because of you, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the undeserved favor of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ."

"May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and in his special favor gave us everlasting comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do and say."

"May the Lord bring you into an ever deeper understanding of the love of God and the endurance that comes from Christ." "May the Lord of peace himself always give you his peace no matter what happens. The Lord be with you all." Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen." "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, Amen."

The glorious subject of these petitions cannot be too much studied; the blessings which they contain, cannot be too earnestly implored. These prayers of the Apostle lead us, as it were, into the inner chamber of his heart. We see what were his inmost desires for the spiritual welfare of his children in the faith. Here, nothing is cold or formal; all is fervent, energetic, affectionate. That which the world derides, and the formalist censures, is the very thing he so ardently supplicated for the churches of Christ; even the religion of the heart, manifesting itself by a supreme delight in Jesus, by a bold renunciation of fleshly lusts, and by an uniform obedience to the Will of God.

The Apostle not only rejoiced over those who were made the subjects of divine grace, and prayed for their continuance in well-doing; but he also labored with incessant toil for their establishment in the faith. This truly apostolic spirit is beautifully displayed in his address to the elders of Ephesus, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now I have done the Lord's work humbly—yes, and with tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. Yet I never shrank from telling you the truth, either publicly or in your homes. I have had one message for Jews and Gentiles alike—the necessity of turning from sin and turning to God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus. And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn there irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit has told me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love. And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. Let me say plainly that I have been faithful. No one's damnation can be blamed on me, for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants for you. And now beware! Be sure that you feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his blood—over whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders. I know full well that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some of you will distort the truth in order to draw a following. Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you. And now I entrust you to God and the word of his grace—his message that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself."

Not having been at Rome when he wrote his Epistle to the Christians of that city, he expressed his desire with peculiar delicacy, that he might be permitted to visit them, for their furtherance in the faith of the Gospel. "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request, if by any means, now at length I might have a prosperous journey, by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me."

As the heart of Paul was filled with love and gentleness, so he was equally undaunted in the hour of danger. His Christian heroism was strikingly displayed at Lystra. Having, as we have seen, been stoned by the people, he miraculously rose up, and came into the city; and the next day, he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Afterwards he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. Then he came once more to Derbe and Lystra; so the churches were established in the

faith, and increased in number daily.

The Apostle, regardless of his personal safety, watched over the interests of the infant churches. When persecution was spreading its fires on every side, he trembled for the souls of his spiritual children, lest Satan should get an advantage over them; for he was not ignorant of Satan's devices. Also, he had a deep insight into the human heart, being well acquainted with his own. And knowing that, "as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man," he was enabled to speak a word in season, and to give such cautions as were needful to guard believers against those snares which were laid for their feet.

His love for the souls of men, led him to endure the greatest privations for their salvation and growth in grace. Impelled by this principle, he traversed various regions, that he might plant churches, and water those churches which were already planted. No force of opposition could deter him from the performance of this duty, nor cause him to desert his beloved converts in the hour of danger. When he could not see them, through providential hindrances, he wrote invaluable Epistles to confirm and strengthen them; and when enabled to travel, we find how fearlessly he revisited those places which were noted by his trials; being willing rather to risk the loss of life, than that one soul should perish through his neglect or from fear of suffering.

In all this the Apostle sought not his own glory, but the glory of God; not his own interest, but the interest of perishing sinners. Hence he could say, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." With the angels of God, he could rejoice over one sinner that repents; and praise the Lord for every brand which was plucked out of the fire. Having been caught up into paradise, his soul was full of heavenly love, and all his prayer, and desire, and labor was, that heaven might be let down into the hearts of men, through a believing reception of Jesus Christ.

What a model is here presented to Christian teachers in every age. There was nothing luke-warm, nothing timid, nothing selfish, in the character of this preacher of righteousness. The love of Christ was the governing principle of his actions; to promote the glory of Christ was the constant desire of his heart. He could truly say, "To me to live is Christ." A heavenly light irradiated his mind. He saw, by faith, the realities of eternity, and his affections yearned over dying sinners. Beholding them suspended by the thread of life over the gulf of hell, in danger every moment of dropping into its everlasting fire, he labored to rescue them from ruin. With unwearied solicitude, he directed them to Jesus, the only Savior and Friend of sinners, whose blood cleanses from all sin, and who can and will save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him.

Thus he felt for the unconverted Jews, when writing to the Church of Rome, "In the presence of Christ, I speak with utter truthfulness—I do not lie—and my conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm that what I am saying is true. My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them."

He also expressed his great solicitude for their salvation, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved; for I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." In them he saw the image of his former self. He could therefore pity them, and pray for

them, and labor to do them good. But he trembled for their state of unbelief. With a prophetic eye, he foresaw the miseries which were coming upon them as a people, who, to use his own words, "who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost."

The present degraded state of the Jews is an awful commentary upon these words; while their existence as a people, affords an undeniable and perpetual evidence to the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations." "Fear not, O Jacob my servant, says the Lord; for I am with you; for I will make a full end of all nations where I have driven you; but I will not make a full end of you." "You shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations where the Lord shall lead you." "And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O House of Judah and House of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing." What uninspired men could have uttered these words with the certainty of their fulfillment? It is most evident, therefore, that the 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.

The Jews have been scattered and persecuted; they are to this day, wanderers, and a by-word among the nations. Those kingdoms which once oppressed them are now no more; while the Jews still preserve their national character, customs, and religion, though dispersed throughout the earth, without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. What but Almighty Power could have effected, and what but Infinite Omniscience could have foreseen, events, which ought to shame the infidel out of his unbelief!

The Apostle who foretold their miseries, has also, in his Epistle to the Romans, foretold their restoration, and conversion to the faith of Christ. This glorious event will be to the world, as life from the dead, when "Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and when they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." In the same compassionate spirit, Paul grieved over the benighted heathen, who, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, walked in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart. With these affections of compassion and earnest longings for the salvation of sinners, he told the Romans, that, "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the Gospel of Christ."

The Lord, whom he so faithfully served in the Gospel of his Son, sustained him amid all his labors, so that he could say, "I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." This experience of his Savior's loving-kindness, made him even "exult in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." Thus he was strengthened to glorify God in the fires; and to spread abroad the savor of his name.

With the love of God, the love of our neighbor is inseparably connected; for, "If any man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loves God, must love his brother also." Under the influence of this Christian love, the Apostle cheerfully expended his strength, in promoting the temporal, as well as the spiritual welfare of his brethren. His religion was of a practical nature; it did not consist in high professions and swelling words; in many promises, and few performances; but in self-denying labors.

When writing to Timothy, he gave him this command, "Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of eternal life."

To the exercise of the same practical piety, he exhorted the Galatian converts, "Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The second time when Paul went up to Jerusalem, he saw James, and Peter, and John, who gave to him and Barnabas the right-hand of fellowship. It was then agreed that he and Barnabas should go unto the Heathen, while the other Apostles would go unto the Jews, "Only they wanted," writes Paul to the Galatians, "that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do."

The prophet Agabus had foretold by the Spirit, that there would be a great famine throughout the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. This period of affliction called into active exercise that grace of love, which, when genuine, evidences itself by feelings of compassion and acts of unselfish liberality. The early Christians were happily united in heart; they formed but one holy family; their interests, their joys, their sorrows, were so blended together, that if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it. Thus it was at this calamitous season; for the historian informs us, that the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea, which also they did; and sent it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

The Apostle was indeed most forward to remember the poor suffering saints. He used all his influence with the Gentile churches to furnish them with the means of subsistence, and spared no pains to impress the hearts of believers with the exalted duty of Christian beneficence. "I have," said he to the elders of the Ephesian Church, "showed you all things, how you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said; It is more blessed to give, than to receive." Though very anxious to visit Rome, in order to benefit the Christians there by his counsel and ministry; yet he had a work of love to perform, which he felt desirous first to accomplish. He therefore writes, "I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can send me on my way again. But before I come, I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Christians there. For you see, the believers in Greece have eagerly taken up an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, who are going through such hard times. They were very glad to do this because they feel they owe

a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the wonderful spiritual blessings of the Good News from the Jewish Christians, they feel the least they can do in return is help them financially. As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. And I am sure that when I come, Christ will give me a great blessing for you."

The charitable Apostle was delighted with the liberality of the Macedonian Christians towards the suffering churches of Judea. To the Corinthians he held them forth as a beautiful model for imitation, "Now I want to tell you, dear friends, what God in his kindness has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the gracious privilege of sharing in the gift for the Christians in Jerusalem." He then bestows a commendation upon the Corinthians themselves, "I really don't need to write to you about this gift for the Christians in Jerusalem. For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to our friends in Macedonia that you Christians in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of them to begin helping." "This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

With Apostolic authority, he might have enforced their obedience; but wishing rather to win them over to the exercise of Christian beneficence, he says, "Since you excel in so many ways—you have so much faith, such gifted speakers, such knowledge, such enthusiasm, and such love for us—now I want you to excel also in this gracious ministry of giving. I am not saying you must do it, even though the other churches are eager to do it. This is one way to prove your love is real. You know how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus Christ was. Though he was very rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich." " And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others; being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God."

How indefatigable was this servant of Christ. Who can view his character, and not glorify God in him. May the contemplation of it, stir us up to an increased desire after that grace which produced in him such holy fruits. As by a participation in the sorrows of others, we lessen their poignancy; so, by an endeavor to increase the happiness of others, we augment our own. Let us then embrace every opportunity of doing good to the souls and bodies of men; for opportunity is the flower of time, while the right improvement of it is the fruit. "To a Christian, it must be regarded as an axiom, that an opportunity of doing good, is tantamount to a command to undertake the service. Let us remember, that we have here no option. Our faculties are given to us, not as a property, but as a trust; and we are bound at our peril to forbear availing ourselves of the opportunities which Providence may place within our reach, of doing justice, and showing mercy, of lessening the miseries, and augmenting the happiness, of our species."

How sweetly constraining is the Christian motive to brotherly love; "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not, knows not God, for God is love. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

"One there is above all other;

O how he loves!

His is love beyond a brother's,

O how he loves!

Earthly friends may fail and leave us,

This day kind- the next bereave us,

But this Friend will never deceive us,

O how he loves!

Blessed Jesus!- Would you know him,

Give yourself entirely to him;

Is it sin that pains and grieves you?

Unbelief and trials tease you?

Jesus can from all release you;

O how he loves!

Love this Friend- who longs to save you.

Do you love? he will not leave you

Think no more then of tomorrow,

Take his easy yoke and follow,

Jesus carries all your sorrow,

O how he loves!

All your sins shall be forgiven,

Backward shall your foes be driven;

Best of blessings he'll provide you,

Nothing but good shall e'er betide you,

Safe to glory he will guide you,

O how he loves!

Chapter 8.

Chapter 8.

THE EFFECTS OF THE APOSTLES PREACHING.

HIS PROPHETIC WARNINGS OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSIONS.

HIS GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

HIS TENDERNESS OF SPIRIT.

HIS VIEW OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

Light and darkness are not more opposed to each other, than Christianity and Paganism. If we look at the sages of antiquity, or at the civilized heathens of modern times, and inquire what all their self-inflicted tortures are intended to effect; the answer is given in the streaming blood and dying groans of human victims, whose mangled bodies are supposed to propitiate their angry deities. Their idols are objects of terror, before whose frightful forms they tremble, and to pacify whose wrath, they blindly rush into the jaws of death. Their idols are 'vices defied', which mark the source from where they spring.

Our God is love- rich in mercy to all who call upon him. Our God is holy- the fountain of blessedness to his people. Love, purity, and mercy are no attributes belonging to heathen deities. As in ancient, so in modern days the peculiar features of idolatry are obscenity and blood. Such is the worship which Satan has established in the earth; for so Paul declares- "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God." In obedience to his Savior's command, the Apostle went forth into all lands preaching to the Gentiles the Gospel of his grace, and laboring in His strength to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And wonderful was the effect of his labors among those polluted idolaters, to whom he made known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

When the Gospel was preached in these first ages of the Church, it was revealed to the hearts and consciences of sinners with great power. They deferred not their repentance one day, on account of any worldly considerations. They did not stay until they had set their houses in order. Neither did the fear of losing their estate, pleasures, or even life itself, separate them from Christ. Crowds of sinners who heard the Apostle preach, flocked into the Church as doves to their windows, turning speedily and without reserve to God their Savior; so that Zion, with holy admiration, might well exclaim. "Who has begotten these?"

Luke bears ample testimony to the truth of these remarks. After the Apostle's sermon at Antioch, he tells us, "As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people asked them to return again and speak about these things the next week. Many Jews and godly converts to Judaism who worshiped at the synagogue followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them, "By God's grace, remain faithful." The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them

preach the word of the Lord. But when the Jewish leaders saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that this Good News from God be given first to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life—well, we will offer it to Gentiles. For this is as the Lord commanded us when he said, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.' When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were appointed to eternal life became believers."

The ministration of the Gospel had this great effect upon them, because, when it was made known by the voice of men externally to the ear, it was applied inwardly to the heart, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, while the Law was thundering its denunciations of wrath against sin from mount Sinai- The Gospel was proclaiming pardon and peace through the blood of Jesus from the hill of Zion. Then were fulfilled the sweet words of David, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth." But the still more glorious day is hastening on, when Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. His children, begotten to him "through the Gospel, shall then exceed in number, as well as brightness and beauty, the spangles of early dew which the morning discloses to the delighted eye of the beholder." Oh happy period! when believers shall cover the earth as the dew drops of the morning; when they shall appear in the beauties of holiness, adorned with humility, hope, love, and all the graces of the Spirit; when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest; when every heart shall be his dwelling place.

The Gospel, being thus preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, was the power of God unto salvation both to Jews and Greeks. And now, as then, it is the word of life, of reconciliation, of salvation, to thousands of wretched sinners, whose hearts are opened, like that of Lydia, to attend to the voice of Mercy. Oh! how can we withstand this Gospel of grace, in which such ample provision is made for every need. In the greatness of his love, our heavenly Father has revealed an all-sufficient Savior, for the removal of our guilt and for our recovery to his favor; and an all-sufficient Sanctifier, for the renewal of our hearts and for our restoration to the privileges of his children. Being taught by the Spirit, Paul knew full well that he might preach and Apollos water, but that God only could give the increase.

In this Epistle to the Thessalonians, he takes particular notice of this accompanying grace of God, "For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true. And you know that the way we lived among you was further proof of the truth of our message. So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way, you imitated both us and the Lord. For this cause, we thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works in you that believe."

The single-hearted Apostle and his fellow laborers in the Gospel, arrogated no power to themselves. They acknowledged their own weakness; declaring that they possessed this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man. This he confessed to the Corinthians, when stating the efficacy of his labors among them, "Not that we are

sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who has made us able ministers of the New Testament."

How harmoniously do the graces of the Spirit blend their excellencies in the experience of Paul, which like the glorious rainbow in the clouds, present to our view the wonderful work of God. Oh! that our admiration may lead us, through grace, to a close imitation of this indefatigable servant of Christ. The faithful minister of the Gospel has joys and sorrows peculiarly his own. Regardless of all personal inconveniences, connected with his pastoral office- his soul can rejoice when, through his labors, sinners are converted unto God. Such delight Paul felt, in the midst of all his conflicts; of this pleasure, John partook when he wrote, "I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth;" and in such pure felicity, will every faithful pastor participate, whose heart is in his work, and whose life is devoted to the cause of Truth.

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. May their numbers and their success be abundantly increased, until the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord. But with sorrow we have to lament, that the Gospel does not exhibit its primitive power among us. Its conquests are few; and the dispensers of it have reason to complain, that they spend their strength to very little purpose. And why is this? Is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save? or, is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear? Are the truths of the Gospel less important now than when they were first preached? or the threatenings against those who neglect them; less alarming? By no means. As professing Christians we must seek for the cause of this evil in ourselves. Like those whom our Lord describes in the parable, we are ever ready to frame excuses for not attending to the call of the Gospel. We try to shelter our slothfulness under the plea of inability to do what the Gospel requires; or, from the lack of time to seek after the promised strength. Thus we deceive ourselves, until death reveals to us our fatal error.

O! that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end. May the Spirit awaken us to a sense of our danger. What language can exceed the tenderness of our heavenly Father; "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go. O that you had hearkened to my commandments, then your peace would have been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

We might have supposed that the world would have grown more holy and more confirmed in the faith of the Gospel, during the lengthening period of the Christian dispensation; but Paul in his Epistle to Timothy discloses a painful truth, "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." "For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." To the Thessalonians he also writes, "Please don't be so easily shaken and troubled by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Even if they claim to have had a vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us, don't believe them. Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction, whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming."

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter declares, "But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach their destructive heresies about God and even turn against their Master who bought them. Theirs will be a swift and terrible end. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of them, Christ and his true way will be slandered. There shall also come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying; where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation."

From where arises all this evil in the Christian Church? The springs which supply these bitter waters are clearly revealed in the charges which John was commanded to deliver to the angels of the seven churches. "I have this complaint against you, because you have left your first love. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. You are neither cold nor hot, I would you were cold or hot; so because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth." This defection of Christian principle, this declension from the holiness of the Gospel, must be traced to the innate corruption of the heart. A growing insensibility to the evil of lukewarmness, a neglect of closet duties, or a heartless performance of them, a lack of watchfulness and circumspection, a sinful conformity to the world, an over-grasping after earthly things, bespeak a people fallen from that exalted standard of faith and love which so signalized many of the early Christians from the world around them.

But, if in the days of Paul the mystery of iniquity began to work, if John had to rouse the declining churches, and even in the purest age of Christianity had to declare, that many deceivers and antichrists were entered into the world; let us look to ourselves, lest we fall from our own steadfastness; let us daily examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith; and knowing that the end of all things is at hand, let us seek for more grace, that we may be sober, and watch unto prayer, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If such signs of declension are visible among professing Christians, who still maintain an outward regard to the ordinances of the Gospel; what black marks may we not expect to find upon those who, though called Christians, do not pretend to make any profession of religion at all. These hate the light, and will not come to it. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The world reigns in their hearts, and Satan has the sway over them. They will not part with those sins which the Word of God condemns, nor perform those duties which it enjoins. They may attend a preached Gospel, but they do not hear it with teachable hearts. Their fastidious minds are soon offended with the matter or manner of the preacher. They criticize the style of his discourse, but overlook, or are offended at its home-directed truths. They, being spiritually healthy in their own estimation, feel no need of the Physician; and would gladly absent themselves altogether from the house of God, did not some secret whisper of conscience, the force of early habit, or a desire to keep up an outward decency of character, restrain their departing steps.

These and other similar causes operate to exclude the light of the Gospel from the hearts of sinners. O! what a wretched being is man, when left to himself! Every evil nestles in his heart, producing a thousand stings to torment him in time and through eternity. Paul directs us to the contemplation of this misery, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to those who are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." David, who was well acquainted with the

deceitfulness of the heart, describes the wicked man as flattering himself in his own eyes, until his iniquities be found to be hateful.

It is awful to think what delusions men practice upon themselves. Through the artifices of Satan, and the false reasonings of their own hearts, they are deceived to their own ruin. By comparing themselves with those who are more notoriously wicked; and thus thinking themselves good. By magnifying their supposed virtues, and softening down their vices. By presuming upon the mercy of God, as if he were too benevolent to put his threatenings into execution; or in other words, too good to be true. By depending upon a death-bed repentance, not considering that repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit; and that they cannot turn and prepare themselves by their own natural strength, to faith and calling upon God. By disbelieving the eternity of hell torments, as being a punishment too cruel and severe for the all bounteous Creator to inflict upon his erring creatures. By denying the particular providence of God; esteeming it beneath his glorious Majesty, to inspect their trivial concerns, or to notice each trifling deviation from his Law. By lowering the standard of Christian morality. By supposing the Almighty to be such an one as themselves.

It is the gracious work of the Spirit to convince the world of unbelief, that radical evil from where grow a thousand branches, each bearing the most deadly fruit. Unbelief threw a shadow over the lovely scenes of paradise, and still shrouds the earth with sadness— it bars the gate of heaven, and opens that of hell. Unbelief blinds the eyes of sinners to the dangers which beset them, and the misery which awaits them. They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not. While to their worldly interest they are quick-sighted in the extreme, a thick film covers the eye of their minds when the higher interests of eternity are set before them. The things of eternity, being invisible, are forgotten, or lightly regarded, while those of time, always appealing to the senses, are ever uppermost in their affections. They know that death will come, but he is now, as they fondly hope, at a distance from them. Hence they sport with lightsome heart along the flowery path of pleasure, until the unexpected dart is hurled, which hurries them, in all their unpreparedness, into the presence of their Judge.

"Life, and the scenes that round it rise,
Share in the same uncertainties;
Yet still we hug ourselves with vain presage,
Of future days serene and long,
Of pleasures fresh and ever strong,
An active youth, and slow declining age.
Like a fair prospect still we make
Things future, pleasing forms to take;
First, verdant meads arise, and flowery fields;
Cool groves, and shady copses here,
There brooks and winding streams appear,

While change of objects still new pleasures yields.
Farther, fine castles court the eye,
There, wealth and honors we espy;
Beyond, a huddled mixture fills the stage,
Until the remoter distance shrouds
The plain with hills, those hills with clouds,
There, we place death, behind old shivering age.
When death alas! perhaps too near,
In the next hedge does skulking he,
There plants his engines, thence let fly his dart,
Which, while we ramble without fear,
Will stop us in our full career,
And force us from our airy dreams to part."

Thus, vain man, heedless alike of present danger and future evil, neglects the blessings of the Gospel, and with awful madness rushes into the everlasting fire. Is he warned of his danger? He laughs at the credulity of his advisers. Is he invited to accept the offers of redeeming love? He cannot relinquish the pleasures of the world. He is willing to run all risks, rather than endure the self-denying requirements of Christianity. Heaven presents no charms to his vitiated taste. Being earthly, sensual, devilish, his desires are only carnal, and his every step brings him nearer to the pit of hell. But oh! how great is the change, when the Holy Spirit shines into his heart, and gives him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! Evils are then discovered which before lay hidden and unknown. Boasted virtues are found to be rebel sins; and crimes, committed under soft and tender names, are seen in all their blackness. Thus Paul, in his state of darkness, considered it meritorious to ravage the Church of Christ; but when enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, he saw his zeal to be rebellion, and his persecution murder.

In every age, whether barbarous or refined, the preaching of the cross is to those who perish, foolishness. The most learned in human science, cannot, by the unassisted powers of reason, discover the glory of the cross of Christ. Their lofty minds cannot stoop so low as to receive, in the simplicity of faith, the humiliating truths connected with, and flowing from, the doctrine of the atonement. This is a path which the vulture's eye has not seen. Human philosophy cannot perceive the beauty and sublimity of this consecrated way to glory. But, blessed be God, the poor have the Gospel preached unto them; the poor are made rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom; though never taught to measure distant planets, or to explore with philosophic eye the center of the earth. With humble minds they listen to the truth, receive it in faith and love, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, are made holy and happy by it.

David tuned his harp to this delightful subject— "Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation. They exult in your righteousness. You are their glorious strength. Our power is based on your favor; for the Lord is our defense, the Holy One of Israel is our King. Remember me, too, Lord, when you show favor to your people; come to me with your salvation. Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones. Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage."

How triumphant is the power of the cross, which enabled the Apostle to say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." No wonder he was anxious to make known to a ruined world, this mystery of grace, which had filled his heart with joy and peace. It was at the foot of the cross, that he had learned to despise all human greatness, and to desire, above all things, an interest in the righteousness of his crucified Savior. The glory of the cross threw all the glories of the world into the shade. Vanity was inscribed on all its pleasures, its possessions, and its power. Hence, with Christian boldness he assured the Roman converts, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes." He declared also to the believers at Corinth, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Deeply impressed with the infinite blessings which flow down from heaven through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, he labored to impress the hearts of others, that they, like him, might be made partakers of the grace of God. Through the force of Truth, Felix was made to tremble, Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and thousands on the day of Pentecost, were pricked to the heart. What effect has the Gospel had on our hearts? Have we been humbled and changed by it? Has it brought us to Christ, the sinners only refuge from the wrath to come? Is the world crucified to us, no longer swaying our affections? Are we crucified to the world, being esteemed worthless for Jesus' sake? The Almighty said to Abraham, "I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing." However much, then, the people of God may be despised, they are the seed which the Lord has blessed.

How expressive are the words of our Savior to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth." Salt has two properties. By the one it preserves from corruption the substance with which it is mixed; and by the other, it communicates to that substance its own savor. The two-fold benefit is derived to the world from true believers. Through their counteracting influence, the progress of corruption is retarded, and by their example, precept, and prayers, the savor of their spirit is diffused. This blessedness is the work of the Holy Spirit, and is produced through the consistency and persevering labors of the righteous.

The life of the believer is a patient continuance in well-doing, a pressing forward towards the mark, a running the race set before him, a growth in grace. Hence, with much solicitude, Paul wrote to the Colossians to continue in the faith, and not to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel which they had heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven. "God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his message in all its fullness to you Gentiles. This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been

revealed to his own holy people. For it has pleased God to tell his people that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. For this is the secret: Christ lives in you, and this is your assurance that you will share in his glory. So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. I work very hard at this, as I depend on Christ's mighty power that works within me."

As the heart of Paul was large enough to contain a whole world, with respect to his desires and prayers for the conversion of every human being to that state of spiritual happiness which he enjoyed; so, he was full of the tenderest sensibilities towards those to whom he had been made the honored instrument in bringing to the knowledge of Christ. With what parental tenderness does he address his beloved converts at Thessalonica and Philippi, "We were as gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children. We loved you so much that we gave you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too. And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you into his Kingdom to share his glory." "God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus."

How exquisitely touching are these appeals to the sympathies of our nature. They speak directly to the heart. We can conceive of nothing more endearing than this tenderness of ministerial affection. The blessed Apostle felt all the father towards his spiritual children- he exhorted- he comforted- he charged each of them, that he might build them up in the faith of the Gospel. His Epistle to Philemon is replete with feelings of Christian friendship; in which, after having expressed his joy in hearing of his faith and love which he had towards the Lord Jesus, and towards all saints, he thus pleads for Onesimus; the runaway servant of Philemon, who, it appears, had robbed his master- "

Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul--an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus-- I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. So if you consider me your partner, give him the same welcome you would give me if I were coming. If he has harmed you in any way or stolen anything from you, charge me for it. I, Paul, write this in my own handwriting: "I will repay it." And I won't mention that you owe me your very soul! Yes, dear brother, please do me this favor for the Lord's sake. Give me this encouragement in Christ. I am confident as I write this letter that you will do what I ask and even more!"

Can any thing be more lovingly persuasive, or more humbly solicitous than these appeals to the heart of Philemon. There is throughout the whole Epistle, a delicacy of sentiment and a pathos which strikingly mark the elevated and refined state of the Apostle's mind. When parting with such a father in Christ, the elders of Ephesus might well weep sadly, falling on Paul's neck and kissing him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more!

Is this Saul of Tarsus, the murderer of Stephen, the blasphemer of Jesus, the persecutor of the sheep of Christ? What cannot grace effect! Well might Jehovah say, "Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for me?" The Gospel is truly a revelation of love and mercy; and those who dispense its blessings, and would wish to see them received by the world, must, with Paul, exhibit in their own spirit, the loveliness and loving-kindness of the Prince of

Peace.

This Apostle of Jesus Christ was well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom. Though his heart was full of the tenderest feelings of compassion, yet he knew how to use the terrors of the Law, as well as the persuasives of the Gospel. With a masterly hand he drew the contrast between the Law and the Gospel, showing with admirable precision the effects produced by each. The Law is the ministry that brought death and of condemnation. The Gospel is the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness. The Law is the letter which kills. The Gospel is the spirit which gives life. The Law, as a covenant of works, though glorious, was done away with. The Gospel, as a covenant of grace, by reason of the glory that excels, is of perpetual duration. By the Law comes the knowledge of sin. Through the Gospel is the knowledge of salvation. The Law works wrath. The Gospel imparts peace. The Law exhibits God as a consuming fire. The Gospel reveals him as a reconciled Father.

What the Holy Spirit has joined together, let not vain man pretend to separate. The Spirit makes use of the Law and the Gospel in working faith, and it must be the work of preachers to join the Law and the Gospel together. They must awaken and wound by the Law, and they must comfort and heal by the Gospel. By the Law they must strike with terror those who are insensible, and rouse such as are sleepy; and by the Gospel they must pour the soft healing oil of the covenant into the wounds of those who are broken in spirit, and are sinking under the weight of their misery. This is rightly to divide the Word of Truth, according to the charge given by the Apostle to Timothy, "Study to show yourself approved of God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" that is, dispensing it suitably and agreeably to the state and temper of the hearers.

The promises of the Gospel are not to be laid open to sinners, who are slumbering on beds of sloth, but they must be awakened by the threatenings of the Law. On the other hand, the corroding medicines of the Law are not to be applied to such as are ready to be swallowed up with excess of sorrow, but to them must be administered the strengthening, reviving cordials of the Gospel. By the Law, sinners must be led to the brink of Jordan; but by the Gospel, they must be carried over Jordan into the promised land of spiritual rest, the pledge and foretaste of heavenly bliss.

It is delightful to observe the wisdom of our Lord; how exactly he suited his counsel to the various states of mankind. The secure and presumptuous he sent to the Law, that they might be humbled. To the contrite and penitent, he preached the Gospel, that they might be comforted. When the rich Pharisee, full of self-conceit, said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" The answer was, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments." When the broken-hearted woman fell at his feet, and spoke in tears the guilt of her life, and the anguish of her soul- "Your sins are forgiven," was the gracious reply.

Thus the wisdom of God shines forth in all his dispensations. The Law gives us the shadow of good things to come; the Gospel reflects their image more distinctly; while in heaven they will be viewed in the perfection of beauty, and be revealed in the saints, in all their fullness of glory.

"Ground of my hope, the cross appears;

I see the man of sorrows bleed

I bid adieu to guilty fears,
And in his death my pardon read.
And could you, O my Savior die,
To rescue me from endless woe!
Enough! there's none more blest than I,
Since you could love a sinner so.
I leave the world its boasted store,
Of pleasures that must quickly end;
I prize its vanities no more,
Since I have found the sinner's friend.
I care not if the world revile,
The world that hates my master's cause;
The world, I know would quickly smile,
Were I again what once I was.
Then farewell world, and farewell all
That emulates a Savior's claims;
I'll bear him and obey his call,
Regardless who approves or blames.
I'll praise him while he gives me breath,
Nor then will cease to sing his love;
For when my voice is lost in death,
I hope to join the choirs above."

Chapter 9.

Chapter 9.

PAUL'S DISINTERESTEDNESS (unselfishness).

HIS PARENTAL SOLICITUDE FOR HIS SPIRITUAL CHILDREN.

HIS SELF-RENUNCIATION.

HIS CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE WITH WEAK BRETHREN.

Disinterestedness formed a beautiful feature in the character of Paul. It is the appointment of God, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; as the Jewish priests, who ministered about holy things, lived of the things of the temple. It is also due from a principle of equity, that those who devote their time and talents for the spiritual good of others, should be preserved, by a suitable maintenance, from those anxieties and cares which necessarily attend worldly business. This equitable provision is clearly ordained of God, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, that the faithful minister may be enabled, with more unfettered spirit, to pursue the arduous labors of his office. "We have planted good spiritual seed among you. Is it too much to ask, in return, for mere food and clothing? Those who are taught the word of God should help their teachers by paying them."

When Paul succeeded, through the grace of God, in forming a church, both Jews and Gentiles instantly united to crush this little company of believers; while some accused him of self-interested motives, as if he only sought a livelihood among the newly converted Heathen. This accusation led him to refuse repeated offers of assistance, that he might cut off occasion from them who thus desired an occasion to misrepresent him. He therefore said to the elders of Ephesus- "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to those who were with me." Though he had a full right, as a minister of Christ, to the support of Christian believers, for whose sake he expended all his strength; yet from the peculiar state of the infant Church, he made this disinterested declaration- "I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Nothing could be farther removed from the heart of the Apostle than self-seeking, and the love of what he designated filthy lucre. The man who could say, "I die daily;" whose desire was to depart, and to be with Christ; whose affections were set on things above; and whose life was hidden with Christ in God; would feel no hankering after the perishing honors and riches of the world. His appeal to the church of Corinth is a striking specimen of that eloquence of the heart, which flows from a feeling of conscious integrity- "The only thing I didn't do, which I do in the other churches, was to become a burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong! Now I am coming to you for the

third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have; I want you. And anyway, little children don't pay for their parents' food. It's the other way around; parents supply food for their children. I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me."

Nothing but the power of the Spirit of Christ, could have produced a feeling so completely opposed to every principle of our fallen nature. "I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you," is the language of warm affection. It is the expression of an entire surrender of ourselves for the good of those whom we tenderly love; as the Apostle said to the Philippians, "If I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; for the same cause also, do you joy and rejoice with me." But to say, "I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me," -is a glorious triumph over the pride and selfishness of the human heart.

O! that we could see among professing Christians, more of this unwearied, this disinterested love. To possess this grace is to resemble Christ, who went about doing good, even to the evil and unthankful; who prayed for his enemies; who laid down his life for his murderers; and who has left us an example that we should follow his steps. Without this heavenly principle of love, which suffers long and is kind, we shall soon grow weary in well-doing, especially, if our labors be requited with ingratitude. To retaliate injuries is the work of pride; to bear them meekly, is the fruit of humility. He, who is saved by infinite mercy, will cheerfully forgive an offending brother. The spirit of the Gospel is love. Happy is the man whose soul is cast into this heavenly mold, and receives the image of Him, who is love.

The faithful minister of the Gospel is often called to spend his strength among a people, who, so far from valuing his exertions for their spiritual good, oppose him in every possible way. Yet, he goes on laboring with unwearied patience in the midst of every discouragement. His motives being misjudged, and his character maligned, still, in the strength of that Savior who sees the sincerity of his heart, he perseveres in his work of mercy. Knowing the value of souls, and the grace of Jesus, he is determined to endure every trial, though the more abundantly he loves, the less he be loved. This holy perseverance does not, in general, lose its reward. The Lord blesses such a patient exercise of faith and hope, both to the shepherd and his flock. Many opposers of the Truth are led, through the Spirit, to submit their wills to Jesus, and to love the man, through whose persevering meekness and unwearied forbearance, they have been brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

May each Christian reader, while holding before himself the mirror of Divine Truth, be enabled to discover his own character. Have you, like the disinterested Paul, this holy love to the Gospel of Christ? Can you labor for the salvation of sinners, though your labors be requited with ingratitude and contempt? Do you esteem all things which nature admires, as loss for Christ? Is your heart powerfully drawn toward the people of God, and do you love them, because they are the members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Spirit? What are your views of sin? Is it beheld as rebellion against God? as the crucifier of Christ? Is it hated, opposed, and more and more destroyed within you? Is holiness the sacred atmosphere in which you delight to live? Can you say with the heavenly-minded Apostle, I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ? Do you esteem it your heaven, to be with Christ, to be made like him, and forever to behold his glory. If, with the deep

feeling of humility and self-abasement before God, your heart can assent to these important questions, then rejoice, yes, again and again rejoice; for He who has begun this good work in you, will carry it on, and perfect it to his own everlasting praise.

True faith, from its very nature, must influence the heart, and cause the fruits of holiness to spring up and abound. When genuine, it works by love and is never satisfied with any present measure, but is always panting after an increase; since He, who imparts it, is infinite and inexhaustible, and has declared, "Whoever has, to him shall more be given; and he shall have more abundance."

PARENTAL SOLICITUDE was an interesting trait in the character of the Apostle. Fearing lest his humiliating sufferings, which he so feelingly described to the Corinthian Christians, should make them ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he says in his Epistle to that church, "I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. So I ask you to follow my example and do as I do. That is the very reason I am sending Timothy—to help you do this. For he is my beloved and trustworthy child in the Lord. He will remind you of what I teach about Christ Jesus in all the churches wherever I go."

Where is the zealous minister of Christ who does not meet with trials, among the very people, for whose welfare he is expending all his strength? This holy man had innumerable trials, and those arising from false brethren were not among the least. Pursuing his former appeal to their hearts, he adds; "I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again. But I will come—and soon—if the Lord will let me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God's power. For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power. Which do you choose? Should I come with punishment and scolding, or should I come with quiet love and gentleness?"

His parental fears were greatly excited for the Corinthian converts. He saw among them much to commend and much to blame. With what faithfulness does he set before them his holy apprehensions "I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. For I promised you as a pure bride to one husband, Christ. But I fear that somehow you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to Christ, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent."

Though at a distance from Colosse, he was equally alive to the dangers which surrounded the Christians in that city, from the storms of persecution. He therefore writes, "I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other friends who have never known me personally. My goal is that they will be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have full confidence because they have complete understanding of God's secret plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

With the same fatherly spirit, he exhorted the Hebrew Christians, "Be careful then, dear friends. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ."

It is truly beautiful to behold this combination of tenderness with that honest plain-dealing which will not allow sin to remain unreproved upon a Christian brother. The divinely-taught Apostle was well acquainted with the deceitfulness of the heart and the devices of Satan. He knew the dangers which accompany both the smiles and the frowns of the world, having himself experienced both. His anxieties were, therefore, never dormant, respecting those young believers in Jesus, whose faith might be shaken through the afflictions attendant upon a zealous profession of the Gospel.

Another striking instance of his solicitude is afforded us in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, "Finally, when we could stand it no longer, we decided that I should stay alone in Athens, and we sent Timothy to visit you. He is our co-worker for God and our brother in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith, and to keep you from becoming disturbed by the troubles you were going through. But, of course, you know that such troubles are going to happen to us Christians. Even while we were with you, we warned you that troubles would soon come—and they did, as you well know. That is why, when I could bear it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out whether your faith was still strong. I was afraid that the Tempter had gotten the best of you and that all our work had been useless. Now Timothy has just returned, bringing the good news that your faith and love are as strong as ever. He reports that you remember our visit with joy and that you want to see us just as much as we want to see you. So we have been greatly comforted, dear friends, in all of our own crushing troubles and suffering, because you have remained strong in your faith. It gives us new life, knowing you remain strong in the Lord."

Then; with expanded heart, he breaks forth into the most joyous thanksgivings to God- "How we thank God for you! Because of you we have great joy in the presence of God. Night and day we pray earnestly for you, asking God to let us see you again to fill up anything that may still be missing in your faith. May God himself, our Father, and our Lord Jesus make it possible for us to come to you very soon."

Like the gardener, he was most solicitous about his tender plants; and labored to screen them from the nipping blast. By faith and prayer, he daily committed them to Him, who died to redeem them by his blood; and felt assured, that He, who had called them by his grace, would preserve them unto his kingdom and glory.

No one had a clearer perception than Paul of the sovereignty of Divine Grace, and the stability of the Divine Promises; yet this did not cause him to relax in his endeavors, by all possible means, to guard believers against the subtlety of Satan, the snares of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin.

He knew the inseparable connection there is between the means and the end; that the one, as well as the other, is divinely ordained. To the ship's crew he said, "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you," -and yet he added, "Unless these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved."

His constant warning therefore was, "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. Do not be high-minded, but fear. Let no man deceive himself." How many err in practical religion by following human theories, instead of the Word of God. The purposes of Jehovah, which are secret to us, do not release us from the performance of revealed duties. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Therefore, whenever we meet with a plain precept, we

should simply endeavor to obey it, without tarrying to enquire into God's hidden purpose.

SELF-RUNNUNCIATION was a prominent feature in the conduct of Paul. Self was swallowed up in that one great object, to promote which all his desires centered- Christ and Him Crucified. He was willing to be esteemed as nothing, so that Christ might be all and in all. The glory of Jesus was his constant aim, to hold him forth in all his excellencies was his delight, though, in so doing, he should be esteemed by the worldly wise, and the great ones of the earth, as a fool for Christ's sake. Thus, with beautiful humility, he told the Corinthians, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

In his Epistle to the Philippians we have a most interesting instance of this victory over selfish feeling- "And I want you to know, dear friends, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including all the soldiers in the palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, many of the Christians here have gained confidence and become more bold in telling others about Christ."

How cheering it must have been to the Apostle, in the midst of his sufferings, to behold the Gospel making its conquests in the palace of Caesar! At the close of this Epistle he says, "All the saints salute you, chiefly those who are of Caesar's household." Oh! that every palace may be illuminated by the Truth of the Gospel, and by the holy lives of its possessors. Happy is that nation where God is known in its palaces as a sure refuge; where its king is a nursing father, and its queen a nursing mother to his Church. Happy is that nation which is in such a case; yes, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.

That the bonds of the Apostle should have emboldened others to speak the word without fear, when the natural effect might have been intimidation, was a cause for thankfulness. But in the midst of these encouragements, he had to notice, what to many would have been a painful trial, "Some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know the Lord brought me here to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. But whether or not their motives are pure, the fact remains that the message about Christ is being preached, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and as the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will all turn out for my deliverance."

Grace shines with peculiar luster in this generous feeling of his heart. No malice, no retaliating passion of envy, or ill-will was awakened in his bosom. All his desire was that Christ should be preached and sinners saved. Did any envy his success, or seek to lessen him in the esteem of others? -he bore it with patience. Did they preach Christ as the only Savior of sinners? -he could, and did rejoice, even though they preached Christ out of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds.

Self was sacrificed to the glory of the Redeemer. This humble servant of Christ felt no keen solicitude about his own reputation, if only the riches of pardoning love, through a crucified Jesus, were proclaimed to the world.

Does our Christian experience accord with this beautiful spirit and temper of the Apostle? Those only are disciples indeed, who have the mind of Christ, and who resemble him in his humility,

self-denial, and love. What a glorious object would the Christian Church be, yes, the joy of the whole earth, if all its professing members were filled with that charity which suffers long and is kind; if they were clothed with that lowliness of mind, which causes each to esteem others better than themselves. O that sovereign grace may produce in rich abundance these peaceable fruits of righteousness- and hasten on that blissful period, when Jesus will reign in the hearts of all his people, and bless the earth from the rising to the setting sun.

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE, was another lovely excellence in the Apostle. Understanding well the glorious liberty of the Gospel, he could bear, with much patience, the prejudices of weaker brethren.

How seldom do old established Christians make sufficient allowance for the inexperience and infirmities of young believers, whose minds, just opening to the Truth, have not attained to the stability of the Christian character.

Toward these babes in Christ, much tenderness should be manifested, and much solicitude exercised, as the mother watches over the first steps of her infant. This lovely part of the Apostle's character is displayed in the following exhortations, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. So don't condemn each other anymore. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not put an obstacle in another Christian's path. We who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself. Give none offence, either to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. If what I eat is going to make another Christian sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to make another Christian stumble."

Living, as we do, in a Christian country, we have not to encounter the Jewish distinctions of foods and drinks; nor to experience the offence of food offered unto idols; yet the duties of charity, forbearance, and self-denial are of perpetual obligation, and in one way or other are called into daily exercise. Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.

This was the truly charitable practice of the Apostle; "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; All things are lawful for me, (meaning no doubt things in themselves indifferent) but I will not be brought under the power of any. I keep under by body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Thus, while he conscientiously abstained from whatever might offend the weakest of his brethren, he most carefully avoided, whatever would injure his own soul.

But here the line must be distinctly drawn; for, while we yield to the prejudices of weaker brethren, we must never make sinful compliances to conciliate the people of the world. Jesus said to his disciples, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

If, then, we try to recommend religion, or to remove the prejudice of worldly people, by departing in any instance from our proper character as professing Christians, we deceive ourselves, and discover great defect both in principle and judgment. The apostolic injunction is, "you must live in a

manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, as citizens of heaven. Let your speech be always with grace. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Hence our duty is plain; for though we cannot always discourse upon spiritual things; yet, we must always speak in the spirit of the Gospel; and though we cannot always be engaged in religious exercises, yet, our light must so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

As believing Christians, we must never conceal our principles, nor shrink from an open confession of our faith. If we call Jesus Lord, we are bound to honor him, by a cheerful obedience to his will, whatever harm it may bring upon us. Sinful compliances are never blessed of God to the conviction or conversion of ungodly people; but often end in the confusion of those who make them.

It may however be asked, did not Paul say, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some?" He did— and his language to the Corinthian church is peculiarly striking, "This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings."

From his whole spirit and conduct, it is evident, that what he conceded either to Jews or Gentiles, were things which did not in the slightest degree affect the fundamentals of the Gospel. Unlike the Pharisees, he would not strain at a gnat and swallow a camel; or tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, while he neglected the weightier matters of the Law.

The religion of Paul was the religion of the heart -a religion of truth and love. Though he could bear with the infirmities of the weak, yet, with uncompromising firmness, he maintained the purity of the Gospel. Of this, he has given us two striking instances, which are highly characteristic of his charity and decision. He told the Galatians, who were drawn away by Judaizing teachers from the truth of the Gospel, that he had opposed the circumcision of Titus (he being a Gentile) lest the doctrine of justification by faith should appear to be renounced; and assured them, that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing. While, in perfect consistency with this conduct, he took Timothy, (his mother being a Jewess) and circumcised him, with the simple view of rendering him more acceptable, and his ministry more successful among the Jews. Thus he made a judicious and important distinction, between the essentials and the non-essentials of religion.

Acting on this principle, when Gentiles were converted to the faith of Christ, he could receive them as brethren, and eat and lodge with them, in opposition to the deeply-rooted prejudices of the Jewish nation. And this he did, from his comprehensive view of Christian liberty, which, while it delivered him from the bondage of the ceremonial Law, led him to delight in the expansive spirit of the Gospel.

In his Epistle to the Corinthians he gives us abundant proof of his utter aversion to a party spirit, which, engendering strife and schism, rends and disfigures the body of Christ. With enlarged heart he loved all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and cheerfully conformed, for the sake of unity and peace, to any custom which compromised no Gospel principle, militated against no Gospel doctrine, and lowered no Gospel precept.

With enlightened mind he beheld the Christian dispensation in its native glory, consisting, not in foods and drinks, not in forms and ceremonies, not in human systems and opinions, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

With holy delight he saw the blessing of Abraham descend on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that they, as well as the Jews, might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. With fervent desire he thus expressed himself to the church of Rome; "So I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am fully convinced, dear friends, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well that you are able to teach others all about them. Even so, I have been bold enough to emphasize some of these points, knowing that all you need is this reminder from me. For I am, by God's grace, a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News and offer you up as a fragrant sacrifice to God so that you might be pure and pleasing to him by the Holy Spirit."

Entering fully into the design of the Gospel, which, like the leaves of the Tree of Life, is for the healing of the nations, he was ready to become all things to all men; and to seek the profit of many, that they might be saved. Few, comparatively, attain to this exalted standard of Christian Experience; for "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

To love the Gospel for its own sake, and to love those who live under its sanctifying influence, though in minor things they differ from us, is to imbibe the catholic spirit of Paul. The exclusive love of our own party, which closes our hearts against those who follow not with us, even though they be the followers of Christ, is the very bane of Christian unity, and the prolific source of evil.

Happy indeed will that period be, when the envy of Ephraim shall depart- when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim- when all the tribes of the Lord shall love as brethren, and unite with one mind and heart. in promoting the glory of Jehovah!

Much wisdom and love, much faithfulness and forbearance, are required in the ministers of Christ Their whole spirit and life should be a commentary upon the Word which they preach.

This holy conformity to the Gospel should also be visible in all who profess to believe in Jesus. It was so with many of the Corinthians. With what joy could the Apostle declare; "But the only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves! Your lives are a letter written in our hearts, and everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. Clearly, you are a letter from Christ prepared by us. It is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on stone, but on human hearts."

Also, over many of the Thessalonians he was much comforted, "You yourselves became an example to all the Christians in Greece. And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Greece, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your

faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it"

A character, so opposite in principle and practice, to that which the world admires, is the work of Almighty Power. "If any man among you," says the Apostle, "seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

However much an ungodly world may despise the faithful ambassador of Christ, there is a sanctity of spirit, a purity of purpose, an energy of action, displayed in his character, which mark him out as a chosen vessel; as one whom Jesus delights to honor.

How important are the titles which he bears in the Word of God- a pastor, a teacher, a steward, a watchman, a builder, a laborer. How incessant his care, his wisdom, his fidelity, his vigilance, his exertion. Who can estimate the value of such a man, whose life is thus devoted to the cause of Truth? We should honor him, as the glory of the churches, and the messenger of Christ. We should esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake.

"Nature teaches us to love our benefactors, and the grace of God will inspire a particular affection to those who have been the instruments of our spiritual good. Indifference to the people and interests of the ministers of religion proceeds from indifference to religion itself, and may be justly considered as a proof, that those in whom this temper prevails, have not experienced the peace and comfort which the instructions and exhortations of the faithful servants of Jesus Christ communicate to believers."

The jailor at Philippi, when converted to the faith of Christ, overflowed with gratitude to the instruments of his conversion. "He took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Lydia, when she was baptized and her household, besought these honored servants of Christ, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come in to my house and abide there. And she constrained them." To Gaius, John writes, "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do, to the brethren and to strangers; which have borne witness of your charity before the church."

If the ministerial character be so elevated; if the work to be achieved be so arduous; if the stream of opposition rolling against it be so powerful; well might the holy Apostle exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Truly God only can give, what may emphatically be called a minister's heart. Such a heart of devotedness to Christ, was imparted to Paul; and such a heart of faithfulness and love dwells in all, who are truly called by his grace, to serve Him in the Gospel of his Son.

"O! for that flame of living fire

Which shone so bright in saints of old;

Which bade their souls to heaven aspire,

Calm in distress, in danger bold.

Where is that spirit, Lord, which dwelt

In Abraham's breast, and sealed him thine;

Which made Paul's heart with sorrow melt,
And glow with energy divine?
That Spirit, which from age to age
Proclaimed your love, and taught your ways;
Brightened Isaiah's vivid page,
And breathed in David's hallowed lays?
Is not your grace as mighty now
As when Elijah felt its power;
When glory beamed from Moses' brow,
Or Job endured the trying hour?
Remember, Lord, the ancient days;
Renew your work, your grace restore;
Warm our cold hearts to prayer and praise,
And teach us how to love you more."

Chapter 10.

Chapter 10.

ON THE CHARACTER OF PAUL, AS A MAN OF PRAYER.

HIS UNBENDING INTEGRITY.

Prayer is the cry of a new-born soul, the sign of penitence, the language of desire, the breath of faith. Contrition, humility, faith, and thankfulness, form the essence of acceptable prayer. He who commands us to pray, can alone impart the spirit of prayer. Our blessed Savior has not only taught and commanded us to pray, but did Himself set us an affecting example of fervent prayer.

At his baptism, while he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him.

Just before he chose his twelve Apostles, he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

At another time, in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

When great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by him of their infirmities, he graciously supplied their spiritual and bodily needs, and then withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

"Taking with him Peter, and James, and John, Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his clothing became white and glistening, and a voice out of the overshadowing cloud, said, This is my beloved Son; hear him."

When his soul was put to grief in the garden of Gethsemane, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."

Like their Divine Master, all true believers have been, and still are, a praying people. To live without prayer is to live without God in the world. True spiritual prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the token of every promised blessing. A praying soul is a thriving soul; for as all things are possible to him that believes, so all needful things shall be granted to the prayer of faith.

PAUL WAS A MAN OF PRAYER. With holy fervor he daily poured out his heart to God, in behalf of the churches which he had planted amid the wilds of Heathen superstition. As the first evidence of his conversion, was, "Behold he prays;" so this mark of his adoption into the family of God was never obscured. In the spirit of a child, he approached God, as his Father in Christ Jesus, and felt anxious that all within the sphere of his influence should enjoy the blessedness of adoption.

How sweetly did he display this privilege of the believer in Jesus to the church at Rome, "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry; Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

This exalted privilege of sonship, the Apostle made known also to the Christians of Galatia; "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying; Abba, Father. Wherefore, you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a Son, then an heir of God through Christ. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Happy indeed are they, who are thus admitted into the family of God; each member of which can sweetly sing—

"Father God! how sweet the sound!

How tender and how dear

Not all the harmony of heaven,

Could so delight the ear.

Come, sacred Spirit, seal the name,

On my expanding heart;

And show, that in Jehovah's grace,

I share a filial part."

To believe in Jesus with the heart unto righteousness, to love him with supreme affection, to live under the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, to draw near to God with the confidence of children, and to be assured that our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved, is the very essence of Christianity.

How animating is the promise of Jesus to his disciples, "Whatever you shall ask in my name believing, you shall receive." But some may say— how can we thus pray? Is not faith the gift of God; and are not our hearts naturally averse from this spiritual duty? Jesus who kindly supplies all our need according to the riches of his grace, has left nothing undone in his work of mercy. His chosen servant was divinely directed to encourage the hope of sinners, and to animate the efforts of believers. "The Spirit," says he to the Romans, "helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." Thus, provision is made for every Christian pilgrim, who, journeying on his way to Zion, beholds these encouraging words— "Ask, Seek, Knock."

But must souls dead in sin be exhorted to pray? Certainly they must; because prayer is of divine appointment; and because all, without exception, are dependent upon Divine Goodness, and stand in need of Divine Mercy.

Prayer is the cry of need. The infant cries when its necessities are felt; and so does the convinced sinner, when awakened by the spirit to a sense of his danger. The humble performance of duty, is infinitely better than a thousand speculations upon it. Man's moral inability cannot take away God's right in commanding, nor man's guilt in not obeying the Divine Law.

A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Sinners must therefore be roused from their perilous state, and in the powerful language of Isaiah, exhorted to seek after, and call upon God- "Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. Let the people turn from their wicked deeds. Let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong! Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

While men are speculating, sinners are perishing, and Satan triumphing. Time is short- Eternity is opening upon us. Now, only now, is the accepted time. Sinners must therefore be urged to cry for mercy, through the blood of Christ; leaving it with God to bless his own appointed means, who works in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

Peter said to Simon Magus, "Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this your wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you, for I perceive, that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to a multitude of sinners, whom he addressed as the crucifiers of Jesus. And what was the effect produced? They were pricked in their hearts; and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Disregarding all metaphysical distinctions about the bondage and freedom of the will, Peter, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thus addressed the convicted multitude- "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Thus, Scripture and experience attest, in spite of human theories, that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

If sinners ought to be exhorted to seek for mercy, surely saints must be stirred up to fervent prayer. It is their duty and their privilege; their strength and their consolation.

How encouraging are the promises of Jesus; "When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret, shall reward you openly." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus, a blessing is pronounced on secret, and on social prayer. If they who fear the Lord, speak often one to another; how much more will they delight to hold communion with their heavenly Father through the Son of his love.

Reader, is prayer the delightful exercise of your soul? Are your refreshments sought for, and obtained, at the throne of grace? Have you access by faith in the blood of Jesus, to the Father of mercies, through the power of the Holy Spirit? Many are the apostolic exhortations to prayer "Pray without ceasing- Continue instant in prayer- Give yourselves unto prayer- I desire that men pray

everywhere." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." This made Paul very desirous to have the prayers of all the churches in his behalf.

He entreats the Thessalonians, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith."

To the Hebrews he writes, "Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly; but I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

To the Corinthians, "In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God who can raise the dead. And he did deliver us from mortal danger. And we are confident that he will continue to deliver us. He will rescue us because you are helping by praying for us. As a result, many will give thanks to God because so many people's prayers for our safety have been answered."

To the Philippians; "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

To the Romans, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

To Philemon; "Prepare me a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given unto you."

These highly interesting extracts show how much even an inspired Apostle valued intercessory prayer. How delightful is the thought, that Christian friends, though separated from each other, may meet in spirit at a throne of grace. To the true believer, prayer is a precious privilege. At the mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, he pours out his heart, makes known his needs, and derives renewed strength to perform his duties. There he lays his burden at the feet of his Savior, and there he is filled with peace and joy. Like Hannah, he goes to his God with a sorrowful spirit, and like her, he returns with a gladsome heart. With David he cries- "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul, O save me, for your mercies' sake." And with him he sings, "The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord has received my prayer. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." Full of faith and love, his affections yearn over perishing sinners- he makes intercession for all men- stands in the gap in seasons of national judgments- and pleads with his God in behalf of a guilty land.

Thus, the praying Christian is the true patriot- the best friend to his native country. Such a national blessing did Elisha esteem the prayers of Elijah, when he cried after the ascending Prophet- "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Oh! that our Elijahs may be jealous for the Lord their God; and lift up the voice of earnest supplication to him that smites. For, wrath has gone out from the Lord- the plague has begun. Commissioned by that Almighty Being, whose Name, whose Word, whose day is profaned, death has entered our land in its most frightful form. The pestilence

which walks in darkness, and the sickness which wastes at noon-day, are now sweeping into eternity the thoughtless and unprepared. How loud is the call- "Prepare to meet your God." How solemn the warning- "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live."

O that the servants of Christ, in this our time of danger and desolation, may be stirred up to fervent prayer. Did we as a nation humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God; did we plead in faith the merits of the Great Atonement; then would his wrath be turned away, and his blessing would descend upon us. With united hearts let us supplicate the God of Britain, that His Spirit may be poured out on our king, our princes, our priests, and on all the people of these realms, that England may still be His peculiar treasure-

the Ark to bear His Truth- the honored instrument, in His hands, for evangelizing the world. (The most unthinking must surely be awakened to a sense of danger, when that sweeping Pestilence, the Asiatic Spasmodic Cholera, has been brought, by the immediate hand of God, into this country. Its desolating ravages in India, Persia, and the Turkish Dominions in Asia, Africa, and Europe; its awful effects in Hungary, Russia, Prussia and France; its milder, but progressive work of destruction in our own Island, are calculated to arrest the thoughtless- and lead all to listen to the voice of God, speaking to the Nations by this tremendous scourge. God has evidently a controversy with his people. He has made bare his arm in righteous judgment. But how gently does he deal with us! we have only felt the sprinkling of the norm. If we do not repent, the overwhelming flood may soon descend upon us, hurrying whole cities into one common grave. Oh! that England may know the time of her visitation; then will God be gracious unto our land, and pity his people.)

PAUL WAS A MAN OF UNBENDING INTEGRITY.

He may truly be called a transparent character. There was nothing dark or ambiguous about him. All was open, ingenuous, sincere. He walked in the light.

Holding sacred the dictates of conscience, he sought its approving testimony! Hence he could say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

When accused before Felix as a mover of sedition, he boldly asserted his conscious rectitude; "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man."

In all ages, the faithful servants of Christ have been charged with fomenting divisions, and turning the world upside down. They have been treated as "pestilent fellows," because they testify of the world, that the works thereof are evil. But, like the upright Apostle, they can appeal with confidence to the Searcher of hearts. He knows their inmost desires to promote His glory, and the best interests of mankind. Possessing these two blessings- "an approving conscience, and a smiling heaven," they can bear with patience the ridicule of the wicked, and labor for the good of those who seek their hurt.

As a minister of the Gospel, Paul was faithful to his trust. While the priests of heathen deities, in order to better delude their votaries, were throwing a veil of mystery around their superstitions; he, as the servant of Jehovah, had no object but to disseminate the light of Truth, no motive but that of

fervent love to the Redeemer.

Neither did he shrink from human scrutiny, nor wrap himself up in falsehoods. Like Samuel of old, he could appeal to the churches with fearless integrity, "We reject all shameful and underhanded methods. We do not try to trick anyone, and we do not distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know that. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed by God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who tries our hearts; for neither at any time used we flattering words as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness."

Thus he appealed to them, with respect to his words, and to God, as touching his heart. They knew that he had used no "flattering words." And, he knew, that God was witness to the inward purity of his motives in preaching the Gospel among them.

Such was the straight-forwardness of Paul's conduct. This holy man had no sinister ends in view. He coveted not the passing glories of a world which lies in wickedness, nor the applause of dying multitudes. His treasure, and his heart were in heaven. No privation could draw a murmur from his lips, nor cause him to think harshly of his God and Savior. His anxieties did not spring from selfish considerations, nor from fear of personal inconveniences. Far otherwise- all his concern was to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ, whatever grief or loss, whatever pain or death, might accompany his labor.

With unspeakable joy he could say to the Corinthians, "But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing. To those who are perishing we are a fearful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this? You see, we are not like those hucksters—and there are many of them—who preach just to make money. We preach God's message with sincerity and with Christ's authority. And we know that the God who sent us is watching us."

Sincerity is a pearl of great price; without it, religion is an empty name. The most gifted talents are of little worth, if unaccompanied by this Christian grace; while, clothed with it, the humblest attainments are pleasing unto God, who sees not as man sees. Religion has its seat in the heart. There, must its power be felt; and from thence, must its light proceed. To possess a single eye, which aims at nothing but the glory of Jesus, and simplicity of heart, which abhors every species of deceit, is to possess the spirit of the Gospel.

While the mind is engaged in holy meditations on the glories of redemption, the affections of the heart must be captivated by the love of Christ, and the will inclined to serve him with all its powers. This is genuine Christianity; the workmanship of God.

"O Savior, may we never rest

Until you are formed within;

Until you have calmed our troubled breast,

And crushed the power of sin.
O may we gaze upon your cross,
Until the wondrous sight
Makes earthly treasures seem but dross,
And earthly sorrows light;
Until released from carnal ties
Our spirit upward springs;
And sees true peace above the skies,
True joy in heavenly things.
There, as we gaze, may we become
United, Lord, to Thee;
And in a fairer, happier home
Your perfect beauty see."

Chapter 11.

Chapter 11.

PAUL'S FAITHFULNESS IN REPROVING.

HIS OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

Among the many duties which compass the walk of the believer, few are more difficult to perform, than that of Christian reproof. We might naturally expect, that the great Apostle would be faithful in the performance of this duty. And so he was. Under every circumstance, however difficult or delicate, arising either from opposition or affection, Paul was a Faithful Repeater. By the light of Truth, he could discern the least deviation from the path of rectitude; and guided by a spirit of love, he was ever ready to impart the faithful admonition.

Much wisdom, combined with kindness, is required in the reproof, and much humility, blended with thankfulness, in the reproof; for, "As an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof to an obedient ear." Those who reprove must guard against every feeling, yes, even appearance of superiority; lest, by exciting the pride of the reproofed, the intended benefit should be lost.

Notwithstanding the delicacy of this Christian duty, faithfulness must guide its operation when the occasion requires its severe exercise. The tender-hearted Paul had to perform this painful task in several instances, which are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and in his own Epistles.

When the Holy Spirit said, "separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," these holy men were obedient to the heavenly mandate. Having performed the work assigned to them, they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. The relation of this missionary tour gladdened the assembled church, and called forth many thanksgivings unto God.

Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. "After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return to each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are getting along." Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not shared in their work. Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas, and the believers sent them off, entrusting them to the Lord's grace. So they traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia to strengthen the churches there."

The heavenly-minded Paul was well acquainted with his own heart, when he said to the people of Lyconia, "We also are men of like passions with you." Though we cannot expect perfection in this sinful world, where the holiest of men are compassed about with infirmities; yet we must beware

that warmth of temper, which occasioned such excellent men to separate from each other. How instructive is Scripture Biography— It not only develops the inward principles of the heart, but makes us also acquainted with the nature and effects of those actions, which these principles produce.

The Bible is a faithful record. There we see man in his real character, whether groaning under the slavery of Satan, or rejoicing as the servant of Jesus Christ. Truth requires no covering, and therefore seeks none. The faithfulness with which the lives of believers are recorded, forms no small evidence of the truth of Scripture, which rests its veracity, not on the excellence of man, but on the immutability of Jehovah. The failings of the saints are detailed with the same impartiality as their graces, no, are even more minutely described, with the evident intention of humbling our pride, and showing us that salvation is of grace and not of works. The sins of believers, be it ever remembered, cannot be charged upon that holy religion which condemns them; but, upon their own corrupt nature which produces them. Holiness is the peculiar characteristic of the Gospel, and proves it to be from God.

The sacred historian bears testimony to Barnabas, that he "was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit." He had willingly given up the world for the Gospel's sake; for, being the owner of land he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. John Mark was his sister's son, for whom he felt, no doubt, much natural affection. He was a young disciple and not sufficiently strengthened in faith, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; hence he shrunk from the trials which awaited the Apostle in every city; and being most probably overcome by fear, left him at Pamphylia and returned to Jerusalem.

Barnabas, in the Spirit of that charity which hopes all things, was desirous to try Mark on another journey, but Paul, who well knew the evil of faintheartedness in the work of the Gospel, and the absolute necessity for a man to be willing to run all risks, if ever he would do good as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, remonstrated with Barnabas upon the instability of John Mark's conduct, and the unsuitableness of taking him for a companion in labor, who previously had deserted them in the work. Hence arose the sharp contention which ended in their separation.

Though he would not desire to justify what is wrong, even in the holiest of men, yet, it is evident that nothing guided the Apostle, but that uprightness of principle and that devotedness of heart to Christ, which rendered him so abundantly useful to the souls of men. Painful as was the circumstance, it forms another development of Paul's character; while, through the over-ruling power of God, it was made conducive to a more enlarged diffusion of the Gospel of peace.

In his last Epistle to Timothy he leaves this satisfactory record- " Take Mark and bring him with you; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Thus Mark proved himself to be a true believer, by his growth in grace, and his continuance in well-doing. How relevant is the admonition of the Apostle, to all who feel inclined to expose, rather than to correct, the failings of a Christian brother, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Thus beautifully were the graces of the Spirit blended in the character of this servant of the Redeemer. He drank into the Spirit of Christ, and trod in his steps. May we go and do likewise.

Another striking instance of his faithfulness in reproof, is related by himself to the Galatians, "But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him publicly, speaking strongly against what he was doing, for it was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who don't bother with circumcision. But afterward, when some Jewish friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore because he was afraid of what these legalists would say. Then the other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was influenced to join them in their hypocrisy. When I saw that they were not following the truth of the Good News, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you trying to make these Gentiles obey the Jewish laws you abandoned?"

What could exceed the honesty of the reproof here exhibited to our view? Did the Apostle speak evil of Peter behind his back? No- he withstood him to the face. Did he shrink from a public, though painful, denunciation of Peter's conduct on this occasion? No- he rebuked him openly, before them all. Did his reverence for Peter's age and character, cause him to palliate or connive at what he conceived to be injurious to the cause of Truth? No- he boldly reproofed him, when he saw that he walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel.

This was faithfulness indeed; and no doubt Peter well knew how to value it, and to love his brother Apostle for it; for "the ear that hears the reproof of life, abides among the wise." Consistency of conduct is, at all times, most important, both in ministers and people. On this occasion, there was a lack of consistency in Peter's conduct, which Paul condemned. If he thought it right to eat with the Gentile converts, he ought not to have separated himself from them, when certain Jews came from James. By this act, he either tacitly acknowledged, that he had done wrong, or he was influenced by an undue fear of man.

But another and yet more pernicious effect resulted from this inconsistency of Peter. In this act, he contradicted the glorious design of the Gospel, which was to break down the middle wall of partition, and to unite both Jews and Gentiles in one body in Christ; for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Peter was the more inexcusable, as the vision with which he had been favored to prepare his mind to visit Cornelius, and the blessed fruits of that visit, must have removed his Jewish prejudices, and led him to see, that unto the Gentiles also, God would grant repentance unto life.

Paul therefore, perceiving the evil which would arise to the Gentile churches from this conduct of his beloved fellow-laborer, boldly maintained the liberty of the Gospel; which, while it freed the Jewish Christians from the ceremonials of the Law, brought the Gentile converts into all the privileges of the children of God. Hence, he gloried in this blessed truth, -"you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus- There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In no stage of our Christian pilgrimage are we removed out of the reach of temptation, or from the hidden evils of our fallen nature. "By faith we stand." Nothing but Almighty Power can keep us from falling, and enable us, under all circumstances to walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel. How faithfully did the zealous Apostle also reprove the church of Galatia, on account of their being drawn away by Judaizing teachers, from the simplicity of the Gospel. "I marvel," said he, "that you are so soon removed from him who called you into the grace of Christ unto another

Gospel, which is not really another; but there be some who trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." And then, with apostolic authority, he declares- "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again; if any man preach another Gospel unto you, than that you have received, let him be accursed."

Errors in doctrine are seldom unattended by defects in practice. If we depart from the purity of the Truth, we shall suffer loss, both in holiness and comfort. This Paul knew, and deplored- "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing? But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."

Few things are more painful than that which is experienced by the minister of Christ, when he beholds his flock carried away by dangerous errors, and losing their affection for him, through the insinuations and flatteries of false teachers. No one, not so circumstanced, can fully enter into the heart-felt grief of such a pastor.

With great tenderness of spirit Paul then appeals to their former affection for him. "Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News of Christ. But even though my sickness was revolting to you, you did not reject me and turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus himself. Where is that joyful spirit we felt together then? In those days, I know you would gladly have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth? Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. I only wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves."

With such earnestness did their spiritual father long for their restoration, that he used the strongest metaphor to express his feelings, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you." Who can question the sincerity of a heart which could make such affectionate appeals, and administer such faithful reproof. His parental heart was grieved that they should so soon forsake him, and listen to the voice of strangers, who sought to lead them away from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This part of the Apostle's history affords a useful lesson to faithful ministers-- to watch over their flocks with jealous care, and not to withhold the wholesome reproof, though it may deeply wound; for "faithful are the wounds of a friend."

Of all the offices held by man, none is so important in its nature, and awful in his responsibilities, as that of the Christian Ministry, however much it may be despised by an ungodly world, or unhappily dishonored by the unseemly conduct of some who sustain it. Glorious indeed will be the reward of that man, who, in the spirit of Paul, takes upon himself the care of souls, and solemnly engages in the presence, and through the grace of Jesus, "to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children, who are in the midst of this evil world, that they may be saved through Christ forever." May all who enter into this sacred office, "never cease their labors, their care and diligence, until they have done all that lies in them, according to their bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to their charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfection of age in Christ, that there be no place left among us, either for error in religion, or for viciousness of life."

The will and ability to perform so great a work, is given of God alone; hence arises the need for earnest prayer, that the Holy Spirit may impart those gifts and graces which are peculiarly essential in an ambassador of Christ.

"Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly, that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men."

This bright example of a Gospel minister, the Apostle held forth to us in his own experience, spirit, and conduct. As his labors were incessant, so also were his solitudes for the welfare of the Church of God. In enumerating his trials, he mentions last, as if to mark its peculiar greatness, that which came upon him daily, "the care of all the churches."

We cannot forbear to mention another instance of his uncompromising firmness when ministerial reproof was needed. He deeply lamented the evils which disfigured the Corinthian Church, "Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead

with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your arguments, dear friends. I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord. When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I prefer Apollos," aren't you acting like those who are not Christians? Who is Apollos, and who is Paul, that we should be the cause of such quarrels? Why, we're only servants. Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow. The ones who do the planting or watering aren't important, but God is important because he is the one who makes the seed grow."

Discarding all idea of personal merit, the disinterested Apostle strikes at the root of popular applause and party spirit. By his deep insight into the human heart, he saw the source from where these evils spring— that love of change, that fondness for novelty, that captious spirit, that itching ear, that setting up of one minister above another which divided the Church, and engendered strifes and contentions among them. With unwearied solicitude he labored to counteract these growing evils, that all who professed and called themselves Christians, might be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

Paul was well aware that an enemy had done this. As the kingdom of Christ is extended by union, gentleness, and love, so Satan increases his dominion by discord, strife, and hatred. Knowing the depths of this arch-deceiver, and being jealous for the Truth, he forewarned the Corinthians against his delusions; "No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval." Is not this a word in season? Do not errors and divisions even now weaken the Christian Church, and tarnish her glory? Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments unspotted from sin.

With equal fidelity he apprized the Christians at Rome to beware of schismatics, who would endanger their peace and unity- "And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things that are contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people."

This unwearied laborer was the more anxious for their preservation from these evils, as they were in a prosperous spiritual condition- "But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to see clearly what is right and to stay innocent of any wrong. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

These instances are sufficient to show, that Paul was a faithful reprovener, that he feared not the face of man. While others were dissembling, or courting popular applause, he could say with honest Nehemiah, "Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way."

As a Christian, and a preacher of righteousness, the Apostle was obedient to the reigning government; and cheerfully submitted to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. His religion was the religion of peace and good order, not of strife and confusion. "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." While the rebellious sinner exclaims; "Who is Lord over us?" -the humble Christian cultivates a spirit of reverential love.

In drawing a sketch of the Apostles conduct and preaching we must notice his important exhortations to the duty of Christian obedience to civil government. Having revealed to Titus, the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, he subjoins- "You must teach these things and encourage your people to do them, correcting them when necessary. You have the authority to do this, so don't let anyone ignore you or disregard what you say. Remind your people to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not speak evil of anyone, and they must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone."

How beautifully does the Christian character shine forth in this admonition. Were all rulers and subjects brought under the holy influence of the Gospel, then truth and justice, brotherly kindness and charity, devotion and piety, concord and unity, with all other virtues, would so flourish among us, that they would form the stability of our times, and make the Church of Christ a praise in the earth.

As it is by the will of God that kings reign and princes decree justice, Paul gives this charge to Timothy exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men," -without any distinction of character; for foes as well as friends; for the turbulent as well as the peaceable; for distant nations as well as for our own land. To which he adds, and, "for kings and for all that are in authority;" giving this substantial reason for the performance of this duty- "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

While the governing power was Pagan and persecuting, he gave this admonition to the Christians at Rome, "Obey the government, for God is the one who put it there. All governments have been placed in power by God. So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow. For the authorities do not frighten people who are doing right, but they frighten those who do wrong. So do what they say, and you will get along well. The authorities are sent by God to help you. But if you are doing something wrong, of course you should be afraid, for you will be punished. The authorities are established by God for that very purpose, to punish those who do wrong. So you must obey the government for two reasons: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience. Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid so they can keep on doing the work God intended them to do. Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and import duties, and give respect and honor to all to whom it is due."

With equal force he inculcates on the Corinthians the duty of contentment in the station in which God had placed them. This admonition is the more striking, as the word rendered servant, in our version, signifies a slave, "You should continue on as you were when God called you. Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. And remember, if you

were a slave when the Lord called you, the Lord has now set you free from the awful power of sin. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. God purchased you at a high price. Don't be enslaved by the world. So, dear brothers and sisters, whatever situation you were in when you became a believer, stay there in your new relationship with God." What a disregard is here manifested to outward worldly distinctions, so opposite to the spirit which actuates professing Christians in general.

To Timothy he also writes, "Christians who are slaves should give their masters full respect so that the name of God and his teaching will not be shamed. If your master is a Christian, that is no excuse for being disrespectful. You should work all the harder because you are helping another believer by your efforts."

The Apostle considered it of such importance to the peace of society, and so accordant with the spirit of the Gospel, not to render its professors dissatisfied with their social stations, that he adds—"These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing. From such withdraw yourself." So advised Solomon, "my son fear the Lord and the king; and meddle not with those who are given to change."

Writing under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter strongly enforced the duty of subjection to the existing powers, on the Christians who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, "For the Lord's sake, accept all authority—the king as head of state, and the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish all who do wrong and to honor those who do right. It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who make foolish accusations against you. You are not slaves; you are free. But your freedom is not an excuse to do evil. You are free to live as God's slaves. Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God. Show respect for the king."

And then, in his second Epistle, he cautions believers against such as were presumptuous, self-willed, despising government, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities. "It is the corruption and misery of man's nature" as Leighton observes, "that he does not know, and can hardly be persuaded to learn, either how to command aright, or how to obey; and no doubt many of those that can see and blame the injustice of others in authority, would be more guilty that way themselves, if they had the same power. It is the pride and self-love of our nature that begets disobedience in inferiors; and violence and injustice in superiors, that depraved temper, that ties to every kind of government a propensity to a particular evil; that makes royalty easily degenerate into tyranny, and the government of nobles into faction, and popular government into confusion. As civil authority and subjection to it, is the institution of God; so the peaceable correspondence of those two, just government and due obedience, is the especial gift of God's own hand, and a prime blessing to states and kingdoms. And the troubling and interruption of their course is one of the highest public judgments, by which the Lord oftentimes punishes the other sins both of rulers and people. And whatever be the cause, and on which side soever be the justice of the cause, it cannot be looked upon but as a heavy plague and the fruit of many and great provocations, when kings and their people, that should be a mutual blessing and honor to each other, are turned into scourges one to another, or into a devouring fire, as it is in the parable of Judges 9:20— Fire going forth from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem, and fire from Shechem to devour

Abimelech."

May the God of Britain preserve our nation from so awful a catastrophe, by uniting the hearts of all, as the heart of one man, in holy obedience to himself, in loyal attachment to our king, and in brotherly love to one another.

It may be asked; did not Paul violate his own precepts when he so awfully denounced the high-priest? If the circumstances of the case be considered, it will be found that he was not aware that Ananias, then sitting in judgment, was the legally appointed high-priest. Ananias was acting contrary to the law, in commanding the Apostle to be beaten before he was found guilty. Paul, who knew his hypocritical character, under the influence of a prophetic spirit, pronounced his doom, "God shall smite you, you whited wall."

On being informed that Ananias was the acting high-priest, the Apostle instantly declared his reverence for the office, saying, "I knew not, brethren, that he was the high-priest, for it is written; You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people." Hence it is evident, that he would not thus have spoken, had he known that Ananias was at that time the officiating high-priest in Jerusalem.

The following historical fact will serve to elucidate the Apostle's conduct. Soon after the holding of the first council at Jerusalem, Ananias was deprived of the high-priest's office for certain acts of violence, and sent to Rome, where he was afterwards released, and returned to Jerusalem. Between the death of Jonathan, who succeeded him, and was murdered by Felix, and the high-priesthood of Ishmael, who was invested with that office by Agrippa, an interval elapsed in which this dignity was vacant. This was the precise time when Paul was apprehended; and the Sanhedrin, being destitute of a president, Ananias undertook to discharge that office. It is probable that Paul was ignorant of this circumstance. With respect to Paul's denunciation, God did smite Ananias in a remarkable manner; for about forty-five years after this, after his house had been reduced to ashes, in a tumult raised by his own son, he was besieged and taken in the royal palace; where, having attempted in vain to hide himself, he was dragged out and slain. "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judges in the earth."

The genius of the Gospel is love and unity. These fruits of the Spirit were the subjects of our Lord's last discourses, and the matter of his intercessory prayer. In the first ages of Christianity, prayers and tears were the only arms of the Church, whereby they long defended it from ruin, and at last advanced it to the most glorious prosperity. The shadows of the night do not more naturally vanish at the rising of the sun, than the darkness of Pagan idolatry and superstition fled before the light of the Gospel. In those days of the Church's first love, no labor was deemed too great, no sacrifice too costly, to evangelize the world. Thousands gladly embraced the crown of martyrdom, rather than deny their precious Savior. Their constancy and patience extorted the admiration of their enemies; the joyfulness with which they sealed the Truth with their blood, won over many of their persecutors to the faith of Christ.

With such lively hopes did they descend into the tomb, that the day of their death was celebrated by their surviving brethren, as the birthday of their martyrdom; for so the primitive Christians used to call the day of their death; looking upon it as the true day of their birth, when they were delivered from this valley of tears— these regions of death, and born again unto the joys and felicities of an endless life. Happy would it be, were this primitive spirit universal. It is fervent prayer, faithful

preaching, and the heavenly lives of Christians, that must, and will, through the blessing of God, evangelize both our country and the world.

May all who bear the name of Christ, bear also his holy image. As subjects of the Prince of Peace, let us study to promote the blessings of peace. While thus diffusing around us a spirit of Christian charity, we shall hasten on that blissful period, when the din of war shall be exchanged for the harmony of praise; when men shall love as brethren; and when Jesus shall reign in every heart—the UNIVERSAL KING.

"Jesus, immortal King, go on;
The glorious day will soon be won;
Your enemies prepare to flee,
And leave a conquered world to thee.
Gird on your sword victorious Chief,
The captive sinner's sole relief;
Cast the Usurper from his throne,
And make the universe your own.
Your footsteps, Lord, with joy we trace,
And mark the conquests of your grace;
Finish the work you have begun,
And let your will on earth be done.
Then shall contending nations rest,
For love shall reign in every breast;
Weapons designed for war shall cease,
Only then, be implements of peace."
Hark! how the hosts triumphant sing!
'The Lord omnipotent is King.'
Let all his saints rejoice at this,
The kingdoms of the world are his!
Hallelujah! Amen!"

Chapter 12.

Chapter 12.

THE OUTLINE OF THE APOSTLES PREACHING.

HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE HEATHEN.

HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINALLY CHRISTIAN WORLD.

Though virtue be exhibited in all her loveliness, and vice in all its deformity; though everything attractive be brought before the sinner, to win him over to the charms of moral excellence- yet, eloquence, with all its powers, can never change the heart. The moral essay, by its musical cadence and well-selected words, may please the ear and gratify the taste; but Satan despises such a feeble effort to overthrow his kingdom. It is as weak as chaff before the wind. With undisturbed repose he keeps his goods in peace, and still remains secure within the citadel of the heart.

What power, then, can dislodge this mighty foe? What voice can bid the dying sinner live? Important question! The preaching of Christ Crucified, through whom grace abounds to the chief of sinners, is the weapon with which the Almighty Spirit destroys the powers of darkness- the instrument which he employs to new-create the soul. No human eloquence can effect so great a work. The glory belongs to Him, who said, "Let there be light and there was light." The power is from him who is pleased through the "foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe." How all-commanding are the words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live."

"Unlike human discipline, which advances by a slow and imperceptible progress, gaining at one time and losing at another, the Gospel works a radical change of the heart, and accomplishes such a revolution in its principles, that the effect immediately appears in the reformation of the life. Philosophy, with much labor, may extort from the barren soil, a few dwarfish and sickly plants; but the Gospel makes a rich harvest of heavenly graces and virtues spring up in the desert of the soul." O that every heart may experience this glorious change!

Let us unite with the spouse in her ardent longings after Christ, "Awake, O north wind, and come south; blow upon my garden that the spices may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Were this the universal prayer, the Church would soon experience the gracious presence of her Lord, and taste the sweetness of his love, "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly O beloved." Lord, do not delay your coming. Visit every heart with your salvation; and fill the world with the blessings of your grace.

RUIN, REDEMPTION, and REGENERATION are three comprehensive words, which form the great outline of Gospel Truth. The amplification of the truths which are contained under these

terms, with all their various bearings on the present and future destiny of man, composed the substance of the great Apostle's preaching.

How humbling are his views of mans APOSTASY from God- "We are by nature the children of wrath. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

How consoling are his views of man's RECOVERY through Christ- "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He gave himself a ransom for all. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We are justified freely by his grace. He has made peace through the blood of his cross. He is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is all, and in all."

How purify in- are his views of man's RENEWAL unto holiness. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

This minister of righteousness, receiving his commission immediately from Christ, proclaimed, through divine inspiration, these glorious doctrines of grace; preaching everywhere, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ The Spirit accompanied the Word by his sovereign power, and multitudes became obedient to the faith.

The doctrine of a Redeemer, obeying the Law, and dying on the cross for man, is the very hinge of all evangelical revelations; the very life of all evangelical blessings. The doctrine of the atonement, is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel; it is the central point in which all the lines of duty unite, and from which all the rays of consolation proceed.

Faith draws all its hope, strength, and assurance; from the word, the fullness, and the promises of Christ. It receives from him, pardon with the one hand, and holiness with the other; both, being equally the design of his mediatorial work, and equally the desire of every new-born soul. Paul had no greater joy, than to set forth the glories of his Redeemer. Knowing where lay the blessed spring of all his privileges and comforts, his heart glowed with delight, when engaged in making known to others the unsearchable riches of Christ. By blessed experience, he had learned, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death, so now grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore he could tell every weeping penitent, these glad tidings of great joy, that, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.

And what returns did such ambassadors of Christ receive? From the world, hatred and persecution; from false brethren, grief and treachery; but from the faithful in Christ Jesus, an abundance of love and reverence. Pastors and ministers were then looked upon as the common parents of Christians, whom, as such, they honored and obeyed; and to whom they applied for counsel and direction in all important cases. A pious and faithful minister was in those days dearer to them than the most valuable blessings upon earth; and they could lack anything rather than be without them. When Chrysostom was driven by the Empress Eudoxia into banishment, the people, as he went along, burst into tears, and cried out, "It were better the sun should not shine, than that John Chrysostom should not preach." They could not then lose their spiritual guides, without

looking upon themselves as widows and orphans, bewailing their death with a general sorrow, as if they had lost a common father. Such was the love which cemented ministers and people together in those early ages of the Christian church.

How transforming are the doctrines of grace, when applied by faith to the conscience, through the power of the Holy Spirit. They remove the burden of sin by revealing a sin-bearing Savior; they strip man of his boasted excellence, by laying him low at the foot of the cross; they change him into the image of Jesus, by shedding abroad the love of God in his heart; they destroy the weeds of selfishness and strife, by sowing the gracious seeds of unity, peace, and concord in the soul. The moral wilderness becomes the garden of the Lord; the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. What but Almighty energy could produce so great a change. Man is naturally proud; the Gospel makes him humble. Man is naturally carnal; the Gospel makes him spiritual. Man is naturally worldly; the Gospel makes him heavenly. Man is naturally dead in sin, and blind to his condition; the Gospel quickens him to a life of holiness, and enlightens his mind to know himself, and Christ as his only Savior.

The Gospel is good news to poor sinners; the proclamation of a full and free forgiveness of all sin, through faith in a crucified Redeemer. The Gospel is the most glorious Revelation of God to man; the brightest display of his Justice, Holiness, and Love, ever vouchsafed to intelligent beings. Here, we behold the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, planning, executing, and applying the gracious work of human redemption. In the Gospel we have the strongest motives to gratitude and obedience. It is full of the sweetest promises to every penitent believer, who flies to Jesus for life and salvation.

Let us enquire how this Gospel has come to us. Has it convinced us of our lost condition? Has it truly humbled us in the sight of God? Has it made us apply to Christ in faith, and earnest supplication? Have we experienced a change of heart, being renewed in the spirit of our mind? Do we feel joy in the Holy Spirit, and peace with God through Jesus Christ?

It is easy in these days of the Church's quiet, to pass for religious characters, since few events occur to try the principles of professors. But all is not sterling that dazzles the eye. Many seem to take delight in religious institutions, and to be on friendly terms with their religious neighbors, who yet remain, through life, satisfied with barren notions of the Gospel, and strangers to its renovating power. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from this fatal error. Let us beware of false marks, of a false peace, and groundless hopes; for this truth stands immovably fixed in the Word of God—"Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all."

The doctrines of grace, systematically arranged in the mind, while the heart is estranged from God, will profit us no more than the idea of a valuable estate would benefit a person on the verge of bankruptcy, because its fields, woods, and mansions were vividly painted on his imagination. Without a personal interest in the merits of Christ, and an experimental acquaintance with his salvation, it is vain to expect admission into the celestial city.

Nominal Christianity neither receives nor confers a blessing. Thousands pride themselves in the name of Christian, as if that were sufficient to secure salvation, in the absence of every holy affection. Blessed are they, who can unite with John in all the fullness of his assurance; "We have known and believed the love that God has to us. We know that we are of God. We know that the

Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

As fallen creatures, we need a spiritual discernment, and a spiritual taste. Without the former, a thick darkness respecting the things of God would ever shroud the understanding; without the latter, no real delight in the riches of his grace would be felt in the soul. When these blessings are imparted, we then love Christ above every other object, and obey his will above every other principle.

Pride and the lust of the flesh, are continually opposing the humbling and the holy doctrines of the Gospel. Salvation by grace, through faith, is offensive to our pride. Salvation by grace, through the sanctification of the Spirit, is equally distasteful to our fleshly mind.

The leaven of pride is not wholly eradicated, even in the bosom of the humble Christian. There are seasons when it works with painful violence; and then, the darkness of our minds, and the deadness of our hearts, indicate that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and that Satan has gained an advantage over us. Spiritual pride is a subtle evil. It slides into our prayer, and entwines itself about our praise. It spoils our best duties, and creates that fondness for human approbation, which puffs up the heart, and steals it away from God.

When the Gospel of Christ, that word of life and reconciliation, shall be exhibited in its spirit and power by all professing Christians, happy indeed will the period be! Then the knowledge of the Lord will overspread the earth; for many will go to and fro in the name of the Lord, and knowledge shall be increased.

But have we attained this consummation, so devoutly to be wished? Is this the aspect of the nominally Christian world? Can we say, that in every place, "judgment runs down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream?" Alas! we have to mourn over thousands, who, while they eagerly grasp after the fruit of the tree of knowledge, despise the infinitely richer fruit of the tree of life. If knowledge is power, how important, for the well being of society, that it be founded upon, and drawn from, the Word of God. Unsanctified knowledge puffs up. It engenders schisms in the Church, and disorders in the state.

As a Christian people, we may value ourselves upon our benevolent institutions and religious societies, and think we have done much good in aiding their establishment and enlargement; but has inward piety been the spring of our outward exertions? Has love to Christ been our daily constraining motive? "Bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This, says the Apostle, is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.

Let us view the two portraits of mankind as drawn by the pencil of eternal Truth, by which we shall see that man, while unconverted to God, is the same internally, whatever change may have taken place in his outward condition.

Behold first the picture which Paul draws of the Heathen world, and which is a faithful representation of modern Paganism- "When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious

behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning and are disobedient to their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, and are heartless and unforgiving. They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too."

O what a deluge of evil has sin brought upon the earth! Surely, where the Gospel shines, the prospect will be cheering. Happy could we find it so.

Look at the picture which the Apostle again draws of the nominally Christian world, and the heart must sicken at the view. "You should also know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that."

How awful in their features of evil, are these two portraits of mankind. The Heathen world, and the nominally Christian world, are essentially the same. Have we not entered upon these predicted times of peril? Does not iniquity, to a frightful extent, abound among us? Are not the elements of confusion now at work? Do not these detailed enormities, both disfigure and convulse the nations of Christendom? The Papal apostasy is gathering its forces against the truth of the Bible; infidelity is waving its banners in proud defiance. Worldly mindedness and indifference are sapping the foundations of the visible Church. Sensuality and profaneness stain the Christian name. Pure and undefiled religion is branded as wild enthusiasm while the humble follower of Christ, who mourns in secret over his country's crimes, and pleads for God before a sneering world, is made a butt for ridicule, and the sport of scorn.

The heart of man naturally revolts against this faithful exposure of its enormities. Our pride fondly shelters itself under the 'dignity of human nature'. We cannot bear to be told how wicked we are, how very far gone, even as far as possible, from original righteousness. But the Bible is no flatterer; it is a faithful mirror, in which we may clearly see, (if we have eyes to see) our real state, divested of all paint and covering. This offends our pride; we cannot endure the sight; therefore we turn away with disgust from this Holy Book, and consider it our enemy, because it tells us the truth.

Is not the language of our hearts too much in unison with those of old, "They tell the prophets, "Shut up! We don't want any more of your reports." They say, "Don't tell us the truth. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies. Forget all this gloom. We have heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel.' We are tired of listening to what he has to say."

And, are there not too many ministers who apply the flattering ointment to the conscience, like those, of whom the Lord thus speaks, "These evil prophets deceive my people by saying, 'All is peaceful!' when there is no peace at all! It's as if the people have built a flimsy wall, and these prophets are trying to hold it together by covering it with whitewash! Tell these whitewashers that their wall will soon fall down. A heavy rainstorm will undermine it; great hailstones and mighty

winds will knock it down. And you shall know that I am the Lord!"

How awakening is the command of Jehovah to all his ministering servants, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. Blow the trumpet, in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord comes, it is near at hand." But, when the alarm is sounded, and when sinners are warned to flee from the wrath to come, they treat both the messenger and his message with contempt. They are like the sons of Lot, of whom it is recorded, "And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons-in-law who married his daughters, and said up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."

As it was in the days of Lot, even so it is now. When the faithful servant of Christ, with the Bible in his hand, and the love of souls in his heart, lifts up his voice, saying, "Arise, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction;" his voice is unheeded; and with Isaiah he has to mourn- "Lord, who has believed our report? I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people."

Regardless alike of the displeasure of the world, or worldly- professors of godliness, Paul boldly declared, "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. he who sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

Let us compare these works of the flesh which exclude the soul from heaven, with the already enumerated sins of the heathen, and of the nominally Christian world, and we must tremble for the millions who are living in the constant indulgence of these iniquities, and who are traveling, if grace does not intervene to save them, to eternal ruin. It may sound uncharitable to the fastidious ear, but the Word of God cannot be broken, "He that believes not shall be damned. If you live after the flesh ye shall die."

How faithful is the pen of inspiration. The very evils which we now lament, prove the truth of that Book, which has foretold those miseries that are coming upon the earth. But let us not despond, "The Lord reigns, be the earth ever so unquiet." He guides the complicated machine of human events, and can, by his overruling power, make all these evils finally to promote the spirituality and enlargement of his Church.

Is any thing too hard for the Lord, whose wisdom is as infinite as his power, and whose love is commensurate with eternity? Let us then, with fervency pray for the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for that promised season of refreshing from His presence, which, descending in showers of blessings upon our country and the world, will transform the moral desert into the garden of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus! look in mercy upon your inheritance; cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved. Show your servants your work, and their children your glory.

"From your seat of mercy bending,
Where you sit enthroned on high,
Lord, in pity condescending,
Hear a helpless sinner's cry.
By unwearied foes surrounded,
Without strength to fight or flee,
Let me never be confounded,
For my hope is placed on thee.
In the hour of tribulation,
To your promise, Lord I cling;
From the storm of fierce temptation
Shield me with your guardian wing.
Let the weight of earthly trials
Drive me nearer to your breast
And afflictions, bitter trials,
Make your blessings doubly blessed.
Then, though dangers' troubled ocean,
Threat me with its rudest shock,
Safe I view its wild commotion
Anchored on the Eternal Rock."

Chapter 13.

Chapter 13.

PAUL'S PROPHETIC VIEW OF THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST.

HIS CAUTIONS AGAINST UNBELIEF AND SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

While drawing the features of our fallen race, the inspired apostle dipped his pencil in the darkest colors- but, when consoling the suffering Church, he, like the ancient prophets, presented to the eye of faith the brightest views of future glory.

Wrapped in mystic vision, Paul saw the blessedness of heaven, and rejoiced in the hope of glory soon to be revealed. With sacred delight he proclaimed the divine purpose and grace, which are now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. It was this glorious hope, this hope full of immortality, this blessed, this lively hope, yes, this good hope through grace, which supported the persecuted saints, and enabled them to take joyfully the confiscation of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven, a better, and an enduring substance.

O! how cheering to the wearied traveler, is the rest of home; how delightful to the captive, is the air of freedom. Though painful, it will yet be profitable to reflect upon those trials which the early Christians so nobly underwent for Jesus sake.

Cyprian, the venerable bishop of Carthage, thus describes the sufferings of the primitive believers: "They were scourged, and beaten, and racked, and roasted, and their flesh pulled off with burning pincers, beheaded with swords, and run through with spears, more instruments of torment being many times used the man at once than there were limbs and members of his body; they were robbed and plundered, chained and imprisoned, thrown to wild beasts, and burned at the stake. And when their persecutors had exhausted all their old methods of execution, they studied and thought of more. Nor did they only vary, but repeat the torments; and where one ended, another began. They sometimes tortured them without killing them, and added this cruelty to all the rest, to stop them in their journey to heaven. Many who were importunately desirous of death, were so tortured, that they might not die- they were purposely kept upon the rack, that they might die by gradually, that their pains might be lingering, and their sense of them without intermission; they gave no intervals, or times of respite, unless any of them chanced to give them the slip and expire in the midst of torments. All which did but render their faith and patience more illustrious, and make them more earnestly long for heaven. They tired out their tormentors, and overcame the sharpest weapons of execution, and smiled at the busy officers that were raking in their wounds; and when their flesh was wearied, their faith was unconquerable. The multitude beheld with admiration these heavenly conflicts, and stood astonished to hear the servants of Christ in the midst of all this, with an unshaken mind, making a free and bold confession of Him, destitute of any external support, but armed with a divine power, and defending themselves with the shield of faith."

Can it be a matter of wonder, that the blood of the martyrs should have been the seed of the Church. To animate believers under all their sufferings, the blessed Paul lighted up their path to the lions and to the stake, by the fullest of assurances of their eternal glory.

Oh! that we, like them, may value the Gospel above every earthly treasure. The Gospel speaks pardon and peace through the blood of Jesus; the Gospel unfolds to our view a day of wonders; a day, which, like the pillar of the cloud, will give light to the children of God, while his enemies shall be enveloped in darkness. The glories of that day, when Christ shall appear in his majesty to judge the living and dead, were revealed to the favored Apostle in all their grandeur.

When writing to the Church of Corinth he was permitted to draw up the tremendous veil which hides futurity from our view- But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die. When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will come true: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

With equal sublimity he makes known these wonders to the church at Thessalonica, "I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever. So comfort and encourage each other with these words."

To the Philippians he also gave this animating hope, "But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer everything, everywhere."

What a revelation of grace and mercy is the Gospel of Jesus Christ! "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." A glorious brightness will illumine the morning of their resurrection, when they shall be called to swell the train of the all-conquering Messiah. But oh! how awful will be the gloom which awaits the resurrection of the wicked! If there be a glare of light, darting through the darkness of that momentous period, it will be the light of vengeance, emanating from the insulted Majesty of heaven, "for our God is a consuming fire." To the wilful abusers of divine mercy, there will then remain nothing but judgment and fiery indignation. The despisers of godliness will find, when too late, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Jesus has graciously forewarned us of the suddenness of his approach. "When the Son of Man returns, the world will be like the people were in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came to destroy them all. And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building— until

the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be just like this right up to the hour when the Son of Man returns."

Taught by the Spirit of Christ, Paul thus warns the churches, "The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night; for when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

The deluge came with fury poured out, sweeping away whole nations, until all the shrieks and groans of drowning millions were silenced in the deep. Equally overwhelming will be the second coming of Christ; "For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe."

The earth, with all its idolized possessions, shall then perish in the general conflagration. At the very time, when worldly minds are in eager pursuit after wealth and honor- the day of the Lord will come. It will come as a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth- it will come as a thief in the night. But oh! who shall abide, its coming, when the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment." Carnal men may ridicule the warning voice, but He, who cannot lie, has proclaimed, through His Word, this awakening truth; that, "God has also commanded that the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire on the day of judgment, when ungodly people will perish."

Death and destruction will be the end of sin and sinners. But God is love. Every truth of His Gospel, when received in faith, has a sanctifying influence on the heart. These sublime revelations of the second coming of Christ, were therefore employed by the Apostle as powerful excitements to the duty of personal holiness; "it is high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast of the the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." Peter, like his beloved brother, exhorted believers to the practice of universal holiness, "Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living! You should look forward to that day and hurry it along—the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames."

Will the Church of Christ suffer loss by this awful devastation? Far otherwise. The sinner's downfall will be the day of the believer's exaltation. How cheering to every child of God, is the assurance and exhortation of Peter, "But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God. And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life."

Oh! that the Eternal Spirit may awaken our solicitude and quicken our steps to the only Ark of safety. Jesus is the sinner's refuge from the coming storm. Abiding in him by faith, we shall be quiet from fear of evil, amid the melting elements, and a burning world. When the wicked are

calling upon the rocks and hills to cover them, and to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, the righteous shall lift up their heads with joy; for He, who summons the world to judgment, is their friend and Savior.

To the Apostles, the second coming of Christ was, therefore, a period of joyful expectation. When they would support believers under the pressure of affliction, they did not draw their consolation chiefly from the prospect of death, as being the termination of their bodily sufferings; but from the glorious appearing of their God and Savior, who would re-animate their sleeping dust, and complete their glorification in his eternal kingdom. They calmly reposed all their hopes upon the faithfulness of Jehovah; and knowing in whom they had believed, they could strengthen the weary pilgrim, by the sweetest assurance of final rest.

Filled with these bright expectations of future glory, founded on the promises of Jesus, the happy Paul animated the Philippian converts- "Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. I always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again. It is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a very special place in my heart. We have shared together the blessings of God, both when I was in prison and when I was out, defending the truth and telling others the Good News."

Being well acquainted with the innate evils of the heart, his Epistles are models for ministerial faithfulness; in which, to guard us against false security and presumption, caution is blended with encouragement- warnings with promises- and fear with hope.

Many are the hindrances, and many the snares which beset us on our way to glory. The corruption of the heart- the subtlety of Satan- the power of temptation- the fear of man- the allurements of the world- are continually, in one way or other, opposing our journey heavenward. But Christ is our Savior. His wisdom is engaged to guide us, and his power to uphold and defend us.

Happy then is the man, whom grace has united to the Friend of sinners. Because Jesus lives he shall live also. While in the body he lives by faith in the blood of Jesus- by faith in the power of Jesus- by faith in the promise of Jesus; and when out of the body, his perfect spirit shall forever dwell with Jesus.

Drawing back from God is drawing onwards to perdition. The further we depart from God the nearer we approach to ruin. How important then is the grace of perseverance. The distinguishing mark of true believers consist in their abiding in Christ, and evidencing that union by the fruitfulness of their lives. Mere outward profession is no certain indication of inward piety, neither is a long continued profession any safeguard against declension or final apostasy. Who would have thought, that Solomon, the wisest of men, who built so magnificent a temple for the worship of Jehovah, and who prayed so fervently at its dedication, would, in his old age, have been turned away after other gods, and been led even to build high places for the abomination of the Heathen! Surely he who trusts his own heart is a fool.

After many years of promise, the heart may discover its insincerity, should God be pleased to bring the professor of his religion into the furnace, either of prosperity or of adversity. Demas fell through the love of this present world. The stony ground hearer withered away, beneath the scorching

beams of persecution. Nothing but the grace of God can keep us from falling, either partially or finally. Can we then be surprised, that the well instructed Paul, who preached the Gospel of the grace of God with such unmixed purity, should guard its possessors against the wiles of Satan, and the remaining corruption of their hearts?

Having explained to the Corinthians the spiritual privileges of the Israelites, he tells them- "Yet after all this, God was not pleased with most of them, and he destroyed them in the wilderness. These events happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did or worship idols as some of them did. All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, who live at the time when this age is drawing to a close. If you think you are standing strong, be careful, for you, too, may fall into the same sin." Then, for their confidence in the faithfulness of their Redeemer, he adds, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

In like manner the Apostle showed the Hebrew converts the danger of unbelief, as exemplified in their own history- "With whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with those who had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they should not enter into his rest, but to those who believed not? So we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief."

With close self-application, he then presses this fact on their consciences- "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Let us labor to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief- for there remains a rest to the people of God."

Lest an undue fear of losing heaven should arise in their hearts from the awful examples which he had brought before them, and so cause their hands to wax feeble, and their feet to grow weary; how delightfully does he compose their apprehensions by a view of the tenderness and the all-sufficiency of Christ- "That is why we have a great High Priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God. Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it." "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence, steadfast unto the end."

What a wonderful display of mercy and judgment is also revealed to us in the eleventh chapter to the Romans. The Apostle himself was so overpowered by the view of the divine sovereignty, that, like a person standing on the brink of some vast abyss, he exclaimed, "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

The Jews, as a people, having rejected their Messiah, were to be cut off because of unbelief; while the Gentiles, embracing the offers of mercy through faith in the blood of Christ, should be grafted into the good olive tree- the Church of God. But, lest this grace should be abused through spiritual pride, the Apostle, with his wonted fidelity, guards them against an evil so offensive to God- "But you must be careful not to brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken

off. Remember, you are just a branch, not the root. "Well," you may say, "those branches were broken off to make room for me." Yes, but remember—those branches, the Jews, were broken off because they didn't believe God, and you are there because you do believe. Don't think highly of yourself, but fear what could happen. For if God did not spare the branches he put there in the first place, he won't spare you either."

Is then the promise trade to Abraham come utterly to an end? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Can his truth fail? Paul answers these questions- "I want you to understand this mystery, dear friends, so that you will not feel proud and start bragging. Some of the Jews have hard hearts, but this will last only until the complete number of Gentiles comes to Christ. And so all Israel will be saved. As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

To the disputer of this word, who impiously cavils at the dispensations of Jehovah, and measures His dealings by the scanty lines of human reason, we would say with Zophar- "Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything there is to know about the Almighty? Such knowledge is higher than the heavens—but who are you? It is deeper than the underworld—what can you know in comparison to him? It is broader than the earth and wider than the sea."

True humility is the basis of excellence in the Christian character. The humble believer will not dare to arraign the eternal God before the bar of his finite understanding. His language and feelings are those of the Psalmist, "Righteous are you, O Lord, and upright are your judgments;" while with the lowly minded apostle he asks with profound admiration, "For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor? And who could ever give him so much that he would have to pay it back? For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen."

True humility is ever accompanied by a patient continuance in well-doing. How important to all who desire an interest in those blessings which shall terminate in eternal glory, are the words which Jesus spoke to the Jews who followed him- "If you continue in my words, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

To continue in the Word of Christ, we must first know it; and in order to know it, we must diligently study it. But as a distinguishing state of heart is required to the right understanding of the Word of Christ, which we have not naturally, we must be earnest in prayer for the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit. As newborn babes we must desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby. In the spirit of children, we must receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls. With humility and teachableness we must sit at the feet of Jesus, and listen to his voice.

But, to receive rightly the word of God, we must abide in the doctrine of Christ. We must continue steadfast in the profession of the Truth. We must not be carried about by every wind of doctrine, but have our hearts established, and our hopes rooted and built up in Christ. We must walk with holy perseverance in the precepts of the Gospel, not running amiss like a broken bow, nor drawing back unto perdition; but going on with progressive step from grace to grace, until we appear before God in glory. If we are enabled, through the power of the Holy Spirit, thus to study, receive, and abide in the Word of Christ, evidencing our union to Jesus by the fruits of righteousness, we shall

be privileged to enjoy the sweet promises of the Gospel; for our Lord has declared, "Then are you my disciples indeed."

How expressive is the word, 'indeed'. It implies, that all who seem to be disciples, are not disciples indeed. This was the case with some of those Jews who surrounded our Savior when he made this declaration- "They were offended at his doctrine, and walked no more with him."

Are no such instances of defection to be found among us? Do we never see some, who, having run well for a season, turn back again into the world? When Jesus appeals to our affection, as he did to that of his disciples, "Will you also go away?" can we reply with Peter's sincerity, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Stability in the truth of the Gospel, and continuance in well doing, are essentially requisite if we would be disciples indeed. To the persevering believer, Jesus has promised eternal glory, "He who endures unto the end shall be saved. To him who overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

The question, then, for self-examination is not so much what we were, as what we are. If we are now cold, indifferent, and worldly, it matters not how zealous we might once have been. Our former state of zeal and active exertion can yield us no present profit, except as it thunders in our ears, "Remember from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

The tinselled Christian may gain the admiration of those who regard the outward appearance, but he will never be approved of by Him who looks at the heart. O! may we never substitute knowledge for grace, profession for principle, words for practice, nor zeal for love.

When God teaches, he teaches to profit; and the effect of his teaching is visible to all, by the renewal of the heart unto holiness. Hence our Lord does not say merely, "You shall know the truth;" but, as if he intended particularly to guard his followers against resting in barren speculations, he subjoins, "And the truth shall make you free."

The truth, received into the heart, makes the believer free, from the condemning power of the law, from the pollution of sin, from the tyranny of Satan, from the fascinations of the world, from the fear of death, from the torments of hell.

Learn then, O follower of the lowly Savior, to bear contempt with cheerfulness, when contempt is poured upon you because you are a disciple indeed, and boldly confess your faith and hope in the atonement of Jesus.

It is easy, in a circle of Christian friends, to admire humility, and to talk upon the duty of bearing reproach with patience; but when we find ourselves really despised- when we are set at nothing, where we expected to be honored- then is the time when pride and mortified self-love will rankle in our bosom, and when our utmost vigilance will be required to overcome these evil workings of the flesh.

At seasons like these, let us look unto Jesus. Let us consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. Let us remember what he suffered for our sakes, though Lord of all, that we may be abased at the sight of ourselves, and lie in self-abhorrence at the foot of the cross. And for our encouragement to persevere, let us never forget his own gracious words, "Whoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess

before my rather who is in heaven."

How blessed then is the Christian indeed. He follows the Lord fully; his every power is devoted to his service. He knows the truth through the teaching of the Spirit; he receives the truth in the simplicity of a little child; he continues in the truth, amid errors of every name; and abiding therein, firm unto the end, he obtains, at length, through the merits of his Savior, that crown of glory which fades not away.

O that we may be Christians indeed; the meek and lowly followers of the Lamb, bearing his image in humility, love, and purity, until we each resemble him in his perfection of beauty, when we shall see him as he is, in his eternal kingdom.

"And while on him we gaze,

And while his glorious voice we hear,

Our spirits are, all eye, all ear,

And silence speaks his praise.

Oh! might I die, that awe to prove,

That bliss of pure ecstatic love

Before the Great Three One!

To dwell in his eternal joy,

To find an ever sweet employ

In songs around the throne."

Chapter 14.

Chapter 14.

PAUL'S DOCTRINE ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

The doctrine of justification by faith, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is the grand characteristic of the Gospel, which distinguishes it from all 'human' schemes of salvation. It is the revelation and work of God himself. Its design is— to humble the sinner, to exalt the Savior, and to promote holiness. This doctrine is founded on the Fall of Man, and on the Justice of God; for while God demands a sinless obedience to his holy Law, man is utterly unable to satisfy the least of its righteous claims.

Through the Fall, we lost the image of God, and all power to serve him aright. Being destitute of every holy principle, and enslaved by every evil passion, we can neither atone for past transgressions, nor perform one act of acceptable obedience.

Foreseeing our wretched state, through original and actual sin; a God of love has provided a RANSOM, a RIGHTEOUSNESS and a REFUGE for us. Paul was honored of God to proclaim these heavenly truths- "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a RANSOM for all, to be testified in due time." "Of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us RIGHTEOUSNESS." "We have strong consolation, who have fled for REFUGE to lay hold upon the hope set before us." O that our hearts could expand with faith and hope, then, with the Apostle we should delight to dwell upon this exhaustless theme, and with feelings of the liveliest joy, should thank our God for his Unspeakable Gift.

Being taught by the Spirit to know himself as a sinner, this enlightened Apostle had learned to value Christ as a Savior. Wholly weaned from self, this heart was fixed upon Christ, the true foundation. With uncompromising firmness he could therefore assert, "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

This glorious truth of the Gospel, so opposed to all his ancient views and feelings, he saw with a distinctness which no carnal reasoning could obscure. Beholding by the light of Revelation, the wide extent of Adam's transgression, he could unite with David in declaring. "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good— no not one." Hence the Apostle was led to this humbling confession; "The law has concluded all under sin, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

Hearing the voice of justice in all its awfulness, with Job he abhorred himself in dust and ashes. Hearing the voice of mercy speaking peace through the blood of Jesus, with Mary he rejoiced in God his Savior.

Full of grateful love, he went forth into all lands, to make known these unsearchable riches of Christ— that Jesus is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes- that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us- that all who believe, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified, by the Law of Moses- that, the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all those who believe, for there is no difference; for the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed'- that, there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon him; for whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Knowing these statements to be the Truth of God, and knowing also the legality of the natural heart and its enmity to the doctrines of grace, he boldly asks the self-righteous opposer, "Do we then make void the Law through faith?" Do we lessen the sanctions, or lower the standard of a Law so holy in its nature, so just in its requirements, so good in its tendencies? "God forbid- yes, we establish the law;" -we maintain its unalterable holiness, its inflexible justice, its irreconcilableness to the smallest transgression.

Through the light of the Holy Spirit, he saw with an inspired clearness of perception, that no sinner can be saved by any obedience of his own; since, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," unable to screen us from the wrath of God, who has declared, "the soul that sins it, shall die." He therefore fled to Christ for refuge; found shelter under the covering of his perfect righteousness, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.

This fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, so destructive to pride and self-sufficiency, this divinely taught Apostle found to be the very source of consolation, strength, and hope.

Having given the church at Philippi a catalogue of those things which once constituted his Pharisaical treasure, he makes the noble declaration, "I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. As a result, I can really know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I can learn what it means to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that, somehow, I can experience the resurrection from the dead!"

Then, with his usual humility and self-abasement, he acknowledges his need of still increasing supplies of spiritual blessings; "I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear friends, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven."

If the Apostle, than whom perhaps no saint was ever more holy, thus confessed his shortcomings; if he regarded his attainments as nothing, when compared with what remained to be attained; if all his hopes of heaven were reposed upon the finished work of his beloved Savior; how humble, how

dependent ought we to be, who stand at so great a distance from the honored servant of Christ!

Yet how encouraging is the view of his character and experience. He, who converted Saul of Tarsus, can now change the heart of the hardest sinner! Let none then despair of mercy, who feel a longing desire after salvation.

"Let not conscience make you linger;

Nor of fitness fondly dream;

All the fitness he requires,

Is to feel your need of him;

This he gives you;

'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

The "offence of the cross" has not yet ceased, nor ever will, so long as pride bears its sway in our hearts. We cannot part with the fond conceit which we naturally have of our own works. If Christ must be our justifier, we hope, at least, to have some share in the meritorious act of justifying. We cannot brook the thought of being wholly indebted to another.

Owing to this proud attachment to our supposed goodness, much error exists in the Christian world. The great doctrine of justification by faith only, cannot, therefore, be too clearly and scripturally stated. How many, even in this our day, darken counsel by words without knowledge. They are blind guides, groping, as in the dark, amid the full blaze of Gospel, light. With all humility of mind, and earnest prayer, we should seek for light to discover the Truth, and for a heart to embrace it when discovered.

Let us then consider in what way a sinner is justified in the sight of God, that we may rightly apprehend and thankfully embrace, through the Spirit, this inestimable blessing.

1. We are justified **MERITORIOUSLY**, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who became obedient unto the Law for man; and who, while we were yet sinners, died for us, that being justified by his blood, we might be saved from wrath through Him.

2. We are justified **INSTRUMENTALLY**, by faith alone, which is the gift of God, the hand that receives the blessed Jesus, and puts him on with all his saving merits, as the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation.

3. We are justified **DECLARATIVELY** by good works, which are the fruits of faith, and evidence our union to Jesus Christ as living branches in the true vine.

Every blessing flows from the throne of mercy through Jesus Christ, who is the only medium of communication between earth and heaven; while all our services ascend with acceptance, only as they are covered with his infinite merits, and washed from their pollution through his precious blood.

Jesus is the Lord Our Righteousness; he is made unto us righteousness; and we are made the righteousness of God in him. Hence God can be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in

Jesus. The way of access is now opened. In Christ, we have boldness and access with confidence, to the Father of mercies; and obtain, through faith in his blood, a right and title to the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Thus we are made complete in Him, and the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers. It must, however, never be forgotten, that there is nothing meritorious in faith. Faith is a grace, wrought in the heart of the sinner, through the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby he apprehends Christ, and is made an heir of God, through Him.

We have nothing whereof to glory, being "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." The language of our heart must ever be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to your name give glory, for your mercy, and for your truth's sake."

As faith is the gift of God, and the root of holiness, so works which do not spring from faith, cannot be acceptable to God; because, without faith it is impossible to please him.

By nature, our hearts yield nothing but evil fruit, and this evil produce continues, until we are united to Christ by faith. When grafted by the Spirit, into Jesus the living vine, we receive a new nature, and bring forth new fruit, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. This good fruit manifests itself by holy obedience to the will of God; it is declarative of our interest in the righteousness of Christ through faith, and prepares us for the enjoyment of heaven.

From this scriptural view of a sinner's acceptance with God, it is evident, that we cannot be justified without faith; and yet, we must not look to our faith as that which justifies us. Our eye must be fixed on the righteousness of Christ only. When our acts of faith are the strongest, we must not rely upon them, as yielding any merit, or as recommending us to God. Our language must then be; I have believed in Christ, and God has justified me; but I will not believe, that God has pardoned me for my faith; I know that I must trust in Christ, if I am accepted of my Judge; therefore I will banish forever, all thoughts of my being pleasing to God, for the sake of my act of believing.

Whoever steers this course will provide for his present comfort, and future safety; for it is only men's ignorance of themselves, of the Law, and of the essential righteousness of God, that puts them upon trusting in anything they can do for their justification before God, and hinders them from submitting to the righteousness of Christ.

Faith resigns up the soul to the mercies of God, and the infinite merits of Christ, and has no confidence in the flesh; it brings the sinner to look on all things as nothing, and not fit to be joined to Christ, who is the only foundation for his reliance; and then his care is, how to be found in the righteousness of Christ, and to place the crown of glory on the head of his Redeemer. This was the experience of Paul, who counted all things but loss for Christ, desiring only that he might be found in Him.

If the doctrine of justification by faith were therefore rightly apprehended, as set forth by the great Apostle under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it would prevent that unscriptural mixture of faith and works, as the ground of our acceptance with God, which destroys its nature, tarnishes its glory, and endangers our salvation.

"O how unlike the complex works of man,

Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan.

Its stand like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star.
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickening words- Believe and live!
Too many shocked at what should charm them most,
Despise the plain direction and are lost."

Although Paul was the champion for this glorious doctrine of justification through faith, yet with equal ardor he enforced the necessity of holiness on the hearts and consciences of believers.

As those who preach the Gospel with faithfulness, should exemplify its excellence by their superior sanctity, the apostle exhorted Titus to the practice of universal holiness- "Speak the things which become sound doctrine; in all things showing yourself a pattern of good works."

Equally comprehensive was his charge to this young minister of the Gospel, whom he called his son after the common faith- "These things I have told you are all true. I want you to insist on them so that everyone who trusts in God will be careful to do good deeds all the time. These things are good and beneficial for everyone." "Put them in mind to be ready to every good work."

This faithful pastor over the Lord's flock closed his Epistle with a general admonition both to ministers and people, who professed an attachment to the Gospel of Christ- "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives." So decided were his views respecting the nature and necessity of sanctification, that, in perfect accordance with the doctrine of grace, he declared- "For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. For it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised. The important thing is to keep God's commandments." "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God, while we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right."

With these earnest desires for the fruitfulness of believers be prayed in behalf of the Hebrew converts, "May the God of peace, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever."

Some people, who are opposed to the doctrine of free justification, endeavor to set James in array against his brother Apostle, as if he were anxious to counteract Paul's statements, and to disprove his conclusions. If they will study the Epistles of Paul and James, with simplicity and prayer, they

will soon find that there is neither antinomianism in the one, nor any ground for legality in the other- but that the Apostles are in perfect agreement with each other. Like the radii of a circle, they meet in one common center. They both select the case of Abraham. Paul says; "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." James says; "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness;" each quoting the words of Moses, "He believed God, and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Thus they conjointly build on the same foundation, that is, that Abraham was justified by faith. Where then is the difference of their statements? It arises from the abuse which was made of this divine truth. Paul declared, that all works, whether ceremonial or moral, are excluded from the office of justifying the sinner in the sight of God; that we are justified freely by his grace, as the source, and by the blood of Christ, as the meritoriously procuring cause.

But this blessed doctrine, so full of comfort to the broken-hearted penitent, was soon perverted by men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth. They slanderously affirmed, that Paul had said- "Let us do evil that good may come;" -and hence, they took occasion to sin, on the impious principle that grace might abound. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, expresses his abhorrence of such vile inferences, drawn from his preaching; and strenuously enforces the necessity of good works. James, with equal force, levels his Epistle, not against the holy doctrine preached by Paul, but against those abusers of divine grace, who, under pretense of exalting Christ, only wanted a license to sin. So early did Satan labor to bring an odium upon the Gospel, by the unholy lives of hypocritical professors.

To counteract this evil, James declares that the faith which justifies is a working faith- that as kind words, and good wishes will not feed a starving brother, while unaccompanied with the needful supply, so neither will faith profit us, if it has not works; for as the body, without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also; that by works, faith is made perfect; and therefore, that such a barren faith, as these corrupters of the truth propagated, could never save the soul; since by works a man is justified, or declared to be in a state of justification, and not by faith alone, (that is, a faith unproductive of good works).

The sum of the matter then is this; What God has joined, none must divide; and what God has divided, none must join. He has separated faith and works in the business of justification, according to Paul, and none must join them in it. He has joined them in the lives of justified people, as James speaks, and, there we must not separate them. Paul assures us, that works have not a co-efficiency in justification itself; but James assures us, that they may and must have a co-existency in those who are justified.

It is evident, therefore, from the scriptures of Truth, that neither faith nor works can procure our admission into the heavenly temple. Christ, as our Great High Priest, can alone enter by his own blood into the Holy Place. In heaven he sits as a priest upon his throne, and there, appearing in the presence of God for us, his living care will perfect, what his dying love began. Through him then we must approach the mercy-seat; by him we must enter into the celestial city. O! how precious is our Almighty Savior. To him we must look- on him we must depend- from him we must draw every needful blessing. His name is as ointment poured forth. He is the balm of Gilead and physician there.

O that our hearts may ever be in tune, to sing the praises of the Lamb who was slain, and has redeemed us unto God by his blood, until we join the universal chorus in the world above, and crown him Lord of all!

Chapter 15.

Chapter 15.

ON JUSTIFICATION (continued)

The doctrine of free justification, through faith in the blood of Jesus, was the Gospel Axe which Luther applied with powerful arm to the root of human merit, whose fibers had struck deeply into the Papal soil. "When I consider," said this champion for the Truth, "the infinite profanation which always has raged in the Church of God, against this only and well-grounded rock, which we hold to be the article of our justification, (that is to say, how not by ourselves, neither by our works, which are less than ourselves, but by another help, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ, we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil, and are made partakers of eternal life,) I am compelled boldly to speak upon it." And he did speak with a voice of thunder. Through the power of Truth, he made the Papacy tremble. By the light of Truth, he exposed the hidden abominations of the Man of Sin.

Yet, while he declared, that the doctrine of justification by faith without works, is the only Solid Rock, the true test of a standing, or of a falling church; like Paul he was equally anxious for the interests of holiness. He knew the blindness of the natural heart, and its enmity to the truth. He knew also the darkness which remains in the minds of the regenerate, even after they have been enlightened by the Spirit of God.

Hence, he foresaw that diversity of sentiment and statement which would arise in the Church, according to the degrees of light or darkness which each of its members might possess. Under this conviction, he honestly confessed that, "to teach this doctrine, and at the same time, to insist on the necessity of good works, is a matter of considerable difficulty and danger. For unless the ministers of Christ be wise and faithful dispensers of the divine mysteries, and know how to divide the Word of Truth rightly, the distinct provinces of faith and works will be confounded." Both these provinces should be explained, and impressed on the mind with the greatest diligence, yet in such a manner, that each of them may preserve its proper bounds. Otherwise, if works only are taught, as is the case in the Pope's kingdom, faith is lost. Again, if nothing but faith is inculcated, carnal men soon begin to dream, that there is no need of good works."

Well acquainted with the corruption of the heart, Luther thus guards the Church against the abuse of this vital doctrine— "There is danger on both sides. If the doctrine of faith is not preached, no man can be saved; for it is faith alone that justifies and saves. On the contrary, if faith be preached, as of necessity it must be, the greater part of mankind will interpret the doctrine in a carnal way, and so understand spiritual liberty as to allow indulgences of the flesh. This we may see in all ranks of life, high as well as low. Many make a profession of the Gospel, and boast of Christian liberty, and yet, serving their own lusts and inclinations, they give way to covetousness, pleasure, pride, envy, and such other vices, and none of them does his duty faithfully. It is impossible that people of this description should prove to be governed by the Gospel of peace."

The church of England, in unison with the other Reformed Churches, firmly holds this important branch of the Christian faith. In her eleventh Article she declares— "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

The clear and scriptural language of the Homily referred to, is as follows— "The Apostle touches specially three things, which must go together in our justification. Upon God's part, his great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part, justice, that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of his body, and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly; and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but God's working in its.

"The grace of God does not shut out the justice of God in our justification, but only shuts out the justice of man, that is to say, the justice of our works, as to be merits of deserving our justification. And, therefore, Paul declares here nothing upon the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, which, nevertheless, is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God. And yet, that faith does not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified, but it shuts them out of the office of justifying. So that, although they be all present together in him who is justified, yet they justify not altogether; neither does faith shut out the justice of our good works, necessarily to be done afterwards of duty towards God, (for we are most bounden to serve God in doing good deeds commanded by him in his Holy Scripture all the days of our life,) but it excludes them so, that we may not do them to this intent, to be made just by doing them."

What language can more fully and explicitly convey to our minds this fundamental truth of the Gospel? May the Eternal Spirit impart unto every reader of these humble pages, if he has it not, this blessed gift of faith, and abundantly increase it, where it has been graciously bestowed.

Hooker breathes the same apostolic language; "Christ has merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God finds us, if we be faithful, for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful, yet even the man that is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin, being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin remitted through repentance, him God beholds with a gracious eye, puts away his sin, by not imputing it, takes quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it, and accepts him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded him in the Law. Faith is the only hand which puts on Christ unto justification, and Christ the only garment which, being so put on, covers the shame of our defiled natures, hides the imperfection of our works, preserves us blameless in the sight of God, before whom otherwise the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yes, to shut us out from the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolutely holy can enter."

Such were the views which Luther, the Fathers of the English Church, and Hooker entertained, in perfect accordance with the great Apostle, respecting the all-important doctrine of justification by faith. "The Devil directs his fierce batteries against those doctrines in the Word, and those graces in the heart, which most exalt God, debase man, and bring men to the lowest subjection to their Creator. Such is the doctrine of justifying faith." May this jewel of the Reformation never be

covered with the worthless paint of human invention, but ever shine in all our churches with its native luster.

Christ is the enricher of the believing soul. He is the pearl of great price. It is not the hand which receives an offered treasure that makes the receiver rich, but the treasure itself. So neither do works, nor any act of faith justify us, but Christ Himself, whom we apprehend. And this faith, be it weak or strong, is yet able to receive the righteousness of Christ, just as a palsied hand may receive a jewel from a king, as truly, though not so firmly, as the hand which is sound. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and receive a new and divine life in our souls.

Peace of conscience, tranquillity of mind, strength to resist sin, delight in holiness, and the hope of glory, are some of 'the precious fruits of faith'. Love accompanies faith, as the light does the sun, and faith working by love evidences our adoption into the family of God, and proves that we are truly born from above. Do we live in the daily enjoyment of this blessedness? Are we sealed by the Spirit of God unto the day of eternal redemption? "The kingdom of grace," as an old writer beautifully observes, "is the suburbs of the kingdom of glory; he therefore who walks not through the suburbs shall never enter into the holy city. A man must be in the kingdom of grace, or else he shall never be admitted into the kingdom of glory. No grace, no glory. No holiness, no happiness. No regeneration, no heaven, nor heavenly honor. For, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. It is then an infallible sign of holiness, when a man does more and more strive against his own unbelief, and labors continually to draw nearer and nearer unto God by holiness.

"To feel our inward corruptions, to desire a deliverance from them, to avoid occasions of sin, to be angry with ourselves for our sinning, is an evidence that the Spirit of God has taken possession of our hearts, and has begun to work a most happy change within us. Where these graces are, there is also the God of grace, the spirit of grace, a man of grace, a true dying unto sin, and a living unto God. Sin is dismantled, the soul is renewed, for God's image is restored."

Thus all who are justified are sanctified, and shall be finally glorified. The renewal of our nature is so essential to happiness, and so indispensably requisite as a preparation for heaven, that without it we cannot be saved. The pure in heart only shall see God; they shall see his face; they shall dwell in his presence; and reign with him forever and ever.

How bright is the glory which encircles the cross of Christ. There, all the divine perfections meet and harmonize. There, the robe of righteousness is imparted to every believing sinner. With the fullest assurance of hope, the blessed Apostle felt his personal interest in this righteousness of the Redeemer; and could say with unwavering confidence, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Happy Paul! who in the midst of all his sufferings could thus realize his union to Christ by faith.

Are we, like him, crucified with Christ, and become dead to sin and to the world? Does Christ live in us by his Spirit? Are we daily living a life of faith in the Son of God? Can we, with sweet assurance say, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me?" This believing appropriation of the Savior's merits, is the spring of comfort, and the root of holiness.

This blessedness Paul experienced, when Jesus revealed himself in all the fullness of his grace. Under every varying scene of life we also shall partake of this felicity, if with him we can say, "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."

O how peaceful and fruitful is the believer, when daily living under the influence of the constraining love of Christ! It is the love of Christ, felt and enjoyed, which softens the roughness of life, and smooths the ruggedness of the way to glory. Sin produces thorns which pierce the heart with many sorrows. But Jesus, by removing the evil, fills the soul with gladness. When he gives quietness, who then can make trouble? As the heart knows its own bitterness, so a stranger does not intermeddle with its joy.

How humbling is the language, how self-abasing are the feelings of the believing sinner, when contemplating these wonders of redeeming love. Methinks I hear such a one thus pouring out his heart in secret— I am indeed a guilty, corrupt, and ruined creature, unable to appease a justly offended God, or make the least atonement for my violations of his law. I am in myself helpless and hopeless. Ah! where then, shall I turn my eyes for support? Can any of my fellow-mortals deliver me out of the wretched condition into which I am plunged, through my original and actual transgression? They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one.

Shall I turn my eyes toward the angelic host, and crave the assistance of the highest seraphim? It is hopeless expectation. I have sinned against an infinite God, who demanded an infinite satisfaction. They are creatures like myself, and have nothing infinite to offer.

To whom then must I look? May I for a moment hope, that the infinite God before whom the angels veil their faces, will condescend to save me from merited destruction, by giving the required satisfaction to his own adorable perfections? But how can God, who is a spirit, make atonement for my sins, since he has declared, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Will the eternal Jehovah stoop so low, as to take upon him my nature, and suffer in my stead? Will He become a son of man, that I may be made a child of God?— "Hear, O heavens! give ear O earth! for the Lord has done it."

Such condescending mercy could never have been conceived by men or angels, had not God himself revealed this mystery of love in the volume of his grace. His own arm has brought salvation. He has visited and redeemed his people. He has magnified the Law, and made it honorable. He is become the Lord Our Righteousness; the justifier of the ungodly. O wonder of wonders!

"Not to be thought on, but with tides of joy,

Not to be mentioned, but with shouts of praise."

O rich salvation of mercy! "In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unflinching love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no

reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; and, being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had, by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being so much better than the angels, as he had by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Therefore God has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things that are under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Almighty God, enable me, through the mighty power of your Holy Spirit, to believe in Jesus; to love him with all my heart; to trust in him as my atoning sacrifice, my justifying righteousness; my purifying fountain, my hope of glory. Give me a growing delight in your holy Word, which reveals these riches of your grace to sinners. May I prize it as my greatest treasure, and study it as my highest wisdom. Impart, to me the spirit of illumination to understand its truths, and to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. Give me more and more of your quickening grace; stir up my languid affections, subdue my inward corruptions, and enable me to persevere in the ways of holiness, until death is swallowed up in victory; and grace is ripened into glory.

"Great God, when I approach your throne,

And all your glory see;

This is my stay, and this alone,

That Jesus died for me.

How can a soul condemned to die

Escape the just decree?

A vile, unworthy wretch am I,

But Jesus died for me.

Burdened with sin's oppressive chain,

O how can I get free?

No peace can all my efforts gain,

But Jesus died for me.

My course I could not safely steer

Through life's tempestuous sea;

Did not this truth relieve my fear,

That Jesus died for me.
And Lord, when I behold your face,
This must be all my plea;
Save me by your almighty grace,
For Jesus died for me."

Chapter 16.

Chapter 16.

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

Through the remaining darkness of our minds, how many conflicting opinions divide the Christian world. Each disputant claims truth to be on his side, and is ready to anathematize all who differ from him. Many, by fanciful interpretations of Scripture, darken the Truth, and disseminate error. Others, assuming a dogmatical spirit, lord it over their brethren, as if, "They were the people, and wisdom would die with them." How different is the temper and conduct of the humble Christian. Being clothed with humility, he thinks lowly of himself, goes daily to Christ for spiritual light, reads his Bible in a prayerful spirit, and exercising charity towards others, grows in grace, is established in the Truth, and adorns the doctrine of God his Savior in all things.

As we have a natural fondness for novelty, we readily seize upon any new thought which impresses our minds, and believing it to be the true sense of our favorite passage, with Samson-like arm, we try to make all others bend to our own view of the subject. The late Mr. Cecil justly observed, "Some men get hold of an opinion, and push it so far, that it contradicts other opinions fairly deducible from Scripture." This error has been the occasion of much dissension in the Church of Christ. How greatly we need that wisdom which is from above. It would be well, if the following excellent and important suggestion, drawn from the experience of that able minister of the New Testament, Henry Venn, was acted upon by our modern discoverers of the Truth— "To guard against dangerous perversions, it may be laid down as a maxim in divinity, that it is necessary not only to hold the doctrines of the Bible, but also to view those doctrines in the same light in which the inspired writers viewed them, and to make only the same inferences from those who they did. For there is scarcely any truth which may not be held in a partial manner, or seen through a distorting medium; so that we then only believe as the Apostles did, when we receive their tenets in the same full comprehensive meaning in which they delivered them, dwell upon them in the same proportion to other truths, and draw the same conclusions from them."

It is most important, then, rightly to explain the Word of Truth; for much diversity of sentiment arises from the different modes of interpreting Scripture. To every attentive student of the Bible it must be evident, that while numerous passages have a literal, others have a symbolical- others a figurative- and others a comparative meaning.

Thus, the declarations of Paul; "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," must be understood in their plain literal sense.

When we read, that "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body," -we do not, as Protestants, understand these words in their literal, but in a symbolical sense. We do not believe that Christ actually gave his body which was then at the table with his disciples, to be eaten by them; but the natural bread and wine, which he appointed to be the symbols of his body that should be broken, and of his blood that should be

poured out for the remission of sins; and "which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

When our Lord said, "If your hand or your foot offend you, cut them off and cast them from you; if your eye offend you, pluck it out and cast it from you;" we do not receive this as a direct command, in the literal sense of the words, to cut off and cast away the various members of our bodies; but rather as a strong figurative expression, to impress upon our minds this important truth— that if sin, though dear to us as a hand, a foot, or an eye, be not cut off and cast away from us, we cannot enter into life eternal.

When to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "Honor your father and mother;" -and to the multitudes which waited on him- "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple," -are we to understand our Lord as commanding us both to honor and hate our parents? While the first command is positive, and the duty of all, as Paul expresses it, "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord," -the second declaration must surely be understood in a comparative sense; as if our Jesus had said, "If any one would come by faith to me, would make a profession of my name, and cleave to me for the blessings of my kingdom, he must practice such self-denial, and submit to such hardships and persecutions for my sake, as show, that he prefers me to all the dearest comforts and relations of life, such as parents, wives, children, brethren, and sisters, yes, even life itself; and must be ready to part with them, and to be separated from them at my call; as if he really hated them; and must be indeed averse to them, and to his own enjoyment of them, so far as they would hinder his faith, and love, and faithfulness to me."

John, in like manner, enforces the two following important truths, which seem at first sight to militate against each other, but when understood experimentally, they are found to be in perfect agreement. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." By the first, the Apostle plainly pronounces it self-deception to suppose that man can attain, in this life, to a state of sinless perfection; and this assertion he strengthens, by including himself, the beloved disciple of his Lord— "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." -By the second, he as plainly declares it to be contrary to the nature of a child of God to commit sin, which, to be in agreement with the truth of the former passage, must mean, to live in the allowed and habitual indulgence of any sin.

The scriptural evidence of our being born of God, and of his seed remaining in us, does not therefore consist in an absolute and entire freedom from all sin while in the body; but in our abhorrence of it, in our fighting against it, and in our not living in the habitual practice of it.

John Guyse, an eminent divine, contemporary with Watts and Doddridge, thus expresses himself in his Exposition of the New Testament; "We are not to imagine the Apostle's meaning to be, that a true Christian never sins, for this would be to make him directly contradict what he had said about deceiving ourselves, if we say that we have no sin; and about the duty of confessing our sins, which supposes us to have occasion so to do. Therefore, the words 'he cannot sin' must be understood in some such sense as this; he cannot deliberately, habitually, presumptuously, and willingly sin. The expressions in the Greek are very strong, and signify committing it, as practisers, workers, or doers of it, with freedom and choice, like people who make a trade of it; and it is the

very same expression which our Lord used, when he said- 'Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.' Our Apostle therefore says- 'He who commits sin is of the devil;' - but 'Whoever is born of God does not commit sin;' -for that principle of grace which is infused into him by means of the incorruptible seed of the Word, has an abiding root and residence in him, to rule and govern him; and he has such a thorough hatred of all iniquity, that he cannot give himself liberty to sin with deliberation and full consent as he used to do; he cannot love, and live in sin. As a child of God, and born of the Spirit, he has received a principle of grace that wills and works in direct opposition to all sin, as sin; much less can he sin upon the score of his being born of God, as though his new-birth were a license for it, or had any tendency towards it."

To an antinomian question Paul gives a Gospel answer, "Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid! Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." "We know," says John, "that whoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." -For, "He that does righteousness is righteous, even as God is righteous." Nothing is so abhorrent to the renewed mind, as the workings of corruption. The pure in heart love purity, and long and pray for a constant increase of it. Their earnest desire is, that they may be sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit, that all carnal affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit, may live and grow in them. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to ascend higher and higher in the scale of Christian holiness; to obtain a greater victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to glorify God with their bodies and with their spirits which are his.

Those who are regenerated, may be termed 'perfect', as being complete in Christ, and perfectly justified through faith in his blood. They may be called perfect, when compared with the wicked, who wallow in sin, and bear the image of Satan. The advanced believer, who is matured in knowledge and experience, in grace and holiness, may be styled perfect, in comparison with young and weak Christians. Yes, even a babe in Christ, may be considered perfect, with respect to his new nature, inasmuch as he has all the parts of a Christian, though not the full development of those parts- for, being born of God, he is a child of God, and daily increases in wisdom, and spiritual stature, and in favor with God and man.

All the seeds of grace are sown in the hearts of true believers. Repentance, faith, love, obedience, patience, hope, joy, and peace are all experienced by the young convert, but, like the vegetable process, they do not shoot up into instantaneous ripeness. In some they advance slowly, in others they make more rapid growth; but in all, there is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Their graces, constantly unfolding themselves, attain to higher degrees of ripeness, until they reach the heavenly world, where only the perfection of unsullied holiness can be found. There the spirits of just men made perfect, surround the throne of God; and, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they serve Him day and night in his temple.

While in the body, we must experience that conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, which marks out the true believer, from those who are the captives of Satan, and from those also who are at ease in Zion. This conflict occasions much joy or pain, in proportion to the strength or weakness of these opposing principles. The life of the Christian is a daily combat. Those people are little acquainted with it, who feel no inward struggling between nature and grace. It is true, that some

pious people are less exercised than others with internal conflicts; but every view which the Scriptures give us of a life of faith is connected with exertion and opposition both from within and from without. It is called a race- a warfare- a pilgrimage. Hence believers are exhorted to run, that they may obtain the prize; to fight, that they may gain the crown; to persevere, that they may reach their promised rest. For, "as the soul of the sluggard desires and has nothing, so the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."

The Christian has been compared to a boat placed upon a rapid river, which, if it is not advancing against the current, must, of necessity, be carried down by it. To oppose the stream, would require a power not its own. Just so it is with the believer. He has to contend against a torrent of inward corruptions, known, perhaps, only to God and his own heart; and having lost, through the fall, all spiritual strength, he feels utterly unable of himself to resist them. He therefore looks continually unto Jesus, and being strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, is enabled to stem the stream, and thus to prove that he possesses spiritual life and vigor.

Sanctification is, therefore, the gracious work of God, transforming the soul of the sinner into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Holiness is essential to our happiness; for joy springs out of that faith, which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world.

The mortification of sin is compared by Paul to crucifixion, which was a painful lingering death; "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Blessed are they who can unite with the holy Apostle in his truly Christian experience, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet, not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

How characteristic of the church in her militant condition, is the description which Solomon has clothed in the richness of Eastern imagery- "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" "The sun," as Leighton beautifully remarks, "is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened; so the believer is perfectly justified, but sanctified only in part. His one half, his flesh, is dark; and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon, to which the sun is not subject at all; so the imperfection of a Christian's holiness, is the cause of so many waxings and wanings, and of the great inequality of his performances; whereas, in the meanwhile, his justification remains constantly like itself. This is imparted. This is inherent."

Equally characteristic of the helplessness of the Church is the interesting enquiry- "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Is Christ the beloved of our souls? Do we behold in him infinite beauty, grace, and power? Are we reposing our souls upon his faithfulness and truth; leaning only on the hope of his heavenly grace? Drawn by the Spirit, are we coming up from this wilderness world, a world of sin and sorrow, and journeying, through the strength of Jesus, to the paradise above?

Some people, unacquainted with the depth of human corruption, think, that to be good, is an easy attainment. The standard of goodness, which consists in amiability of temper, a freedom from grossly vicious habits, and a benevolent desire to relieve the indigent; our fallen nature may reach. A well directed education, the moral tone of the circle in which we move, and a decorous observance of the outward forms of religion, have each a tendency to civilize the mind, and to give

a certain air of excellence to the character. But all this is very far below the standard of evangelical holiness.

Barnabas was called a good man, because, "he was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." Paul, who was no flatterer, bore this testimony to the Roman Christians, "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are full of goodness." On what he founded this assertion, he himself informed them, "You are the called of Jesus Christ- Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world- Your obedience is come abroad unto all men."

How opposite is the goodness which the world admires from that which God approves. The one like the morning cloud and early dew, passes away; the other, like the rising sun, shines more and more unto the perfect day.

The love of God in Christ, a conformity to his image, a hatred of all sin, a renunciation of worldly lusts, and an entire devotedness of heart to the divine will, constitute that goodness which is pleasing unto God, and which can only spring from an union to Christ, by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This happy state is attended with much conflict, arising from the remainders of sin in the regenerate. A battle must be fought, but the believer who dies fighting against sin, will die conquering, through the blood of Jesus.

The experience of eminent Christians is always interesting and instructive. All have to pass through the strait gate, and to travel along the narrow way. Many are discouraged, because they think their trials are peculiar to themselves, and such as no spiritually-minded believer can experience. Being afraid to disclose their griefs, they suffer much inward distress from the dread of self-deception and hypocrisy. Satan, taking advantage of this state of mind, strives to confirm their fears, by casting his fiery darts into their souls, and impelling them onwards to the brink of despair.

But Jesus will not allow his sheep to perish. What Satan meant for evil, he overrules for good. These trials, though severe, cut up self-righteous hopes by the root, and lead the trembling believer, under the guidance of the holy Spirit, to the foot of the cross, where peace, and strength, and victory are obtained.

They can now with freedom open their hearts to some fellow-pilgrim, and are surprised to find, that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren who are in the world. Thus they are comforted and encouraged to persevere.

May every Christian reader take encouragement when thus tried, for the God of all grace, who has called us, (if believers in his dear Son) unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, will, after we have suffered a while, establish, strengthen, settle us. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Paul, when he became a subject of divine grace, was made to groan under the burden of indwelling sin, which, in his unconverted state, sat but lightly on his conscience. The unregenerate, who are reveling in sinful pleasures, can form no idea of the pain which a holy mind feels, when an impure thought is presented to the imagination. Those things which the wicked dwell upon with delight, are distressing to the pure in heart. When, therefore, we hear the believer in Jesus, mourning over his corruption, and loathing himself for all his abominations, it is not because he has, in every instance, cherished iniquity, but because it is offensive in all its actings to his

new-born soul. With the tried Apostle he can say- "We that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened- and are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, this spiritual conflict is described in such humiliating terms, that by some it is supposed to relate to an awakened Jew, seeking justification by the works of the Law; or, to an unconfirmed believer, struggling with feeble strength against the power of indwelling sin. They cannot conceive that Paul is relating his own experience, when, in his advanced state of Gospel sanctification, he says, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

As the design of this little work is to be experimental, and not controversial, and as the holy Apostle makes use of the first person, we will take it for granted, that he is speaking of himself, and thus endeavor to draw that benefit from his experience which we believe he intended to convey to the Christians at Rome.

Having declared, that believers are dead to the Law by the body of Christ; and that the Law, so far from subduing the evil passions, is the innocent occasion of stirring up their opposing lustings, the Apostle asks, "Is the Law sin? God forbid. No, I had not known sin, but by the Law; for I had not known lust except the Law had said, You shall not covet." Here he probably describes his earliest convictions. It was then the Tenth Commandment, reaching to the desires of the heart, which brought him to a sense of guilt and condemnation. For, he declares, "I was alive without the Law once, but when the commandment came, (perhaps the Tenth Commandment more especially, in all its spirituality and power) sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."

In his unenlightened state, he was evidently working for life, instead of from life received. He was forming a righteousness of his own, grounded on his obedience to the outward letter of the Law, and which he conceived to be blameless, as he told the Philippians, when summing up his Pharisaical merits. But, when his eyes were opened to see his guilt and pollution, he found this very Law in which he trusted, and from which he expected so much reward, to be unto death, condemning him, as a breaker of it, to eternal destruction. "For sin," he adds, "taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." O that we may learn true wisdom from this experience. Sin first deceives, and then slays the soul. Well might the Apostle warn the Hebrew converts, lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

How carefully does this experienced Christian guard the Church at Rome against the least idea of the Law being the cause of sin; for he immediately declares; "The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me; God forbid." Sin is the only cause of death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." If Adam had never sinned, death would never have reigned over the human race. "But," says the Apostle, "sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good, that sin by the commandment" (contrasted with its spotless nature) "might become exceeding sinful."

It is sin then, and not the holy Law of God, which works death in the soul, and effects its ruin. The Law convinces and condemns. Sin defiles and destroys. So frightful is sin in its nature and consequences, that nothing but itself can adequately express its vileness- "that sin might become exceeding sinful." Surely none but fools would make a mock at sin, or treat with levity the

awakened sinner, who is seeking deliverance from its guilt and power.

The Apostle proceeds, "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal." Here he draws a contrast between the purity of the Law, and the carnality of his fallen nature; and when brought to this standard of perfect holiness, he perceived at once, through the light of the Spirit, of the pollution of his best action. But how strong the expression which he now uses, "sold under sin." What? the Lord's freeman, sold under sin! Could he, like Ahab, sell himself to work wickedness? Impossible.

The believer, whose experience is here described is not said to sell himself, he 'was sold' under sin. This implies something passive, rather than active. We may be said to be sold, with respect to original sin, which taints our whole nature, before we can perform one act of the will. When we have attained to the exercise of our mental faculties, and are duly awakened to a sense of our abject condition, we resemble slaves, who are longing for deliverance, and yet cannot emancipate themselves from their hated bondage. Through the remainders of corruption, we have to struggle and fight against the sin that dwells within us, and which is ever seeking to entrap us by its deceitful wiles; but, as the servants of Jesus Christ, we can never be the willing slaves of sin; this is totally adverse to the spirit of the Gospel, and marks with awful blackness the subjects of Satan's kingdom.

This seems to be the meaning of the Apostle's declaration; for he adds with much simplicity and sincerity, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I." Thus confessing how much it distressed his renewed mind, to feel this inward struggle against the holy principle of grace. The whole bent of his mind and will was toward God and holiness; therefore, he could affirm for his own comfort, "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good."

His will was averse from sin and inclined to the holy law of God; on which account he could declare without hesitation- "Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." As if he said- It is not the newly implanted principle, the new man in Christ Jesus which thus labors to throw off the restraining power of the Law, but sin, the unrenewed part of my nature, which still dwells within me "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, (my corrupt and unregenerate nature) dwells no good thing; for to will, (through the power of converting grace) is present with me, but how to perform that which is good (through the remainders of corruption) I find not."

How important is self-knowledge. "I know," says this experienced saint, "that in me dwells no good thing." This is not the language of a proud Pharisee, or of a self-righteous professor of Christianity, but of a humble believer, taught of God to know himself, to feel the plague of his own heart, and to bewail his corruptions with unfeigned sorrow.

How did the Apostle know, that in him dwelt no good thing; that is, as he himself explains it, in his flesh or unrenewed nature? Because he was constrained to acknowledge- "The good that I would do, I do not; but the evil which I would not do, that I do." He therefore places this distressing experience to the account of indwelling sin, "Now if I do that which I would not do, it, is no more I (my renewed nature) that does it, but sin that dwells in me."

At length he comes to this conclusion- "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." I cannot shake off this hated inmate, nevertheless, "I delight in the Law of God after the

inward man." This proves that the experience here stated, is that of a truly converted person, under the teaching of the Spirit; for an unregenerate man could not delight in the Law of God after the inward man, that is, with all the powers and affections of the renewed mind. "But," he adds. "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Thus while grace was urging on to higher and higher degrees of holiness, these 'Canaanites in the land' were opposing his progress, and trying to bring him into their hated captivity.

Feeling most deeply his utter helplessness under these distressing conflicts, he is compelled to cry out with doleful lamentation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall rescue me from this loathsome body of sin, which I feel so closely attached to me, and from which I cannot escape?

Job, and David, and Isaiah, and other eminent saints, have been forced to make a similar cry, when laboring under the conscious burden of indwelling sin. But, what joy, does the Gospel bring to the heavy-laden soul; what relief to the disquieted conscience! One believing glance of a crucified, exalted Savior, can drive away a legion of inbred evils, and deliver the oppressed soul from all its burdens.

The happy saint, having, by an act of faith, reached the foot of the cross, now breaks forth into an ecstasy of delight, "I thank God, who gives me the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Every fresh application to the blood of the Atonement, brings fresh peace and strength to the soul, and is the sovereign antidote to the evil of sin. For the consolation of every tried believer, who has thus to endure the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, the Apostle draws his blessed conclusion, "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit."

Happy is the believer, who, taught by the Spirit to know and to feel his own unworthiness and nothingness, goes daily, to his crucified Lord for an increase of faith and love. It is an awful deception to imagine, that because sin is never wholly destroyed while we remain in the body, that therefore we may feel easy about its dwelling within us. This is not the feeling of a child of God. Every perception, every motion, every acting of sin, however inward or unperceived by others, is painful and humbling to the new-born soul. Having received a new nature, the believer has received a new bias, new affections, and new desires. He pants after God. He longs to be conformed to the perfect image of his Savior. He delights to do the will of his heavenly Father. Though pardoned through faith in the blood of Jesus, he still loathes himself on account of his iniquity, and watches, and prays, and strives against the sin which does so easily beset him.

By the light of the Gospel Truth, he searches his heart, and takes a survey of those temptations and snares which surround his path. Ceasing from man, he trusts in the faithfulness of his Covenant God. Renouncing his own righteousness, he looks unto Jesus, and labors, through the

Spirit, to follow his steps. As a person ascending a lofty mountain sees the prospect widen before him, the nearer he approaches its summit; so the true believer, as he advances in his Christian course, obtains a more expanded view of the perfections of Jehovah, of the purity of the Law, and of the holiness of the Gospel. Hence forgetting those things which are behind him, and reaching forth unto those things which are before him, he daily pursues his upward walk, until, passing through the gates of death, he attains the summit of his desires, when, standing upon Mount Zion, with palms of victory and songs of praise, he beholds Jesus in the fullness of His glory, and is made like Him in the perfection of His holiness, when he sees Him as He is.

A consciousness of indwelling sin should therefore drive us to the cross; make us value the finished work of our Redeemer, and excite us to more fervent supplications for growth in grace—knowing that this is the will of God, even our sanctification; and, that if we ask any thing according to his will he hears us.

How great then is the privilege of the sanctified believer. He walks in the light of the Divine Countenance, and enjoys communion with God. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses him from all sin; while the Holy Spirit dwells in him, as in a temple consecrated to the Divine glory. Yet, writes John, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." O that we may come to Christ, as little children, subjecting our minds to his will and our reason to his Word. then shall we know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be governed, and guided, and sanctified by it.

Christian reader, are your feelings in unison with those of the Apostle? If you can not read your experience in this Seventh Chapter to the Romans, you have no right to the comforts of the Eighth.

When the motions of sin are felt within you, how do you act respecting them? Are they allowed to work unmolested in your heart; or, are they, when perceived, immediately resisted by the prayer of faith? Do these perceptions of inward corruption give you pain; or are they treated with indifference, so long as the inward evil does not become an outward sore? Can you say with the Apostle, "to will is present with me. I consent unto the Law that it is good; I delight in the law of God after the inward man." And, when the cry of agony— "O wretched man that I am," is extorted from you under the pressing burden of conscious corruption, does a believing view of Jesus, as your righteousness and strength, become, at once, the death of your sins, and the life of your hopes? If so, then take the full comfort of the Apostle's assurance, that to you, there is no condemnation, while you evidence your union to Christ, by walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It has been quaintly, but truly remarked, that the Cross-bearer shall be the Crown-wearer. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the outward trials which they have to encounter in common with the rest of mankind, would be easily borne, were it not for the plague of their own hearts, which greatly adds to the weight of temporal affliction.

Their desire is to have their wills swallowed up in the will of God, and with filial affection to kiss the hand that smites. But alas! too often they have to mourn over a rebellious spirit, which makes sad inroads into their spirituality and peace.

Being taught of God to know themselves, and to abhor sin, they daily wrestle with this inbred evil. The weapons of all-prayer and faith in the blood of Jesus arm them for the combat. Looking unto Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, and confiding in his love, whose grace is sufficient for them,

and whose strength is made perfect in their weakness, they endure unto the end, and obtain a crown of glory that fades not away.

Such are the conflicts and such the conquests of every true believer. With Paul, he can say, "Without are fightings, within are fears;" and with this holy man he can glory in tribulation. Beholding our danger and our refuge, have we fled with anxious haste to the cross of Christ, and there, through faith, obtained the pardon of our sins, the robe of righteousness, the spirit of adoption, the renewal of our nature, the peace of God, the foretaste of heavenly bliss!

"Happy are you O Israel, who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, with the Lord."

"O vain heart, where are you roving;

What proud wishes in you swell?

Can you hope for God's approving?

Are you fit with him to dwell?

Do those empty joys ensnare you

Which frail mortals prize so high?

Or do faith's bright visions bear you

To the portals of the sky?

There are times when I can cherish

Fondest hopes of heavenly rest;

Soon, too soon, they fade, they perish;

All is gloom within my breast.

O how desolate and dreary

Are those hours of lonely grief,

When the mind, depressed and weary,

Seeks, but cannot find, relief.

Gracious Lord, your righteous dealings

With our sinful race below,

Prove you faithful, though our feelings

Like the ocean, ebb and flow.

Hear my fervent supplication,

And your strength and peace restore;

Fix me on a firm foundation,

That I may be moved no more.

Chapter 17.

Chapter 17. ON THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT (continued)

We have seen the sentiments of the Saxon Reformer respecting that corner-stone of the Reformation, the doctrine of justification by faith; how zealous he was for the absolute freeness of Divine grace, and yet how zealous for the interests of holiness. We will now consider his views and feelings with regard to the Christian's conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, "It is very useful," says Luther, "for sincere and pious people to know and meditate on Paul's doctrine concerning the contest of the flesh and the Spirit. It is an admirable comfort to the tempted. When I was a monk, if at any time I happened to feel the motions of a bad passion, I used to think the prospect of my salvation was completely over. I struggled in a variety of ways both to overcome the bad passion, and to quiet my conscience. All in vain. The lust of the flesh returned, and I was harassed with thoughts of this sort— You have committed this, or that sin; you are impatient, you are envious; in vain have you entered into holy orders. Now if I had rightly understood Paul's doctrine of the flesh lusting against the Spirit. I should not so long and so miserably have afflicted myself. I should have reflected, and said, as I do at this day in similar situations— Martin, as long as you remain in the flesh, you will never be entirely without sin; you are now in the flesh, and therefore you must experience a contest with it; and this is agreeable to what Paul says, the flesh resists the Spirit. Despair not then, but strive manfully against all carnal dispositions, and fulfill not their lustings. Do this, and the Law shall have no condemning dominion over you."

In the same self-abasing spirit, he speaks of himself and his fellow-laborers in the ministry- "We ourselves, the ministers of the Gospel, are not so active and zealous in doing our duty, now that we have the light of truth, as we were before, during the darkness of our ignorance. We are grown cold and negligent in handling the Word, and in prayer also; and lastly, both in well-doing and in suffering; insomuch, that if Satan did not torment us internally, with spiritual temptations, and externally, with hostile persecutions, and above all, with the contempt and ingratitude of our own congregations, we should become, I fear, quite careless, and lazy, and lost to every good work."

Happy would it be for the Church, if this picture did not apply to modern times. But, blessed be God, we still have men among us, who, like Luther, are valiant for the truth upon the earth; who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and who are not ashamed to confess Christ before a sinful and adulterous generation. May their number increase a thousand-fold.

Luther labored to bring back the Christian Church, not only to the purity of the faith, but to the practice of piety. "The whole man," writes this enlightened Reformer, "must, in the Gospel, stoop and become new. He must put off, as it were, the old skin, as the serpent does. For when its skin is old, the serpent seeks out a narrow hole of a rock, and forces itself into it, and draws its old skin off from itself, and leaves it outside the hole. So must a man yield himself to the Gospel and God's Word, and boldly follow, and draw off, as it were his old skin, and leave outside, his knowledge, his thoughts, his will, his love, his pleasures, his words, his works; and become entirely a new man, who sees all things differently from what he did before, judges differently, feels differently, thinks

differently, chooses differently, speaks differently, desires differently, pursues and works differently." "Truly religious people," he justly remarks, "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; and hence their sins do not finally ruin them. For, if they obey the flesh by gratifying its concupiscence, they infallibly lose their faith and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, if they do not abhor their sins, sincerely repent, and return to Christ, that they may recover their faith and the Holy Spirit, they will die in their sins. Wherefore I can speak no comfort to those who dream they have faith, and yet live in sin." Against all such there is a dreadful sentence in force; namely— Those who live after the flesh shall die. And further, the works of the flesh are manifest; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, and such like; they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Luther then shows in what way true believers are kept from falling into gross sins, and how they are enabled to persevere even unto the end, "The severe threatenings of Almighty God against sin," he observes, "have a due effect upon the minds of true believers, so as to deter them from breaking his laws. They arm themselves with the word of God, with faith, and with prayer, and do not give way to the lusts of the flesh. In fact, they so resist the flesh, as to nail it to the cross with all its sinful desires. Hence it is, that the flesh, though yet alive, and capable of showing some signs of motion, cannot perform what it would; being bound hand and foot, and nailed fast to the cross. Such are the principles, and such is the practice of truly pious people. The same important truths may be expressed a little differently thus— The faithful, while they live on earth, do actually crucify the flesh; that is, though they are sensible of its lustings, they do not obey them. Furnished with the armor of God, namely, faith, hope, and the sword of the spirit, they oppose the natural or carnal man; and with these spiritual arms, as it were, with nails, fix him to the cross of Christ, and compel him against his will, to be subject to the spiritual man, or new creature. Afterwards when they die, they entirely put off the carnal man, and they will rise from the dead, with a body incorruptible, and free from sinful affections and lusts."

Thus clearly did this zealous Reformer declare, in unison with the Apostle, that, there are two principles of action within us, flesh and spirit; and though we cannot entirely put off the flesh or kill it, we must fight against it, and strive to subdue it, until we put off our mortal body, and enter that blessed state, where,

"Flesh and sin no more control.

The sacred pleasures of the soul."

The Church of England maintains the same truth with equal clearness in one of her Collects— "O Lord, raise up your power, and come among us, and with great might support us; that whereas through our sins and wickedness, we are sorely hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us."

Also, in the ninth Article— "Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusts always contrary to the Spirit. And this infection of nature does remain in those who are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh is not subject to the law of God."

This remnant of corruption in the converted sinner is powerfully pressed upon our consciences, as a cause for deep humiliation in the Homily on the misery of man— "Let us all confess with mouth

and heart, that we are full of imperfections; Let us know our own works, of what imperfection they be, and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge any part of justification by our merits or works. For truly there are imperfections in our best works; We do not love God so much as we are bound to do, with all our heart, mind, and power; We do not fear God so much as we ought to do; We do not pray to God, but with great and many imperfections; We give, forgive, believe, live, and hope imperfectly; We speak, think, and do imperfectly; We fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh imperfectly. Let us therefore not be ashamed to confess imperfection even in all our best works."

Becon, one of the most active of the English reformers, and who, by his writings, contributed much to the diffusion of the Truth, in his "Dialogue between the Christian Knight and Satan," makes his Christian warrior say, "In myself I am a sinner, but in Christ, my righteous Maker, I am righteous. For he has forgiven me all my sins and has taken me into his grace, favor, and tuition. He is always ready to help me; he forgives me the remnant of my sins, and purges them in me daily, until he makes me altogether new. Although I fulfill not the commandments of God in the Law with my own works, yet I fulfill them in the Gospel with the most perfect works, and the satisfaction of Christ, in whom I believe. This faith is reckoned to me unto righteousness, although my works of themselves be imperfect. All these things can I prove by the Word of God.

"With this do I comfort myself; I have sins indeed, but yet, for Christ's sake, in whom I believe, there is no condemnation for me. The Law is good and holy, but it can justify no man. It cannot change our stony heart, or give us a softer heart, or purify our sinful nature and renew it, or take away sins; this the Spirit of Christ alone can do. In myself I am a sinner; but this is not to walk after the flesh. For to walk after the flesh is, without all fear, stubbornly and proudly to fulfill the lusts and desires of the flesh, and all that our sinful nature desires, and of itself is bent unto. I fall indeed into sin, but yet after the inward man I hate sin; I desire nothing more than to be clean, and utterly delivered from sin; and I am sorry, even from the very heart, that I have sinned, and do sin against God. I cannot of my own natural strength, without the Spirit of God, hate sin and resist it, seeing, that even together with nature, it is born into the world with me. He that hates sin, has the Spirit of Christ, yes, he is Christ's. Paul therefore confesses that in all godly people the remnants of sin do remain, against which the Spirit strives. But he adds words full of high consolation, even that for all this, there is no condemnation to them. And this privilege and prerogative have they in Christ, that Righteous One, in whom they are engrafted through faith, and whose merits they do enjoy, and by them are saved from their sins."

Thus, our venerable Reformers were experimentally taught of God to know themselves, as well as to understand the Truths which they cheerfully sealed with their blood. While they pressed upon men's consciences the absolute necessity of universal holiness, as essential unto salvation; saying with Paul, "This also we wish, even your perfection;" they at the same time declared with Solomon, "There is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not;" "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin;" and with James, "In many things we stumble." If then all, even the best of us, are conscious of so many slips and falls, ought it not to make us very humble and modest in our thoughts of ourselves, and sparing in our censures of others? Surely spiritual pride cannot luxuriate in such a soil as this. The deeper are our views of the sin that dwells in us, the more humbly we shall think of ourselves, and the more gratefully we shall prize our salvation by Christ. What Paul felt in his own experience, he strongly enforced upon others. To

the Christians of Galatia he writes, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the Law. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This is true blessedness, to live under the daily influence of the Holy Spirit, and through his power to overcome the lustings of the flesh.

The consciousness of indwelling sin made the Apostle say to the Corinthians, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." What need would there have been for this self-government, if he had attained to a state of sinless perfection?

Were sin wholly destroyed in the hearts of believers, and in consequence of this happy liberation from evil, were they delivered from the fear of falling, Paul would not have given this admonitory exhortation to the Thessalonian Christians; "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of concupiscence even as the Gentiles, who know not God; for God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The knowledge where his strength lay, enabled this good soldier of Jesus Christ to declare, "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 to Christ."

Satan, taking advantage of these remnants of evil in the hearts of believers, is constantly laboring to excite opposition against the holy principle of grace implanted in the soul. Hence Paul, whose care over the infant churches was incessant, thus admonishes the Christians at Ephesus, "My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Believers then must be strong in the Lord, for they have to encounter a mighty adversary in an evil day. But let them not fear; for through the power of Jesus they shall prevail, since He, who is in them, is greater than he that is in the world.

As a father exhorts his child, so does the tenderhearted Apostle his beloved Timothy; "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." And like a general, experienced in this holy warfare, he animates the Christians at Corinth to the spiritual combat, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong."

But who is sufficient for these things? What feeble arm, or what human weapon can successfully oppose the powers of darkness; He who calls us to the combat, opens the spiritual armory, and bids us equip ourselves for the fight. "Stand, therefore," says the Apostle, "having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the

sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Being himself well acquainted with the efficacy of believing prayer, he feelingly adds, "And supplication for all saints, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

With equal force, he urges on the Thessalonians to spiritual combat- "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." How invincible is the believer, when thus clad. And, as the hour of dissolution advances, how unspeakably blessed, when, in the triumph of Christian hope, he can exclaim, "O death where is your sting. O grave, where is your victory. Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." May every reader experience this full assurance of hope which upheld the conquering Apostle while passing through the deepest waters, and which cheered his soul in the darkest seasons of affliction.

Too many resemble the character of Pliable, so admirably drawn by Bunyan in his Pilgrim's Progress. They are delighted with the glowing descriptions which are given of heaven by the inspired writers, and long to behold the golden streets, the pearly gates, the crystal streams, the unwithering tree of life, and all the glories which compose that blissful place. But when they fall into the Slough of Despond, that mire of inward corruption, with which they were hitherto unacquainted; and have to struggle with doubts and fears, raised by Satan and their own unbelieving hearts; they are offended, and gladly run back again into the world, just as the dog returns to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The true believer, on the contrary, like Christian, is bent upon advancing toward the wicket-Gate. He is escaping for his life from the City of Destruction, this present evil world, and therefore dares not tarry in the plain, much less turn back to the place from where he came. He may, for a time, sink deep in desponding fears, arising from indwelling sin and obscure views of the grace and glory of Jesus, but having received a new nature, he ardently longs after the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. He cries for help, and help is vouchsafed from the Lord, whose well-timed promises, like the steps across the Slough of Despond, support his feet, until he reaches the firm ground nearest to the Shining light, and thus evidences the reality of his conversion to God. Though much discouraged because of the difficulty of the way, he is still determined to persevere; and obtaining a clearer view of the cross of Christ by the exercise of a stronger faith, every spiritual blessing is imparted to him, and he finally enters with joy into the Celestial City.

The amiable and pious Leighton has forcibly described this chequered experience of the true believer, which is so compounded of joy and sorrow. "Inward corruptions," as he truly observes, "clog and trouble the believer, and he cannot shake them off nor prevail against them, without much pains, many prayers, and tears. And many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he has gained ground; yes, sometimes he is foiled, and cast down by them; and so in all other duties, such a fighting and continued combat with a revolting backsliding heart, the flesh pulling and dragging downwards. When he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with a stone tied to its foot; has wings that flutter to be upwards, but is pressed down with the weight fastened to him.

What struggling with wanderings, and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer.

"How much pain to attain anything, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial; and if anything is attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party. How often are the righteous driven back to their old point! If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried back by the stream; and what returns of doubtings and mischief, after they thought they were gotten somewhat above them; insomuch that they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never do for them. And yet, through all these, they are brought safely home. There is another strength which bears them up, and brings them through; but these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that it is not so easy to come to heaven as most imagine."

The heavenly-minded Leighton, no doubt, included himself in this experience of the righteous, though Burnet has left his record of his superior sanctity, "I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him, for above twenty-two years, I never knew him speak an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper, but that in which I wished to be in the last minutes of my life."

If then, the righteous scarcely are saved; if so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties surround their path; if so many enemies are up in arms to impede their progress; and so much evil still remains from the fleshy principle within; requiring incessant watchfulness and prayer; how shall the sinner and the ungodly stand in judgment? Awful indeed will be the end of those, who have either rejected or neglected the grace of God, so freely offered in the Gospel of his Son.

There are, it is true, many shades of character, some darker and some fainter, but still they are shades of evil. The Bible speaks of no middle character, no neutral state between the righteous and the wicked. We must be either believers or unbelievers, saints or sinners, the friends or the enemies of Christ. We cannot serve God and Mammon. The line of demarcation between the true Church and the world, is broadly and distinctly drawn in the Word of God. The blessed Jesus has declared, "He that is not with me is against me." This important distinction was also clearly made when the gracious commission was given to Paul at the period of his conversion, "Now I send you to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

This transforming power accompanied the preaching of the Apostle. Hence he could say to the Ephesians, "You were once darkness, but now are you light in the Lord, walk as children of light." Also, to the Thessalonians. "You are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

Clement of Alexandria gives this short account of the primitive Christians, "As the fairest possession we give up ourselves to God, entirely loving him, and reckoning this the great business of our lives. No man is with us a Christian, or accounted truly rich, temperate, and generous, but he that is pious and religious; nor does any further bear the image of God, than he speaks and believes what is just and holy. So that this, in short, is the state of us who follow God; such as are our desires, such are our discourses; such as our discourses, such are our actions; such as are our actions, such is our life; so universally good is the whole life of Christians." Certainly none were ever greater enemies to a naked profession, and the covering a bad life under the title of

Christianity, than these early followers of the Savior.

Do any live otherwise than Christ has commanded? It is a most certain argument that they are not Christians, though with their tongue they smoothly profess the Christian doctrines; for not mere professors, but those who live according to their profession, shall be saved. So careful were the primitive believers to avoid all sin, that they stood at the greatest distance from anything, however lawful in itself, which seemed to bear the appearance of evil, or which might offend the weakest of their brethren.

"Who," says Clement, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "that has ever been among you, has not experienced the firmness of your faith, and its fruitfulness in all good works- and admired the temper and moderation of your religion in Christ? All of you were humble minded, not boasting of anything; desiring rather to be subject than to govern; to give than to receive; being content with the portion God has dispensed to you- and hearkening diligently to his word; you were enlarged in your affections, having his sufferings always before your eyes. Thus, a firm and blessed, and profitable peace was given unto you; and an inestimable desire of doing good; and a plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit was upon all of you. You were sincere, and without offence towards each other; not mindful of injuries; all sedition and schism was an abomination unto you. You bewailed every one his neighbor's sins, esteeming their defects your own- you were kind one to another without grudging, being ready to every good work- and being adorned with a conversation altogether virtuous and religious, you did all things in the fear of God, whose commandments were written upon the table of your hearts."

Such was the lovely portrait, drawn by the early Fathers of the Christian Church. In those days, religion consisted not in talking finely, but in living well. We, alas! are not now, what these primitive Christians were— burning and shining lights. The lamentation of the prophet is sadly too descriptive of our state- "Our silver has become dross, and our wine is mixed with water." The world has tainted the Church by its unhallowed admixture. Where is the simplicity, the self-denial, the zeal, the entire devotedness of these first Christians to be found? Certainly not among the great mass of religious professors. Long continued prosperity has induced a spirit of slumber. The visible Church planted in our countries has had a long season of repose. No storm of violent persecution has been permitted to assail it. We have grown up within its bosom during a period of religious liberty unknown to former ages. From our infancy we have heard, in a greater or less degree, the glorious truths of the Gospel. They have become familiar to our ears, but they have not proportionally affected our hearts. Hence, without considering what is the nature, the operation, and the requirements of the Gospel, we have substituted the form for the power, the notion for the spirit of Christianity; contenting ourselves with the circumstance of being born in a Christian country, and belonging to a Christian Church; as if the initiatory rite of baptism would amply secure our admission into heaven.

Without any breach of that charity which hopes all things, we are compelled to declare this painful truth; that thousands who are moral, and regular in all the outward duties and decencies of religion, are still as far distant from the spirit and practice, the principles and feelings, of the true believer, as the East is from the West. Do any startle at this plain assertion? Where, would ask, is their deep contrition, their sincere repentance, their hatred of sin, their application to the Savior, their love to his name, their delight in his service, their attachment to him, their self-denying

obedience, their renunciation of the world, their patience under suffering for the Gospel's sake? Where, in short, is the new creature in Christ Jesus to be seen in them? It has no existence. They have a name to live, being called Christians, and professing to believe in Jesus, but they are dead. The general truths of the Gospel may dwell in their understandings, but they have no abiding place in their hearts. Their notions may make them moral, but they do not transform their souls into the holy image of Christ. The Apostle has well described the character of these nominal Christians—"they profess that they know God; but in works deny him. They have the form of godliness, but, deny the power thereof."

These are the people who, frequenting the House of God, sneer at conscientious piety, and sarcastically pity the weakness of "the saints." Yet, they have full confidence in the mercy of God, and deem it most uncharitable, even to breathe a hint that they are in danger of eternal perdition. But, when death seizes upon them, when the world is found to be an idol which cannot save, and worldly friends but miserable comforters; when conscience fastens upon them as its prey, and tears their souls with inconceivable anguish, (awful presage of the worm that never dies;) O what would they not give for that sweet assurance of hope, that real Christianity, which supports and gladdens the despised believer, as he passes through the cold stream of death to his eternal rest. Unbelief blinds their minds, and hardens their hearts. While in the enjoyment of health and plenty, they can sport with thoughtless gaiety on the brink of hell. The sun of prosperity shines upon them, and all around is pleasant. Then why should they forebode the death-bearing storm, or sigh in the midst of laughter? Sickness or poverty, in their estimation, is the proper time for reflection, because at such gloomy seasons, the opportunities for pleasure are gone. They may, perhaps, be induced to bestow a few thoughts upon serious things, but they never do it with a serious spirit. At the grave of some beloved friend, they drop the tear of affection, and for the moment feel the vanity of earthly things; but soon, the tide of occupation and of pleasure returns, and the faint impression is obliterated from their minds.

Like Felix, they dismiss, as soon as possible, the unwelcome visitor, and quiet their consciences by this message, "When I have a more convenient season I will call for you." Have we never imitated Felix in his dangerous procrastination? When will this more convenient season arrive? Will tomorrow find us more disposed to repent than today? As we grow in years, will our hearts grow softer, or the world less powerful in its influence over us? No! may not the same motives which occasion our delay today, prevail with us on the morrow, to procrastinate until the day ensuing, and thus lead us onwards to the verge of life, unprepared to meet our God?

O how awfully great is our insensibility to eternal things. Rising from their beds in the vigor of health, what numbers have been struck by the dart of death, and hurried, in a few hours, into the presence of their Judge. This day may be our last. What season then, is convenient as the present? Other opportunities may be less favorable; none can be more advantageous; for now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Now the door of mercy stands open, but it will shortly be shut. Now the scepter of mercy is held out, but soon it will become a rod of vengeance. Now we hear the voice of love, but before long we shall behold the wrath of the Lamb. Now the invitation is "Come unto me and I will give you rest;" speedily we shall hear in dreadful thunder, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire." O that every slumbering sinner may be aroused to a sense of his danger. Has God said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" has he pronounced his righteous judgment upon procrastinating sinners, "Because I have called, and you

refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes," -then let us tremble, lest His insulted and grieved Spirit should never more vouchsafe his convictions; lest this awful seal of perdition should be placed upon us. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone."

While in the pursuit of earthly things, or distracted by worldly cares, what thousands are deceived through the subtlety of Satan to their eternal ruin. They intend to repent, and are resolved to be godly. They resolve, and re-resolve, and die the same. Blest with a profusion of worldly goods, which a bounteous Providence has heaped upon them, what multitudes of professing Christians are thus unmindful of the Giver of their mercies, forgetful of their responsibilities, neglectful of their souls, yes more, rejecters of Him who died to save them, who is even now waiting to be gracious, who calls to them by his ministers, who invites them by his Word, who strives with them by his Spirit.

Should any one cast his eyes upon these humble pages, whose conscience bears testimony to the truth of these reflections, I pray that the Divine Spirit of all grace, may bless the faithful admonition to his heart. O that these solemn truths may be received in the same spirit of love in which they were written; for, as "the ear that hears the reproof of life abides among the wise;" -so, "he that hates reproof shall die."

Whatever human reason may suggest as the way to heaven, the Bible plainly declares, that there is no salvation for sinners but through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ; and no other way of coming to Christ, as a Savior, but by believing on him; that, faith is the gift of God, the work of his Spirit in our hearts; and that, for this inestimable blessing, we must pray without ceasing. To encourage us to the performance of this duty, with what inimitable tenderness has Jesus appealed to our hearts, "If you, being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to those who ask him."

Can we remain insensible to this inconceivable lovingkindness of our God and Savior? God is love, and has manifested his love towards us, by sending his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. God is love, and has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. How importunate are his calls of mercy- "Why will you die, O house of Israel? Will you not be made clean? When shall it once be? O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins."

May this exhibition of redeeming love soften our hearts, and lead us to the mercy-seat where God waits to be gracious. There, with an earnestness of desire, and deep feeling of our need, let us ask, that we may receive; seek that we may find, knock that it may be opened. "For this," says John, "is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us; and if we know that he hear us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

"Why should earthly beauties tear me

From the fountain of all bliss,

From that Lord, who waits to bear me

To a happier land than this?
Faith already seems beginning
To approach that land of rest,
Where I shall be done with sinning
And with endless peace be blest.
Hasting to those heavenly treasures,
Lower joys I leave behind;
Earth with all its boasted pleasures,
Shall not move my steadfast mind."

Chapter 18.

Chapter 18.

PAUL'S SOURCES OF CONSOLATION—
THE COVENANT TITLES OF JEHOVAH,
THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE DIVINE COUNSEL,
THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SAVIOR'S GRACE,
THE EFFICACY OF HIS POWER,
THE ASSURANCE OF FUTURE GLORY.

Nothing can be more interesting to a Christian, whose heart is filled with holy love, than the contemplation of the Divine Perfections, as displayed in our redemption by Jesus Christ; and of that work of grace, which is wrought in the heart of the sinner, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Well might David strike his harp with joyful notes "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God, while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord."

Every other subject is light and trifling compared with this; for, however wonderful are the works of God, He, who made them, must infinitely surpass them all in glory. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those who have pleasure therein." But, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."

What can be more ennobling to the soul of man, than spiritual meditations on that Infinite Being, who made, redeemed, and sanctified us; whose watchful care ever protects us, and whose love is engaged to preserve and bless us.

O! how delightful is the thought, that he who inhabits eternity, who clothes himself with light as with a garment, who rides upon the wings of the wind, before whom all nations are less than nothing and vanity, who beholds, at one glance, all things past, present, and to come, is our FATHER and our FRIEND. What can harm us, while sheltered under his wing! What can grieve us, while dwelling beneath his smile? He, who rules over all worlds, has promised to make all things work together for good to those who love him. If we love God, he will make good this sweet promise even unto us.

How secure, how peaceful, how blessed, is the true believer in Jesus. His heart can joyfully respond to these soul-reviving questions of the Apostle— "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any tiling to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ who died; yes, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,

or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

With an eye fixed on the everlasting Covenant, the Apostle rose superior to every misgiving feeling. Happy Paul, who in the fullness of faith could thus triumph in Christ. When assailed by inward temptations and outward trials, can we strike a chord in unison with his, and in the full assurance of hope, exclaim, amid threatening dangers, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

O glorious triumph of faith! Well might Jesus say, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." As there is no condemnation, so there shall be no separation between Christ and his people. Their union is firm as the everlasting hills- and unending as the days of eternity. What then can exceed the blessedness arising from a firm hold on the promises of God in Christ? All earthly supports shall finally forsake us, but the Word of Christ will never fail. He has himself given us this blessed assurance, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Must it not then be dishonoring to Jesus, for one moment to doubt his word, which is firm as the everlasting pillars which support his throne.

Earth would once more resemble Paradise, did the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ produce its full effect on every heart. The religion of Jesus is a religion of love; and love works no ill to his neighbor. It is a religion of peace, and peace would convert spears into ploughshares. It is a religion of purity, and purity, would banish every unclean passion from the earth. To extend the blessings of this heavenly religion was the heart's desire of Paul; to make known its riches was his delight, though his efforts were too often repaid by ingratitude, and attended with unnumbered sufferings.

Earth will not always groan under the weight of sin, as now alas it does! The page of prophecy unfolds an age of brightness to our view, when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channels of the sea; when the wolf and the lamb shall feed together; and when they shall neither hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. Then truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Violence shall no more be heard in our land; neither wasting nor destruction within our borders; for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. His people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever, that he may be glorified.

Blessed Jesus! why are your chariot wheels so long in coming? Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young deer upon the mountains of spices. You have said, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

How truly wonderful is the Spirit's operation in the heart of the believer. The more we meditate upon it as exhibited in the character and experience of the great Apostle, the more we shall admire the wisdom, power, and love, which shone forth in his conversion and establishment in the faith. His whole experience is profitable to us. We behold successively his conflicts, comforts, and his conquests. Perhaps no man ever suffered more in the cause of Christ, enjoyed more abundant consolations, or obtained more glorious victories over the powers of darkness. We have already

seen an ample detail of his trials, as recorded by himself; trials which would have daunted the most courageous, unaided by strength from above.

With beautiful humility, so characteristic of his mind, he says to the Corinthians, "Jesus was seen by me, as of one born out of due time; for I am the least of the Apostles, who am not fit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." So careful was this holy man to place the crown of glory upon the head of Jesus, whose power and love had been magnified in his conversion to the faith which once he destroyed.

The consideration of those sources of consolation, from where he derived so much joy, and which sustained him under the vicissitudes of his eventful life, will afford another proof of the blessedness of faith in Christ. During his abode at Corinth, at Jerusalem, and while traversing the ocean on his voyage to Rome, this faithful servant of Christ was favored with encouraging visions. "I am with you," were words of unspeakable comfort, when spoken in the hour of trial by the Savior whom he loved. The titles which are given to the Almighty in his Epistles to the different churches, contain within them the sweetest consolation.

When exhorting the Christians at Corinth, he says, "Finally, brethren farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

To the Romans he writes, "Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."

In the fullness of his heart, he breaks forth into a song of praise, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God; for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." How endearing is the view here afforded us of our Almighty Creator; how blessed is the assurance of his good-will toward us through Christ Jesus.

It is peculiarly affecting to the heart of every contrite believer to be thus privileged to call upon his God as- the God of love and peace- the God of patience and consolation- the God of hope- the Father of mercies- and the God of all comfort. O that we could feel the overflowings of gratitude for such superabundant grace.

Nothing more awfully manifests the hardness of the heart, than insensibility to the loving-kindness of God, whose tender mercies are over all his works, and whose very chastisements are blessings in disguise.

The heart of Paul was deeply impressed by a view of the Divine Goodness. This made him exclaim, "O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passes knowledge." To the wicked, he put this awakening question, "Do you despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" To the righteous, he used this affectionate entreaty "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

unto God, which is your reasonable service."

This view and these feelings of a Savior's love, enabled him to console the suffering saints. He could speak from sweet experience both of mercy and judgment. To the Christians at Corinth, the comforted Apostle thus unfolded the divine dealings, "So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in suffering, you will also share God's comfort." Blessed indeed is that shepherd, who can thus strengthen the faith, and encourage the hope of his flock, by revealing to them the sources of his own consolation, and by leading them into the green pastures, and beside the still waters of the Gospel of Christ.

It is the will of God, that in everything we should give thanks; that we should glory in tribulation; and count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that the trying of our faith works patience. But alas! we live very much below our duty and our privileges. We love ease and an exemption from trial; we shrink from suffering, and cannot bear the weight and shame of the cross. And why are we thus? Because the world has struck its roots into our hearts, which, like the deadly cancer, is consuming the vital principle.

The deeply-tryed Apostle had to weep over one whom he once reckoned among the saints- "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." Jesus also gave this solemn warning, "Remember Lot's wife." May the all-gracious Spirit revive his work, as in the days of old, lest our end should resemble that of the seven churches, to whom John delivered the Savior's rebuke, and from whom the light of evangelical truth has long been removed.

The foundation of all that spiritual joy which animated the breast of Paul, was the immutability of the Divine Counsel. God's faithfulness was his best security. He knew whom he had believed, and through grace, enjoyed the full assurance of hope. This blessed truth the Apostle admirably unfolded to the Hebrew converts, to promote their stability in the faith- "God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. So God has given us both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can take new courage, for we can hold on to his promise with confidence. This confidence is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain of heaven into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the line of Melchizedek."

Our finite capacities cannot comprehend the fullness of grace which is contained in these sublime words; for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" We must die, to know the vast extent of redeeming love! Here, we can only see as through a glass darkly, but in heaven we shall have a full view of that covenant of peace, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

How wonderful is the divine condescension. Surely a simple promise from the lips of Eternal Truth ought to fill our hearts with joy. But so slow of heart are we to believe all that the Lord has spoken, and so weak is our faith in seasons of darkness, that God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. Thus, when God

made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Can we then doubt, after such a confirmation as this? Is not Jehovah in all ages the same covenant-keeping God? Are not his promises as lasting as the days of heaven? Has he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good? O! the desperate vileness of our ungrateful unbelieving hearts! With tears may each say, with the father of the poor afflicted child, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief;" and with our Christian Poet—

"Why should I shrink at your command

Whose love forbids my fears?

Or tremble at the gracious hand

That wipes away my tears?

Wisdom and mercy guide my way,

Shall I resist them both?

A poor blind creature of a day,

And crushed before the moth.

But ah! my inward spirit cries,

Still bind me to your sway;

Else the next cloud that veils my skies,

Drives all these thoughts away."

We resemble mariners, navigating a tempestuous ocean, the waves of trouble are ever rolling around us; deep calls unto deep, while the tempest-tossed believer, like Peter, is compelled to cry out, "Lord save me, or I perish;" and with David, "All your waves and billows are gone over me."

But in the midst of this tossing, how consoling is the assurance, that in Christ Jesus the soul is as safe as if it were crossing a sea without a wave. While the worldling is driven by fierce winds here and thither, and is at length engulfed in the mighty waters; the true believer, secured by the Anchor of Hope, is firmly moored to the Rock of Ages.

Can we then be surprised that the delighted Apostle, thus preserved by the strength and faithfulness of his Savior, should feel exceeding joyful in all his tribulation? Blessed indeed was his Christian Experience. None can understand it aright, none can feel it fully, but those happy souls in whom Jesus takes up his abode, and manifests himself as he does not unto the world. Reader, can you participate in this Gospel blessing? Do you cast anchor within the veil?

The knowledge of ourselves is a most difficult science, owing to the vanity of our minds, and the influence of self-love. We are blind to our own faults, but quick-sighted to the failings of others. The mote in our brother's eye is readily discerned, while we are unconscious of the beam so apparent

in our own.

Humility is the basis of Christian excellence. It is a grace of peculiar beauty in the sight of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and who has declared, that "he who humbles himself shall be exalted." Those people, therefore, who imagine, that they have obtained such a victory over their corruptions, as will free them from the trouble of watchfulness and circumspection, have attained unto a higher degree of sanctification, than ever the holy Paul professed to have done. Let us learn humility and self-knowledge by the experience of this eminent servant of Christ.

We have a beautiful instance of this Christian state of mind, recorded by himself in his second epistle to the Church at Corinth; "I knew a man in Christ," writes the Apostle, "whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knows; such a one was caught up to the third heaven, into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Paul was this man, although with admirable humility he endeavored to cast a veil over himself. He could have revealed a scene of wonders, which would have raised him still higher in the estimation of the churches; but, says he, "I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or that he hears of me."

Could any spark of pride or vain-glory exist in such a lowly bosom? Could he, who as a sinner, declared himself to be the chief, and as a saint, less than the least, be in danger of the swelling of high-mindedness? Let us hear what he says of himself, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the Revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

Surely no one, after such a confession, will dare to say- I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin; I am removed from the fear of evil. Was it needful for the humble, self denying Paul, to have a thorn in the flesh, to keep him in the valley of humiliation, and to remind him that he was still in the body, and therefore subject to temptation? Then where is the Christian, who has reached to such a height of perfection, as to be wholly removed from the buffetings of Satan, and the lustings of the flesh? "For this," said the Apostle, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." This trial, whatever might be its nature, was distressing to him. It was a thorn. He felt its painfulness, and prayed earnestly for its removal.

Was he left without a word of comfort under this unexpected trial? O! how compassionate is Jesus to his suffering servants. With infinite loving-kindness, he opened to him this source of consolation- "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

So contented was the happy saint with this Divine answer to his prayer, that although the thorn was not removed yet the assurance of receiving a sufficiency of grace in every time of need, enabled him to say with feelings of exultation, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

What can any suffering or tempted believer want more, for strength and comfort, than the all-sufficient grace of his Savior? Having this, he has every thing; lacking this, he is poor indeed. Delightful promise! "My grace is sufficient for you." Jesus gives strength equal to our day. However dark the dispensation, or difficult the path; whether we be in the sun shine of prosperity, or amid the storms of adversity- in the activities of life, or on the bed of death, the promise is never failing- "My grace is sufficient for you." May every reader enjoy in all its fullness this source of consolation,

so highly valued by the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

While laboring with all cheerfulness in the vineyard of his Lord, Paul had to endure many privations. We have seen how he suffered in the course of his ministry, both hunger, and cold, and nakedness. Yet none of these things moved him. He was willing to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. When the Gentile churches manifested their affection towards him, by ministering to his necessities, he received the expression of their love with thankfulness. This grateful feeling he strikingly exhibited in his Epistle to the Philippians, "How grateful I am, and how I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but for a while you didn't have the chance to help me. But even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty. As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. I don't say this because I want a gift from you. What I want is for you to receive a well-earned reward because of your kindness. At the moment I have all I need—more than I need! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable to God and pleases him. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."

Such was the Christian spirit which displayed itself in the conduct of this holy man under every trying circumstance of life. Humility, patience, faith, and love shone brightly in him at all times; and more especially when under the pressure of affliction. No repining ever escaped his lips; for his heart cheerfully acquiesced in all the will of God, and suffering was converted into pleasure, when endured for the Gospel's sake. If he spoke of his necessities, it was not with the view of compelling the churches to relieve them. His soul abhorred so mercenary a motive. He therefore says to the Philippians, "Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need."

What an antidote is divine contentment to the ills of life. This rare attainment can only be made in the school of Christ. Happy indeed is the man, who under every changing scene, in humble dependence upon a Savior's grace, has learned to be content.

It was not human power nor human reasoning which thus enabled the apostle to support with lightsome heart the burden of the Cross. Faith in the power of Christ was the great secret of his consolation, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Have we attained to this happy state in our Christian experience? Can we say in sincerity and truth, I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content?

Few, as Bunyan expresses it, descend into the Valley of Humiliation without a slip or two. However much we may trust to the strength of our principles, we shall always find, by experience, that it is easier to talk about resignation than to be resigned. Paul could say, "I know how both to be abased and I know how to abound. I am instructed both to abound and to suffer need." Blessed instruction! invaluable knowledge! which thus enabled him to bear prosperity and adversity with a Christian spirit. Those who know themselves the best, know how difficult it is, because of the pride

and earthliness of their hearts, in whatever state they are, therewith to be content. The Spirit of Christ alone can teach us the art of divine contentment. If He instruct us, we shall be able to learn the hardest lesson. Let us then sit daily at the feet of Jesus, where, imbibing his Spirit, and receiving his grace, we shall rise superior to every trial and be enabled to unite with Paul in his assurance of faith, "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength."

The prospect of death, so terrible to many, was to the Apostle a scene of brightest expectation. The man who could say, "I die daily; I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; being willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord;" -must have rejoiced at every approach towards the consummation of his wishes. When death knocks at the door and shakes his dart, the sinners tremble for fear. So did not Paul. While his outer man was daily tending to decay, his inner man was advancing toward perfection. He could triumph over death in its most frightful form, and find, in the worldling's terror, a source of the highest consolation. The opening grave, with its accompanying gloom, may sadden a heart wrapped up in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, but all its darksome horrors vanished before the bright assurance of the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Faith is the eye which pierces the clouds and fixes itself upon the hidden glories of Emmanuel's kingdom. This faith, ever in vigorous exercise, upheld the great Apostle, and like the pillar of fire in the wilderness, shed a brightness over all his path. Possessing this gift of grace, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, he felt his affliction to be light, and its duration momentary. With steadfast faith, he looked, not at the things which are seen and are temporal, but at the things that are not seen, and are eternal; he therefore gradually advanced in a fitness for heaven, and gloried in those tribulations, which, through the Spirit, wrought out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

What a blessed gradation there is in the scale of mercy! For affliction there is glory. For light affliction a weight of glory. For light affliction which is but for a moment, an eternal weight of glory! Here then we perceive another source of the Apostle's consolation, for the joy of the believer, passing the boundary of time, reaches into eternity.

Like a true pilgrim, this apostolic missionary had no certain dwelling-place. He renounced those treasures which engross the worldling's mind, for a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He gave up all, to possess all. He became poor, that he might be rich. "We who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened," was his experience. "We look for the Savior, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," was his earnest expectation, and his hope.

How different is the state of unconverted men. They hug their chain, though they sigh under its weight; they cherish the viper, though it may sting them to death. True happiness cannot possibly be found in any of those earthly things which so much occupy the time, and captivate the hearts of dying mortals. Pleasures may fascinate, riches may dazzle, honors may inflate; but what can these sources of supposed comfort yield in the hour of death and judgment?

Miserable comforters are they all at such a season of real anguish. The Gospel, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can alone impart genuine happiness. A heart, wholly given to God through faith

in a crucified Savior, is the truly happy heart. If there be a pleasure in this lower world, which can impart a sweet without an excess, it is the pleasure of communion with God through Christ. If at God's right hand, there are pleasures for evermore; if in his presence there is fullness of joy; then every approach to Him must be an approach to happiness; and communion with Him must be the foretaste of eternal bliss.

"This world", as Hooker has feelingly expressed it, "is made up of perturbations." The curse has made the cross. Had man never sinned, he would never have suffered. No thorns or thistles would have sprung up beneath his feet. Now, they cover the earth, as perpetual emblems of man's misery, and of God's displeasure. In every thorn and thistle we may read the fall of man. Through Christ, the promised seed of the woman, the curse is now removed from every believing sinner; and though the cross remains, yet its bitterness is extracted, and it is made to yield the wholesome fruit of patience, self-denial, and deadness to the world.

The covenant love of God sweetens every cup of suffering, and lightens every burden of affliction. Hence, the way, though thorny, is rendered pleasant; and trials, though sharp, are gloried in, for Jesus' sake. Who then is the truly happy person, in this world of sin and sorrow? It is the genuine believer in Jesus; he, whose faith is not speculative, but practical; whose love is not transient, but abiding; whose hope is placed, not upon created things, but on Christ the sure foundation.

From Jesus, he receives pardon and peace, righteousness and strength, grace and glory. Streams of mercy are ever flowing around him. He sees love inscribed on every dispensation; and like the martyr, can kiss the faggot prepared to consume him, crying "Welcome Cross-Welcome Cross."

The great Apostle of the Gentiles, was honored of God to proclaim this blessedness to the world. Being taught by the Spirit to know the Truth, and to feel its power, he saw with unclouded vision the glories of the Gospel, and daily lived under the consoling influence of its heavenly light.

To the Corinthian church, he poured forth his stores of Gospel tidings, "All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ."

With such divine supports, such sources of consolation, Paul was enabled to encounter the fiercest opposition; and at midnight, to sing praises to his God in the dungeon at Philippi. Have we attained to this height of blessedness? Can we extract sweetness from the bitterness of death-and consolation from the worldling's source of sorrow?

While meditating upon these riches of sovereign grace, these abundant consolations provided for suffering saints let us strike our harps with David and sing, "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them. If I should count them they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with you. How excellent is your loving-kindness, O God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house, and you shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures. For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light, we shall see light."

"When the world my heart is rending
With its heaviest storm of care,
My glad thoughts, to God ascending,
Find a refuge from despair.
There's a hand of mercy near me,
Though the waves of trouble roar;
There's an hour of rest to cheer me,
When the toils of life are o'er.
Happy hour! when saints are gaining,
That bright crown they longed to wear;
Not one spot of sin remaining,
Not one pang of earthly care.
O! to rest in peace forever,
Joined with happy souls above;
Where no foe my heart can sever
From the Savior whom I love.
This the hope that shall sustain me
Until life's pilgrimage be past;
Fears may vex, and troubles pain me,
I shall reach my home at last."

Chapter 19.

Chapter 19.

PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

ON SELF-EXAMINATION.

The doctrine of the Cross shines with peculiar luster in the writings of Paul. Its sublimity far surpasses the conception of the strongest intellect; while, through its simplicity, the most unlettered peasant is made wise unto salvation. Love to God, producing love to man, is the blessed fruit of faith in a crucified Redeemer. Nothing can equal the master-strokes of the great Apostle in his portraiture of Christian love. They discover a mind enlightened from above- a heart clothed with humility. While charmed with the beauty of the picture, we must feel abased at our own little resemblance to it. Oh! that our whole soul may be molded into this heavenly grace.

Spiritual gifts, so highly valued by the primitive churches, were as nothing in the estimation of this eminent saint, if unaccompanied by love. With what peculiar force does he express this feeling to the Corinthian Christians, "If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatever."

How all-pervading in the Christian system, is love. As the sap, which circulates unseen, causes the fertility of the tree; so is this hidden principle the cause of fruitfulness in the believer. Earth would resemble heaven, were all who call themselves Christians, the living exemplars of this lovely grace. But alas! how widely different from celestial love, is the prevailing spirit of the Christian world. The spiritual foe is fearfully at work. Union in the camp of Satan, and disunion in the Church of God is most portentous of approaching evil. The enemies of Christ are making one common cause against His Truth- while his professing people are allowing jealousies and mistrusts to separate them from each other. Oh! that a spirit of love may be speedily poured out upon all our churches, lest the Holy Dove should flee away from these scenes of strife, and leave us to the miseries of a fallen people.

Let us contemplate the features of Christian charity as drawn by the masterly hand of the Apostle, and then look at those of our fallen nature- and though painful be the contrast, may it lead us in self-abasement to the Cross of Christ, where love is displayed in its divinest form.

Love is patient and kind. We are quick in our resentments, slow in our reconciliations, and backward to repay an injury with kindness.

Love does not envy. We look with envious eye on the possessions and preferments of others; and cannot bear to be outshone by the superior talents of our neighbor. The Scripture says not in vain, "the spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy; and where envy is, there is confusion and every evil work."

Love does not boast, it is not proud. We are naturally vain and self-sufficient, proud of our gifts, and wise in our own conceits.

Love is not rude. We transgress the bounds of decency and propriety; and fail in that reverence which is due to our superiors.

Love is not self-seeking. We are selfish, regarding our own interest and pleasure; caring not who sinks, if only we swim.

Love is not easily angered. We take fire at the least offence; making a man an offender for a word allowing anger to rest in our bosoms; and letting the sun go down upon our wrath.

Love thinks no evil. We readily indulge in evil surmisings, and unfounded censures; sitting in judgment on the motives of others, and condemning those as hypocrites whom the Lord does not condemn.

Love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. We take a secret delight in the falls of those whom we dislike; and find a pleasure in hearing and propagating the tale of slander.

Love bears all things. We do not bear unkind treatment with meekness, nor cover the defects of others with the veil of love.

Love believes all things. We are unwilling to put the best construction on our neighbor's actions, and to give him credit for his good intentions.

Love hopes all things. We seldom anticipate good from the conduct of those, against whom we have imbibed a prejudice.

Love endures all things. We cannot endure with patience undeserved reproach; nor be willing, at all times to suffer, rather than to inflict an injury.

Thus we are by nature, the very reverse of this holy charity; for having, through the fall of our first parents, lost the image of God, who is love, we bear the image of Satan, who is the author of envy, malignity, and pride. "Whoever has watched the sun in his declining course, and has seen him sink into the horizon, must sometimes have observed dark clouds gathering round him, as if to blot out and extinguish his rays; but instead of effecting this, the sun throws on them the brightness of his own pure light, and reflects upon the dark face of the hostile clouds, the radiant colors of his own splendor. They glow with borrowed hues of glory. This will be the effect of Christian Charity also. If any assail us with dark suspicions, doubts, and fears, let us spread over them the light of Christian love; let our example be as pure as the object is holy; thus shall we tinge them with better colors; they will catch the same glow, and be excited to better purposes."

Divinely glorious is that principle, which can effect such happiness. In the midst of manifold changes and dissolutions- Charity never fails. Prophecies shall be fulfilled- Tongues shall cease- Knowledge, like the scaffolding, shall be removed- Faith shall be lost in vision- Hope, in

enjoyment- but Love shall never fail. This grace will flourish with immortal vigor in the Paradise above; forever expanding its beauties, and filling the redeemed with eternal joy, the nearer it approaches the untreated Fountain of Light and Love.

How divinely glorious is the Gospel. Its effects on the human heart are truly wonderful. It may well be called the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. The Gospel, when cordially received, begets such a gracious temper of mind, as makes us humble, amiable, and charitable; forbearing and forgiving; ready to do every good work. It smooths the ruggedness of our natural disposition; banishes selfishness from our hearts; and infuses that gentle and loving spirit which sheds a blessing wherever its influence is felt. This new-creating power of the Gospel was most visible in the first and best ages of Christianity. No sooner did the Gospel fly abroad into the world upon the wings of love, than the charity of Christians became notorious even to a proverb. The very Heathens, who raged against them, were compelled to exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another." Clement, of whom Paul speaks so highly in his Epistle to the Philippians, styling him his fellow-laborer, whose name is in the book of life, enforces the duty of Charity with an almost apostolic authority in his Epistle to the Corinthian church, "He that has the love that is in Christ," says this truly Christian Bishop, "let him keep the commandments of Christ. For who is able to express the obligation of the love of God? What man is sufficient to declare, as is fitting, the excellency of its beauty? The height to which Charity leads, is inexpressible. Charity unites us to God; Charity covers the multitude of sins; Charity endures all things, is patient in all things. There is nothing base and sordid in Charity. Charity lifts not itself up above others; admits of no divisions; is not seditious; but does all things in peace and concord. By Charity were all the elect of God made perfect; without it nothing is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God. Through Charity did the Lord join us unto himself; while for the love that he bore towards us, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his own blood for us, by the will of God; his flesh, for our flesh; his soul, for our souls. You see, beloved," continues this Primitive Father of the Christian Church, "how great and wonderful a thing Charity is; and how that no expressions are sufficient to declare its perfection. But who is fit to be found in it? Even such only as God shall vouchsafe to make so. Let us therefore pray to him, and beseech him, that we may be worthy of it; that so we may live in charity, being unblameable, without evil propensities, without respect of persons. All the ages of the world, from Adam, even unto this day, are passed away; but they who have been made perfect in love, have, by the grace of God, obtained a place among the righteous; and shall be made manifest in the judgment of the kingdom of Christ. Happy then shall we be, beloved, if we shall have fulfilled the commandments of God, in the unity of love; that so, through love, our sins may be forgiven us. For so it is written- Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose, spirit there is no guile. Now this blessing is fulfilled in those who are chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

If the first duty of the Christian be Charity, without which all our doings are nothing worth; if faith, working by love, be the only saving faith- how important is Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church, and to all the churches of Christ in every succeeding age- "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves; know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates."

With much humility, sincerity, and prayer, we should enter into our own bosoms, and there, search the secret recesses of our hearts, to detect each lurking evil, and to know the worst of our selves. This self-knowledge, though a difficult, is an indispensable attainment. No labor should be deemed too great, no discovery too humiliating in the prosecution of this inward search. May the Divine Spirit teach us by his illuminating influence. We are naturally blind to our real state and character- but God fully knows the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our heart.

The following considerations are submitted to the pious reader, in the humble hope, that they may, in some measure, conduce to this desirable end, through the blessing of Him from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed.

ON THE NATURE OF GOD.

When I meditate upon the greatness and glory of God, on his infinite and adorable perfections, what effect has this knowledge upon my heart? Do I reverence this Holy Lord God? Do I love him above all created beings? Am I anxious to please, and fearful to offend him? Does a sense of his Omniscience restrain me from secret sin? Does a conviction of his Omnipotence inspire me with confidence in the hour of danger? Does a firm persuasion of his Omnipresence encourage me to bear up under outward trials, and to press forward on the way to glory.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

When I reflect upon the introduction of moral evil into the world, and all its dire calamities; temporal, spiritual, and eternal; what are my feelings on this mysterious subject? Do I receive this truth in the simplicity of faith, not desiring to be wise above what is written? Feeling the effects of sin, by painful experience, am I desirous to obtain the remedy which a gracious God has provided in the Gospel of his Son? Am I more anxious to extinguish the destructive fire, than curious to know how it was first kindled? Does a consciousness of sin humble me before God, and empty my soul of all hope of self-justification in his sight? Can I rest satisfied with the Divine Revelation, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned?"

ON THE FALL OF MAN.

When I think upon man's apostasy from God- the total corruption of my heart- the hardening, polluting, and blinding nature of sin; what is the influence of these momentous truths? Do they lay me in the dust before God, and cause me to cry out- Unclean, unclean! Woe is me! I am undone! Behold I am vile! Have they made me to despair of salvation by any righteousness of my own; and filled me with shame in the presence of Infinite Purity? With self-abhorrence do I cast myself on the unmerited mercy of God in Christ, daily praying with the broken-hearted Publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner?"

ON SALVATION BY JESUS CHRIST.

When I survey the freeness and fullness of Divine grace, the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ's salvation, the efficacy of his blood, the value of his righteousness, the prevalency of his intercession, and the sweet and precious promise of eternal life through him; how am I affected by these glorious truths? Do I feel a spring of delight rising up within me, at the sound of these glad tidings of great joy? Have I felt my need of this grace? And, in humble penitence and faith, have I

come to Christ as my only Savior, to be redeemed from present sin and future misery?

Renouncing all self-dependence, and casting myself upon Christ for righteousness and strength, have I experienced a change of heart, and found sin to be exceeding sinful? Does my soul sink deeper in humility, while beholding my just desert in the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion of my compassionate Redeemer? Does gratitude continually ascend, like holy incense from my heart, when reviewing the Savior's dying love? Is my benevolence toward man more enlarged, and my obedience to God rendered more lively and sincere, from these precious views of the grace of Christ?

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

When I view the work of the Spirit, his mighty energy in opening the blind eyes to see the glory of Jesus; in unstopping the deaf ears to receive the sweet sounds of salvation through him; in making the tongue of the dumb to sing his praise, and the feet of the lame to run in the paths of willing obedience- When I dwell upon his powerful operations in breaking the chain of sin, destroying the strongholds of Satan, convincing the rebel of his ingratitude, inclining him to accept the offered mercy, and to become the willing subject of the Prince of peace; what effect have these all-important truths upon my heart?

In this rebel, do I behold myself? With full conviction of my depravity, do I earnestly seek, through Christ, for the aid of the Holy Spirit? Have I hitherto experienced anything of this mighty change, this growing renovation of heart? Is sin less powerful in my soul? Do I feel its force decreasing, and the power of grace, the love of holiness, acquiring strength? Through the influence of the Spirit, can I renounce the vain and empty pleasures of the world, its carnal company, its sinful ways? Have I resigned my all to God, desiring that his will should rule, and his Spirit guide, my every thought and action?

Are all my hopes of heavenly glory derived from, and resting upon Jesus, as my Prophet, Priest, and King! Has the Divine Spirit made me willing to kiss the scepter of his grace, and to take my station beneath the banner of the cross? Through his Almighty strength have I become a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ? Do I now wage war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, with whom I was once in league against the Majesty of Heaven? Conscious of my utter inability to withstand these foes without the power of Christ, am I continually going to the Strong for strength, and thus living in humble dependence on his grace, do I come off more than conqueror, through Him who loved me and gave himself for me?

ON PERSONAL HOLINESS.

When I consider the dangers which surround me, and the sin which still dwells within me; do I pray for grace, to keep my heart with all diligence, to walk along the slippery path of life with circumspection, and to cultivate a spirit of humility and godly fear? Am I kind to those who treat me with contempt, because I profess myself an unworthy follower of a crucified Redeemer? Have I indulged any murmuring thoughts at my present condition, or envied the possessions, or attainments, of those whose superior wealth or knowledge cast me into the shade? Am I willing to be nothing in the sight of men, if so I may, through Christ, be admitted into favor with God? Is this the language of my heart- "Make me little and unknown, Loved and prized by God alone." Is it my daily prayer and study to recommend the Gospel by gentleness, kindness, and courtesy; thus

silencing those who would accuse the religion of Jesus as tending to foster uncharitable feelings, moroseness of spirit, disagreeableness of manners, and discord in domestic life?

When little provocations occur, which, in some shape or other will perpetually happen, through the perverseness of those with whom we dwell; is my temper easily ruffled?- Or do I maintain a spirit of self-possession, when tempted to anger by more serious causes, being wishful to reprove in love, rather than in a spirit of bitterness?

Have I any pleasure in hearing or speaking evil of others; or do I cast a veil of charity over their failings, being willing at all times, when an action will admit of two constructions, to hope the best?

Is it a grief when evil thoughts arise in my mind and are they at such times my burden and cross? Do I pray and strive through the Spirit to subdue them? Do I fly to the blood of Jesus to be cleansed from every pollution of sin?

Am I distressed when I hear of abounding wickedness? Is my soul pained within me, when I behold the falls of professors, the backslidings of God's children, and the reproach which they bring upon the Gospel of Christ? Have I a holy joy when sinners are converted, when the cause of Truth is triumphing, and when the Gospel is extending its influence throughout the earth?

ON RELATIVE DUTIES.

When I learn from Scripture the necessity of good works- that holiness is an essential part of Christ's salvation- that to be really holy, is to be relatively holy; when I meditate on the duties of man to man, on brotherly affection, and on all the charities of social life; when I dwell upon those obligations which are laid upon me as a Christian, to fulfill the law of love; and contemplate the happiness, connected with a strict obedience to the precepts of the Gospel, the blessedness arising from a kind endeavor to make others happy, and the felicity, flowing from a consciousness of desire to promote by prayer, by influence, by precept, and example, the salvation of my fellow sinners; when I read in my Bible, the reciprocal duties of rulers and subjects, of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of ministers and people- what effect have these important duties on my life and conversation? Am I walking with steady step in this path of holy obedience; aiming, in a spirit of love, to fulfill the duties of my station; seeking to attain to higher, and still higher degrees of holiness; and devising plans of usefulness, which may promote the temporal and eternal interests of mankind?

These questions, put honestly to the conscience, may lead us, through the light of the Spirit, to form some judgment of our state before God. The difficulty of ascertaining our true character, arises from the blinding influence of self-love. We have, naturally, a fond conceit of our own excellence, and cannot believe that our hearts are so bad as the Bible declares them to be. We can speak humbly enough of ourselves, even when pride is whispering that we are better than thousands around us; but we cannot bear to hear our conduct condemned by others. Nothing is more common, and yet nothing more dangerous, than self-deception. The faithful Apostle gave this caution to the Corinthian church, "Let no man deceive himself." How dreadful, when the soul is first awakened from its delusion in the place of torment.

This self-deception is very prevalent. Jesus said to his disciples, "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in

heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name have done many wonderful works? And then, will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, you that work iniquity."

The foolish virgins, with their exhausted lamps and empty vessels said, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the door was shut; and being once closed, was closed forever! These virgins, justly called foolish, were self-deceivers. They represent, by parable, thousands of nominal Christians, who rest contented with the light of outward profession, without examining whether they possess the grace of the Spirit in their hearts. These people, having a name that they live, build upon a vague hope of mercy, while utter strangers to the sanctifying influence of the Gospel, and thus perish in their sins.

The religion of Jesus reveals the remedy for all these evils. Grace, abounding to the chief of sinners, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, was the theme which kindled into a flame all the energies of Paul; and if, like him, we are taught of God to know the truth, and to feel its power, it will kindle ours.

What joy springs up in the soul of a sinner, when Jesus is preached in all the fullness of his salvation, and received in the simplicity of faith. Christ crucified is the magnet which draws away the heart from earthly things, and fixes it on things above. To feel the holy influence of this mystery of love, is to feel our heaven begun.

Sovereign grace is the source of holiness; for what is grace, but the favor of God, whereby he freely imparts to perishing sinners, every spiritual blessing through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. In Christ, he is the Father of mercies.

Out of Christ, we are ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved. In Christ, we are enlightened, accepted by God, purified, and redeemed.

Out of Christ, we are hastening fast to hell. In Christ, we are journeying toward the bliss of heaven.

Out of Christ, eternity is full of torment. In Christ, it is filled with unspeakable joy.

Oh! that every dying sinner would reflect on these things before it be too late. Many, during the joyous season of health and plenty, treat subjects such as these with a scornful smile. But their summer-days will not last forever. The wintry season of affliction will quickly come, when blooming health must be exchanged for pallid sickness, and splendid opulence for a noisome grave.

The rich worldling died- and oh! how altered his condition! His remains were drawn to the tomb with all the pomp of a funeral procession- but his soul was hurried to the place of torment. The wretched Lazarus died; poor but pious. No stately hearse conveyed his body to the grave, but waiting angels carried his spirit to the joys above. Each left the world as he came into it- bringing nothing in, he carried nothing out. The beggar left his rags, the rich man his estates behind him. Rank and wealth, though ordained of God for useful ends, are but temporal distinctions. They cease at the hour of dissolution. Riches cannot arrest the stroke of death, nor procure for their possessor a passport to heaven. Poverty cannot sharpen its sting, nor subtract one joy from the poorest saint's eternal happiness. One moment in heaven will convince the believer, that his afflictions upon earth were light. One moment in hell will convince the pleasure-loving sinner, that it

would have been good for him, if he had never been born.

Ah, who can grasp the thought of never-ending joy, or everlasting woe! The mind labors to conceive, and yet can never reach beyond the first impression of eternity. Numbers, years, ages, all, all are lost in the immeasurable, unfathomable abyss!

The riches of grace are the only durable riches, without which the mightiest monarchs of the earth are poor. When earth with all its glories shall have passed away, the lowly followers of Jesus will abide forever, and shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

How difficult it is to get heart-affecting views of sin, of Christ, of hell, and of heaven. We talk about them, but alas! how little are we practically affected by them. But what is knowledge without practice or feeling, without conversion of the heart to God? Nothing but the Spirit of Christ can open our eyes to see the deformity of sin- the preciousness of the Savior- the misery of hell- the bliss of heaven.

"Quick as the apple of an eye;

O God my conscience make;

Awake my soul, when sin is nigh,

And keep it still awake.

O may the least omission pain,

My well-instructed soul;

And drive me to the blood again

Which makes the wounded whole."

If every motion of the soul, which does not spring from love to the Savior, be sinful, then, what innumerable sins crowd into the space of every fleeting hour! What an immense amount at the close of a long life! This view is indeed overwhelming. Oh! that it may at once humble us, and lead us to the Lamb of God, whose blood can wash away our guilty stains, whose love can cast our sins into the depths of the sea.

Who can adequately conceive of hell, and all its horrors? or of heaven, and all its glories? We are now standing on the brink of death. Before us, lies an eternal world. Soon we must enter into it. But how shall we enter it? As we die, so shall we appear at the throne of God. We may die this very day. What then is our present state? Are we prepared by deep repentance, humble faith, and holy love, to meet our God? Oh! let us not allow one fleeting hour to escape, until the important enquiry be solemnly made; and an answer of peace be graciously obtained. Let us now go to Jesus— bow lowly at his feet- place ourselves beneath the droppings of his blood- cast our eyes upon him in faith, and fix them there, until he remove us to that blissful place where we shall forever dwell beneath his smiles, and grieve him by our sins no more.

"What love, what pleasure, what surprise,

Shall fill the enraptured heirs of heaven,

The day the Savior meets their eyes,
The day the promised rest is given.
Their love is kindled here below,
The Author of their hope they love;
A purer, brighter flame will glow,
In yonder glorious world above.
Of pleasure too they taste below,
But pleasure not unmixed with pain;
In yonder world 'twill not be so,
For there no sorrow will remain.
And if obscure and transient views
Of heavenly things give such surprise,
What wonder must the sight produce,
When God appears before their eyes?
O joyful sight? O glorious day,
When God the Savior shall be seen;
When earthly things shall pass away,
And heaven's unchanging state begin."

Chapter 20.

Chapter 20. ON GOSPEL SANCTIFICATION.

Like a wise master-builder Paul laid the true foundation— Jesus Christ; and built thereon a sacred edifice of heavenly graces, more valuable than gold and silver and precious stones. Those who study the nature of the Gospel, and live under its power, both know, and can enter into its blessed design. All its doctrines, precepts, and promises, are calculated to abase the pride of man, to exalt the glory of Christ, to reveal the malignity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of the world, the bliss of heaven; to show the sinner his utter helplessness, and to reveal to him an all-sufficient Savior- for proud man must be humbled, the idol self must be dethroned.

Hence; we find that human merit is altogether excluded from the system of Paul's theology. Being illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he preached the truth without any mixture of error. There are no disproportions, no disfiguring features in his portraiture of Eternal Truth. Perfection in all its parts bespeaks its Divine original. With uncompromising firmness he declares- that faith is the gift of God; that we are justified by faith; that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith; that we walk by faith; that we are the children of God by faith.

It was therefore to the faithful in Christ Jesus, that the Apostle wrote with such affectionate entreaty, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

How powerfully does he inculcate the duty of universal holiness, "Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you."

With such exhortations to holy obedience, how strange that any reflecting mind should, for a moment, charge the doctrines of grace with having a licentious tendency. Yet, there were people, as we have already noticed, who were base enough to abuse the grace of the Gospel. The champion for the Truth hesitated not to call them, "the enemies of Christ, whose end is destruction." So carefully did he guard believers against those evils of our nature, which, when brought into contact with the Gospel, destroy its sufficiency by self-righteousness; its purity by antinomianism.

With peculiar emphasis, almost bordering on indignation, he asks these abusers of the Gospel; "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And then, after showing the sanctifying nature of true faith in Christ, he gives the believer this blessed assurance; "Sin shall not have dominion over

you, for you are not under the Law but under grace."

In all periods of the Church, Satan has sown his tares among the wheat. This state of the visible Church, is declared by our divine Savior, in various parables of exquisite beauty. The good and bad fishes -the wise and foolish virgins- the fruitful and barren branches- the guests with, and the one without, a wedding garment; are all designed to illustrate this truth- that as they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, so neither are they all true Christians, who profess to be members of Christ. Paul, with his usual discrimination of character, has given us the distinctive features of these two classes; the one holding the Truth in unrighteousness; the other, holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure conscience.

O! that we could enter, by sweet experience, into the Apostle's charge to the Christians at Philippi- "In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your lives shine brightly before them. Hold tightly to the word of life, so that when Christ returns, I will be proud that I did not lose the race and that my work was not useless. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel."

How meek and gentle, how harmless and unoffending were these early followers of the lowly Jesus; and yet, how bold and fearless in their confessions of Christ, before an ungodly world. They shrunk indeed from sin, but not from suffering for the Gospel's sake. O that we could resemble these primitive believers who were the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth. Their spirituality of mind, their joy through believing, their renunciation of self and worldly greatness, formed those lovely features of the new creature, which the Apostle so admirably described when drawing his own character to the Philippian converts- "For we who worship God in the Spirit are the only ones who are truly circumcised. We put no confidence in human effort. Instead, we boast about what Christ Jesus has done for us." O that the Spirit may be poured out upon all our churches; then the world would once more see the beauty of Christianity in the holy lives of its professors.

These extracts, though forming a small part of those exhortations to holiness, and cautions against sin, with which his Epistles abounded, show the infinite value of the Book of God- that storehouse of heavenly wisdom. Following its holy light, through the guidance of the Spirit, the believer is led into all truth, comforted under trials, guarded against temptations, directed to the right performance of relative duties, and taught how he might to walk and please God.

"The blessing of heaven resting upon the devout study of the Bible, often induces those long dead in trespasses and sins to turn from the errors of their ways, and save their souls. The Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots, because the Agent of the transformation is Almighty; and they may also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. If we expect a moral and religious population, we must lay the foundation deep in an early acquaintance with the sanction of the Law, and the merits of the Gospel. We must endeavor to impress the lessons of Divine Truth upon the minds of the young, while their attention is pliant and their affections warm; while they are yet, as much as possible unspotted from the world, and before contact with sinful seductions shall have diffused its chilling influence over their hearts. If the duty be important, it should be early commenced; if the undertaking be difficult, it should be entered upon without delay. If we have run

with the footmen, and they have wearied us, then how can we contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein we trusted they wearied us, then how shall we do in the swelling of Jordan?"

We cannot sufficiently value the Records of Eternal Truth. The more we love the Bible, the more will its holy influence be visible in our lives.

The true believer in Jesus, when living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is clothed with humility; the love of God is shed abroad in his heart; the peace of God rules within him; he is adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory; he abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit; and receives the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul. Such will be our character, and such our privileges, if like him we feel the power of grace in our hearts.

If our affections are set on things above, we also shall be safe, whatever storms may agitate the world; and if our life be hid with Christ in God, we shall have a sure refuge against the rage of Satan, and the fear of death. While the worldling's treasure is fading as the tints of evening, our portion will be glorious as the days of heaven; for God will be our everlasting light, and the Lamb our glory. How loosely then should we sit to all things here below. Oh that we could practically learn to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

May every heart be impressed with the Apostle's appeal to the church of Corinth, "Brethren, the time is short. It remains, that both those who have wives, be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they wept not; and those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those who buy, as though they possessed not; and those who use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passes away."

The more we contemplate the holiness of God, and the nature of our redemption by Jesus Christ, the more we must be convinced, that sanctification is the beauty and the health of the soul. The holy Christian is the happy Christian. He may, and must have troubles as he journeys to his heavenly rest; but so long as Jesus is his guide and guardian, darkness may reign without, but all shall be peace and light within.

What lies nearest to our hearts? All men propose some object to themselves, and their utmost energies are directed to attain it. Some pant after honor, some after pleasure, and many after wealth. What are we most anxious to possess? Is it the favor of God? is it an interest in the atonement Jesus? Or, are we only thirsting after earthly things? Blessed indeed are we, if to do the will of God be the great object of our lives; if to walk agreeably to the light of His revealed Word, be our one undeviating aim.

Jesus as our perfect pattern, left us an example that we should follow his steps. The more we drink into his spirit, the more we shall love and obey our heavenly Father, enjoy a foretaste of heavenly bliss, and be prepared for heavenly glory. True happiness would soon revisit our world, were the name of God universally hallowed- were his kingdom set up in every heart- were his will done on earth, as it is in heaven. O when will this happy period arrive. A great blessing is promised, but this blessing must be sought for by fervent believing prayer.

Christ was the glorious promise under the Old Testament Dispensation- the Holy Spirit is the gracious promise under the New. For this gift, Jesus himself, as Mediator, intercedes for his people- "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth." For this gift he commands us to pray with assurance of success; "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

O! that Christians of every name, may be stirred up to seek the Lord until he comes and rains down righteousness upon us; until the Spirit, being poured out from on high, fills our world with light and love, with peace and purity, with grace and glory.

Divine Truth, like the meridian sun, shines with resplendent luster in the Book of God. The glory of Jehovah is the Alpha and Omega of all its revelations. Is a world created? -it is by the Word of God. Is a world redeemed? -it is through the love of God. Every blessing flows from him- all praise belongs to him. Pride wants its share of merit in the work of redemption, but Truth levels the proud pretension in the dust. With what force does the Apostle repel the self-righteous plea, and refute the skeptical cavil. In all his writings, he maintains one constant truth- "By grace are you saved....not of works, lest any man should boast."

The author of all holiness is Almighty God; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them. The meritorious cause of sanctification is Jesus Christ; who, by his death and obedience, has procured for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, to renew our souls after his image in righteousness and true holiness; and therefore he is made unto us sanctification. The instruments which God employs in the hand of the Spirit, to produce the blessing of holiness, are his Word and ordinances, the ministers of his Gospel, and the various dispensations of his providence.

Gospel sanctification consists in the mortification of our corrupt affections, whereby the power of original sin is weakened; and in the vivification or quickening of our souls to a new and divine life, whereby habitual acts of filial obedience are performed.

The work of sanctification extends to the whole man; body, soul, and spirit. The design of God, in our sanctification is, that the mind be enlightened to know himself as the chief good, and his mercy in Christ as the highest blessing; that we be made acquainted with the corruption of our nature, and the remedy which he has provided; that our will be molded into his will, and our constant aim be the promotion of his glory; that the memory be stored with heavenly truths, and daily replenished from his Holy Word with new subjects for delightful meditation; that the conscience be made tender and alive to the calls of the Spirit, afraid of sin, while delivered from guilty fears through the blood of Jesus; that the affections of love, joy, grief, and fear, be all brought under due regulation, through the indwelling Spirit, and made to run in one uniform channel of evangelical holiness- that those desires of the soul, which are of a more animal nature, be brought into subjection to the Law of Christ; while the body is made subservient to the powers of the renewed mind.

Such ought to be the happy state of every true believer in Jesus; and such, in some measure, is his state, when he walks in love, and in the light of the divine favor.

But, it may be asked— Is his sanctification, while in the body, complete and entire, lacking nothing? Alas! no. Although the above description is true, with respect to what the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, as all his works are like himself, pure and holy; yet, through the remainders of corruption, this blessed work is greatly impeded and retarded in its growth. There still remains much darkness to be dissipated from the mind, much selfishness to be subdued in the will; much forgetfulness of God to be rectified in the memory; much hardness to be softened in the conscience; much irregularity to be removed from the affections; much self-indulgence to be mortified in the animal passions. All this creates that conflict, that up-hill work, that struggling, and wrestling, and fighting, that earnestness in prayer, that cleaving to Jesus, that reliance on his grace, that display of his power, that exercise of his mercy, which are constantly experienced in the eventful life of the true believer.

All these things Paul felt when he said, "I run- I fight- I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do; I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And what was the mark at which the Apostle aimed? -perfect holiness. And what the prize which he longed to attain? -perfect happiness through Christ Jesus. This is the longing desire and aim of every true believer.

Is this our experience? Can we say with the Apostle— "when I am weak, then am I strong?" Conscious of our spiritual weakness, and in full reliance on the strength of Jesus, do we in faith draw out of his fullness grace for grace? The enemy may alarm, but he cannot destroy the children of God, for whom Christ died. How sweetly consoling are the Savior's words, "You now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy, no man takes from you."

While running the heavenly race, the believer has many hindrances, and many helps. Does the Devil walk about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? In this can he rejoice, that, angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. O how numberless are the mercies of Jesus, how multiplied the devices and depths of Satan. The power of this arch-deceiver, though limited and restrained, is yet truly awful. The Scriptures style him, "the god of this world," so extensive is his influence over the hearts of men. They declare that, "he who commits Sin is of the Devil," because he blinds the minds of those who believe not; and, works in the children of disobedience.

Are the children of God out of the reach of this evil one, while journeying to their eternal rest? Ah! no. What says the Scriptures? "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel and God was displeased with this thing." Jesus said to Peter- "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." "Some," says Paul, "are already turned aside after Satan." "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us." The spotless Jesus himself was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, whom he drove back by this powerful word, "Get away Satan."

Fear not then, O tempted saint. Jesus, in whom you believe, has vanquished this roaring lion. Are you helpless in yourself? Hear what John says, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Are you afraid of falling, one day, by the hand of your spiritual foe? Hear what Paul says, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Then let us not despond. The Spirit of God, who dwells in the hearts of his people, will make us more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. How gracious are the words of Jesus to Peter when Satan desired to sift him- "I have prayed for you,

that your faith fail not." How cheering his love to Paul when buffeted by Satan; "My grace is sufficient for you."

O may we ever lean upon our loving Savior, whose power is infinite. Blessed are those who hear his voice, who follow him in faith and patience, through evil, as well as good report. They and they only are the sheep of his pasture, who thus look unto him and live upon him as the bread of life. Jesus has purchased them with his own blood, he will preserve them by his power, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

This Truth, the holy Apostle declared with an inspired distinctness to the church at Rome, "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Oh! blessed and consolatory conclusion! Can we now for a moment doubt his willingness to save? Did he die for us, and will he not preserve us? Did he pray for us, and will he not hear our prayers? Did he invite us to come, and will he forbid our approach? His compassion is not diminished, because he is now in glory. His love is not abated, because the heavens have received him out of our sight. His tenderness is not less susceptible; now that he is removed from the innocent infirmities of our nature. He still can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He still feels in heaven, for his poor afflicted members upon earth. Though Lord of all, having all power in heaven and in earth, he is not insensible to the needs of his people. He is their friend, who loves at all times; and who, when they are gathered together in his name, is ever in the midst of them. If persecuted for his sake, he graciously identifies himself with them, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute you me?" If relieved, in the name of a disciple, he condescendingly accepts the benefit, as done to himself, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

Oh how inconceivably great is such love as this! Well might the grateful Apostle, who was himself a wonderful subject of it, fervently pray, that the Ephesians might know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and, be filled with all the fullness of God.

Jesus, having loved his own, will love them unto the end, and glorify them with his own glory. His work and ways, like himself, are infinite and everlasting.

The graces of God's Spirit are not, in the hearts of his children, like morning mists which soon disperse; they resemble the morning light, which shines more and more, unto the perfect day. Their faith, like a well-built tower, whose foundation is laid in a rock, can withstand the assaults of the enemy, and the raging of the storm. What are all enemies and storms, however powerful and violent, where brought into contest with Jehovah Jesus? They are weak as the chaff before the whirl wind; or, as the flax before the devouring fire. In the strength of Christ we must, and shall prevail.

Let us then trust, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy. Jesus ever reigns! Reposing with steadfast faith on his Divinity, atonement, and intercession, we may smile in the midst of danger, having nothing to fear but sin. How precious are these truths,

whose everlasting lines gladden and support the Church; "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him."

"My Father knows my feeble frame,
He knows how poor I am
Untold he knows it all;
The least temptation serves to draw
My footsteps from my Fathers law,
And make me slide and fall.
Of this, I give him daily proof,
And yet he does not cast me off,
But owns me still as his;
He spares, he pities, he forgives
The most rebellious child that lives,
So great his patience is.
And shall I then a pretext draw
Again to violate his law?
My soul revolts at this;
I'll love, and wonder, and adore.
And beg that I may sin no more
Against such love as his."

Contemplate, O my soul, with rising admiration, the love of God to sinners. Contemplate the freeness, the fullness, the fitness, the all-sufficiency of Christ's salvation. Contemplate the gracious work of the divine Spirit, in its beginning, progress, and completion; until all your powers are lost in wonder, love, and praise!

How amazing is the kindness and love of God our Savior to dying sinners, who cast themselves upon his mercy, and stay upon his word. He infuses into their souls a principle of spiritual life, which is no less than eternal life begun. He creates a divine light in their minds, which discovers their disease and their remedy. He imparts His strength, by which they persevere, and conquer. He becomes their sun and shield; and gives them grace and glory. He declares them to be his portion, to whom it is his good pleasure to give the kingdom.

The Father has prepared this kingdom for them, from the foundation of the world. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for them in the mansions of glory. The Spirit descends into their hearts to make them a prepared people, and to consecrate them as temples of the living God. The precious blood of Jesus cleanses them from all sin. His glorious righteousness claims their admittance into the celestial city, and procures their acceptance with the Father. His lovely image is drawn in lines of grace upon their souls, by the unerring hand of the Eternal Spirit. His countless promises are their daily food and portion; and like reviving cordials, strengthen them when laboring under trials, and contending with the prince of darkness.

Should not such love, of which these instances are but as a drop compared to the mighty ocean, constrain you, O my soul, to love, with all your powers, this adorable Redeemer?

To live to Christ should indeed be the business of your life; and if your business, God will assuredly make it your blessedness.

Chapter 21.

Chapter 21.

ON THE SPECIAL GIFTS OF GOD.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY IN CONTEMPLATING

THE PURPOSES OF JEHOVAH.

THE STABILITY OF THE NEW COVENANT.

How precious are the gifts of God; no human mind can estimate their worth; their value exceeds an angel's computation. With overflowing gratitude let us hourly bless our heavenly Father:

For the Gift of His Son- "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

For the Gift of His Holy Spirit- "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

For the Gift of a New Heart- "A new heart will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you."

For the Gift of Inward Peace Through the Son of His Love- "My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you."

For the Gift of the Holy Scriptures- "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

For the Gift of Eternal Life- "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God, who is infinite in love, does not give and then take away. Of the endlessness of his gifts we have abundant assurances in his Holy Word. Jesus said to his disciples, "If any man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." God has secured, by promise, the stability of his people- "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Peter has affirmed, "The Word of the Lord endures forever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

And Jesus to complete the full assurance of hope, has declared, "If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. Father, I will that they whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." On what an immovable rock does the believer in Jesus rest all his hopes of heaven. The eternal truth and faithfulness of Jehovah are engaged in covenant, to secure the final happiness of his people.

But, does God never recall any of his gifts? He does indeed frequently reclaim what he has only lent; such as health, riches, friends, and other temporal comforts; and often in righteous judgment, he hides his face from us. But his 'new covenant blessings', which he gives in, and with, and

through his beloved Son, he gives forever; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

Hence, Paul could say to the Corinthians, "You come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." To the Philippians he gave the same blessed assurance, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is fit for me to think this of you all, inasmuch as you are partakers of my grace."

Happy, thrice happy is the man, who, like Mary, has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from him. These truths may be called the children's bread. They are the never-failing support and cordial of holy souls, who know by sweet experience the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, the blessedness of being rooted and grounded in love, and the consolation arising from a firm hold of the promises made to them in Christ Jesus.

Those who know not the Truth, through the teaching of the Spirit, may abuse these privileges of the true believer, by sporting themselves with their own deceivings, and throwing the rein upon the neck of their lusts. But, must we on that account withhold the heavenly manna! Must the children perish for lack of bread, because some vitiated hearts may destroy its wholesome quality? Shall fragrant flowers no longer scatter their perfume, because a few of them may be converted to pernicious purposes? Would we desire the Almighty to withhold his providential blessings, because they are often perverted and abused? As it was in the days of the Apostle, even so it is now; the carnal mind turns food into poison, and blessings into curses.

O that we may have grace to draw out of the precious truths of God, all the benefit and blessedness, which they are designed to convey.

The character and state of redeemed sinners are most admirably delineated in the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England. Their election in Christ being declared, their spiritual state is thus described— "They are called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due, season; they, through grace, obey the calling; they are justified freely; they are made the sons of God by adoption; they are made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." This is a beautiful epitome of the Christian's walk to glory, which the Apostle has so fully revealed in his various Epistles, by the unerring pen of inspiration.

Whatever poisonous consequences may be drawn by the corrupt heart, from the sweetest truths of God's Word, of this we are certain, that all is good which comes from God, and all is done right, which is done from a principle of faith in Christ, and in obedience to his will. While we cultivate this holy frame, our duties will be pleasant, our delights will be pure, and our hopes will be sanctified.

Let us then think often on the nature, the extent, and the influence of the love of Christ— what designs it formed— with what energy it acted— with what perseverance it pursued its object— what obstacles it surmounted— and what sweetness it imparted under the severest trials. And then, let us remember, the present and eternal portion of every believer in Jesus is still the same Almighty, efficacious love— free, sovereign, and everlasting. It is your portion, even yours, O sinner, if you have laid hold on Jesus; if you have fled to him as your only refuge from the storm; if you have received him into your heart by faith.

There is nothing more clearly revealed, or more frequently insisted upon in the Holy Scriptures, than a holy walk and conversation, as the fruit and evidence of a justifying faith. Without this blessed work of the Spirit, religion is but a lifeless form, unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to man.

When the sinner changes his state before God, through faith in the atonement of Christ, he changes also his character before men, through the renewal of the inner man. He becomes a new creature and walks in the newness of life. His views, intentions, and designs are new. His affections are placed upon new objects. His will receives a new bias; and in the language of Paul—"Old things pass away, and all things become new."

The true believer is a decided character. He does not halt between two opinions. His choice is deliberately and firmly made. The Divine Spirit has convinced him of his danger, and taught him where to find pardon, peace, and joy. He wholly relies on the power and grace of Jesus, receives strength equal to his day, and though encompassed with infirmities, and groaning under the burden of the flesh, he runs the race which is set before him, and, through grace, obtains the prize.

How different from all this is the formal professor of Christianity. His heart is cold and comfortless, while that of the true believer is lively and joyful. The one, has the Spirit of a slave; the other, that of a child. The one, serves God through fear; the other, from a principle of love.

Though we see as through a glass darkly, yet quite enough is revealed to us in the Bible, to condemn us if we miss the road to heaven. What we need is, a humble mind to receive the great truths of the Gospel as practical truths, which were revealed, not for the purpose of making us disputants, but disciples of Jesus Christ; not, that we may indulge our speculative opinions, but that we may be made wise unto salvation.

However extensive may be our knowledge, or however animated our feelings, it will avail us nothing, while we remain destitute of those scriptural marks which designate the children of God, and which can alone prove us to be among the chosen in Christ Jesus. This truth shines as with a sun-beam in the page of Revelation, that the people of God are a holy people, each possessing that inward purity which manifests itself by outward acts of piety.

It is painful to think with what unhallowed freedom some people speak and write about the Divine Decrees. They assert their opinions with an authority most bold and daring; and are ready to anathematize all whose views do not accord with their own. This state of mind is the offspring of pride.

The further advanced the real Christian is in the grace of the Gospel, the more he possesses the spirit of a little child. He becomes more humble, more teachable, more submissive, and more dependent upon the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit. He knows his own nothingness, and the Divine Immensity. This bending of the mind and will is the blessed effect of the Spirit's teaching; for, how is it possible that a finite creature should grasp Infinity; or, that a mind, so contracted as ours, should comprehend the Eternal Jehovah, in all his purposes and decrees? What created being can unfold those mysteries of grace which were treasured up in the Divine Mind, before time began, and which can only be known, as the Spirit has been pleased to reveal them to us by the Prophets and the Apostles.

Being commissioned to preach these wonders of redeeming love, the indefatigable Apostle declared to the Corinthian church the source from where they came, "the wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God, which was hidden in former times, though he made it for our benefit before the world began. But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would never have crucified our glorious Lord. That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deep secrets. No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths."

This important declaration of Paul, puts the seal of inspiration upon his communications to the churches, and makes his writings to be the Word of God. It is also a fulfilment of the Savior's promise to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Thus the Gospel dispensation is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit. May our hearts overflow with gratitude for this revelation of redeeming love. O Spirit of Truth, by whose power the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified, shine into our hearts, and give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Open our understandings to understand the Scriptures, and mold our souls into the holy image of our God and Savior.

Man would be wise above what is written; taking reason for his pilot, he loves to launch into a sea of theory and conjecture. Pride swells his canvass; and while in quest of some discovery, which he fondly hopes shall immortalize his name, his vessel, freighted with vanity, is driven by every wind of doctrine, until at length it sinks amid the rocks of infidelity.

Knowing the danger of such unhallowed speculations, Paul, with apostolic faithfulness, thus warns the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." He also cautions Timothy, "Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge."

Were our minds duly humbled under a conscious feeling of our ignorance, we should seek for wisdom from above, that we may know what is good to be known, and experience the sanctifying influence of the truth upon our hearts. However we may wish it, we cannot reach beyond the limits which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed. Even within that boundary line, there are many things hard to be understood. Humility and obedience will guide us, through the Spirit, into all truth; for, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Mutability is inscribed on every earthly thing; but, "the counsel of the Lord stands forever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations." This divine stability and unchangeableness was the rock upon which David built his hopes, "It is my family God has chosen! Yes, he has made an everlasting covenant with me. His agreement is eternal, final, sealed. He will constantly look after

my safety and success." Happy saint—

"Who can sink with such a prop,

Which bears the world and all things up!"

This truth comforted the afflicted Jeremiah; "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying; Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Isaiah was honored to be the bearer of this divine consolation to the suffering Church, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you."

A time of trial is the time when the promises of God are peculiarly precious. The Lord, whose grace is sufficient for us, has grace in store for suffering seasons. "As your days so shall your strength be." This was experienced at a period of national judgment, when the king of Babylon was commissioned to carry away captive the idolatrous house of Judah. During this season of distress, the prophet Jeremiah was favored with a divine declaration of faithfulness and mercy. It would seem to the eye of sense, that the promise, made to the house of David, was about to be cancelled by the overwhelming desolation. But God will never disappoint the hopes of his saints, who rest upon his Truth. They may partake of the general calamity, but not of its penal character; for while the wicked are made to drink of the cup of divine indignation, the righteous shall be refreshed with abundance of peace. At such a period, the Lord, as he has graciously promised, will be a little sanctuary to his people; a refuge from the storm, when the blast of the terrible ones is a storm against the wall.

To these hidden ones, thus says the Lord— "If you can break my covenant with the day and the night so that they do not come on their usual schedule, only then will my covenant with David, my servant, be broken. Only then will he no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. The same is true for my covenant with the Levitical priests who minister before me. And as the stars cannot be counted and the sand on the seashores cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David, my servant, and the Levites who minister before me." O! how firm is the promise of Jehovah. He might well say, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

But as his promise is true to his people, so are his threatenings to his enemies. The rebellious Jews had sent to Egypt for help against the Chaldeans, and no doubt they rejoiced in the success of their worldly policy; for, "When the army of Pharaoh was come forth out of Egypt, and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem." Inspired with hopes of deliverance, they began to think— 'Now we shall see what will become of Jeremiah's predictions; neither we or our land shall fall a prey to Nebuchadnezzar.' Trusting to an arm of flesh, they despised the Word of the Lord, and indulged the infidel hope, that his threatenings would prove abortive.

The Almighty God, who searches the deep recesses of the heart, sent this message to his unbelieving people. "Thus shall you say to the king of Judah; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt, into their own land; and the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus says the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, the Chaldeans shall depart from us; for they shall not depart."

Now mark the impossibility of defeating the purposes of Him, who can destroy a wicked people by the weakest instrument, "For though you had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire." O that rebellious sinners would lay this to heart; for neither wisdom nor strength, however matured or combined, can defeat the purposes of Jehovah. The weaker the means which are employed, the more is the power of God manifested thereby. The locusts, the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm can reduce a land of plenty into barrenness, as expeditiously as the devouring sword; sooner than the Word of God shall fail. Jesus has assured us, that the stones would immediately cry out. Human projects are uncertain in their results— not so the Divine counsel, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words," said the Omnipotent Savior, "shall not pass away."

As the judgments of God overtook his enemies, so do his mercies encircle his people. When the famine was desolating the land of Israel, the prophet Elijah was sustained by that Almighty hand, which in all ages protects and feeds the saints- "Hide yourself by the brook Cherith- I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." O afflicted believer, whatever be your straits and trials, God has means to help and deliver you, as he did his suffering servant. When the brook was dried up, then came the word, "Arise, get you to Zarephath, behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain you." It was not a king or a noble who was to preserve the life of this holy Prophet. No- it was to be a poor widow, who, with two sticks, was about to bake her last cake for herself and her son that they might eat it, and die! Let these instances of God's providential care, and miraculous preservations, shame us out of our unbelief and mistrust of his goodness- "for the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah."

The Bible is full of wonders. This delightful Book would arrest the attention, and attract the admiration of mankind, were it not for its holy character. Its light is too pure- its standard is too exalted- its statements are too humbling, for the pride and wickedness of the natural heart. In the Bible, truth shines with unclouded luster. Wherever it is received in faith and love, there, darkness flies before it. At the glorious Reformation, its Holy Light, concealed in cloistered cells, shot forth filling those nations with unnumbered blessings which embraced its heavenly doctrines. O may we never by our sins provoke our God to withdraw His Truth from us.

Protesting against Papal errors and Infidel blasphemies, let us rally around the Word of God- that standard of Eternal Truth. Clinging to the cross, and confessing Christ, let us ever, with fearless integrity, maintain our Gospel principles, and earnestly contend for that faith, once delivered to the saints, which is founded upon the bible- the whole bible- and nothing but the bible.

Whatever infidelity may assert, this truth is written as with a sun-beam on the page of Scripture, and in the Book of Providence— that all the purposes of Jehovah, whether of mercy or of judgment, shall have their full accomplishment. The puny arm of man can neither turn aside the burning wrath, nor suspend the shower of blessing.

We naturally expect great effects to arise from what we conceive to be powerful causes. So did Naaman, when he esteemed the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel. "But, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. My strength is made perfect in weakness. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be

accounted of?

This truth, so humiliating to our vanity, Paul boldly declared to the Corinthians- "Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

For this reason he was not ashamed to say- "Dear brothers and sisters, when I first came to you I didn't use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God's message. For I decided to concentrate only on Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. I did not use wise and persuasive speeches, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among you. I did this so that you might trust the power of God rather than human wisdom."

Though honored to preach the Gospel of his grace, this humble servant of Christ sought not glory from men. Ever desirous to exalt the Savior, he told the Corinthians, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Humility is inseparable from the Christian character. Pride was not made for man; yet man is a proud sinner- a fugitive from God. His darkened understanding, his perverted will, his corrupt affections, his polluted memory, his seared conscience, his defiled imagination, all prove him to be a creature fallen from original righteousness, obedient to some other power, and pursuing an end, the very opposite to that for which he was created. Satan being entrenched in his self-love, obtains an easy conquest over him. The artful foe whispers to his heart the flattering tale, and he receives it with complacency. Listening to this hellish fiend, he boldly eats of the forbidden fruit, and braves the vengeance of Omnipotence.

Truth is too bright for his diseased intellect- too stern and faithful for his fastidious ear. He slights the monitory warnings of his truest friend, and fondly cleaves to Satan and his lies. O what a blessing is a humble mind, a teachable Spirit, a dependent frame of heart. This happy state of soul contains within itself the abundance of peace. Jesus dwells in such a lowly bosom, and beautifies the meek with his salvation. Happy shall we be, if our wills are made conformable to the Will of God. Then however dark may be his dispensations towards us, at evening-time it shall be light. Then, when heart and flesh shall fail, Jesus will be the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

"Would that my heart were fully bent

To serve you, Lord, in faith and love;

That my desires were all intent

On heavenly joys, and things above.

Vouchsafe with energy divine

To visit me and make me thine.

Oh Savior, with your presence cheer

This heart, and chase the gloom away
Rise, Sun of Righteousness, and here
Light up an everlasting day.
Your grace dispels the shades of night;
Wherever you dwell, there is light.
I seek you in affliction's hour,
When every earthly comfort fails;
I seek you when the tempter's power,
Against my feeble heart prevails;
My burdened bosom breathes its sigh
To You, and knows that you are nigh.
Dear Lord, I shall not ask in vain,
For you have taught me how to pray;
Here I will wait till I obtain
Your grace to take my sins away
My helpless soul with pity see,
And let it now be filled with thee."

Chapter 22.

ON THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD, THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEVER'S HAPPINESS.

THE FINAL GLORIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.

The unchangeable nature of the promises of God in Christ, which are YES, and AMEN, to the glory of his grace, gladdened the afflicted Apostle under all his troubles. By the inspiration of the Spirit, he was enabled to lead his Christians to the one only source of all their holiness and happiness- -the eternal purpose and love of God in Jesus Christ, through whom their souls were redeemed and sanctified. The sweet Psalmist of Israel struck his harp to this inspiring theme- "Salvation belongs unto the Lord; your blessing is upon your people." O may we catch the sacred fire, and feel our every power glowing with holy love. None but ransomed sinners can fully estimate the blessings of redemption. Salvation springs altogether from the grace and sovereign will of God, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that shows mercy; who dispenseth his blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, as seemeth good in his sight. All blessings in time and eternity must be traced to CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 375 this infinite love of God the Father, in, and through, his beloved and co-equal Son. The heart of Paul glowed with holy fervor whenever he dwelt upon this theme of mercy. Angels delight to look' into this mystery of love.

Devils tremble at the amazing sight of man's redemption. None but unhumbled sinners turn from it with disgust! When writing to the churches, the divinely-inspired Apostle kept back nothing that was profitable; neither did he shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Ministers who are swayed by interested motives, easily forsake the path of rectitude. Instead of preaching those truths which would be profitable to others, they preach such doctrines as are profitable to themselves., Paul was a man of another spirit. He had tasted that the Lord is gracious; to him Christ was precious; and his heart's desire and prayer to God

Chapter 22.

Chapter 22.

ON THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD, THE SOURCE

OF THE BELIEVER'S HAPPINESS.

THE FINAL GLORIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.

The unchangeable nature of the promises of God in Christ, which are yes, and amen, to the glory of his grace, gladdened the afflicted Apostle under all his troubles. By the inspiration of the Spirit, he was enabled to lead his Christian converts to the one only source of all their holiness and happiness— the eternal purpose and love of God in Jesus Christ, through whom their souls were redeemed and sanctified.

The sweet Psalmist of Israel struck his harp to this inspiring theme- "Salvation belongs unto the Lord; your blessing is upon your people." O may we catch the sacred fire, and feel our every power glowing with holy love. None but ransomed sinners can fully estimate the blessings of redemption.

Salvation springs altogether from the grace and sovereign will of God, who has mercy on whom he will have mercy. It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy; who dispenses his blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, as seems good in his sight.

All blessings of time and eternity must be traced to this infinite love of God the Father, in, and through, his beloved and co-equal Son. The heart of Paul glowed with holy fervor whenever he dwelt upon this theme of mercy. Angels delight to look into this mystery of love. Devils tremble at the amazing sight of man's redemption. None but unhumiliated sinners turn from it with disgust!

When writing to the churches, the divinely-inspired Apostle kept back nothing that was profitable; neither did he shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Ministers who are swayed by self-interested motives, easily forsake the path of rectitude. Instead of preaching those truths which would be profitable to others, they preach such doctrines as are profitable to themselves. Paul was a man of another spirit. He had tasted that the Lord is gracious; to him Christ was precious; and his heart's desire and prayer to God was, that His way might be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations. "To the suggestions of worldly prudence, he paid no attention; his counselor was conscience; and the source of his actions was the love of Christ. Hence he sought the salvation of others, with an ardor little inferior to that, with which he labored, through grace, to secure his own. Contenting himself with the consciousness of upright intention, and the approbation of his Master in heaven, he did not hesitate to bring forward, in the proper season, whatever would contribute to the instruction and establishment of those, to whom he ministered, even though, in some instances, it should awaken their temporary displeasure."

This holy man, well knew, that as a faithful minister of Christ, he must rise superior to every consideration, but that of his duty. Actuated by this principle, he sought not glory from men, being willing to be esteemed as the off-scouring of all things for Jesus' sake. He, who could say, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel," would never shrink from a faithful exhibition of Gospel Truth. To the Galatian church he feared not to say, "Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant."

Tracing his own conversion to the sovereign and eternal love of God, who was pleased to separate him from his mother's womb, and to call him by his grace, he delighted to dwell on the exhaustless theme of mercy. Being guided by the Spirit into all Truth, how sweetly did he comfort the Roman Christians, by the comfort with which he himself was comforted of God, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." Here we have presented to our view the golden chain of grace and mercy, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, which draws up into glory all who are called according to his purpose.

To the Ephesian church, Paul unfolded the hidden wisdom of redeeming love, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." Here again grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

To the Thessalonians, the Apostle imparted the same glorious revelation, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this comprehensive and most consolatory passage, we behold the source, the means, and the end of that salvation which will fill heaven with unceasing praise.

Peter, in unison with his brother Apostle, being taught by the same spirit of Truth and Love, styles believers-- "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Leighton has made the following beautiful remarks on these words of Peter, "This foreknowledge is his eternal and unchangeable love. 'Has not the potter power over the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?' This, if it be harsh, yet is apostolic doctrine. This deep, we must admire, and always in considering, close with this, O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

"Effectual calling is inseparably tied to this eternal election on the one side, and salvation on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven, in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down to earth, into the hearts of his children; and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them; if therefore they can read the characters of God's image

in their own souls, those are the counter-part of the golden characters of his love, in which their names are written in the book of life.

"Their believing, writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the Scriptures; and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life, that God has by himself from eternity. So finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain where it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it has its source, and shall return to that ocean which arises from eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

"If election, effectual calling, and salvation, be inseparably linked together; then, by any one of them, a man may lay hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is that way, wherein we may attain and ought to seek that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore, make your calling sure, and by that, your election; for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in its outworking .

"Though the mariner sees not the pole-star, yet the needle of the compass that points to it, tells him which way he sails. Thus, the heart that is touched with the loadstone of divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking towards God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward, towards the haven of eternal rest.

"He that loves may be sure he was loved first; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently, that God has chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him and be happy in him forever; for our love and electing of God, is but the return and the repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us."

The writer of these pages has no wish to uphold any human system of theology. He desires simply to declare, in the words of the inspired Apostle, the whole counsel of God, and to keep back nothing which he deemed profitable to the Church of Christ. Angry controversies and contentions wound the mind, embitter the spirit, and destroy the peace and unity of the Church.

To every prayerful student of the Bible, it must be most apparent, that all the doctrines of the Gospel, when received in the simplicity of faith, must, from their nature, have a practical influence on the heart and life. For they are revealed for this very purpose, to make us humble, and holy, and happy. How forcibly does Paul impress this truth upon his beloved Timothy; "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal; The Lord knows those who are his. And, let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

The first seal is secret to us— "The Lord knows those who are his." The second seal is visible to all— "Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." If we bear the second seal, we may be scripturally assured that the first is impressed upon us. All who bear the broad seal of sanctification, have also the private seal of adoption; for if we love God, it is because he has first loved us.

Let us then seek for those precious fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, which are the indubitable marks of the children of God.

True Christians may differ from each other in language, national customs, and other external circumstances. Yet, they all resemble each other in their likeness to God. Their views and feelings,

their conflicts and supports, are substantially the same. Being born from above, and taught by the same Spirit, they each bear the stamp of their divine origin, though separated by oceans and trackless deserts. Writing to the Ephesians, the holy Apostle mentions this blessed operation of grace; "And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God."

Also to the Corinthians, "It is God who gives us, along with you, the ability to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment of everything he will give us."

All who truly believe in Jesus, have the witness in themselves; for the indwelling of the Spirit, that precious fruit of the atonement, is known by the change which is produced in the soul. The believer, by this holy transformation of character, evidences his "election of God," and his interest in the merits and intercession of the Redeemer.

All who possess the Spirit of Christ, have the mind of Christ, and follow the example of Christ. The Holy Spirit guides the believer into all truth, both in doctrine and practice. His genuine work is, the production of light in the mind, and of love in the heart. Thus, all who are actually pardoned through the blood of Christ, are graciously sealed by the Spirit of Christ to the day of redemption.

The Church of England, in her Homily on Whit Sunday, is in perfect accordance with this truth of Scripture, "It is the Holy Spirit, and no other thing, that quickens the minds of men, stirring up good and godly motions in their hearts, which are agreeable to the will and commandment of God, such as otherwise, of their own crooked and perverse nature, they could never have. That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. As who should say, man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and nothing, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motions, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds. As for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, if he has any at all in himself, they proceed only of the Holy Spirit, who is the only worker of our sanctification, and makes us new men in Christ."

How blessed is that man in whom the Spirit of God condescends to dwell. He has new joys, new concerns, new hopes, new desires. He prays by the Spirit, and for the Spirit. Receiving the spirit of adoption, he approaches the throne of grace with confidence- views God as his Father- possesses the temper and prospects of God's child, and delights in everything which promotes the glory of his divine Redeemer.

"Surely, may such n one say, the Lord has loved me with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness has he drawn me, even when I was far from him; and now having brought me near, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, he will preserve me to the end, as much by his unvarying truth, as he led me at first by his spontaneous mercy. What shall I render then unto the Lord for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon me! I can only render to him by receiving from him. The more I know of his goodness, and taste of his bounty, the more I am indebted to his grace. He himself must, and, I doubt not, will enable me to receive the cup of salvation, and to call upon his holy name, as my Lord and my God! And when the heavens are rolled together as a

scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat; when the earth, with all the inhabitants of it, is dissolved; then may I and each of my brethren, say; 'I have lost nothing; still I can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.'

It was to such holy characters as these, that Paul addresses this affectionate exhortation- "Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful."

Thus we see how true faith purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, and triumphs over death and hell. True faith is inseparable from holiness, for the same Divine Power which enables the sinner to put on Christ as his righteousness, transforms him into a holy temple for Christ to dwell in, as his purifier. This is the glory and blessedness of the Gospel. It brings the sinner into union with his Savior; and raises him from earth to heaven.

The influences of faith are extended through the whole soul, and its life is spread by a vigorous circulation. Wherever faith is set up in the mind, as a convincing light to discover the sweetness and excellency of Christ, it will discover itself in the will, by an eager appetite to feed on his pleasant fruits; and in the affections, by that heavenly flame which is ever ascending towards him as the chief good.

This was exactly the effect produced in the soul of the great Apostle, when divine light broke in upon his mind. He saw the glory of Jesus; his will was captivated, and his affections were wholly fixed upon him. No sufferings could deter him from his service, no enemy could drive him from his post of honor. As he gloried in the cross of Christ, so he gloried in tribulations also, when endured for his sake. Ardently desiring the salvation of sinners, he labored with unceasing perseverance to make them acquainted with their only Savior; and, perhaps, no man was ever so blessed in his labors of love.

O! what a glorious day will that be, when this holy man of God shall appear before the throne of Jesus, clothed with immortality, and wearing the crown of righteousness. Then will his joy indeed be full. Surrounded by his spiritual children, whom he will know as the fruit of his labors, he shall realize those sweet anticipations of bliss expressed to the Thessalonian believers; "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming; for you are our glory and joy."

As eternal life is the gift of Christ, so, like the good shepherd, he guides his flock in safety to the fold above. If we would we reach that heavenly world, we must be ever looking unto Jesus, the author and Finisher of our faith. We must rely upon him for a joyful admission into the realms of peace. He alone can strengthen us for the trials of the way- he alone can support us under the last conflict with sin and death. If we believe in Jesus with all our heart, the stream, through which we shall have to pass, may be tempestuous, but its waves shall not be allowed to overwhelm us. Jesus will carry us in his bosom, and, through his faithfulness and love, will safely land us on the

heavenly shore.

And oh! what bliss will await us there! No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no heart has conceived, the glory which shall be revealed in us, as the ransomed of the Lord. We shall be heirs of God! We shall possess him as our portion, who is the possessor of heaven and earth. We shall be joint heirs with Christ, who is the Head over all things to the Church. Though now compassed about with infirmities, we shall then be like the sun in his strength; though now allied to the dust, we shall then be made kings and priests unto God. We shall sit with Christ upon his throne, and forever drink the living waters of purity and joy.

Our toils will there be exchanged for rest. In that region of unsullied happiness, Satan cannot reach us; wicked men cannot harm us; grief cannot distress us; sin cannot defile us. The day will forever shed its brightness over us, for the Lamb will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory. We shall then be made like unto Jesus, and shall follow him, as the trophies of his victory, wherever he goes.

O! transporting thought, to be made like unto Jesus! This will form the most blessed ingredient in the happiness of heaven. The glorious image of Christ will never be defaced, but the beautiful lines of the new creature will forever shine in the perfection of beauty, to the praise of redeeming love. Here on earth, we are struggling with imperfection, infirmity, and sin; but there, the happy spirit, disengaged from every weight, will ascend, with lightsome wing, to the bosom of its God and Savior.

When we come into that happy world above, to be clothed in the white attire of innocence, it will be impossible for one evil thought to slide into our minds. In that region of perfection there will be perfect light in our understandings; perfect rectitude in our wills; perfect purity in our affections. Our spiritualized bodies will then no longer clog the soul, but rather assist in quickening the movements of the willing spirit. In heaven, we shall enjoy an eternal communion with God. In this world of clouds and shadows, he is often a God who hides himself; but there, he will reveal Himself to the Church triumphant, in all the splendor of his glory, in all the fullness of his love. There, we shall have sweet fellowship with angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect; and above all, with Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant. And there, with fullness of grace in our hearts, with diadems of glory on our heads, and with the high praises of God upon our tongues, we shall surround his throne, and shall reign with him forever and ever. Thus our bliss will be perpetual; it will be an Eternal Joy.

With what gratitude, if believers in Jesus, should we now begin the song of praise to the Father of mercies, who, from the beginning has chosen us unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; to the Son who has redeemed us unto God by his blood; and to the Spirit who sanctifies us, and all the elect people of God. Happy, thrice happy shall we be, if we have the witness in ourselves, that we are the children of God, and can justly conclude that we have saving faith, from the truth of our sanctification.

If we are holy, we are believers; but without holiness there can be no settled principle of faith. It is sin which darkens our evidences, and destroys our comfort. A constitutional morbid feeling may prevent our enjoying the blessedness of communion with God, by the dread which it creates in the mind; but, if we are happily preserved from this mental depression, and are delivered from the

reigning power of sin, as ransomed sinners we ought to rejoice at all times, and in everything to give thanks. This is our privilege and felicity, as it is the earnest and foretaste of our eternal bliss.

It is the will of God, that his people should be happy; the fault is theirs, if they are not so. His law is good, as well as just and holy; its language is, "Do yourself no harm." His Gospel is love, and breathes good-will towards men; speaking peace through Jesus Christ, and inviting sinners to be reconciled to God. If sinners perish, the cause is from themselves; if they are saved, it is through the unmerited grace of God. Hell will be filled with self-reproach. Heaven will resound with never-ending praise.

O! that every self-deceiver may be roused to a sense of his danger, before it be too late. The loss of worldly property may be retrieved; but our wasted moments can never be recalled. How invaluable on the bed of death are moments to an awakened sinner; and yet how little do we estimate their worth, in the day of health and plenty. The insensibility of the human heart to eternal things is most appalling. A reflecting mind will scarcely think it possible for a man to be so far lost to sober reason, as to fancy himself safe while lying on the brink of a crumbling precipice, or standing on the mast of a heaving ship; yet, thus rash is the man, who, trusting in his own righteousness, and following the sinful desires of his heart, fancies himself secure, and his salvation certain, though he is treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Perhaps some may think, that in the Christian world, few are so entirely lost to every feeling of self-preservation, and the solemnities of a future judgment, as to act such a madman's part. Happy indeed, were this the case- yes, happy, if men were influenced by a salutary fear to flee from the wrath to come; if they would be persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, to seek him before the door of mercy is closed. But alas! even under the fair garb of Christianity, nothing is more common than such a worldly, carnal mind. Actions speak more forcibly than words. They are the test of character. Like fruit upon the tree, they show the nature of the man, while motives, like the sap, are hidden from our view.

The delusions of Satan are very powerful. It is high time to awake out of sleep. No moment should be lost in deciding the important question, Am I Christ's, or am I not? Is Jesus the one object of my love, of my desire, of my delight? Do I esteem him the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely? O that the Eternal Spirit of all grace, may display his saving power, in convincing the sinner of his guilt; in revealing to him the mighty Savior; in leading him to Gethsemane, that there, he may behold the agony and bloody sweat of his Redeemer; in conducting him to the hill of Calvary, that there, he may see the bleeding Lamb of God, dying for his sins. O that the blessed Spirit may melt his heart to penitence and love, renew his soul, bring him into the Gospel-fold, and make him a monument of mercy, a sinner saved by grace.

The door of mercy is still open; the God of grace is waiting to be gracious; Jesus is pointing to his hands, his feet, his side; inviting us to fly from wrath and misery, to endless bliss and glory. The voice of Mercy is now heard- Come, for all things are ready. Come, for yet there is room. Come, to the feast prepared by Sovereign Love. Come, and freely partake of Gospel blessings.

O! that Jesus may draw every heart to himself by the silken cords of love, until the glorious period shall arrive, when all his elect shall be gathered around his throne, redeemed out of all nations,

and kindreds, and people, and tongues, crying with a loud voice, and saying, "Salvation to our God, which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

"Oh! how the thought that I shall know

The man that suffered here below,

To manifest his favor

To me, and those whom most I love,

Or here, or with himself above,

Do my delighted passions move

At that sweet word- forever!

Forever to behold him shine,

Forevermore to call him mine,

And see him still before me;

Forever on his face to gaze,

And meet his full assembled rays,

While all the Father he displays,

To all the saints in glory.

Not all things else are half so dear,

As his delightful presence here,

What must it be in heaven?

'Tis heaven on earth to hear him say

As now I journey day by day,

Poor sinner, cast your fears away,

Your sins are all forgiven.

But how must his celestial voice

Make my enraptured heart rejoice,

When I, in glory, hear him;

While I, before the heavenly gate,

For everlasting entrance wait,

And Jesus on his throne of state

Invites me to come near him.
Come in, O blessed, sit by me,
With my own life I ransomed thee,
Come taste my perfect favor;
Come in, O happy spirit, come;
You now shall dwell with me at home,
O blessed mansions, make him room,
For he must stay forever.
When Jesus thus invites me in,
How will the heavenly host begin
To own their new relation?
Come in! come in!- the blissful sound
From every tongue will echo round,
Until all the crystal walls resound
With joy of my salvation!"

Chapter 23.

Chapter 23.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS ON PAUL'S CHARACTER.

The character and experience of Paul, though imperfectly delineated in the foregoing pages, show the nature and blessedness of Christianity. Its heavenly doctrines, its consoling promises, its holy precepts, were so many sources of light, joy, and purity, which, through the transforming power of the Spirit, made the once persecuting Saul of Tarsus, a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is interesting to trace the origin, and pursue the course, of those principles which made him such a burning and shining light. Perhaps no mere man was ever made so great a blessing to mankind, or underwent such trials for the sake of the Gospel.

From the short review which we have taken of the life of this holy man, it will be evident, that he was no impostor. His sacrifice of reputation, wealth, and power; his willingness to suffer contempt, poverty, and persecution, abundantly clear his character from this imputation. As far as respects earthly things, he had nothing to gain, but every thing to lose, by declaring himself to be a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ. It is also evident, that he was no visionary enthusiast. His spirit was free from the violent impulses of fanatical delusion; and his zeal, though fervent, was never tainted with melancholy or vanity. He did not court persecution or popularity to obtain a name; neither did he, like the votaries of Pagan and Papal superstition, inflict upon himself useless and absurd penances, with a view of propitiating the Almighty, or purchasing heaven. But, if to love Jesus with all the heart- if to devote all the powers of the mind and body to his service- if to count all things but loss to win Christ, and be found in Him, be enthusiasm; then we do not hesitate to say, that Paul was indeed of all enthusiasts, the Chief.

It must also be apparent from what we have seen, that the Apostle did not embrace Christianity through the weakness of his mental powers; neither was he duped by the artifice of others. Being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a noted doctor of the law, his mind was well stored with the learning of those times. His Epistles afforded ample proof both of the strength and cultivation of his intellectual faculties; while his commanding eloquence extorted from King Agrippa that striking confession- "You almost persuade me to be a Christian."

On his way to Damascus, he heard the voice, he saw the glory, he felt the power of Jesus. Being taught by immediate revelation from above, he embraced the Truth in all its greatness, and immediately preached Christ, in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. Can we review so marvelous an event, and not exclaim, "This has God wrought! The finger of God is here!"

Since Paul, as appears from the clearest evidence, neither sought to deceive others, nor was himself deceived; every candid mind must be led to these conclusions- that his faith in Jesus was the result of an overwhelming conviction of the truth of Christianity, which all his Jewish prejudices could not withstand- that his conversion to the faith which once he destroyed, was the work of God- that the Christian religion is a Divine Revelation- and that to reject or neglect the Gospel, is

dishonoring to God, and destructive to ourselves.

Blessed is he, who with a thankful heart believes the heavenly Record- "That God has given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." As there can be no happiness without holiness, so there can be no holiness without an union by faith to Jesus. Are we abiding in Him- deriving strength from Him- and depending solely upon his great atonement? He died for sinners- we are sinners. He has said, "Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out." If then, as poor sinners, we come unto Him, we shall assuredly be saved. This is the simple truth of the Gospel. Happy are they, who, like Paul, are enabled to embrace it with child-like simplicity; for to all such, there shall be a performance of those things, which were told them of the Lord.

In the sufferings of Paul, we have seen exemplified that marked hostility which was manifested by the king of Syria, when he commanded his captains to fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. The enmity of the Jews and Gentiles was not directed against Saul of Tarsus until he became a Christian, and labored most zealously in the cause of the despised Nazarene. It was Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, Christ proclaimed by him, as the King of Israel, who was the real object of their attack.

The world hated Christ, and would not have him to reign over them. They also hated his faithful servants, and sought to destroy them. The enmity of the natural heart still remains the same. Let a worldly man, however elevated his station, become an humble follower of the crucified Jesus, and condemn the world by his holy life, and soon his once attached friends will manifest their displeasure, either by leaving him with disgust, or by visiting him with scorn and insult.

This spirit of opposition began its deadly ravages in the family of Adam, and is still in active operation. For, "As he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him who was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." The prayer of David conveys the same truth, and speaks the language of the despised children of God, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant."

Should it be asked- Are not the followers of Christ in danger of deserting him through fear of suffering? The conduct of Paul will afford a sufficient reply. If left to themselves, they would indeed fall away; therefore they dare not say we will not; but through the grace of Christ supporting them, they are enabled boldly to say- "We are ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus."

The exhortation of Peter is truly animating. Having fallen through self-confidence, but being again restored through grace, he knew how to strengthen his brethren, "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

Jesus himself has put the seal of blessedness upon his persecuted saints, "God blesses you who are hated and excluded and mocked and cursed because you are identified with me, the Son of Man. When that happens, rejoice! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven."

How bitter is the enmity of wretched fallen man against the God who made him, who redeemed him, and who waits to be gracious to him. The zealous Paul once felt this enmity in his state of blindness, and when converted, deplored it deeply at the foot of the cross. May we not enquire; What is the state of our hearts? Can we suffer shame and reproach for Jesus' sake; or, do we turn aside through fear, when a cross is appointed for us to bear?

What words can be more awakening, than those which Jesus spoke to his disciples- "If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it." Ah! who can bear this touchstone of sincerity? Who can endure the bitter pang of separation from the dearest objects of their earthly affection? Yet it must be so. With undivided hearts, and disengaged affections, we must follow our all-gracious Savior, though we incur the frowns of relatives, and the loss of friends. We must be ready to suffer for his sake, if we would enjoy Him as our portion. To gain all, we must be willing to lose all; for Christ has said- "He that finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it."

Do we feel our hearts growing cold? Oh! let us look unto Jesus, until they are filled with holy love. He left the bosom of the Father. He took upon him our nature. He entered into our world of woe. He carried our sorrows. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He endured the cross, despising the shame; and then, as the Lord of glory, he burst the bands of death, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right-hand of the throne of God, where he ever lives to make intercession for us. Can we be insensible to such grace as this? O that the love of God were shed abroad in every heart, then would earth resemble heaven, and the Church of Christ form one holy, happy, and united family.

It cannot be too deeply impressed on the consciences of men, that love to Jesus is the spring of holy obedience. It is the Divine Chemistry which turns all into gold. A cup of cold water given from this principle shall not lose its reward, while the most costly sacrifice is worthless, if it does not spring from love.

The sacred fire of love can only be kindled by Him whose name and nature is love; and when once kindled, it can only be kept burning on the altar of our hearts, by the constant supply of his grace. The prayer of faith obtains the holy oil with which our vessels must be filled, and our lamps trimmed, while waiting in joyful expectation for the coming of the Bridegroom. Increasing with the increase of faith in the atonement of Christ, this heavenly flame will burn brighter and more fervently, the nearer it approaches the source from where it came.

"Yes! love indeed is light from heaven;

A spark of that immortal fire

With angels shared, by Jesus given,

To lift from earth our low desire.

Devotion wafts the mind above;

But heaven itself descends in love;

A feeling from the Godhead caught
To wean from self, each sordid thought;
A ray of Him who formed the whole.
A glory circling round the soul."

"Love is from God; and every one that loves, is born of God, and knows God." "God is love; and he who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." Happy then is the heart in which the spirit of love dwells and reigns. Such a heart is the abode of the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, and who delights in the lowly, loving disciple of the crucified and glorified Jesus— his coequal, co-eternal Son.

Oh! that we may daily live under the sweet constraining influence of the loving-kindness of our God. Without it, all is dark and cheerless; with it, joy and peace, like lovely flowers, spring up around our path. What are all the vanities of this world, but painted bubbles, when compared with this eternal treasure? Love, joy, peace, survive the tomb; and form that unending wreath which shall forever adorn and gladden the soul of the glorified believer.

Like his Divine Master, Paul had no certain dwelling-place. He was truly a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth. Wherever he went, bonds and imprisonments awaited him. We, on the contrary, in these days of the Church's prosperity, can dwell at ease, none making us afraid. The law does not unsheath the sword of persecution, nor kindle the martyr's fire. Is there not then cause for anxious apprehension, lest, while we profess much love for Christ, our hearts should cleave unto the dust? Are we not in danger of making a home of this world, and of setting up our rest here, as if this wilderness were the promised Canaan, rather than the road through which we have to pass to it?

As professing Christians, living in the midst of Gospel light and Gospel privileges, we can readily exclaim against the idolatries of the Heathen, while we forget, that whatever draws away the heart from God, is an idol in his sight. Our domestic ease, our family comforts, too often become our household gods, at whose shrine we sacrifice the claims of Christian charity, and the spiritual interests of perishing millions. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." There is in every man a powerful principle, which God has wisely implanted for the purposes of self-preservation. The second great commandment in the Law appeals to this principle— "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus refers to it— "All things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

But there is a sinful love of self- a spirit of selfishness which is utterly at variance with the law of love. Nothing can extirpate this evil principle but love to Christ. As believers in Jesus, we must daily live in the exalted spirit of his new commandment; "Love one another, as I have loved you." The love of Christ to us is the Gospel pattern of our love to others. With enlarged heart, the Apostle enforced this disinterested duty on the Philippian Christians- "Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had."

With thankfulness to Almighty God we must acknowledge, that of late years much has been done in our favored island to advance the cause of Christ throughout the earth, as well as to widen the circle of general beneficence; yet much still remains to be done. This is but the seed-time of the

world. Let us then, in the spirit of faith and prayer, cast our bread upon the waters, for we shall find it after many days.

If we truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall, and must, rejoice in everything which advances the interests of his kingdom. A heart warmed with the love of God, cannot rest, satisfied with mere verbal expressions of gratitude, for the blessings of redemption. Love is an active principle. Its language is, What can I do, however feebly, to promote the great and good work of evangelizing the world? If contributing of my substance will aid the noble cause, I will gladly cast into the treasury that which God has given me. If active exertion be required, I am willing to spend and be spent in advancing my Savior's kingdom. If advocating the cause of Christ be needed, I will endeavor to speak, though with a faltering tongue. Such is the language of love. To all this, the servant of Christ will join his fervent prayers, and rejoice, with all his Christian brethren, at the enlargement and prosperity of Zion.

"He who sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who sows bountifully, shall reap also bountifully," -is the Apostle's appeal to our Christian liberality. Do we act agreeably to this practical knowledge? Do the rich professors of Christianity never first consult their family luxuries, their equipage and decorations, before they dare to answer the Savior's call; "Sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come, and follow me." Our loving Savior, though he does not require his followers to enter upon a state of voluntary poverty, or to deny themselves the innocent enjoyment of his providential bounties; yet, he does demand their chief affection, and a willingness to impart cheerfully of their substance for his sake.

"Jesus went over to the collection box in the Temple and sat and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two pennies." Many are willing to make an offering out of their surplus, but few, to make a sacrifice of their comforts. Liberality must be estimated, not by quantity, but proportion. A splendid gift from a wealthy person forms only an offering, when no inconvenience is felt by the rich donation. A small sum given by a poor man is a real sacrifice, when some privation is experienced by this act of generosity. On this account it was, that, looking at the largeness of her heart, and the smallness of her means, our Lord declared- "I assure you, this poor widow has given more than all the others have given. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has."

As the love of the world is the sin which easily besets us, when sheltering itself under the creditable appellation of prudence, economy, and planning, our Savior has given us a double caution against its pernicious influence. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." The Gospel indeed does not condemn a prudent management of our concerns- it rather enjoins it for, "a good man will guide his affairs with discretion." But, it does condemn that anxious, murmuring, fretful spirit, which disfigures the conduct of many professors.

How cheering are the words of Paul, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Christian Reader, behold your privilege- "Do not be anxious about anything." When any trial comes upon you which would fill you with anxiety, (for who can escape from trouble in this fallen world) do not grapple with it in your own strength, nor lean to your own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart;

betake yourself by earnest prayer to the Father of mercies; implore Him to direct and overrule for good, "the cloud you so much dread," and then, calmly leave at his feet the burden of your fears. Do this with thankfulness, that you have such a God who cares for you, and on whom you may boldly cast all your concerns. While you thus acknowledge Him in all your ways, God will direct your paths, and either support you under, or deliver you out of, all your troubles.

How sweet is the voice of mercy speaking peace to the troubled heart- "But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit." He, on the contrary, who, when trouble overtakes him, will first measure it with his reason, and manage it with his own counsel, and take the care upon himself, rather than cast his burden upon the Lord by faith and prayer, shall involve himself in many miseries, lose his joy and peace in God, sink deeper in the miry clay, and in the end obtain nothing but vexation of spirit. This is what the Lord says: "Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans and turn their hearts away from the Lord. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, on the salty flats where no one lives."

O how quieting to the afflicted believer are the words of Jesus- "Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." "Let not your heart be troubled." "Neither be you of doubtful mind." Happy is that soul whose hopes are firmly anchored on the promises of Christ! We live alas! far, far too much below our privileges. Had we more faith, and spiritual-mindedness, we would have more strength and joy in every tribulation; our moderation would be known unto all men; our conversation would be without covetousness; we would be content with such things as we have on our journey heavenward; and our minds being fully stayed upon Him who has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," would be kept in perfect peace. Such was the happy spirit in which the primitive Christians lived and died. They learned in whatever state they were, therewith to be content; and took joyfully the confiscation of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Do we act as stewards of the manifold gifts of God avoiding miserly anxieties, and wasteful expenditures? Knowing that we are not our own, being bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God, do we seek for grace to live to our Redeemer's glory? The world would no longer sway our affections, did we daily reflect how quickly it is passing away; and how soon we shall be called to give an account of our stewardship, either for the one, or for the ten, talents which may have been entrusted to our care.

Though all do not become martyrs, yet all must possess the martyr's spirit; and though all are not called upon to forsake their houses and friends, as the noble-minded Paul did, yet all must be in readiness to do so, when the cause and glory of Christ demand the sacrifice. It was "to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," that he gave the exhortation, "Do not be conformed to this world." The very admonition implies the danger of worldly conformity, and the proneness of the heart to earthly things. Who can say that he is always raised above the undue influence of terrestrial objects- that he is daily passing, as it were, upon tiptoe, across this world of vanity. Alas! alas! we too often sink into the mire of earthly-mindedness, and have our thoughts absorbed amid

the trifles of a day! But what can the world profit us? It can neither secure us against temporal evils, nor save us from eternal misery. It cannot, for a single moment, prolong our existence here, or make that existence peaceful and happy. It is often a clog, but never a help in moments of spiritual distress. And yet, we love the world, though, by its deceitful smile, it robs us of our peace, entangles us in its snares, and would, if left under its power, eventually destroy our souls.

The heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world which shone so brightly in the lives of the first Christians may well cause us to blush. These devoted followers of a crucified Redeemer did not study those arts of splendor which have overspread the Christian world. When the honor of their Divine Master required the sacrifice, they could trample under foot, those profits and pleasures which ensnare and enslave mankind. They looked upon the delights and advantages of this life, as things not worthy to arrest their affections in their journey homeward. Their spirits breathed in too pure an air, to be caught with the delusive charms of this lower world. It was their continual regard to keep company with dying thoughts, and to dwell within the prospect of eternity.

Hence, Justin Martyr in his Epistle says, "that Christians, even in their native country, live as pilgrims and strangers. They are in the flesh, but do not live after the flesh; they dwell upon the earth, but their conversation is in heaven. As the soul lives in the body, but is not of the body, so Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world; for, while sojourning in corruptible tabernacles of clay, their immortal spirits are daily longing for, and expecting an incorruptible state of glory in heaven."

The simplicity of these early believers in Jesus, kept them from aspiring after worldly honors and distinctions; and, if at any time advanced to them, their greatest care was, to keep themselves unspotted from the world. When Cyprian was elected Bishop of Carthage, his modesty and humility made him fly from the first approaches of the news. Thinking himself unfit for so weighty and honorable an employment, he desired that a more worthy person, and some of his seniors in the faith might possess the place. So far from accepting his refusal, the people were more urgent in their entreaties; his doors were immediately crowded, and passages of escape blocked up. He would indeed have fled out at the window, but finding it in vain, he unwillingly yielded, the people in the meanwhile impatiently waiting, divided between hope and fear, until seeing him come forth, they received him with universal joy and satisfaction.

Can we wonder that such a feeling should be expressed towards this excellent man, when it is recorded of him, that upon his becoming Christian, he sold his estate, to relieve the necessities of his poor brethren, from which he could not be restrained, either by the persuasions of others, or from the considerations of the poverty to which he himself might be reduced. After his entrance upon the ministry, his doors were open to all who came, from which no widow ever returned empty. To any who were blind, he became a guide to direct them; to them who were lame, he lent his assistance and support. None were oppressed, but he was ready to defend them. He was the father, the friend, and the shepherd of his flock. With Job, he could truly say- "All who heard of me praised me. All who saw me spoke well of me. For I helped the poor in their need and the orphans who had no one to help them. I helped those who had lost hope, and they blessed me. And I caused the widows' hearts to sing for joy. All I did was just and honest. Righteousness covered me like a robe, and I wore justice like a turban. I served as eyes for the blind and feet for the lame. I was a father to the poor and made sure that even strangers received a fair trial." Thus Cyprian like

the blessed Paul, lived for one only object— the glory of Christ and the salvation of men.

Contentment, moderation, and thankfulness peculiarly distinguished the primitive Christians. This lovely feature in their character is strikingly portrayed by Gregory, bishop of Nyssa- "The transitory condition of man's life," says he, "calls for daily reparation of the decays of nature. He, therefore, that looks no farther than to minister to the desires of nature, and troubles not himself with vain anxious thoughts for more than is necessary, lives little less than the life of angels; while, by a mind content with little, he imitates their need of nothing. For this cause, we are commanded to seek only what is enough to keep the body in its due state and temper, and thus to address our prayers to God; 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Give us bread, not delicacies or riches, not splendid and purple clothing, not pearls and jewels, large fields and great possessions, not numerous flocks and herds of cattle, or a multitude of servants, not any of those things by which the soul is diverted, and drawn from more noble and divine thoughts and cares, but only our daily bread."

Thus practically did the primitive Christians follow the command of our Savior; "So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn't life consist of more than food and clothing?" Having food and clothing they learned to be content. Thus, unhesitatingly, could they declare their renunciation of all things for his sake, "Lo, we have left everything, and have followed you." Thus deeply did they drink into the spirit of their beloved Lord, who said, "My food and drink is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish his work."

O how seldom, in these modern times, do we find that full display of the mind of Christ, which was exhibited amid the storms of persecution in the early ages of Christianity. May the Divine Spirit revive our languid graces. May we daily look unto Him, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes, became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. The tendency of the Gospel is to expand the heart, to widen the stream of liberality, to diffuse happiness through the earth. When its power is felt, its fruits immediately appear. Love oils the wheels of action, while faith propels the ardent spirit in its career of universal benevolence.

But, if few be found willing to sacrifice their superfluities for the Gospel's sake, how much fewer are found ready to leave the bosom of an affectionate family, to brave the dangers of the ocean, to endure the sicknesses of foreign climates, and all those other trials which await the man, who in the spirit of the self-denying Apostle, delights to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and would rather die than forsake his God and Savior.

Few, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully. Yet nothing is more abhorrent to our all-gracious Redeemer, than a divided heart and a lukewarm spirit. As all our happiness in time and in eternity is the fruit of his love to us; so all our holiness is the fruit of his Spirit, drawing our hearts, and fixing them wholly upon Himself. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and to show them unto us; to convince us of the emptiness of every earthly good; and the folly of seeking our happiness in a world which lies in wickedness. Sin blinds the understanding, and sears the conscience; but, when the heart is filled with the love and Spirit of Jesus, how weak are the temptations of Satan—how powerless are the allurements of the world— how comparatively smooth the paths of sorrow. May we be graciously delivered from a worldly spirit, which can assume a thousand forms to allure and to deceive. To be in the world, and yet not of the world— to use it for our temporal necessities, and yet not to abuse it for carnal purposes, is a high Christian attainment, which Paul possessed in

an eminent degree.

From the book of Nature we may derive much useful knowledge. Solomon sends the sluggard to the ant. Isaiah, the inconsiderate, to the ox and the donkey. Jeremiah, the forgetful, to the stork and the swallow. Animals and birds teach us many important lessons- Thus, when the squirrel is disturbed, it skips from bough to bough, continuing always near the earth; while the lark, when alarmed in her nest, flies upwards with rapid wing, singing as she soars. Just so the worldling, when beset with grief, goes from one terrestrial object to another; while the Christian, leaving all his earthly cares behind him, rises on the wings of faith and prayer, to seek, with tuneful heart, his rest in God.

Do we thus seek for consolation from our God and Savior, and find it in the hour of trial? Jacob wrestled and prevailed. May we be Israels with God, and never cease to pray, until he gives that realizing faith, which lessens the weight of earthly sorrow; that hope and fear which bear the soul with steady flight to heavenly glory!

Jesus, dwelling in the heart by faith, invigorates the feeblest saint, and dispels the deepest gloom. The believer, resting in the full assurance of hope upon the unchanging promises of his Savior, triumphs over every enemy, and reaches in safety his eternal rest. Such was the blessedness which cheered and strengthened the heart of Paul, and such is the blessedness which animates all the children of God.

In the days of his unregeneracy, we have seen how the Apostle prided himself in being a descendant of Abraham; or, as he styled himself, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." Like the rest of the Pharisees, he esteemed himself to be righteous, and despised others, especially the Gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. But, when it pleased God to reveal to him that Savior, by whom the middle wall of partition was broken down, he could give the right-hand of fellowship to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

This is the true Christian spirit, which unites the whole body of the Church, by that charity which is the bond of perfectness. For this uniting spirit, our divine Redeemer supplicated his Holy Father, previous to his crucifixion, "Sanctify them through your Truth; your Word is truth; that they all may be one; as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also maybe one in us; that the world may believe that you have sent me." If union be the strength and beauty of the Church of Christ, how great must be the guilt of those who tarnish and weaken it by contentions and divisions.

Through the blindness of our minds, we are too ready to value ourselves upon our external privileges, as if belonging to a pure Church must of necessity make us pure. It is one thing to make a profession of religion, and another to possess its spirit, and to feel its power.

From Scripture and experience we learn that the heart of man, while alienated from the life of God, is the same in all ages and countries. Outward circumstances indeed make some difference, but the radical evils of the heart remain the same. In Christian lands, unconverted people are no better than heathens, except as they are brought under the predominating influence of Christianity, which restrains their vices; while, in those nations, where sensuality forms a part of the prevailing superstition, they are more openly licentious.

How little reason have we then to plume ourselves upon our outward advantages, or to exalt ourselves above others; when the difference arises, not from any superior natural goodness of our own, but from circumstances over which, as far as we are concerned, our wisdom and foresight had no control. Wicked men are greatly indebted to Christianity, and to the restraining grace of God, for numberless outward comforts which they enjoy, though they either know it not, or are unwilling to acknowledge it. But oh! what an unspeakable mercy is converting grace, which brings unnumbered blessings in its train; for godliness has the promise not only of the life that now is, but also of that which is to come.

This blessedness, Paul experienced in all its richness, and proclaimed it to a dying world, in all its fullness. He knew, that the grace of God makes all the difference between one man and another; collectively, between nations, where Christianity is established, and where it is not- individually, between those who are Christians indeed, and those who are Christians only in name. Being well acquainted with the workings of spiritual pride, he put these humbling questions to each Corinthian convert, "Who makes you to differ from another? And what do you have, that you did not receive? Now, if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?"

Are we the subjects of this distinguishing grace? With what ardor then should we follow the footsteps of the Apostle, and engage with all our hearts in the service of our Redeemer. Has the Spirit drawn us to Christ with the cords of love? How zealously then should we labor for the conversion of mankind. Though despised by the world, we shall be precious in the sight of God. Though, by nature, devoid of spiritual light and power, we shall become, through the Spirit, "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world." Thus was Abraham blessed of God, and made a blessing to all around him; and so are all who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which obtained for him that exalted title- "the Friend of God."

May the universal Church of Christ, by whatever names its several parts may be distinguished among men, be stirred up to active zeal and self-denial, to increased liberality and fervent prayer. Then will our Zion become a praise in the earth, and all the ends of the world shall see the salvation of our God. When we survey those regions of the earth, where the light of Truth has not yet penetrated, inhabited by millions of immortal beings who are successively passing into eternity, what daily cause have we to bless God, that our lot has been cast in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths; a land, where his ministers are appointed to proclaim the Gospel of peace; where we are governed by equal laws; and where we enjoy the blessing of civil and religious liberty.

O! that we may not, by our willful and continued ingratitude, provoke our God to withdraw these blessings from us. As a nation, we have long enjoyed his peculiar favor; and as a nation, we are unmindful of his benefits. By his present dispensations towards us, he calls to us, in mercy, to consider our ways. But, if his call of mercy be disregarded, he will speak with a voice of judgment, which shall cause the stoutest hearts to tremble.

The Almighty has put a singular honor upon his Church, not only by imparting to it his blessing, and causing it to reflect his glory, but by rendering it the medium, whereby his perfections are more fully known to the angelic host. In heaven, they behold one unbroken stream of love; in hell, one unmixed torrent of wrath. But, in this our world, the seemingly opposing attributes of justice and mercy, are displayed in all their glory at the Cross of Christ.

This wonderful truth is mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Can we be indifferent to this mystery of grace? Can we treat with lightness these wonders of redemption, which occupy the highest thoughts, and call forth the loudest praise, of principalities and powers in heavenly places? Could angels weep, surely, tears would be shed in heaven over the insensibility of man.

To display this redeeming grace to a dying world, was at once the labor and delight of Paul. The Godhead of Christ, his atonement, resurrection, and glorification, constituted the grand subjects of his preaching. He was truly a scribe well-instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom.

This wise master-builder did not exalt Christ on the ruins of the Moral Law, nor raise human works to an equality with the righteousness of Christ. He did not magnify the sovereignty of God to the disparagement of his holiness, nor lower the claims of justice to enhance the charms of mercy. In the beautiful harmony of truth, he so revealed the divine perfections, that with David we are led to exclaim, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Having receive the Gospel by the revelation of Jesus Christ, he saw and proclaimed the glory of the cross, whereby God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly; faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we desire that our faith may be kept from faltering, we ought to be always upon our guard against every opinion, the drift of which is to lower the Author and Finisher of it; because everything that tends to lessen our Redeemer's glory, and to detract from what he has done for us, weakens our faith, unhinges our hope, and destroys our confidence. Therefore, as we should avoid those as the spreaders of the most dangerous plague, who would reduce our Savior to the lots rank of a creature; so we shall be afraid of partaking of the infectious leaven of such as would bring us off from looking for our salvation from Christ alone, and would persuade us to expect that from our faith, repentance, sincerity, and obedience; which was procured for us by his agonies, toils, and death. And, at the same time that we are exalting Christ to the utmost, we should avoid the extreme of those, who, under pretense of magnifying our Savior's infinite merit, pretend to a liberty to act as they will; because whatever swelling words we may speak, we do not sincerely trust in the infinite merit of the sacrifice of our Lord offered up as our Priest, unless we manifest the sincerity of our faith, by submitting to him as a King.

"It shows that people have no desire to be saved by Christ, when they take pains to degrade him. None can better judge of his worth, than those, who having washed their robes in his blood, and by his aid, passed through great tribulation, are brought to behold his face in righteousness. They suffer no diminishing thoughts concerning him to find the least harbor in their spotless breasts; but, in the company of angels and archangels, with the highest strains of rapture, praise and adore him.

"As long then, as Christians are traveling through the dark and gloomy valley of life, they should not be backward to ascribe the highest honors to him who was slain, and has redeemed them to God by his blood; which they will do without ceasing and weariness, when, passing out of time into eternity, they shall come to be forever with the Lord in the peaceful realms of light and immortality, where faith will be turned into sight, and hope will be swallowed up in enjoyment."

Blessed Jesus, O Light of the world, and the Glory of your Church, cause the bright beams of your Truth to shine into my heart. Open my understanding that I may understand the Scriptures. Reveal Yourself as my Savior, as the Lord my Righteousness, as my Great Atonement and Example. Wash me from all my sins through your precious blood. Fill me with faith and love, meekness and humility. Wean my affections from the world, and enable me to receive the truths of the Gospel in simplicity, to walk in the way of your precepts with sincerity, and to feed upon your promises with gratitude. Prepare me by Your Holy Spirit for the mansions of glory; and place me near your throne as a monument of mercy, there to praise You with saints and angels forever and ever.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net