

THE BELIEVER'S TRIUMPH!

by James Smith

Smith's final completed work, a 42-chapter exposition of Romans 8 presenting experimental Christianity and the glorious privileges of believers, providing comfort, reproof, encouragement, and instruction connecting doctrine with practice.

42 Chapters

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00 The Believer's Triumph!

The Believer's Triumph! or,

No condemnation in Christ—No Separation from Christ A devotional exposition of Romans 8:1-39

by James Smith, 1862

00p PREFACE

PREFACE by Joseph Smith (Editor's note: perhaps this was the author's son.)

It has been said by a divine of the seventeenth century, in reference to the portion of the divine word of which this work is an exposition: "Search all the Scripture, you will not find any one chapter into which more excellent, sublime, and evangelical truths are crowded! The Bible is the book of books, and this chapter may be styled the chapter of chapters! From first to last it is high gospel, all gospel; it is the summation and storehouse of all the saints' privileges and duties. You have in it the love of God and of Christ shining forth in its greatest splendor. Blessed be God for every part of Holy Writ—but specially blessed be God for this eighth chapter to the Romans!" The sentiments here expressed have found an echo in many a believer's heart. There is no class or character for whom it does not contain something suitable—but it is pre-eminently adapted to the various circumstances and conditions in which true Christians are found. The distinction here accorded to this portion of Holy Writ may with equal truth be given to this production of the author's pen, in relationship to the many other works bearing his name. Being the last volume he was permitted to complete, written with a deep and abiding consciousness that his work was almost done, when his mind was evidently fitted and prepared for the inheritance he was so soon to receive—it possesses a richness and savor which will commend it to the judgment and heart of every child of God. The intentions of the author appears to be:

1. to present before the reader experimental religion as distinct, and differing from that of the mere formalist or hypocrite;
2. to display the glorious privileges of the gospel and the believer's title to them;
3. to stir up the slothful to active service in, and consecration to, the Master's service, from a principle of gratitude for the blessings bestowed and love to their great Giver;
4. to present a consistent and connected view of truth, displaying the harmony that exists between experimental, doctrinal, and practical religion, and 5. to give to each and all, their portion of spiritual food in due season.

Here is:

comfort for the mourner;

reproof for the erring;

condemnation for those who persist in rejecting Christ;

encouragement to seeking souls;

instruction for those who desire to know more of the Lord; and,

a withering exposure of the man whose religion consists in mere profession. The thought that the hand that penned these pages, lies helpless in the cold and silent grave; that the breast that heaved with emotions, as the truths here recorded passed through his mind, is no longer susceptible of feeling; and that he who on earth handled, and tasted, and felt so much of what he wrote and preached for the good of others—died, before the publication of these pages, to that blessed world

"Where he can see, and taste, and know

All he desired or wished below!"

gives a more than common force and solemnity to this volume. May that Spirit who so eminently used his servant during his long and active life, bless this his last effort, to the building up of the Church and the conversion of thousands of immortal souls!

01. NO CONDEMNATION

1. NO CONDEMNATION

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1

Few Christians appear to live up to their privileges. Perhaps they do not fully understand them; and yet they are clearly revealed in God's word. Let us turn to that word, and endeavor to learn from it what our privileges are. Let us take the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and seeking the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, endeavor to understand its meaning, enter into, and enjoy its contents.

Paul had given an outline of his own experience in the former chapter, stating the conflicts and inward trials he had to endure. But he did not close it in gloom—but gladness, exclaiming, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Then, notwithstanding all he had said of his inward conflicts, on the ground of what he had before stated, he says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh—but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). The Privileged State.—"no condemnation." There may be affliction, deep, sore, and complicated affliction. There may be temptations, terrible and distressing temptations. There may be fears, alarming and terrifying fears. There may be sins, yes, there are sins, for there is no man that lives and sins not. Yet, "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Yes, men may condemn us, as they did the apostles and primitive Christians. Satan may condemn us, as he is ever ready to do. Even conscience may condemn us, and it will, unless we daily bring it to the blood of sprinkling. Still, "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." This is the privilege of every Christian, and of every Christian at all times; for however our feelings may vary, or our frames may change—our state remains the same.

What, then, is condemnation? To be condemned, is to be doomed by the just Judge to be punished, to be punished for sin, and according to the desert of sin. Such condemnation, to the sinner out of Christ, is just and righteous, and the punishment awarded must endure forever.

Condemnation is for sin in general; for it is written, "Cursed is every one who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." So that every sinner is under the curse, and as such is doomed to suffer—to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

But, under the gospel, condemnation is for unbelief in particular, as our Lord said, "He who believes not, shall be damned." And again, "He who believes on him is not condemned; but he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Thus there is no escaping condemnation—but by faith in Christ. Every unbeliever is condemned—condemned already—and is only respited for a time. But every believer is justified—justified now—and justified forever.

There is also another cause of condemnation specified—enmity to Christ, or the lack of love to him: "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ—let him be accursed when the Lord comes." So that, let a man be ever so moral, or amiable, or attentive to the services and ceremonies of religion—yet if he does not believe in Jesus, if he does not love the Savior—then he is condemned already. The punishment to which all such are condemned, is the loss of a kingdom. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." When believers are invited to come and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, these will be commanded to depart from the presence of the Judge, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels! The kingdom is lost, the punishment is merited, the sentence is pronounced, and the doom is dreadful. Upon such, the wrath of God will be poured out without mixture, and without end. From this all who are in Christ are delivered; they are therefore said to be waiting for God's Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered them from the wrath to come. They are not only delivered from the wrath of God—but they are justified and made heirs of God. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Their justification is through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Therefore the apostle says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Our sins were imputed to him, the curse of God alighted on him; in consequence of which we are invested with his righteousness, and receive the blessing of the Most High God. On the ground of the Savior's undertaking, follows the gospel grant, as Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, He who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Believing, eternal life is ours; condemnation is removed at present, and prevented for the future; we are passed from death, and are privileged to live forever. And now, in justice to the work of Christ, to fulfill and render good his word, as well as out of his boundless mercy, God exempts from condemnation every believer in Jesus. To such, not one cause or ground of condemnation remains; every sin is blotted out, every demand of the law is met, every accuser is silenced, and the just God is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus.

"There is therefore now no condemnation," though our graces are imperfect, though our services are faulty, though the conflict within is severe, though Satan and the world do their worst against us, and though in many things we all offend—still there is no condemnation. To us the promise belongs, "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, says the Lord." The Privileged People. They are described by their state: they are "in Christ Jesus." By the eternal decree of God, they were appointed to be one with Christ, as their head, representative, and surety. By the operation of the Holy Spirit, they are taught their need of Christ, are led to Christ, and are united with Christ. By the faith of the heart, they embrace Christ, venture alone on Christ, and become identified with Christ. So real, so close, so lasting is the union, that the members of the human body are not more really, closely, or

durably united to its head, than are believers with Christ; we are therefore said to be "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

They are also described by their character: "who walk not after the flesh—but after the Spirit." By "the flesh" we understand corrupt nature, or nature as corrupted, debased, and depraved by sin. By "the Spirit" we understand the new nature, which is produced by the Holy Spirit, in our regeneration. As it is written, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Man generated his like; and as he is corrupt, depraved, and wholly given to evil—so is that which he generates. So also the Spirit generates his like; as, therefore, he is holy, spiritual, and righteous—so is that which he generates. The new creature, therefore, has two distinct, opposite, and antagonistic natures, which always oppose and hinder each other; as we read, "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."

Union to Christ not only gives life—but likeness, for Christ dwells in us; and the consequence is, that the life which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us—which led John to say, "He who says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Thus there would not only be life from Christ—but likeness to Christ. In the Christian, there is a constant struggle for the mastery between the flesh and the spirit; Satan assisting the one, and the Holy Spirit the other. But in consequence of divine aid, the flesh is crucified, and its evil inclinations are resisted; so that, though at times the flesh will prevail—yet the general bent of the mind, and the general course of the life—is holy. We walk, or frame our course, not according to the corrupt inclinations of the flesh—but according to the holy and righteous inclinations of the spirit.

Still, there is often a desperate struggle, and we have at times to say with Paul, "To will is present with me—but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would do—I do not; but the evil that I would not do—that I do." The spirit will seek after God—but the flesh will wander from him. The spirit will strive to obey God—but the flesh delights to sin against him. The whole aim of the spirit is to please God—but the flesh is enmity against him. With such opposite and active principles in the same soul—how can we wonder if the conflict is sometimes desperate, or if victory hangs in doubt?

All outside of Christ are condemned, and are therefore miserable. For how can a man be happy with the sentence of death, eternal death, suspended over him! He may sleep and forget it—but when he awakes, he must be wretched.

All in Christ are safe, and therefore happy. For how can a man be really unhappy—if one with the Son of God, if justified in the sight of God, if possessed of everlasting life?

Let us therefore flee to Christ, if we have not; and cleave close to him if we have. Let us rejoice in Christ, as in our strong tower, as in our beloved husband, and as in our living head. All that Christ IS—he is to us; all that Christ HAS—he has for us; well, therefore, may we rejoice in him. Let us walk carefully and cautiously, not yielding to our fleshly inclinations—but putting off the old man with his deeds.

We should judge of men by the habitual bent of the will, and the daily course of the life. It is not individual acts—but habits, that correctly represent the man. If we want to know where a man is

going—we notice the way in which he walks; if we want to know the society a man loves—we observe with whom he associates. Just so, if we want to know whether a man is a Christian—we must observe whether he imitates Christ; or if we wish to know whether a man is going to heaven—we must notice whether he chooses the way of holiness, which alone leads there.

02. Holy Freedom

2. Holy Freedom "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" Romans 8:2

Freedom from condemnation, is an invaluable privilege, and it lies at the root of all our other privileges. For it matters not what we now have—if at the end, we are condemned to suffer eternally for our sins. This one thing would embitter everything else. It is therefore important to have a knowledge of this privilege, and also to know that it rests on sure grounds. All who are united to Christ, are free from condemnation, they are justified from all things; and the apostle states the reason of it thus: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2.) The Freedom Enjoyed. We were under the law, or covenant of works, which was given to Adam, and under which all his children are born—a law which requires us to possess a perfectly holy nature; and to present to God, daily and hourly, a perfect obedience. This law was incorporated in the Jewish code, and was given by Moses to the Israelites, having the ceremonial and judicial laws appended to it. Both Jews and Gentiles, therefore, are naturally under law—a law which requires unsinning obedience, and which promises life to the obedient—but pronounces death on the offender. It curses every one that breaks the least commandment; and curses again every one that does not confirm its requirements, authority, and sanction. This law we are bound to keep—or die. If we sin—we suffer. But we have sinned, and corrupted our nature and our way; and now sin has gained the ascendancy over us, so that it naturally influences and controls the whole man. We are in bondage to it; and what is worse, we are in love with it. We prefer sin to holiness. Yes, in consequence of it, we prefer darkness to light, falsehood to truth, earth to heaven, and even Satan to God! Being under sin, we are bound to suffer, and the suffering denounced is death;—which death includes a separation from God, as the source of intelligence, holiness, honor, and love; a banishment from God into darkness, misery, and torment; and an association with the devil and his demons and all the implacable enemies of God. We were, therefore, naturally in bondage:

to the rigorous and righteous law of God;

to sin, which, like a tyrant, rules within us and over us;

and to death, which, like an executioner, will banish us from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. But all who are "in Christ Jesus" are emancipated and made free. Jesus was made under the law for them: he took their responsibilities on himself; he, as our substitute and representative, presented to the law a holy nature—not only a holy human nature—but a holy human nature in union with the divine. In that nature he performed all that the law required for them, and suffered all that the law had threatened for them. He was made a curse for them. He entirely exhausted the curse in his own person for them. In him—the law received its due, all it could demand—he became its end. As we read, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes." As believers, therefore, "we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the

letter." Being represented by Christ, we are dead with Christ to the law which slew him; therefore says the apostle, "Reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin—but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Being thus dead to the law, and the law being dead to us—we are free from guilt, even as Christ our representative is free; we are free from condemnation, even as Christ our substitute is free; we are free from wrath, Jesus having turned it away from us—we are by him "delivered from the wrath to come."

This, then, is our freedom:

we are free from the law as a covenant of works;

we are made free from sin—that is, from its guilt and power;

we are free from condemnation, being made the righteousness of God in Christ;

we are free from the wrath of God, and he loves us with the same love with which he loves his only-begotten Son.

What a glorious privilege! What a blessed state! How wondrously the grace of God shines in our present and everlasting freedom!

How Was This Deliverance Effected? "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Paul testifies from his own experience here, hence he says, "He has made me free." Let us consider this a little more particularly. We were under "the law of works," a law which knows nothing of grace or mercy—but which makes its demand, and pronounces its sentence. By this law we were condemned, and left for execution, or to suffer the due desert of our deeds. But when the Holy Spirit quickened the soul, he brought home the law with light and power to the conscience. The consequence was conviction of sin. That was seen to be sin now, which was not looked upon as sin before; as Paul would not have known lust to be sin, except the law had said, "You shall not covet." The law being spiritual, and extending to the motives, thoughts, and purposes of the heart, we were convinced not only of the sins of our past lives—but of our hearts, and we saw that by nature we were totally corrupt, and that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was evil—only evil, and that continually. The law, while it thus revealed to us our lost and ruined state, still continuing to make its demands upon us, irritated the evil principles within us; and sin, that appeared to be dead before—was now full of life and vigor.

"The law works wrath:" stirring up sin—and yet forbidding sin, and pronouncing a terrible judgment upon the sinner, the soul is filled with self-pity, and hard thoughts and angry feelings against God are generated and encouraged in the soul. The enmity of the carnal mind now works and rages, and it is no uncommon thing for the sinner to wish that there were no God, or that he were a God that could wink at sin and tolerate evil—in a word, that God were anything but what he is, "holy, just, and good." The desert of a soul in such a state is clearly discovered to be death; for as the sinner would annihilate God if he could, he perceives clearly, that if God is just, or has any regard for his character—then he must be punished.

Thus it is evident that life and salvation can never be by that law; the sinner must be delivered from it, or perish under it, for he can never be saved by it.

We are therefore brought under "the law of the Spirit of life." This is the gospel, called "the law of faith;" for as the law of works promises life to works, and to works only; so the law of faith promises salvation to faith, and to faith alone. The one great need of the sinner is righteousness, and the gospel is called "the ministration of righteousness." It reveals the sinless Jesus as made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; and it presents his all-glorious righteousness to the sinner as a free gift, without money and without price. This perfect work, or righteousness of Jesus, meets and answers all the claims of the law of works, and justifies God in justifying every sinner who receives it and trusts in it. Receiving the offered righteousness, it is placed to our account; and the law having received all its demands, has no more claim upon us. As the law has now no claim upon us, sin has no power to condemn us; therefore says the apostle, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law—but under grace."

We stand, therefore, before God accepted in the Beloved; we stand in grace, or in God's favor, who is to us a loving Father, and not a rigid lawgiver. We are under the law of faith. This law is in Christ Jesus, who is its author; the obedience it requires is faith; and its promise, or reward, is eternal life. This law is not ritual, or carnal, or legal, as the old or first covenant was; but it is spiritual—it is the law of spiritual life, or "the law of the Spirit of life." The Spirit works by it, and effects our deliverance through it. Our liberty, therefore, was procured by Christ, by his meritorious life and death;

it is revealed in the gospel, called "the perfect law of liberty;"

and it is effected by the Holy Spirit, who brings it home in power and demonstration to our hearts.

We receive the Spirit, as the gift of Christ; we believe the testimony, or obey the gospel; the consequence is, we burst the cords that bind us, we slip the yoke that galls us, we come out of the prison-house of unbelief—and we enjoy liberty and walk at large.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;"—for he reveals Christ, leads to Christ, unites us with Christ; so that we take the yoke of Christ, are identified with Christ, and are under "the law of Christ." The unregenerate are all under the law of sin and death. That is the law which prohibits sin, discovers sin, convinces of sin, and binds over the sinner to suffer death and its consequences. He must do—or die. He must keep the whole law; for if he offends in one point, he is guilty of all. The law, therefore, can hold out no hope for the sinner; for to convince and to condemn—this is all the law can do.

Believers are also under law—but it is the law of Christ—a law that requires faith, and awards life—a law that commands love, and promises a reward. If we believe in Jesus, we are dead to the old law; being dead to the old law, we are married to Christ; and being married to Christ, he is our Lord, Lawgiver, and Judge. His precepts are our rule; and as all the morality of the old law is incorporated in the gospel, and as the gospel directs the believer how to act in every place and state, in all the relations of life, both toward God and man—it is a perfect rule of conduct, and is binding upon every one that names the name of Christ.

Blessed be God for deliverance from the law of sin and death! Blessed, forever blessed be God, that we are now under the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus!

03. The difficulty solved.

3. The difficulty solved.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3

Christian privileges should be clearly stated, well defended, and forcibly explained. This was the apostle's practice. He informs us there is no condemnation to believers in Jesus; he defends his point by showing that they are not under the law of works—but under the law of faith; and then he proceeds to explain this by stating, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). This passage,

Suggests a difficulty. The difficulty is—to get rid of sin, that so the sinner may be free from condemnation. We could not get rid of sin by the law, because we could not keep it; therefore we could neither be justified, nor sanctified, nor reconciled to God by the law. The reason is, we are both wicked and weak:

We are so wicked that we would not keep the law, or meet God's demands, if we could; for the mind, in its natural or carnal state, is enmity against God.

We are so weak that we could not keep the law if we would; for apart from Christ, or without union with him, we can do nothing. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." The law requires what we cannot do, for it requires us to present to God a holy nature; and it demands also a perfect obedience, answerable to all its precepts, in all our relations, and under all the circumstances of life. There must not be one unholy or unlovely thought, emotion, word, or deed; or the law cannot be satisfied, nor can it acquit or justify us. As the law requires what we cannot do, so neither can it give what it requires, or accept of repentance in the stead thereof. All it can do in the case of the sinner is—to demand of him, convict him of sin, condemn him for sin, and leave him to suffer the due desert of his sin. The law cannot lower its standard, or take less than its full demand; and therefore it can neither acquit us, nor cleanse us, nor give us power to raise ourselves out of our deplorable state.

Here is the difficulty, then—to give the law its due, to get rid of sin, to get it out of God's sight, and out of man's nature—so that God, who is just and holy, may justify us. The passage contains also,

God's Solution of The Difficulty. "He sent his own Son." He had a Son, an only Son, a divine Son, his own proper Son, called his "only-begotten Son." Not a son by creation, as the angels; nor by adoption, as the saints; but a Son partaking of his own nature in all its fullness, glory, and majesty—a Son equal to himself in authority, dignity, and every divine perfection. This Son he sent, as the apostle John said: "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." God sent his Son; that is, he chose him for the wondrous work, he appointed and ordained him to do the work, he qualified him for the performance of the work, he

commissioned and authorized him to come and do the work, and he entrusted him with the work. This was the work given him to do.

He sent him in the flesh; he took our nature, for the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "God was manifest in the flesh." Not in corrupt human nature, or in sinful flesh—but "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Not in glorified humanity as he wears it now, nor in humanity as Adam possessed it before he fell—but in humanity compassed with infirmities—but only sinless infirmities.

Therefore we read, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son—yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all those who obey him." Here were sufferings, and emotions, and sensations, of which Adam's nature in Paradise does not seem to have been capable; nor does the glorified humanity of the Son of God, as it exists at the right hand of God. Yet his humanity is called, "That holy thing." And of him it is testified, "Who did no sin;" "who knew no sin;" and "in him was no sin." He took the nature of the Virgin—but it was free from every taint of sin, from every polluting spot; therefore he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." It was true human nature, like ours, only sinless—he had a body and a soul like ours, prepared for him, assumed by him, and fit to be his residence while he tabernacled among us. "The children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sacrifice for sin. He was not born under the law—but by circumcision he was made under the law, and became a debtor to do the whole law for all those whom he represented. To represent his people, he took their nature: as their representative, he was circumcised, and assumed their responsibilities; assuming their responsibilities, their sins were charged on him, and he became liable to suffer for them, he undertook to get rid of them. For his people whom he represented: he obeyed the law, was made a curse, became a sin-offering, and put away their sins by the sacrifice of himself;—so that, being united to his person, and believing in his name, Paul's words become applicable to us, "You are complete in him . . . wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead." By the transfer of our sins to him, he was made sin for us; and being made sin for us, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." So also his righteousness is made over to us, and we are made "the righteousness of God in him." As, therefore, our sins were laid on Christ, punished in Christ, and put away by Christ; and as his righteousness is made over to us, placed to our account, and imputed to our persons; to us there can be no condemnation. But the apostle adds, that by making his Son a sacrifice for sin, "he condemned sin in the flesh." He showed that he could not merely wink at it, tolerate it, or overlook it; it must be got rid of, and be got rid of righteously. Sentence, therefore, was passed on sin; and as Jesus had become the great sin-bearer, sentence was passed on him, he was doomed to suffer its desert, and make full expiation for it. So that, though it was only placed to his account, or charged upon him, his person remaining perfectly sinless, he was delivered into the hands of wicked men, he was left to the rage of devils, he was abandoned by his Father; and thus suffered what would have been insupportable

to all but himself, and as the sin-offering he died. In Jesus, sin was doomed to destruction, as we read, "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." It was dethroned that it might be annihilated. Jesus suffering for it showed what it deserved, and thus it was condemned. He expiated it at the expense of his life, that he might ultimately abolish it forever. How could God condemn sin in a more solemn, striking, or affecting manner, than by condemning his Son for it, bruising and putting his Son to grief on account of it? O marvelous mystery, that God should send his own, his only, his beloved Son in our nature—in a nature like ours in every particular except sin—and by making him our great sin-offering, condemn sin in our nature, dooming it to utter annihilation, and showing his infinite abhorrence of it!

Man, by nature, is in a state of sin, and under the righteous and rigorous law of God. He is wicked and will not keep it, has no desire or wish to do so—and is therefore justly condemned; but he is also so weak, that if he had the will, he has not the power, and is therefore to be pitied as well as blamed. Being in this state, someone must come to deliver him—or he must perish in his sin. There was no one qualified, either in heaven or on earth; therefore there was no one able to deliver him. To meet this difficulty and remove it, 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. Therefore Christ came, and has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree:" that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. His natures, being divine and human; his perfections, having all the attributes of Godhead and all the excellences of humanity, fitted and qualified him for the work: and being qualified, he commenced and carried out his undertaking, putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

God's Son, sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, had a near relation both to the Father and us. He is the Son of the Father in truth and love; and he is our brother, being bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He had intense affection: his love to his Father was glowing and constant, and so was his love to us. He was prepared to be anything, to do anything, and to suffer anything—in order that his Father might be glorified; and he was equally prepared to be, to do, and to suffer anything—in order that we might be saved. He condemned sin—that he might not condemn the sinner; he died for sin—that he might not be required to doom the sinner to death. He could not excuse sin—but he could die for it; he could not save the sinner in his sins—but he could put away his sin. And blessed be his adorable name—he died for us; by dying he atoned for all our transgressions; and now in him, and walking not after the flesh—but after the Spirit—to us there is no condemnation!

04. The design of the incarnation

4. The design of the incarnation

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh—but after the spirit." Romans 8:4 The incarnation of the Son of God was the greatest event in all time; and was intended to meet and remove the greatest difficulty that ever occurred in the government of God. That difficulty arose out of the demands of the law of God, which stood in the way of the salvation of man. Sin must be got rid of, the law must be honored—or man cannot be saved; but man is weak and cannot obey the law, and to pay its penalty would be to suffer the wrath of God forever. To meet the case, God sent his Son, and made him a sacrifice for sin, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh—but after the spirit" (Romans 8:4). The Design or Result of the Incarnation of the Son of God. That the right, or rights, of the law might be met, it required obedience, and it had a right to obedience; that obedience, therefore, must be rendered to it, that the just judgment of the law may be executed, which is punishment for sin, and that punishment must be endured. In obedience and punishment, the law found satisfaction, received honor, and answered its end.

Now Jesus came that the rights of the law might be met in us; that is, in our nature—the nature that sinned and deserved to suffer. In our nature, as our surety, Jesus rendered to the law all its due. In this way the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, for we are in Christ—who represents us; and Christ is in us—who obeyed the law for us. Christ and his people are but one body; he is the head, and they are the several members: what the head did, therefore, for the body, the body may be said to do. Jesus was treated as a sinner, when he was found in the likeness of sinful flesh; that we might be treated as righteous, and at length be clothed with sinless flesh.

Thus we are freed from all legal obligation, and are delivered from the covenant of works. This is our justification; and out of this grows our sanctification. Christ for us secures the work of the Spirit within us. Under the Spirit's teaching—we discover and own the rights of the law; then we love the requirements of the law; then we desire to render the obedience it requires, and we do so imperfectly, yet hope to do so perfectly at length.

Here a Question arises—Can we fulfill the righteousness of the law? Not legally or fully; Jesus only could do this. But evangelically or sincerely we may. As a covenant of works, in order to our justification, we cannot keep it; but as a simple rule of conduct—we can observe it, and walk by it. As the effect of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, we love all about us, and "he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Love works no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8, Romans 13:10). "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). When, therefore, all enmity, hatred, and malice are purged from us, and love, kindness, and benevolence rule us—the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us.

Christ came in order that we might be renewed—as well as redeemed; or that we might experience a change of nature—as well as a change of state. Hence we read, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). He died to have us peculiarly his own, and zealous in the performance of his law. Again: "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26). Or, as another expresses it, "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies—might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75). Once more: "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).

If ungodliness is turned from us, if we are turned every one from his iniquities, if we serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness, and if we are zealous of good works—then, evangelically, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Jesus came that we might obey as well as receive—and that we might receive in order that we might obey. The law, then, is still holy, just, and good, and we delight in it after the inward man (Romans 7:22). But we could not be said to delight in it, if we did not wish to be conformed to it, and desire to walk in accordance with it. Where would be the proof of our sanctification, if we did not love that which is holy, just, and good? And what is the proof of our justification—but our sanctification? As a covenant, requiring obedience in order to life, and threatening disobedience with death, we are delivered from the law, and are dead to the law; but as a rule requiring love—love to God and man—it is incorporated in Christ's gospel, and we admire it, love it, and desire always and everywhere to live in accordance with it. Thus not only in our justification—but in our sanctification also, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. The Proof. "Who walk not after the flesh—but after the Spirit." We walk not after the old covenant—but after the new; influenced, not by the law written and engraved on stones—but by the law put into the mind and written on the heart. The law, as such, did not, could not meet our case; and therefore the Son of God came in order to do it. He having obeyed the precepts, and endured the penalty of the law, procured for us the Holy Spirit, and that Spirit he imparts to us. By the Spirit he imparts—we are born again, receive a new nature; and henceforth there is both flesh and spirit in the same person, and both striving for the mastery. The flesh, as the old inhabitant, is determined not only to keep possession—but to rule; but the spirit, as taking part with God, is determined not only to subdue—but to expel it. As Hagar and Sarah in the same household could not agree, and Hagar had to be expelled before there could be settled peace; so the flesh and the spirit will strive and struggle, and the flesh must be expelled before we can have settled tranquility. As Esau and Jacob struggled in Rebekah's womb, so do these two natures in the believer's soul; we, therefore, who are in this tabernacle, do groan being burdened. But the Christian will renounce the flesh, mortify it, and endeavor to crucify it, looking upon it as a determined, inveterate foe; and he will take part with the spirit, approving of its working, and endeavoring to obey its dictates. The Holy Spirit also becomes our guide and leader, and we follow him, who ever leads us into the truth, sanctifies us through the truth, fills us with a love to holiness, and leads us into fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. As the sons of God, we are thus led by the Spirit of God; and yield to the holy inclinations and spiritual affections which he awakens within us. We put off the old man, which is corrupt, with his deeds; and we put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Satan, through the flesh, works powerfully within, stirring up our lusts, corruptions, and evil propensities; but we refuse to obey him, or allow the flesh to rule—we will not be guided by its lusts, appetites, and depraved inclinations; and whenever for a time it gets the sway, we mourn, condemn ourselves, confess our sin before God, ask his pardon, and seek for more grace. No gracious man can habitually let the flesh lead; for it leads always into folly, corruption, and sin; and if we were to follow it, it would certainly lead into hell. But the spirit thirsts for God, pants for holiness, and leads us to God's book, to God's house, to God's throne, and into all God's ways: its great object is to please God—and if we follow it, it will infallibly lead to heaven.

See God's respect for his law. He would rather part with his own Son, send him into our world in the likeness of sinful flesh, clothe him with the form of a servant, appoint him the most difficult and self-denying work, and even put him to the painful and shameful death of the cross—than allow his law to be dishonored, or save a soul without showing it all due respect.

See how the claims of the law are met. Outside us, by Jesus living and dying for us. Within us, by the Holy Spirit new-creating us, imparting a spiritual and holy nature, which becomes the guide and ruler in the soul; so that the old nature is renounced, and the new one owned as the rightful possessor; so that if the flesh mislead, we say with Paul, "Now then it is no more I that do it—but sin that dwells in me." If hindered in doing good, and impelled to do evil, we say again, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it—but sin that dwells in me;" and with him conclude, "I thank God through Jesus Christ. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

See what we shall be. We shall be all the law requires—perfectly righteous in state, perfectly holy in nature, and perfectly obedient in our lives. Yes, blessed be God, we shall be like Jesus, perfectly like him; "for we shall see him as he is!"

05. The Two Classes

5. The Two Classes

"For those who are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and those who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" Romans 8:5 The whole world is made up of two classes—those who walk after the flesh, and those who walk after the Spirit. The same parties have got mixed together in the Church; it is, therefore, very important that we should be particular in describing characters, and marking out the boundaries between nature and grace. The apostle has set us an example of this, for he constantly distinguishes between the precious and the vile, between him who fears God—and him who fears him not. Having stated the great privilege of the Lord's people, and having set forth the design of our Redeemer's advent—he proceeds to distinguish between those who enjoy the blessing and those who do not. He brings the whole world before us in one brief verse, intended as an illustration of his former statement, and says, "For those who are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and those who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5). Here is, The Lost Sinner's State and Conduct. As to his STATE, he is not in Christ. He has no vital union with Christ. He is without Christ, and without God in the world.

He is without faith. He may believe the gospel to be from God—but he does not sincerely believe in Christ. Faith always brings us to Christ, lays us low before the cross of Christ, induces us to commit the soul to Christ, trusts implicitly in Christ, nor will it allow us to rest without union to Christ.

He has not the Holy Spirit. The Spirit always convinces of sin, shows the need of a Savior, leads us to Jesus, and inspires us with a hatred to sin and a love to holiness. His nature is unchanged. He is still in the flesh. He may be educated, cultivated, and very much improved mentally and morally—but he is still a natural man; and 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.

He is in his corrupt state—a part of the wild olive-tree, resting on the old foundation, sensual, having not the Spirit. This is every man's state by nature. His CONDUCT is, he "minds the things of the flesh." To "mind," is to attend to, to savor, to seek, to enjoy and relish. And the "things of the flesh" are the things that please and gratify the flesh. In religion, he relishes and enjoys the legal, or the ceremonial, or the licentious—but not the spiritual. In the matter of acceptance with God, his own works and merits must have some place, or some influence. It must be his works, or his feelings, or his creed; his connection with some Church, or his attention to some religious observances, or his experience of some joys or sorrows. It is never Christ alone. Simple trust in Christ is never considered enough; there must be some appendage, some addition. In natural things, his inclinations or lustings are fleshly and evil, always going out after something that will gratify the carnality of the mind. The works of the flesh when unrestrained are evil, only evil, and that continually. As the apostle states, "Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish

ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." What a fearful catalogue! What a corrupt tree, which brings forth such bitter fruit! Yet such is human nature, when unsanctified by the grace and Spirit of God.

Even in natural good things—the flesh shows itself, seeking them from a bad motive, or for bad purposes—to feed pride, to gratify ambition, or to please the carnal appetite only. Nor is this all: they are sought inordinately, and placed before spiritual things, and that even under a profession of religion, as the apostle complained, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." They were "after the flesh," or fleshly; and therefore they set their minds, their affections, on earthly things—they walked after the flesh. Turn we now to, *The Believer's State And Conduct*. The believer is in Christ. He is one with Christ. He can never be too often reminded of this, for he should live daily and hourly realizing the fact, Christ and my soul are one. He is under the dispensation of the Spirit, the ministration of righteousness. He is a new creature, which God has formed for himself, to show forth his praise. He possesses a new and spiritual nature, which acts within him, influencing and directing him, so that he relishes, enjoys, and minds spiritual things. He is "after the Spirit" and he "minds the things of the Spirit."

He experiences that he is accepted of God, and accepted of God through Christ alone. He carefully excludes everything done by or felt within himself, from any part or place in the matter of his acceptance with God. In this it is Jesus, and Jesus only.

He "minds the things of the Spirit,"—the things which the Spirit reveals: this renders the Bible—his counselor, the source of his comfort, and the directory by which he walks. Truth is unfolded to his mind, he is led into it, he receives it with meekness, it becomes in him the engrafted word; and of the things which pertain to his peace and holiness he can say, "God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit." And he can add with Paul, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world—but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us by God." What the Spirit reveals—we know, and what the Spirit applies—we feel and enjoy.

He minds not only what the Spirit reveals—but what the Spirit works. In him the Spirit as a well of living water abides; and there is a springing up into everlasting life. In him the Spirit as an incorruptible seed dwells, and there is a growing up into Christ, and a bearing fruit to the glory of God. And "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." He produces godly sorrow for sin, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, submission to the righteousness of God, acquiescence in the will of God, and the meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Of these things the spiritual man savors, he relishes and enjoys them; therefore he fixes his eye and sets his mind upon them.

"The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;" to which he inclines and directs the minds of those in whom he dwells. Not only so, they relish communion with God in grace, and cannot live long comfortably without it; and this is but preparatory to the ultimate enjoyment of God in glory. That those who are after the Spirit—do mind the things of the Spirit; and those who are after the flesh—the things of the flesh—appears from their thoughts: they think

deeply, frequently, and pleasantly of those things upon which the heart is set. Therefore, Jesus said, "Where your treasure is—there will your heart be also." So also the apostle exhorts, "If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Now, if our treasure is in heaven, it is spiritual; and if our treasure is spiritual, our thoughts will be set upon it, and be busy about it. So, if our affections are set on things above, they must be set on spiritual things; and wherever our affections are set, our thoughts will be.

One feature of character in the Lord's people of old was, "they thought upon his name." If we mind the things of the Spirit, our thoughts will be engaged with them. So, if we think of them—we shall speak of them, and our spirituality will appear in our words. John represents worldly men as speaking in a worldly strain, and so pleasing the world—but himself and the Lord's people with him—as speaking in a very different strain. He says, "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he who knows God hears us; he who is not of God hears not us." And Solomon testifies, "The tongue of the wise is as choice silver—but the heart of the wicked is little worth." If the nature is spiritual, and if we mind the things of the Spirit, there will be a spirituality in our conversation; for "out of the abundance of the heart—the mouth speaks." As our thoughts will appear in our words, so in our actions; therefore our Lord said, "By their fruits you shall know them." The life expounds the heart. If, therefore, spirituality reigns in the heart—it will appear in the life, and we shall live, not unto ourselves—but unto Him who died for us and rose again. If the thoughts, words, and actions correspond with the written word in general, and if we enjoy spiritual subjects and exercises, we are after the Spirit.

Let us now ask, Am I in the flesh—or in the Spirit? In which direction does my mind habitually lean? In which am I most at home, and which gives me most satisfaction—the spiritual or the carnal, the earthly or the heavenly? This ought to be a settled point with us; we ought not to live at an uncertainty, or in doubt.

If we are in the flesh, we relish, enjoy, and seek earthly things supremely: we think more of gold—than of grace; more of the opinion of men—than of the approbation of God; more of gratifying the appetites—than of feeding the soul; more of earthly pleasure—than of communion with God. If pride rules us, or worldly honors have a powerful attraction for us, or carnal society delights us, or if on any special point we habitually prefer the natural to the spiritual—we are in the flesh; for we mind principally, and enjoy most, the things of the flesh.

If we are in the Spirit, we relish, enjoy, and seek principally spiritual things. Nature is always powerful, and the more excellent the nature, the greater is its power. There is power in vegetable nature, more in animal nature, more still in intellectual nature—but most of all in spiritual nature. The animal, therefore, will conquer the vegetable; the intellectual the animal; and the spiritual the merely intellectual. If, then, we are after the Spirit, or if we are spiritual, the superior nature will rule us. And if the spiritual nature rules us—it will subdue our corrupt propensities, control our carnal appetites, curb our earthly desires, and lead us to prefer the things which are spiritual and divine.

If we were wholly spiritual, it would be perfectly so, and always so; and if we were altogether fleshly it would not be so, it would never be so. As, therefore, we have the two natures, both will work, and each will sometimes appear—but the elder shall serve the younger. When the flesh

prevails, it will cause us grief and sorrow; but when the Spirit reigns, it will fill us with joy and peace. Let us, then, endeavor to attend to, and carry out the admonition of the apostle, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Again: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Once more: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he who sows to the flesh—shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit—shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

06. The Two Minds

6. The Two Minds "To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace"
Romans 8:6

Nothing can well be more opposite than the state of the lost sinner—and the state of the saint. The one is carnal—and the other is spiritual. The one is the enemy of God—the other is his friend. The one loves to get to the greatest possible distance from God—and the other cannot be too near to him. The one has toward him, the feelings of a slave toward a hard and exacting master—but the other has all the feelings of a child toward a wise and loving father. Sin is the element of the one—and holiness is the element of the other. And as the state is, so is the result; therefore the apostle says, "To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). Notice,

What it Is to Be Carnally-Minded, and the Result. The margin reads, "the minding of the flesh:" to be ruled, influenced, and guided by the flesh, or corrupt nature, indicates a state of death, and leads to eternal death. The flesh influences all the faculties of the man who is dead in sin. The understanding, which is clear and acute in reference to carnal things, discerning their nature, value, and desirableness; is totally dark in reference to spiritual things. It discerns no beauty in them. It attaches no value to them. It awakens no desires after them. In natural things, all is life, zeal, and vigor; so that the Savior said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." In reference to spiritual things, Peter says, "He is blind, and cannot see afar off." As the flesh influences the understanding, so also the will, which runs directly contrary to God's will. It chooses what God forbids—it prefers what God condemns. Darkness cannot be more opposite to light, enmity to love, or sin to holiness, than the will of man, as biased by the flesh, is to the will of God. As the flesh influences the will, so also the affections, which hate what God approves, and love what God hates. The affections, as influenced by the flesh, are set upon things earthly and sensual. They never soar to the heavenly or divine; and instead of having God for their grand object—they seldom, if ever, have respect to him. The carnal mind may think much—but it never thinks rightly, of God; the true God is not in all its thoughts. It may reason—but it will be only of things earthly, or intellectual; and reason will be exalted above revelation. It may devise, purpose, and plan; but all will end in making provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof. In reference to the selfish and the carnal, there will be a mind to work—but not in reference to the spiritual and divine. Whatever the mind is set upon—will engage the thoughts, exercise the reason, set to work to produce, and open the mouth to boast of. As the king of Babylon gloried in his magnificent city and palace, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" so every carnally minded man has some Babylon which he has built, on which his heart is set, and in which his pride centers; and that is his god. His state and actions are carnal. The flesh is prevalent. He is what Paul confessed himself and others to have been before conversion: "For we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The flesh is consulted—instead of God's will; it is indulged and

pleased—in preference to God; and self-love, self-seeking, self-idolatry rules the man. The world is in the heart, and the heart is in the world, set upon its foibles, follies, and pursuits; and yet the apostle says, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world." 1 John 2:15-16. To prevent this, Paul exhorts, "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs!" 1 Timothy 6:8-10. The RESULT of being carnally minded, is that such are in a state of death. The seeds of natural death are in the body, and spiritual death spreads over the soul. Like the Ephesians of old, such "are dead in trespasses and sins." They may appear to be at ease and enjoy much pleasure—but as Paul said of some women, so it is with them, "She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives." This is the highway to eternal death; for "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust is conceived it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." This is the second death, which has power over all who die outside of Christ—eternal death, entitled "the wrath to come." So that the carnally minded, or those who habitually mind, savor, and fix the attention on the things of the flesh, or those things which feed, gratify, and please the flesh, are not only exposed to the sentence of natural death—but are spiritually dead now, and are doomed to suffer the bitter pains of eternal death forever!

What it Is to Be Spiritually Minded, and its Consequence. It is to "mind the things of the Spirit," to have a taste for them, so as naturally to turn to them with appetite and pleasure. It includes a knowledge of the existence, worth, and value of spiritual things. Therefore Jesus said to the woman at Jacob's well, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water."

It includes faith in the great and glorious promises of the new covenant; faith that sees the promised blessings in the distance, is persuaded not only of the existence—but the excellency of them, goes out after them, embracing them, and then renouncing everything for them. Thus did the patriarchs, as Paul testifies: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises—but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

It includes also esteem, and esteeming even the most painful things, as the result of a spiritual choice, above the most pleasant which flow from gratifying the flesh. As Moses, of whom we read that he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing 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 in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." This leads the soul to seek for spiritual things first and principally, as Jesus directed: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Not merely to seek once, nor occasionally—but to render it the great business of life, making a work of it, as Christ exhorts: "Labor not for the food which perishes—but for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."

If we, knowing the value of spiritual things, believe the promises made in God's word, esteem them above all natural and carnal enjoyments, seek them as of prime importance, and labor for them as for life and food—we are spiritually minded. To be "spiritually minded" is also to mind the lessons of the Spirit as a scholar. It is the prerogative of the Spirit to lead us into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. All our lessons are placed before us in God's holy word; many of them are illustrated by divine providence, and they are unfolded and applied by the Holy Spirit. The spiritually minded believe in divine teaching, expect divine teaching, and attend to divine teaching. They yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit as a loving child to the influence of its parent.

They are led by the Spirit, molded by the Spirit, and transformed into the likeness of Christ.

They exercise the graces of the Spirit, and become docile, teachable, and humble; yet they exercise confidence in God, hope toward God, and zeal for God. To them Christ is as the daily food, and they eat his flesh, and drink his precious blood—nor does the natural man feel his need of, or enjoy the food that perishes with the using—as the spiritual man does Jesus Christ. The result is life—a life of faith in Christ; a life of communion with God; a life that consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; a life of present happiness, preparatory to a life of future glory. What a contrast to the state they were formerly in, which led Paul to ask, "What fruit had you then in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death!" "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Not only life—but peace—peace with God, or a perfect reconciliation to him, and agreement with him. This produces harmony: there is harmony within the soul, and between the soul and the Lord's people. This leads to communion both with God and his Church; out of which spring filial confidence, lively expectation, and holy joy. The state is well described by the experience of the primitive saints, who could say, "Being justified by faith—we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And also in the devout prayer of the apostle for his brethren: "Now 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."

Such have peace in opposition to agitation and perplexity; peace, in opposition to anxiety and foreboding; peace, in opposition to doubting and fear. They are not like the troubled sea, the figure that represents the agitated, restless, and tossing state of the wicked; but like the calm, smooth, unruffled lake. They are not like the little bark, driven by the winds and tossed; but like the granite rock, around which the winds may roar, against which the waves may dash and die—but it remains unmoved. Life and peace, what precious blessings! what priceless favors!

Believers, though in a measure spiritually minded, may yet at times suffer much from temptation, the evil suggestions of Satan, and the terrible conflict within. They may fear much, when they take the eye off the Lord Jesus, and, like Peter on the lake, may feel themselves to be sinking. They may doubt much, losing sight of the faithfulness of God to them, and the finished work of Christ for them. To a certain extent—they may mind the things of the Spirit—and yet enjoy little life and peace. The reason is, they are not sufficiently weaned from the flesh—they are not living by simple faith in Christ alone. With them it is not, only Christ, always Christ, and altogether Christ; for if it

were, their peace would be like a river, and their life would be like that of the hale and healthy man.

Lost sinners may know much of the gospel theoretically, they may feel much under the preaching of the word, they may do much for the cause of God; and yet may be only almost Christians. Strangers to the life of God in the soul, their hearts are not set on spiritual things; and as they do not mind the things of the Spirit, they have not peace. Lost sinners, though they make a profession of religion—yet they habitually desire, pursue, and enjoy carnal things. They prefer the present to the future, the visible to the invisible, the carnal to the spiritual, the temporal to the eternal. They follow the inclinations and propensities that lead to condemnation and death. O the folly of such conduct! To such the words of Wisdom may be applied: "He who sins against me, wrongs his own soul! All those who hate, me love death!" Such people are often found in a state of false security: "The prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself; but the simple pass on and are punished." The present state of such is sad—but their final doom will be dreadful! Being in the flesh, the motions of sins, which are by the law, will work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death; and of the course they pursue, and the practices in which they indulge, we must say, "The end of these things is death!"

How important, then, is the inquiry, Are we carnally minded—or spiritually minded? Do we habitually mind the things of the flesh, or the things of the Spirit? What says our prayer-closet? Are we often closeted with God, praying unto our Father in secret? What says our Bible? Is it our daily companion? Do we esteem it more than our necessary food? Is it used as a light to our feet, and a lantern to our paths? What says the sanctuary? Do we frequent it, enjoy its hallowed services, and feel when in it as in our Father's house? What says our business? Is it with us a secondary matter? Do we make the seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness our first, our great, our grand concern?

Beloved, let us closely and thoroughly investigate the matter. Let us go right into it, nor rest until we prove to our own satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of all the Lord's people about us, that we are spiritually minded, and enjoy life and peace. A mistake on this point is fatal: let us not, then, think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think—let us not be too easily persuaded that our state is good; but let us set our hearts upon thorough sanctification, deep devotedness to God, and hearty, constant minding of the things of the Spirit.

07. The State of the Carnal Mind

7. The State of the Carnal Mind

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7

It is of great importance to have a right view of the true Christian state, and this the apostle has given us in the commencement of the chapter; and it is equally important to have a right view of human nature in its fallen state, and this the apostle is now giving us.

Few seem to believe that humanity has sunk so low as it has, or that it is so thoroughly bad, so desperately opposed to God as it is. But no statement can be more plain or positive, nor be conveyed in more plain and precise terms, than the statement we have now to consider, which contains the apostle's reasons for asserting that to be carnally minded is deadly: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Minding the things of the flesh proves the mind to be carnal, for the carnal mind only relishes and enjoys carnal things. The Carnal Mind Is Enmity Against God. All the rational powers are carnalized, they are steeped in carnality.

Perhaps one of the best things in the natural man is his wisdom; but this leads him to intrude into those things which are not seen, instead of believing and acting upon what is revealed; and the reason assigned is, he is "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." His wisdom is not that pure, peaceable, gentle wisdom, which is from above; but is designated "earthly, sensual, and devilish." He is wise to do evil—but to do good he has no knowledge; he is wise for time—but not for eternity; wise in earthly things—but not in heavenly. He is directly opposed to God in his tastes, views, preferences, and pursuits; he has no relish for what God loves and approves; he prefers what God despises—to what God esteems, and, therefore, he pursues what God prohibits. This leads to controversy; and God very justly has a controversy with man, because he will call darkness light, and prefer evil to good. Man shows himself contrary, and will not listen to what God speaks and what God writes, nor do what God bids. Man is as contrary to God, and with God—as much as he well can be. He is in determined opposition to God—and in his thoughts, words, and deeds, displays his hostility and hatred.

Man is not merely God's enemy—but his carnal mind is "enmity against God." An enemy may be reconciled—but enmity cannot. If he were only black he might be cleansed—but he is blackness. What can be worse! He is totally opposed to God—in his desires, affections, inclinations, and actions. He has not one desire to be holy. His affections are not set on anything that is spiritual. His inclinations are all toward carnal things. His whole course is wandering from God, turning the back to him—and not the face. He loves everything that God hates, and hates everything that God loves. He cannot bear the presence of God, he hates the image of God, and turns a deaf ear to the calls of God. He has no sincere love to God; therefore he breaks out in rebellion against God,

manifesting an utter dislike of God.

Therefore the apostle styles the heathen, "haters of God;" and the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "You have hated both me and my Father." This is true still, not only of open and avowed atheists and infidels—but of all, though perhaps in a less degree. Such was the state of the Colossians, as we read, "You were once alienated and enemies in your mind." And this alienation is carried so far, and this enmity has become so natural, that, as the prophet says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may they also do good who are accustomed to do evil."

Here some may object, 'I feel no such enmity and alienation from God.' Perhaps not; ignorance, forgetfulness, or distance may account for this. If there were a person I bitterly hated—but that person was in Australia, so that I never saw him, nor heard from him, and seldom thought of him, my feeling of enmity might lie dormant; but if I heard that he was coming back to this country, my old feelings would begin to awaken; but if he were coming to the same town, to the same street, to the same house, to live in the same room with me, how would it be then? Just so, while the sinner has no sense of the presence of God, and seldom thinks of God, his enmity may lie dormant; but let God come near to him, and he will say, as some in the days of Job, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways!" Or, like the Gadarenes to Jesus, they would beseech him to depart out of their coasts. The less of God—the better the carnal mind likes it; the greater the distance from God—the happier the carnal mind is. Not that the carnally minded hate every god—but only the true God, the God of the Bible. Let man invent a god of his own, a god all mercy, a weak and vacillating god, a god that will overlook sin, and give his sanction to the sinner—and there will be no enmity manifested against such a god! The gods of the heathen would be preferred to Jehovah, the only living and true God. It is a just God and a Savior—that the carnal mind hates. Separate the idea of a just God from that of a Savior, and though there might be some caviling and disputing, there would be no enmity. It is the holiness and justice of God's nature that are principally disliked; or these associated with his sovereignty and grace. The enmity of the heart is natural, not infused, otherwise we might be only objects of pity. One would pity a poisoned lamb—but not the poisonous serpent; so the enmity of the sinner being natural—and yet not originating with God—but with man, we must blame the sinner, and condemn his enmity. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The carnal mind will not be in subjection to God; its cry is, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us!" God's law and the sinner—are as opposite as they ever could be. The law is spiritual, the sinner is carnal. The law is holy, the sinner is all unholy. The law is just, the sinner is unjust. The law is good, the sinner is bad, and bad as bad can be. The law is directly opposed to all selfishness, requiring supreme love to God, and equal love to men; but the sinner is a mass of selfishness, and would, if he could, set his throne above the throne of the Most High God! He is ever climbing and clambering, and would never rest, rise as high as he might—while there was one on an equality with him, much less while there was one above him.

Man will not be subject to the law of God: he wishes to be a sovereign, not a subject. He has an understanding to perceive the excellency of that law, affections to love that law, a conscience that should take part with that law, and a will that should be ruled by that law. But all being under a carnal bias; the sinner cannot subject himself to God's law, nor submit to God's righteousness, on account of the depravity, carnality, or badness of his nature! The natural powers were no doubt injured by the fall—but it is not on account of any injury that they received that men cannot do the

will of God; but it is for lack of a disposition, or inclination, arising out of the enmity of the carnal mind; or, as it is generally stated, the inability is more moral than natural. The carnal mind is so thoroughly indisposed to observe God's law, that nothing will induce it. You may try prohibitions; but the moment anything is prohibited, that moment the carnal mind desires it, and goes out in pursuit of it! You may speak of penalties; but even if the penalty is death, as in the case of Adam, the carnal mind will dare it. You may try persuasions; but as Moses and the prophets could not persuade the Jews, so neither could the Son of God, and he testified that they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. Try the promise of rewards; but though you promise eternal life, or heaven with all its glory, splendor, and happiness—yet, like the young man in the Gospel—they go away very sorrowful; or say with Felix, "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for you." Yes, the man's own vows and resolutions are not sufficient; for the carnal mind will break through them all, and prove that "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The whole inclination of man is evil, and to evil—and that continually. Hear the divine testimony before the flood: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Hear the testimony of God after the flood: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Again, hundreds of years after: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any who understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one!" All which is confirmed by the Apostle Paul, as an accurate description of human nature in his day, both among Jews and Gentiles, for he declares that "there is no difference."

Man's condition, then, is dreadful! Look at the object of his enmity—the only wise God—the almighty, holy, just, and good One. He hates the most lovely, most excellent, most glorious Being in the universe! The object of his bitter enmity—is the God who made him, the God who sustains him in being, the God in whose hand his breath is, and to whom he must account for his thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds!

Look at the nature of his enmity; it is rooted, virulent, and active. To him there is no object so repulsive, or of whom he indulges such bad and cruel thoughts, as God.

Look at the cause of his enmity; and this is principally the perfection and excellency of God's nature, and law. The more clear his perceptions of God, and the nearer he seems to get to God, the more opposition he feels in his heart to him.

Look at the effect of his enmity; he will only mind the things of the flesh, and the end of these things is death—the second death—eternal death—banishment from God, to be punished by God, and to endure the wrath of God forever!

Man's state is dreadful! He is at war with God—at war with his Maker! What an enemy must God be! Ever present, always just, and all-powerful! He could crush man more easily than we can crush a moth. He can sustain His enemy with one hand, while He punishes him with the other—and that forever! But mark! God is not naturally man's enemy; nor is it in his heart to punish his bitterest foe—but only as justice demands. Therefore he sends his ambassadors to him, proposes terms of peace, and stoops to beg him to be reconciled. How touchingly he puts the question, "Why will you die?" How solemnly he asserts, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies."

Still, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There must be a new heart, a new creation; and this God has promised. He says, "I will give them a heart to know me." Again, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you." This heart will feel for God, as injured; sympathize with God, as grieved; mourn before God, as insulted; seek pardon from God, reconciliation to God, peace with God, and the entire subjection of the whole man to God. This spirit is love, and will destroy the enmity of the carnal mind, and will give it such views of God, and produce such feelings toward God, as will fill the whole soul with sorrow for sin, grief for the hatred indulged, and melt the man down in contrition, humility, and self-abhorrence before the Lord.

Gracious God, destroy the enmity of the carnal mind in us; create in us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit, so that we may no longer mind the things of the flesh—but the things of the Spirit!

08. Man's Great Duty

8. Man's Great Duty "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" Romans 8:8 To be in the faith—is to be a believer in the Lord Jesus, believing with the heart unto righteousness. To be in Christ—is to be a Christian; united to Christ, living in communion with Christ, and consecrated to the service of Christ. To be in God—is to be united to God, having the Spirit of God, and living to the glory of God. To be in the flesh—is to be in our natural, carnal state, influenced and regulated by natural and carnal principles and dispositions. A carnal state is a deadly state, it being a state of enmity against God; consequently the party is under the curse of the law of God, and exposed to the terrible wrath of God! As minding the things of the flesh, as in a state of enmity against God, not subject to his law—the apostle comes to this solemn conclusion in reference to all such, "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8.) Consider—

Man's Great Duty. To please God. This is the great end of man's existence, the design of his creation; that God may be pleased by him—and take pleasure in him.

He is bound to please God as a creature—all his powers, faculties, and distinguishing excellences, being conferred on him for this purpose.

He is bound to please God also as a subject—being placed under a moral government to this end. He is not ruled as a brute—but as an intelligent, accountable creature; therefore the Lord appeals to his reason, presents him with motives, and rules him by law.

He is bound to please God also as a servant—for God has condescended to employ him; promising rewards, and threatening him with punishment.

He is bound to please God much more as a child—in which relation, in a sense, we all stand to God, for we have all one Father, and one God has created us. The great end and object of every man's life, as a creature, a subject, a servant, and a child—is to please God, who is at once his creator, sovereign, master, and father. This is our honor; for a better character man cannot acquire than that acquired by Enoch, which was, that "he pleased God." This is our happiness also; for sweeter happiness we cannot enjoy than that which arises from the testimony of God in the conscience that we are pleasing him.

It is also our wealth; for if we please God, we can never lack: all the stores of the Creator are at the service of the creature who pleases him. Better than the possession of a mountain of gold—is the well-founded persuasion that we are pleasing God. It is the end on which our eye and heart should be fixed, and toward which all our purposes, plans, and actions should tend. But what pleases God? The loving obedience of all his holy creatures pleases him: thus he is pleased in heaven by the angelic multitudes, and by the spirits of just men made perfect. The absolute submission of sinners on earth pleases him, and this he demands at their hands; but of too many it may be said, as of the Jews, "I bear them record that they have a zeal for 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 to the righteousness of God." The sinner, while his

heart is enmity against God, will do anything rather than this.

If we would please God as sinners, we must listen to his Son. He points us to him, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him." He reveals the Father's mind, publishes the Father's grace; assures us that it is his Father's will that every believer in him should have everlasting life. We must believe the Savior's word. It is the word of God, and if we do not believe it, we make God a liar; and how can we offer him a greater insult?

Unless we credit the divine testimony, confide in the divine promises, and trust in the faithfulness of God—we cannot please him. We must accept what Jesus presents. He holds out a loving invitation to come to him for repose, satisfaction, and eternal life. He presents great and precious promises, securing to the believer all things that pertain unto life and godliness. He offers us a free, full, and everlasting salvation, without money and without cost, as the gift of his Father's love. If, therefore, we would please God, we must accept his invitation, and come to him; we must embrace his promises, and trust them; and we must receive the salvation that is in him, with eternal glory.

We must do what he bids. Not do first, and receive afterwards; but receive salvation first, and then do. When this is the case, his commandments are not grievous, for grateful love renders obedience sweet. Being saved by him, we should publicly identify ourselves with him and his cause, endeavoring to carry out all his precepts, in the world, the Church, and the family. We must seek his glory. SELF must no longer be the end of our existence—but that God may be glorified in us, by life or by death. We must not live unto ourselves—but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

If we listen to what Jesus speaks,
believe what Jesus says,
receive what Jesus offers,
do what Jesus bids, and
then make God's glory the end of our life
—we shall please God.

Consider now— The Sinner's Inability. "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." While in his fleshly, carnal, corrupt state—he cannot please God, for he is a rebel in arms against God. He has plotted treason in his heart against God, and has carried his rebellion against God to the highest pitch. When God sent his servants, they were slighted, insulted, or put to death; and when he sent his Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, they said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him!" "But they kept shouting, Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" So they "killed the Prince of life," they "crucified the Lord of glory!" Nor did this arise from any peculiarity in the nature of the Jews; it was but the manifestation and breaking out of the enmity of the human heart. The principles that prompted them—dwell in us. They were fair and correct representatives of all human nature, as it is found in man universally. Now, while our hands are stained with the blood of his only begotten Son, and while we have neither confessed nor repented of the awful deed—how can God be pleased with anything we do!

While in his fleshly, carnal state, God cannot be pleased with anything man does; for he is a prodigal afar off. He has left God, and wandered as far from God as he could. He has degraded his nature and disgraced his name. He is sunk in sensuality, poverty, and misery—and all the result of sin. He has often been invited back to his Father's house—but hitherto he would not go. He prefers the company of harlots—to the company of God; and would rather feed swine—than serve God. His property is all squandered, his good name and reputation are lost, and his heart is still ruled by enmity against God! How then is it possible for him to please Him?

He cannot please God, for his heart is opposed to Him! His views on every essential and important point differ from God's views; all his motives are base and groveling; and his nature is as opposite to the nature of God as it can be!

Besides this, there is in every sinner an obstinacy that will not yield to God; a spirit of pride that rises up in direct hostility to God, and a rooted determination to walk contrary to God. But some may think that the picture is a caricature, or that the coloring is too strong. This is not the case, for it is God's own representation, and every one taught by the Holy Spirit, sooner or later, comes to see that it is correct! No sinner, while carnal, while minding the things of the flesh, can ever please God. He cannot at any time, either in youth or old age; in any place, common or sacred; under any circumstances, of either sickness or health; at any season, either in life or death.

Man is totally depraved. He is wholly fallen. The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint. The leprosy cleaves to him, has spread over him, and dried up all the moral and vital moisture of the soul. The man is therefore lost, wholly lost, eternally lost—unless God interposes for his rescue!

All that he does while he is so, is displeasing to God. "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord." "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." He has no faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God." In all his prayers, tears, alms-deeds, and other good works, there is something that is displeasing to God. It is like the offering of Cain; for the person must be reconciled to God—before the sacrifice can be accepted by God. Until then he cannot please God, for he cannot set his heart to do it. He may try—but the innate disposition of the heart while carnal will be too strong for him, and will lead him to break through all his vows, promises, and resolutions. The conduct he may change—but the heart he cannot change, for its depravity has become natural to it. He cannot do what God requires, as God requires it. If what he does is externally good, it is internally bad. The motive prompting, and the end aimed at—are alike evil, for SELF is always the carnal man's god.

He must therefore be regenerated, or be created anew in Christ Jesus: he must be reconciled to God through the death of his Son: he must be dedicated to God as the effect of being anointed with the Holy Spirit: and, as the result, he must daily consecrate himself to God to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life. Without regeneration from God—there can be no reconciliation to God; without reconciliation, there can be no acceptable dedication; and without hearty dedication, there can be no evangelical consecration: nor can there be any of these without the Holy Spirit.

Every one, therefore, should seek the Spirit. God has promised Him, for he has said, "Turn at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you." But he has said, "I will be inquired of, to do it for them." And Jesus has given us the assurance that in this way we may obtain. His own words are,

"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."

Here, then, is our remedy: the Holy Spirit can subdue the enmity, and destroy the carnality of the heart; he can renew it, and conform it to the mind of God, so that we may please him. Let us therefore admit the fact stated, that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God;" let us deplore it before God as being our natural condition; and let us cry mightily and incessantly to God that he may give us the promised Spirit.

Then we shall be prepared to please God, and we shall make pleasing God the one grand business of our life; and such a life will be a life of holiness to the Lord, a life of blessing to all around us, and a life of real happiness to ourselves.

Gracious Lord, send your Holy Spirit thoroughly to convert our souls, so that we may be able to please you; and so to dispose our hearts that in all things we may please you. Oh, to please God as Enoch did, as David did, as Daniel did—yes, even as Jesus did! May we please God on earth, as preparatory to dwelling with God in heaven. Amen.

09. The Indwelling of the Spirit

9. The Indwelling of the Spirit

"But you are not in the flesh—but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." Romans 8:9 To be in the Spirit, and to have the Spirit in us—are essentially the same thing, and set forth that union and communion which exist between believers and the Holy Spirit of God. Nor is any religion real, but that which is produced by the Spirit; nor does the Holy Spirit ever work effectually in any heart, without dwelling in it. The apostle had asserted and proved that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God;" and he then adds, "But you are not in the flesh—but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." (Romans 8:9). Let us notice— His Favorable Opinion Of Them. "You are not in the flesh—but in the Spirit." He had addressed them as "saints," as "beloved of God," and as the "called of Jesus Christ," in the commencement of his epistle, and he still speaks of them as such: 'You are not in a carnal state. You live in the flesh—but you do not live after the flesh.' Thus he speaks of himself: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor." And thus Peter testifies: "He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men—but to the will of God." To live in the flesh is one thing, to live after the flesh is another. Yet many professors, to a certain extent, allow the flesh to rule them, as Paul testifies of the Corinthians: "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual—but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men?" The indwelling of the Spirit, in fullness and in power, lifts us out of SELF, raises us above our natural condition, elevates us above our fellow-men, and makes us spiritual and holy. Of old God dwelt in the tabernacle, over the mercy-seat; then in the temple, and on Mount Zion, of which he said, "The Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever: here I will dwell, for I have desired it." Now he dwells in his Church, represented by the tabernacle, the temple, and Mount Zion; as Paul testified to the Ephesians, "You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." So also in individual believers, whose bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. To such our apostle says, 'You are in the Spirit, you are spiritual; you have a new nature, you possess the Spirit, who produces in you his fruits.' But mark— His Cautious Manner Of Addressing Them. "IF so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." To "dwell" is to inhabit; and if the Spirit lives in us:

He has opened our hearts—as He did the heart of Lydia;

He has quickened our souls—as He did the souls of the Ephesians;

He has convinced us of sin;

He led us to the Savior, and

He is now daily leading us into a practical and experimental knowledge of the truth. To "dwell" is to abide; not merely to visit or possess for a time, as in the case of Balaam, Saul, and others—but to become a living spring within, springing up into everlasting life. He abides in the Lord's people as a powerful worker, subduing their iniquities, helping their infirmities, and unfolding the glories of the Savior. He excites holy desires and ardent prayers; he imparts sweet joy and peace; he comforts in troubles and trials; and he counsels in perplexity and difficulties. To "dwell" is to rule; for wherever the Spirit dwells—he rules. He is master of the house he inhabits, and rules the whole household. He is sovereign of the kingdom in which he dwells, and rules all the subjects. He is God in his temple, and expects homage, adoration, and obedience from all engaged therein. Where the Spirit dwells—he writes God's laws upon the heart, and puts them into the mind to be obeyed. He stamps the image of God on the soul, and produces a wonderful transformation, as we read, "But we all with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

He delivers us from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and enables us to conquer all our foes, as John states: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world." He fortifies us against, and enables us to rule the flesh: "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law—but under grace." He also reveals to us what God has provided for us, and our interest in it: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world—but the Spirit who is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

If we profess to have the Spirit, we should give some proof of it. The Spirit never dwells in a person without working. He always assimilates to his own likeness, endears the Savior, and leads the person to copy his example.

If others give proof that they have the Spirit, we should be satisfied, not suspicious, and treat them accordingly. Paul judged charitably, saying, "You are not in the flesh;" yet he acted prudently, and therefore added, "IF so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." If any doubt whether we have the Spirit or not, let us patiently persevere in the Lord's work and ways, and we shall convince them. No argument is so powerful as the argument of a holy life. Take no offence—but quietly go on doing the will of God from the heart. This will not only convince—but it will ultimately reprove them. As Noah, who no doubt was misjudged, and perhaps rashly condemned—but he went on building the ark, and so reproved their unbelief every day. As we read, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Not only so—but your holy conduct will surprise them, as in Peter's day: "They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." It will also justify the ways and dealings of God, as it is written, "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

Let every reader, therefore, see to it that he has the Spirit of God dwelling in him. There can be no substitute for this. If you have it not, sit under a sound, simple, faithful, and pointed minister of the gospel. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, and through the gospel the Spirit takes

possession of the heart. Therefore Paul, when the Galatians were turning away from the truth, appealed to them, "Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" But do not sit under the gospel as if you expected it to operate upon you like a charm—but ask the blessing of God; for to you who need the Spirit, the Lord Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you,"—adding, by way of encouragement, "Every one who asks, receives." If you ask, therefore, and ask desiring to obtain, you shall receive.

Encourage every conviction and impression you experience, and so attend to the admonition, "The Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Quench not the feeblest light of the Spirit, the smallest spark of the Spirit's fire within you; but encourage it, beseeching Him who never quenches the smoking flax, to "raise it to a flame." Once get the Holy Spirit into your heart as the Spirit of life, love, and power—as the Spirit of truth, meekness, and righteousness—as the Spirit of Christ—and you are made, and made forever!

10. the Proof That We Are Christ's

10. the Proof That We Are Christ's "Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ—he is none of his" Romans 8:9 When we think of eternity and its unchangeable realities, we feel as if we could not be too sure of a saving interest in its glories, and preparation for its employments and enjoyments. Many, it is to be feared, are deceived, being too easily satisfied. They, because they have had some convictions of sin and some impression of divine things, take it for granted that they are Christians. Such make a profession of Christ, attend to gospel ordinances, quiet their consciences by the performance of some religious duties, and persuade themselves that they are safe for eternity. But, alas! in them the great thing is lacking; as the apostle, having spoken of the Romans being in the Spirit, and having the Spirit of God dwelling in them, adds, "Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ—he is none of his" (Romans 8:9).

Some Wish To Be Considered Christ's. That he has a people peculiarly his own, whom he has chosen for himself, redeemed from among men, and peculiarly privileged, is plain. It is no wonder, therefore, that some wish to be considered Christ's, who are not. Yet it is great folly, for their pretensions will one day be exposed, and their profession will be condemned.

"He taught his disciples" Mark 9:31. Those who are really Christ's, are called His disciples, because they are brought, in a child-like, docile spirit, to sit down at His feet and receive His words. From Him—they learn all their theology. On spiritual subjects—they know no more than He teaches them. They receive what He teaches, not because they understand, approve, or admire it—but simply on the ground of His authority. They, as little children, receive the doctrines which He teaches, and embrace the precepts which He gives. His knowledge—is their library, His example—is their rule, and His will—is their law. They not only receive—but retain and hold fast His Word; as he said, "If you continue in My Word—then are you My disciples indeed!" John 8:31

Those who are Christ's, are his servants, for their knowledge is to be reduced to practice. They not only hear—but do the things which he teaches. In his world or in his Church he finds work for all who profess his name; and he expects them to work for him, and out of love to him. To the flesh, the work he appoints to be done is very often trying, and calls for much self-denial. But if he commands, his servants must obey; for without obedience, the claim to be considered his will never be admitted. Hear his own words: "Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" As if he had said, 'Do my will, obey my commands, and copy my example, in keeping my Father's commandments, and I will acknowledge you as mine.'

Without a practical conformity to the will of Christ, we cannot establish a claim to be considered the disciples or servants of Christ.

Those who are Christ's are his brethren, for they have the same nature, and belong to the same family. Hence we read, "For both he who sanctifies, and those who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He was not ashamed when he dwelt among them; as he, stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, said, "Behold my mother and

my brethren! For whoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." So also, after his resurrection, he said, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Oh, blessed relation to Jesus! oh, glorious connection with him! Jesus and his people are not only of one nature—but they form one family. All who believe on him, and lovingly obey him, are recognized by him as his brethren. But, nearer still, they who are Christ's—are his bride—are taken into the nearest, dearest, and most lasting union possible. Believers are married to Christ, and are bound to submit their wills to Christ, and to leave him to dispose of their persons and services as he pleases. The Church is subject to Christ in everything; and as is the body, so is every individual member of that body. The Church shares with Christ in all his afflictions, in all his wealth, and in all his honors. Do we wonder, then, that some claim to be considered Christ's—who are not? But without a knowledge of Christ's person, without a full trust in Christ's work, without habitual communion with him, without a practical conformity to him—the claim will not be allowed.

Those who are Christ's, are entitled to all the promises of his Word. These are many, exceeding great, and very precious. They embrace all that God has to bestow, they secure all the Christian can possibly need. They were made to exhibit the richest grace, they are confirmed in the most solemn manner, and they are sure to all the covenant seed. They not only provide for all the vicissitudes of time—but they embrace all that can be possessed or enjoyed in eternity. All God can consistently give to us, all that Christ could procure for us, and all that can be conferred by the Holy Spirit upon us—is made over to believers in God's precious promises.

They who are Christ's are entitled to all the provisions of his house. For them the great feast, the feast of fat things, is made; for them the wedding-garment is provided; for them the cleansing fountain is opened; for them the holy ordinances were instituted; and for them the high and holy communion with God was ordained. The songs of saints, the service of angels, the flesh and blood of the Son of God, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to see the goings of our God and our King in the sanctuary—are all for them. All on earth that can bring foretastes of heaven, or prepare us for heaven—is for those who are Christ's.

They who are Christ's are entitled to all the prospects of his chosen ones. For them a glorious paradise will bloom; for them the pure river of the water of life will flow; for them the tree of life will bear its twelve manner of fruits; for them the hidden manna is kept in store; for them the holy city will descend out of heaven from God; for them the many mansions are provided; for them Jesus has gone to prepare a place. They have in prospect the enjoyment of perpetual health, the possession of perfect holiness, the realization of the highest happiness, and the being invested with the greatest honor! To be with Christ, to be like Christ, and to enjoy the presence of Christ in all his glory—are the prospect of God's chosen. The Possession of the Spirit of Christ—Is Necessary to Establish Our Claim to Be Considered Christ's. "Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ—he is none of his." He may, like the foolish virgins, profess Christ, take the lamp, go forth to meet the Bridegroom, never go back again into the world—and yet not really be Christ's. How solemn is this! Yes, men may be enlightened—and not quickened; they may taste the good word of God—and not feed on the bread of life; they may feel the powers of the world to come—and not be created anew in Christ Jesus; they may possess the Spirit in his gifts—and yet, not having his grace, may never bring forth his fruits.

Paul's criterion is, "having the Spirit of Christ"—no matter what a man has, if he has not this, "he is none of his." By "the Spirit of Christ" here, we do not understand the temper or disposition of Christ—but the Holy and Eternal Spirit, of which Paul had been speaking before—that Spirit which inspired the holy prophets to write of Christ, and which Jesus promised to send into the world. This divine agent, as the Spirit of Christ—always convinces the soul of its need of Christ. Many have been convinced of sin, and have been made uneasy about sin—who have never really and distinctly felt their need of Christ. Now, the Spirit of Christ not only convinces of sin in general—but reveals Christ to the mind, and shows that the lack of faith in Christ, is a sin. He sets forth Christ as exactly adapted to the sinner, shows that Christ is the one thing needed by the sinner, awakens an unconquerable desire after Christ, nor will he allow the soul to rest until it has closed with Christ. The Spirit of Christ—always leads to the cross of Christ. He will not allow the soul to stop at, or rest in, sacraments, ceremonies, or any duties it may perform. He points to the cross. He leads to the cross. He fixes the sinner's eye upon the cross. He brings peace to the soul through the cross. He dedicates and devotes the sinner to God's service at the cross. Every one who has the Spirit of Christ—knows something of the worth, virtue, and efficacy of the cross of Christ. The Spirit of Christ always conforms to the image of Christ. Christ is the model after which the Spirit works; and by the word and ordinances, by providence and his own inward operations—he stamps the likeness of Christ upon the soul. He fixes the eye on Jesus, who, as a mirror, represents and sets forth the glory of God; and by looking at Jesus—a divine transformation takes place, and we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit of Christ always consecrates to the service of Christ. Where the Spirit of Christ is, there is spirituality, there is activity—spiritual activity for God. To possess Christ is the soul's first aim; to profess Christ is its next; and to serve, honor, and glorify Christ, is its aim ever after.

Unless, therefore, we have been taught our need of Christ as a Savior; unless we have been led to the cross of Christ to seek salvation there; unless we are in some degree conformed to Christ, and are daily seeking more conformity; and unless we are consecrated to the service of Christ, we have not the Spirit of Christ;—and if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are "none of his." The Spirit of Christ in a believer—is a Spirit of life, which quickens him from a death in sin, and keeps him alive ever after, so that he lives a life of faith upon the Son of God.

He is also a Spirit of love, shedding abroad the love of God, constraining the soul by the love of Christ, and making it a loving soul.

He is the source of charity to others; and you know, let a man have what he may, if he has not charity—he is nothing.

He is also a Spirit of liberality, so that the soul is willing to give anything to Christ, or part with anything for Christ. The Christian, therefore, relieves Christ in his members, and gives to Christ in his cause. To all such, therefore, He will say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Matthew 25:34-36

He is also a Spirit of liberty, leading from:

the bondage of the law,
the vassalage of the world,
and the hard service of Satan,

and enabling us to serve God in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. He gives us liberty to approach God, to worship God, to serve God, and to enjoy God.

He is a lamb-like Spirit, producing patience, meekness, gentleness, goodness, and usefulness, in all in whom he dwells.

If, therefore, we have the Spirit of Christ, we have the life of God within us; the grace of love is manifested by us; generous liberality appears in us; holy liberty is enjoyed by us; and the lamb, not the wolf, represents us;—but if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are "none of his."

Christ will not own all who lay claim to him—this he expressly tells us: "Many will say unto me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, you who work iniquity!" It is not wonderful works—but holy works, that prove us to be Christ's; and where these are not, he will say, "I never approved of you."

Unfounded confidence is dangerous. Faith in Christ is a precious grace. Confidence in God is both a duty and a privilege. But confidence in the goodness of one's state—is not always safe. It is to be feared that many imagine themselves to be Christians, who are not. They think they are Christ's—but they have not his Spirit. Self-examination is therefore necessary. We ought not to be always questioning our state; but we ought thoroughly to investigate it, and make sure upon good grounds that it is safe, and then go forward in the Lord's work and way. But there are times when examination into the ground of our hope and the foundation of our assurance is necessary; therefore let it not be neglected. The Spirit of Christ—is the great proof that we are Christ's. There may be much feeling, a moral reformation, and a profession of religion—without this. But if we have the Spirit of Christ, our thoughts will be engaged with him, our hearts will be going out to him, and we shall at times long to depart, that we may be with him, and see him as he is. The Spirit of Christ always renders Christ precious, and produces the highest possible esteem of him. The Spirit of Christ always makes its possessor like Christ. Not perfectly, here—yet he kindles and keeps alive a desire for perfect likeness. This is the great, the grand, the habitual aim of the soul, always and everywhere, to be like Christ. This would satisfy it in the absence of all besides—but nothing else would ever quiet its craving, or give it full satisfaction in the absence of this!

11. Death and Life

11. Death and Life

"And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness" Romans 8:10

Man is a complex being, possessed of body and soul. Real religion has its seat in the latter—but it affects and influences the former. The whole person of man must be saved or lost. Sin affects the entire person, and so does grace. But if the entire person is affected by grace, how is it that the body dies? To this the apostle now directs our attention, saying, "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10). The Privilege Supposed. "If Christ is in you." Christ dwells in all his people by his Spirit, who, as infinite, can dwell in myriads of people, as well as fill heaven and earth, at the same time. This fact we can believe, and draw much comfort from it; but as the acting of the Infinite cannot be comprehended by the finite, we cannot fully understand it. That the Spirit is in us we know, and that he is also in all believers in the same way we believe.

Christ is in us as the food is in the body. He is our spiritual sustenance, the bread of life, and we feed on him. He gives the living water, and we receive it from him. Now, the body does not more really receive food, and derive from it nourishment, strength, and vigor—than the soul receives Christ, deriving from him spiritual nourishment, strength, and vigor. Christ is in us as the soul is in the body. As the soul quickens, animates, and energizes the body, so does Christ the soul; and to his Spirit we are indebted for every holy thought, every pure desire, and every godlike purpose. Nor is the soul more truly in the body—than Christ is in the believer's soul. Nor is the soul more truly the life of the body—than Christ is the life of the soul. "Christ lives in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Christ is in the soul as its hope. Therefore Paul, speaking of the saints, says, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Our hope of glory is founded on Christ, and on Christ alone; and our hope of glory is excited and sustained by Christ. It is founded on Christ without us—and what he has done for us; but it is excited and sustained by Christ within us—and what he communicates unto us.

Christ is in us—as the beauty of the soul. Therefore, when the apostle stood in doubt of the Galatians, such was his anxiety to present them to God in the beauty of holiness, that he experienced deep pangs of soul on their account. Hear him speak to them: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you." Once before he had passed through deep and painful exercises of soul on their account, and now he travails in birth for them again. O for this intense love to souls in every minister's heart! Nor in every minister's only—but in every believer's!

Christ is in the soul as its new-creator. As God, when he had formed and fitted up the world for the reception of man, came into it, looked over it, rejoiced in it, and pronounced it very good, so does Christ in his new creation. "If any man is in Christ—he is a new creature." "Created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works." Thus Christ is in us, and we are in Christ.

If Christ is in us, he will be in our thoughts; and our deepest, sweetest, and most frequent thoughts will be of him.

He will be in our affections; and as our loving thoughts will be of Christ, so our desires will ascend to Christ, and our affections will gather round him.

He will be in our hopes; all our expectations will be associated with Christ. His coming will be the object of our hope, and to be forever with him will be our highest expectation and joy.

He will be in our confidence. To him we shall confide all; with him we shall entrust all. In no one will our hearts repose with such satisfaction and pleasure as in Jesus.

Indeed, the whole soul will be more taken up with Christ than with anything or everything else. If we think at all—we shall think of Christ; if we love at all—we shall love Christ; if we hope at all—our hope will be connected with Christ; and if we have confidence in anyone—we shall have confidence in Christ.

We partake of Christ first, and then of his benefits. So says the apostle, "He who has the Son—has life." First, we have the Son; and, having the Son, we have life—eternal life. We receive Christ at our regeneration: "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him."

We abide in Christ: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." We enjoy the manifestation and inhabitation of Christ: "If a man loves me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him—and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Thus there is an identification with Christ. We are in him, he is in us. In him we died, were buried, arose, ascended, and are made to sit down in the heavenly places. We were buried with him in baptism; in which also we were raised with him, by the faith of the operation of God. In us Christ lives, walks, reigns, and holds communion; he supping with us, and we with him. But here is: A Solemn Fact Admitted."The body is dead because of sin." It must die. It is said to be dead, because the sentence of death is passed upon it: "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." "It is appointed unto men once to die." The execution is begun, in the various and painful diseases which find a home in the body. It is therefore called a "vile body." It must die because of sin—because of Adam's sin: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The margin reads, "In whom all have sinned;" for as Adam was our representative, we were involved in all he did; therefore we derive from him a corrupt nature, and are born under a sentence of death. But our own sin deserves death, and though the guilt of it is atoned for, this natural effect of it remains, as God's testimony against it, and the proof of his displeasure: "The wages of sin is death." But death is not only retained as God's original sentence against sin, it is also his method of freeing us from all the infirmities produced by sin, and ultimately preparing us for glory. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption." Therefore,

those who are found alive at the coming of the Lord, must undergo a change similar to that we experience at death. The body is said to be dead, not death: the dead may live again—but death cannot; so the body will live again, at the coming of the Lord. We have now A Distinguishing Experience Pointed Out. "The spirit is life, because of righteousness" "The spirit is life" not merely living, because it has eternal life, and can never, never die. We live through the operation of Christ within us, who by his Spirit quickens, revives, restores, supports, and supplies the soul. We live through communion with Christ without us, going to him, receiving from him, and having fellowship with him. "The spirit," or soul, "is life, because of righteousness;" that is, Christ's righteousness; for as we die because of Adam's sin, so we live because of Christ's righteousness. With Christ we are one, and so he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, when he was made sin for us, and was delivered for our offences; and so we receive, possess, and are entitled to all the effects of his righteousness.

O glorious mystery! Christ made sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him! O strange connection! as one with Adam—we die; but as one with Jesus—we live, and live forever! Here is life notwithstanding death, and life for body and soul forever; as Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he were dead—yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." Never die—but live, and live forever! The passage presents three contrasts:

a contrast between the body and the soul,

another between death and life, and

a third between sin and righteousness.

Paul had spoken of the law as the law of sin, before; he speaks of it as the law of death now—it is "the law of sin and death."

Death in the believer will be destruction of its parent, sin. Sin introduced death, and death will eternally exclude sin. Our souls and bodies will both live, live in union and in harmony forever. Jesus will lose nothing purchased by him, or given by the Father to him. Hence he says, "This is the Father's will who has sent me, that of all whom he has given me I should lose nothing—but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him who sent me, that every one which sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Jesus may be expected to come soon, and when he comes, he will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The soul is now provided for, and will enjoy the provision made for it at death, which we do not exactly understand now: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Then we come to the general assembly—to the spirits, or souls, of the just men made perfect. We must enter glory by the same way as Jesus did—through death and the grave. We must be conformed to him in death, before we are conformed to him in the resurrection. Painful and unpleasant as death may be, there is something pleasing in the thought that we go by the way

Jesus went, and place our feet where he has placed his before us, and for us. Let us not think too much of the body or its death—but rather let us rejoice in the life of the spirit, and in the righteousness of Jesus, through which that spirit lives. "If a man dies—shall he live again?" Yes, and live more fully, more perfectly, yes, and eternally live! Yes, we shall live like Jesus, live with Jesus, live for Jesus, and live to Jesus for ever! Jesus now lives in us; and soon, it may be very soon, we shall live with him!

12. Our Resurrection

12. Our Resurrection

"But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwells in you" Romans 8:11 The apostle, having asserted that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," seems to anticipate an objection, "If there is no condemnation, how is it there is any death?" This he had partly replied to when he said, "The body is dead because of sin—but the spirit is life because of righteousness." And now he proceeds to meet the objection further, by showing that, in virtue of union with Christ, a glorious resurrection is sure: "But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). Here is: A Condition. "If the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you" The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father, because he proceeds from the Father, and is a paternal gift to his children. It proves our adoption, and displays our Father's love; for after the gift of his Son—the Father could give us nothing greater than his Holy Spirit. Besides this, it is intended to prepare us to be with him, fitting and qualifying us to dwell in his presence. For as Jesus did all that was needful to be done outside us, so the Holy Spirit commences, carries on, and completes the work within us.

He dwells in all the Lord's people, working in them to will and to do of his good pleasure, witnessing to their adoption, and keeping them from ten thousand evils. He dwells in them, in the name of the Father, for the honor of the Son, and to make good the gracious promises of his word. He is our Sanctifier, separating us from the world, consecrating us to God, and producing the image of Christ within us. He is our Guide, leading us to Jesus, guiding us into the truth, and directing us in the way that leads to our Father's house. He is our Comforter, who comforts us in all our tribulations, fills us with joy and peace in believing, and enables us to abound in hope by his power. When he once takes up his residence within us; he maintains it—He never abandons his temple or gives up his charge. Jesus is before the Father for us, and the Holy Spirit is for Jesus within us, and both the effect of the Father's infinite love to us. Mark: The Fact Founded On The Condition. "He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit which dwells in you." The Father raised up his Son from the dead; for though the resurrection of Christ is ascribed to himself, and also to the Holy Spirit—yet it is generally ascribed to the Father. For, as the Father delivered him up to justice, and into the hands of wicked men; as it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to put him to grief; as he committed his departing spirit into the hands of his Father; so it was most befitting that he should be raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father. His resurrection was not only his acquittal as the substitute of his people—but it was his public justification before all worlds. The resurrection of Christ—is the pattern and pledge of ours. As Christ was raised from the dead—so shall we be. Because Christ was raised from the dead—therefore we shall be. We die, for we were represented by Adam; we shall rise again, because represented by Christ. We died through our union with the first man; we shall live through our union with the second. Jesus the head has risen, therefore all his members

shall rise. As Jesus shared with us in our degradation, so we shall share with him in his glorification. The rising of the Savior secures the resurrection of all that are saved by him.

"He shall quicken your mortal bodies."—These very bodies shall rise again. As the very body of Christ which was nailed to the cross arose, with all the marks of the scourge, thorns, nails, and spear upon it, so these very bodies of ours in which we suffer shall be raised from the grave. The same bodies—but O how will they be changed! Everything that rendered them mortal shall be done away. All defects and hindrances, all the causes of pain or suffering, gone—are gone forever. Sown in corruption, it will be raised in incorruption. Sown in dishonor, it will be raised in glory. Sown in weakness, it will be raised in power. Sown a natural body, it will be raised a spiritual body. Sown in the likeness of the first Adam, it will be raised in the likeness of the second. Nor will our resurrection be merely by the exercise of authority, or by the exertion of power—but by his Spirit who dwells in us. On account of his Spirit, who possesses us as his temple, and claims us in the name of Christ. "By his Spirit;" by the agency and power of the Spirit, who is the bond of union between Christ and his people. As the breath appears to be the bond of union between the soul and the body, so the Spirit, whose well-known emblem is the breath, is the bond of union between Christ and the soul. The Spirit is in all the members, as he was in the Head; and as we read of Jesus, that he was "put to death in the flesh—but quickened by the Spirit," so shall we also be quickened by the Spirit. For as the germ of life lies hidden in the tiniest seed, and bursts forth into a plant or flower in the spring; so the Spirit will keep possession of the dust of the saints until the command is given, "Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." As the Spirit wrought in Christ, so he does and will work in us; and he is in us as the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession—which is at the first resurrection. Until then he has sealed us, so that we are sacred to the Lord, and shall be kept safe until Jesus comes, who will break the seal and publicly exhibit his hidden ones before all worlds.

We are now freed from the dominion and power of sin, not being under the law—but under grace; and we shall be freed from the power of death, when Jesus comes to call us from the grave. As neither sin nor death has now any power or dominion over Jesus; so, soon, neither sin nor death shall have any power over us. We shall be free, as Jesus is free; and glorious, as Jesus is glorious! By the indwelling of the Spirit, we have a right to rise; being the children of the resurrection, we come to resurrection by heirship! As Jesus said, "They shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead," (from among the dead, the first resurrection), "neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." And Paul seems to teach something very like this, when he says, "He who sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The Holy Spirit will, therefore, be an active agent in the resurrection of the saints, when the dead in Christ will rise first. We are sure of a glorious resurrection, for the Spirit within us is the pledge of it. God will not take back the pledge he has given—but will acknowledge it, and honor it, by putting us into the full, perfect, and eternal possession, of all that he engaged to bestow when he gave that pledge—a part of which was a glorious resurrection from the dead, after the example of the resurrection of Christ. As the Sonship of Christ was cleared, proved, and manifested by his resurrection from the dead—so will ours be. We read, "He was declared," (determined, proved, or

manifested), "to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Or, he was powerfully proved or demonstrated to be the only-begotten Son of God, invested with all power, and possessing a divine nature, by the resurrection from the dead. Jesus had declared that he was divine—for this he was charged with blasphemy and condemned to die; he claimed to be the only-begotten Son of God—his claim was denied; but when he arose gloriously from the dead, invested with all power in heaven and in earth, he proved absolutely that he was divine. Well, we also claim to be the sons of God, by adoption and grace; our claim is denied, the world will not acknowledge us to be such; but when we are raised from the dead, by the power of the Spirit, in the likeness of Jesus, the matter will be placed beyond doubt. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." The Spirit never gives up his hold of us, or his possession of us—no, not at death! We are as much united to Christ in death as in life; we are, therefore, said to "sleep in Jesus." The Spirit that formed the union between Christ and the soul, maintains it; so that neither death nor life can separate us from Christ, or from the love of God in him. The pleading Savior and the indwelling Spirit will secure to us a glorious resurrection unto eternal life. The whole Church will be made alive in Christ, as his perfect, glorious, mystical body.

Lost sinners will be raised from the dead—but they will not be made alive in Christ. This is nowhere asserted of them; it is a privilege peculiar to the saints. Paul, when discussing the doctrine of the saints' resurrection—for he does not refer to the resurrection of sinners, or of those who die in sin—says, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." As all in Adam died, by virtue of their connection with him; so all in Christ shall be made alive, by virtue of their connection with him. But are all in Christ, as all were in Adam? Certainly not. Each had his seed in him; he represented them, he communicated to them: as, therefore, Adam communicated guilt, disease, and death to all his seed; so Christ communicates righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life to all his. They live in Jesus, in life; they sleep in Jesus, in death; and they are made alive in Jesus at the resurrection.

Every man will rise in his order or rank: Christ, as the first-fruits, first; afterward, or next, those who are Christ's at his coming. Christ, the first-born, is risen, has ascended to heaven, and has sent down the Holy Spirit in his name and place into the Church: that Spirit claims, possesses, and pervades the whole Church; he has the care and charge of it, nor will he give up his charge until he raises every member of it from the dead, in the glorious likeness of Jesus; who will receive it, look upon it, and be delighted with it, as a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

13. We Are Debtors

13. We Are Debtors "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" Romans 8:12 The privileges of the gospel lay us under the deepest and most solemn obligations. Every privilege binds us to duty, and demands hearty obedience at our hands. Grace leads from sin-and never gives a license to it. The more we realize the goodness of God, and the more we enjoy the privileges of the gospel—the more we feel bound to glorify God in our bodies, and souls, and spirits. The apostle felt this, and, therefore, having set forth the high privileges of the gospel, and having led the minds of the Lord's people forward to a glorious resurrection, he seems to pause, and, as one struck with the wondrous favors conferred, exclaims, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Romans 8:12). The Relation. "Brethren." The Church is a holy brotherhood; every member is God's child, every member is Christ's brother. Alluding to each one that receives the word of God, and keeps it, he says, "The same is my brother." We form one family under God, our Father. We are one family in Christ, our elder Brother.

"Brethren"—here is equality. Not that there are no differences or distinctions; for there are babes, young men, and fathers. There are different gifts, and different administrations. Some are in office, and some are not. Some are to guide, others are to follow. Some are to feed, others are to be fed. Some rule, others are ruled. But we have all the same nature, we all stand in the same relation to God and to each other, are all partakers of the same grace, and shall all meet in the same family mansion, at the end of our journey.

"Brethren"—here is love, fraternal love. To such the apostle speaks, "Love as brethren." To such the apostle refers, "Love the brotherhood." As we are all one in Christ, we should love each other. As we are to dwell together in heaven—we should lovingly walk together on earth. As we are all under grace, we are all equally and alike debtors. Paul places himself beside the believing Romans, and says, "Brethren, we are debtors" The Information. This is an inference or conclusion drawn from what he had stated before. God having done so much for us, having conferred so much upon us, and having brought us into such a high and honorable connection with himself—we are not at our own disposal. It is for the Lord to dispose of us as he will: we are absolutely his property, for we have put ourselves into his hands, that he may use us, and dispose of us as he pleases. We are not left to our own direction. In all our ways we should acknowledge him, and he will direct our paths. We should consult God's word, ask his counsel, watch his hand, and give up our own wills to his. We are not in the flesh—but in the Spirit; therefore we are debtors.

We owe everything to God, as men; for we depend on him, and are accountable to him. He is our creator; for it is he who has made us, and not we ourselves. He is our owner; for he created us for himself, and for his own use and glory. He is our ruler, ruling us, as moral, intelligent, and accountable creatures, by his laws, to which he has appended rewards and punishments. He rules us by moral motives, and by moral means.

Much more as Christians, do we owe everything to God. Our obligation is grounded upon our redemption. We were in abject misery, wretched slavery, and under the sentence of eternal death; from all which we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver or gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot! Having thus redeemed us, Jesus claims us; therefore says the apostle, "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." To have us for his own, and at his own disposal, to have a right to rule us and reign over us, was that which Jesus had in view in all he did and suffered. Hence we read, "We are the Lord's: for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." On the ground of our redemption, therefore, are we under obligation to the Lord; so also on the ground of our regeneration. Are we born again, born of God, created anew in Christ Jesus? The Lord says, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." The apostle also testifies that we are "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." We are born of the Spirit; born again, not of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. Thus we became spiritual, thus we were fitted for God's service on earth, and for the enjoyment of God's glory in heaven.

Thus on the ground of our regeneration we are under obligation to God; so also on the ground of our baptism. In baptism we professed our faith in Christ, sought to be identified with Christ, publicly put on Christ, and consecrated ourselves to Christ. We openly surrendered ourselves to him, to be used by him, employed for him, and to be disposed of just as he pleased. We said, "I am the Lord's." We told all around us, that we wished to be regarded as the Lord's property, to be considered one of the Lord's people, one of Christ's disciples. We voluntarily came under obligation to Christ, and bound ourselves to obey and serve him. As by our baptism we are under obligation to God, so also on the ground of the promised resurrection. We expect to be raised by the Spirit, to be raised in union with Christ, and to be raised in the likeness of Christ. We expect, as the dead in Christ, to rise first; to be raised out from among the dead; and, as the upright, to have the dominion in the resurrection morning. As the anticipation of a glorious resurrection lays us under obligation to God, so does the indwelling of the Spirit and its design. The Spirit of God dwells in us for the most gracious purposes, and with the most glorious design. By this we are distinguished, honored, and exalted. We are brought nearer to God, made more like God, and shall ultimately be filled with all the fullness of God. Well, then, may the apostle say, "brethren, we are debtors!" Our obligation cannot be dissolved, it abides forever. We cannot dissolve it; we see not how God can—but if he can, he will not. We cannot transfer our obligation to another. Every one must meet it for himself, acknowledge it for himself, and honor it for himself.

"We are debtors, not to the flesh." This does not mean the body; for we are under obligation to feed it, clothe it, and preserve it—to treat it as a member of Christ, and as a temple of the Holy Spirit. By "the flesh" we understand the corrupt and corrupting principles that dwell in us, and make use of the senses and members of the body. Now we are under no obligation to yield to this flesh, or pamper it, or indulge it. All our natural appetites should be kept under control, and we should eat and drink, dress and work—as men who are bound to please God, and to glorify him in all things. We are not debtors to the flesh—but we are debtors to the Spirit, and we should ever follow His leadings, obey His impulses, and encourage His aspirations. To the Spirit speaking in the Word, we should listen; to the Spirit working in the heart, we should yield; and to the Spirit

manifesting the will of God in the dispensations of divine providence, we should bow.

If obedience is a debt—then there can be no merit. But obedience is a debt which God justly demands, and he is wronged if it is not paid; nor can we be honest if we do not desire, strive, and seek grace from God, that we may do his will from the heart. As our debt is never discharged, as the claims of God are never fully met—it is impossible that we should merit anything at the hands of God. If we are bound to obey the Spirit, then the gratification of the flesh is rebellion.

Yet, how many there are, who grieve the Spirit! and if they do not absolutely live after the flesh, they yield to it, indulge it, and allow it to rule to a certain extent in their tempers, dispositions, objects and aims. Whereas, as we are debtors to the Spirit, and are bound to live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, to every temptation of the flesh we should reply, "I am a debtor!" We owe ourselves and our all, to a certain Creditor; and if we have any honor, we shall not encourage his enemy, nor squander our talents on his foe.

Attempting to pay, we receive back more than we give. As the Psalmist said, "In keeping His commandments there is a great reward." So also the Apostle James, "Whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer—but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Rendering unto God the things which are God's—we enjoy a sweet and holy sense of satisfaction within; in addition to which the Lord meets with us, shines upon us, whispers loving words to us, and renews our strength. The way of the transgressor is hard; but the ways of wisdom are pleasant ways. Our debt daily increases, in consequence of new favors conferred. Never were we under obligations so strong and so numerous to serve the Lord as now. He daily loads us with his benefits. He crowns us with loving kindness and tender mercy. His mercies are new every morning, and his favors are without end. Thus our debts increase. Thus we become bound to the Lord in sweeter and stronger ties. To attempt to fully meet our obligation is but reasonable. Therefore Paul says, "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." As it is reasonable, so it is comfortable: for it brings us into connection with the Father, who is "the God of all comfort;" into fellowship with the Son, who is "the Consolation of Israel;" and into communion with the Holy Spirit, who is, emphatically, "The Comforter."

Reader, are you a debtor to man? Own it; and as soon as you possibly can, discharge it; for the law of the New Testament is, "Owe no man anything." To keep quite clear of debt, in a commercial country like this, appears to be next to impossible. But we should have no debts of long standing, or debts occasioned by love of dress, or for table luxuries; especially should we keep clear of all debts to those who obtain their living by their labor. Some professors are so heartless and cruel, that they employ the poor, who depend on their daily labor for their food; and when their work is done, neglect to discharge their bills for weeks or months! This is totally unscriptural, and highly improper. Brethren, in this sense let none of us be debtors; and, if possible, let us keep our families free from this sin. Are you in debt to God? I know you are. But are you as a Christian? If so, be honest—own it, feel it, endeavor to pay it by little installments, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and sending the gospel to those who have it not;—and if ever we are tempted to be idle, wasteful, or to procrastinate, may the words be sounded in our ears and our hearts, "We are debtors!"

14. Penalty and Reward

14. Penalty and Reward

"For if you live after the flesh—you shall die; but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body—you shall live" Romans 8:13

Profession is not possession; and many who profess to be religious are destitute of the vital principle. Like the foolish virgins, they have the virgin's garb and the lamp; but they have no oil in their vessels: and so when the Bridegroom comes, they will be found unready, with their lamps gone out. To prevent this, the apostle often writes so as to awaken suspicions, and lead to self-examination. He guards the professed followers of Christ against carnal security, and is most careful to insist upon the essentials of experimental and practical godliness. "Be not high-minded—but fear," he writes to these Romans. "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," he writes to the Hebrews. And in the passage that now comes under our consideration, with an almost unusual sternness he says, "For if you live after the flesh—you shall die; but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body—you shall live" (Romans 8:13).

Carnality and its Penalty. By "the flesh," he intends corrupt nature, or nature as under the power and direction of corruption. Hence he says of himself, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." It is corrupt—wholly corrupt—always corrupt. We must be delivered from it, and it must be destroyed in us. To "live after the flesh," is to allow the sensual appetites to rule us, as they do the unregenerate, and once did believers; as we read, "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

It includes also being under the government of corrupted reason, and of the depraved will. He connects all the three in Galatians 5:19-21 : "Now the works of the flesh are obvious: (and he begins with the sensual appetites,) sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; (and he closes with the depraved will,) hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God!" Galatians 5:19-21 In our natural state, the flesh in one form or other governs: "For we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." First, foolish—then disobedient—and then deceived. This is always the case: the man that gives way to folly, will disobey God; and then, for a time, at least, God gives him up to deception. As the Lord said by the prophet, "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighted in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them."

Now, if we live after the flesh, or allow the flesh to govern us; if we make it our business to gratify it, minding the things of the flesh; if we make its gratification our end or business—we shall die.

Some did, to whom Paul alluded when he said, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Our Lord also gives an instance of one such in the person of a Jew: "And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-21

Here is one specimen of living after the flesh. If we habitually consult the flesh, and live in the indulgence of it, in any one of its forms—either yielding to the sensual appetites, or allowing corrupted reason to direct or control our minds, or yielding to the depraved will in our conduct and behavior—we shall die. The death intended is the second death—eternal death. This is required by the justice of God; for all who so live are at enmity with God—they refuse the gospel remedy which God has provided for their moral malady, and prefer the indulgence of the flesh, though they know that the end of these things is death. Now, if a man, out of enmity to God, refuses to make use of the remedy which God at an infinite expense has provided for his guilt and depravity, and prefers going on in the course that leads to death—does he not deserve to be punished with death! And will not, must not, justice award to the man his desert! The prevalence of the principle must decide our condition: if the principle that prevails and rules us be the flesh—then we are carnal, and must die; but if the ruling principle be the Spirit—then we are spiritual, and we shall live. Here is, then,

Spirituality and its Reward."If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." The deeds of the body must be mortified. By "the body," some understand the sin that dwells in us, which is compared to a body. It is called "the body of this death." And our apostle speaks of "the body of the sins of the flesh;" and exhorts the Colossians thus, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived." Colossians 3:5-7

Therefore it is added, "But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. But Christ is all, and is in all." Colossians 3:8-11. But as the affections of the mind—are manifested by the deeds of the body, it may be best to take the words in their literal and general sense, "If you mortify the deeds of the body." Hence Paul said before, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness." You felt yourselves under no obligation to mortify sin, and live a holy life. To "mortify" is to put to death, or destroy; and the mortification of sin consists in a constant opposition to it, and warfare with it, until it dies. But sin dies slowly; its life seems to be all but immortal. The

believer finds that in mortifying sin, he has to groan under it: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is a clog to him, a burden upon him, a constant hindrance to him in his course: "We who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." He has to strive against it: "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." The flesh longs for what is carnal, and the Spirit longs for what is spiritual; the flesh strives for the mastery, and the Spirit strives for the mastery; and these being absolutely and always contrary to each other, there is an almost incessant conflict within, and will be, until the weaker dies.

He has also to starve it. Hence our apostle exhorts, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Imitate Christ; clothe yourself with Christ; aim always to do as Christ did, or would do; and make no provision to gratify the flesh. He has to put it off, refusing to accommodate it, or live in the practice of that which indulges it: "That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

He has to subdue it, as Paul did, who says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." He was striving for the mastery, he was fighting and running for a prize; and as the body clogged and hindered him, he disciplined it, subdued it; lest, when he appeared before the Judge who awarded the prizes, he should be disapproved of, and not be adjudged entitled to the prize he had aimed at.

He has to die to it—that as the dead man loses his interest in, and relish for, the things of this life, so should he in reference to sin. So we read, "Likewise reckon you yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin—but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." And now, lest the believer should be discouraged, because the work is so arduous, sin being so strong, and we being so weak; and because, by reason of habit, it has become like a second nature; the apostle reminds us that we have a divine and almighty helper, even the Holy Spirit!

"If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body." Sin is first pardoned, then mortified. The Spirit, therefore, first leads us to the cross, and after that to do battle with our inbred foes. The Spirit is the sanctifier of the Lord's people; but in the work, they are not passive—but active. God gives the Spirit: "I will put a new Spirit within them; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." The Spirit communicates grace, by which he subdues our iniquities. He applies the word, and we are sanctified through the truth, cleansed as in the laver of the word. He uses providence, which, like the gardener's pruning-knife, prunes the branch in the living Vine and makes it fruitful; or, like a strong wind, cleanses the floor.

Under the gracious teaching of the Spirit, we make use of means for the mortification of sin; not such as the poor blind Pagan or the superstitious Papist would use—but such as God's word directs us to employ: as prayer; like Paul, who, when the messenger of Satan came to buffet him, "besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him:" and the word, which has a cleansing power; as Jesus said, "You are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you."

There are special seasons when this work of mortification may be more successfully carried on; as, when God embitters sin, saying, "Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the Lord your God." As when the Spirit works in us under the word, producing hatred to sin, ardent longings for holiness, and inciting to oppose and overcome the corruptions that work within; as Peter represents it, "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto sincere love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently." Also after a fall, as was the case with David, as we read in Psalms 38:1-22; Psalms 51:1-19.

"If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live;"—live a life of grace—in communion with God and devotedness to God; and you shall live a life of glory—in the presence of God and of the Lamb forever!

Sin must die—or the sinner. Both cannot live, therefore let us strike at the root of sin, and not be satisfied with lopping off the branches. Thus Paul distinguishes between those who are Christ's and others: "Those who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Crucified it! not only sentenced it, or allowed it to starve—but put it to the most painful, shameful, and lingering death.

Let us aim at pleasant sins, at those into which God's people are most prone to fall, and those in which our flesh finds most pleasure. If we are not at war with sin—we are at war with God. We cannot be at peace with both. God utterly hates and abhors sin; and in his word we read, in the plainest terms, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." O for grace to carry on the work of mortification vigorously and successfully!

15. The Spirit's Leading

15. The Spirit's Leading "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God—they are the sons of God" Romans 8:14 The apostle, having asserted that if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body—then eternal life shall be ours; proceeds to give several other reasons why we may expect to enjoy that privilege. As the inheritance comes by heirship, and heirship by relationship, he notices first our filial relation to God—as proved by the gracious leading of the Holy Spirit: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God—they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). The Privilege. "They are the sons of God." God has very graciously brought some of his fallen creatures into a near relation to himself; constituting those, who were once aliens and strangers, his sons and daughters. In order to which he did, in the covenant of grace, choose, set apart, and predestine them to this privilege, as we read elsewhere: "Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

He very early associated them with Christ, his only-begotten Son, as we read: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." O blessed privilege!—chosen in him!—blessed in him!—predestined to adoption by him!—associated with Jesus before the foundation of the world!—and all as expressing our heavenly Father's great love to us, his deep and undying interest in us! Being thus associated with Jesus by his Father's eternal decree, he took our nature, suffered for us, suffered like us, suffered with us, suffered through us, that he might be fully qualified to be the Captain of our salvation, and without failure bring all the sons to glory: "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers!" O blessed connection—one with Jesus! O glorious relation—not ashamed to call us brethren! As the sons of God, we are like Jesus: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Jesus is the first of the family. He is at the head of the race. He is the pattern Son. We are like him now in position, as the sons of God; loved with the same love, and joint-heirs with him of the same inheritance. We are like him in nature; for his Spirit dwells in us, having new-created us. We shall be like him perfectly, in every sense shortly; only we shall not be divine, or be entitled to his official glories. Chosen in him, united to him, inseparably identified with him, "as he is, so are we in this world."

We are the objects of God's special love. A man may love his property, his neighbors, his servants, his friends; but his love to his children is greater than his love to all these. So God loves his creation, loves his angels, loves the world; but his "great love" is that with which he loves us, his children. In eternity he loved us. His covenant was but an effect of his love to us: the wondrous work of redemption, with his promises, gifts, graces, and the prospects unfolded by his word, are but so many streams flowing from the ocean of his love. His love to us is wonderful, it passes

knowledge. "Herein is love, not that we loved God—but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

We are entitled to peculiar dignity and wealth. What an honor, to be the sons of God! What a prospect of wealth, to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ! We are kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with him. We are entitled to the unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches of grace, and riches of glory, are ours. As one with Christ, we inherit in Christ, and shall share with Christ. "What manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The Proof. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God—they are the sons of God." The Spirit who leads, also illuminates and sanctifies. By him they are led to see the utter hatefulness of sin, and the surpassing beauty of holiness; and to perceive the loveliness of Christ, in his person, offices, and work. They are led to feel a deep and abiding hatred to sin, and a strong and increasing love to holiness. The Spirit leads them to Christ, shows them his exact adaptation to them, and enables them to close with him, as the author of eternal salvation.

He leads them to holiness, separating them from the world, consecrating them to God, and making them zealous for good works.

He leads them to war with sin, both in themselves and in the world; to the enjoyment of peace with God, and communion with the Father and his Son; and puts them in possession of true spirituality.

They now see the beauty, excellence, and value of spiritual things, and therefore they mind the things of the Spirit. To be "led by the Spirit" is to be under the government of the Spirit as a TEACHER, who unfolds and leads into the truth; as a SANCTIFIER, who cleanses from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; as a GUIDE, who leads from earth to heaven; and as a COMFORTER, who comforts us in all our tribulations.

If we are led by the Spirit, we shall love the Bible, prize divine ordinances, be much in prayer, come out from the world and be separate, and walk in holy fellowship with God; we shall resist Satan, watch against temptation, and avoid the very appearance of evil.

Let us, then, obey the Spirit, as he speaks in the word. The precepts of the New Testament proceed immediately from the Holy Spirit. To resist them is to resist him. To neglect them is to pour contempt on him. To disobey them is to disobey him. To obey them is to obey him. Let us, then, make the written word our rule, and seek in all things to know the mind of the Spirit, in order that we may obey the dictates of the Spirit.

Let us, then, yield to the Spirit, as he works in the heart. Dwelling as he does in us, he works on the understanding, affections, and will. He often prompts us to do good, and checks us when we are about to do evil. If we, in all things, and at all times, yielded to him—we would honor Jesus more; we would adorn the gospel more; our distinctness from the world would be more complete; our usefulness in the world would be much greater; and our attachment to the Lord's people would be much stronger.

He ever leads us from evil, and every evil way; he ever leads us into the way of holiness and the paths of truth. Let us, then, walk in the Spirit, leading us in the way. As to walk in love, is to walk under the influence of love; so to walk in the Spirit, is to walk as influenced, directed, and guided by the Spirit. We must either yield to the Spirit—or resist him; we must walk in accordance with his

dictates—or contrary to him. If we live in the Spirit—let us also walk in the Spirit. If we profess to be spiritual, let our spirituality appear in our lives, appear everywhere.

If we profess to be led by the Spirit—then let it be seen in our walk, that no one may have reason to ask, "Does the Spirit of God lead into such company, into such amusements, into such practices?" May our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Let us beware of grieving the Spirit, who, next to Christ, is our greatest friend. Jesus did all for us on earth, and is now engaged for us in heaven; but the Holy Spirit does all within us. As Jesus is our Redeemer, so the Spirit is our Sanctifier. Now, the Holy Spirit may be grieved by our inattention to the lessons he teaches, or the word he has inspired; so also by our lightness and frivolity, by our pride and worldliness, by our anxiety and covetousness, by our love of ease and selfishness. Nor will the Spirit be less grieved by our bad thoughts of God, or low thoughts of our Lord and Savior. It is his office to glorify Jesus, and unless we sympathize with him, and assist him in this, we grieve him.

If we have not the Spirit, we have no vital connection with Christ. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union between Jesus and our souls; nor does the union of the soul and body more depend on the breath, than the union between Christ and believers on the Spirit. Well, therefore, may David cry, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me." If we have no vital connection with Christ, we have no spiritual connection with God. As the Spirit unites us to Christ, so Christ unites us with the Father; hence he says, "I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one." God is in Christ, and we are in Christ, and it is in Christ that our souls meet with God, become united to God, and are made happy in God. No spiritual connection with God—no sonship. Only those who have the Spirit of God, who are in union with the Christ of God, and who realize fellowship with God, have satisfactory evidence that they are the sons of God. No sonship—no inheritance, for it is a family inheritance. If I am not a child of God, heaven will be no home for me; for it is the family residence, the Father's house, the inheritance of the saints in light.

Oh, for such a fullness of the Spirit as will leave no doubt as to my vital connection with Christ, or my spiritual connection with God, or my title to the adoption; so that I may live in joyful expectation of soon partaking of the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for the children! And for such a measure of grace, that I may so live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, as to prove to all that I am led by the Spirit, and am therefore a son of God!

16. Bondage and Liberty

16. Bondage and Liberty

"For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" Romans 8:15

Paul now gives us a further proof of sonship, and furnishes another reason why we should have eternal life. The evidences of our sonship cannot be too strong or satisfactory, as whatever proves us sons, proves that eternal life is ours. Our apostle looks back to the state in which the saints had been—in spiritual slavery; and the spirit by which they were actuated—a "spirit of bondage:" then he sets forth the privilege enjoyed at present—sons of God; and the Spirit by which they are influenced, "the Spirit of adoption." Let us briefly look at these two points: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" (Romans 8:15).

What They Formerly Possessed. The "spirit of bondage," or a slavish spirit. This is the spirit generated by the legal covenant, under which we all came in Adam, and from which there is no deliverance but by coming under the new covenant by faith in Christ. That covenant says, "Do—and live; transgress—and die." Having a consciousness of transgression, we are naturally afraid of God; and as death introduces us into the presence of an offended God, we are more or less all our lives in bondage, through the fear of death. Nor were the Jews much better off, except as they rose above the spirit of the dispensation they were under, by exercising faith in the promised Messiah. For though they were heirs of promise—yet, being in their minority, their state differed but little from that of servants, or favored slaves, as the apostle testified: "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we." The old economy, or covenant, revealed God as a Master requiring, or as a Lord commanding, rather than as a Father promising and giving. For work—there was wages. For obedience—there was reward. For idleness—there was the lash. For disobedience—there was punishment, even to exclusion from the promised land. This produced fear, and generated anxiety and alarm. The spirit of the dispensation was necessarily servile. So we, who were not under the same economy, being Gentiles, were also in bondage to the lusts of our flesh, to the god of this world, and to the law, imperfect as was the copy of it, which ruled our consciences. For though our knowledge of God's law was necessarily small and imperfect—yet it was sufficient to convince us of sin, to fill us with fear of punishment, and at length to lead us to despair of pleasing God, or being accepted by him. All our duties, therefore, were performed through fear, and we were rather slaves than freemen, and felt rather as the servants of a hard and exacting master, than as the children of a kind, loving, sympathizing father. To correct this, and to change both our state and our feelings, the gospel was sent; and having embraced the gospel, "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!"

What They Now Enjoyed. "The Spirit of adoption" This is the Holy Spirit of promise, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit received through the gospel. The Spirit of adoption reveals to us God's paternal character, and opens to our view the paternal heart of God. He fixes the eye on God as revealed in Jesus, showing us that Jesus revealed the Father, clearly manifested him, so that to see Jesus is to see the Father. He leads us, as children, to take all our views of God, not from the wonders of nature, or the mysteries of providence—but from the simple and lovely life of the Lord Jesus, who always presented God to his disciples as a Father, inculcating love to him, confidence in him, and expectation from him. So that whenever we are overawed with the greatness of God, or dazzled with his glory, or terrified with his justice—the Spirit seems to point with his finger to the Savior, saying, "Look at Jesus; God is that: see what Jesus did; God will do just the same; Jesus correctly revealed his Father." He persuades us of the love of God to us, shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. He makes it plain to us that God loved us before we loved him, and that all our love to him flows from his love to us. He points to the cross, and says, "Behold the love of God!" He points to heaven, and says, "It is your Father's house, and your eternal home—behold the love of God." In his own sovereign—but effectual way, the Spirit reveals the love of God to us; he represents God as saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you;" so that at length we can adopt the language of John, "We have known and believed the love that God has to us! God is love."

He shows us our right of access to God—that we may come to God at all times, with all our affairs, and for all we need. That for this purpose the throne of grace is erected, the blood of Christ was shed, and our acceptance in the Beloved is published. As said Paul, "For through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." And again, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." As the child has at all times access to its father's presence, to whisper all its wishes into its father's ear, and to receive all it needs from its father's hand; even so we, under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, are taught to come at all times to our heavenly Father, and to cast all our cares on him.

He places us under the care and protection of God, showing us, that as it has pleased the Lord to adopt us for his own, fixing his special love upon us—so he will take special care of us. He repeats to us, in the secret and solemn fellowship which we have with him, some of our Father's sweet and precious words: "Nothing shall by any means hurt you." "He who touches you, touches the apple of his eye." "Mercy shall compass him about." "Not one hair of your head shall perish." "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

While in secret, silent communion with him, God's love appears so clear, his pity so tender, his care so constant, and his protection so sure—that we cannot doubt our safety. And the promises flow in so sweetly, so suitably, and so appropriately, that we could almost believe that they were made on purpose for us! All slavish fear is now gone, and loving confidence occupies its place. The Spirit of adoption produces reconciliation to God—and we are pleased with all the Lord does, with all he has said in his word, and with all he requires of us. But we are filled with joy at the revelation of what God is in himself: all his attributes and perfections sparkle before the eyes of the mind, and every hard thought of God, every harsh feeling toward God, dies out. God in Christ appears all glorious, all lovely, everything one could wish or desire God to be. We no longer quarrel with his sovereignty, nor are we displeased with his requirements; all is right, perfectly right. All produces filial love to God.

We love him, not so much as a creature would love a God who is infinitely and eternally above him; but as a child loves a kind, gentle, loving father. There is a holy familiarity in this love, producing a divine freedom in the presence and service of God. We love him most heartily, and long to be swallowed up in his love, and to be eternally employed in loving, blessing, and praising his most holy name.

He produces sweet filial peace with God—the peace of a child in its father's presence, who is conscious that he has forgiven all its trespasses, and has forgotten all past transgressions. The Spirit of adoption makes us feel that there is nothing in God's book against us, nor anything in his heart towards us but pure, perfect, and perpetual love. This leads us to show a filial regard to all the requirements of God. Obedience becomes pleasant. To do anything for God, who is our Father, and such a Father—is most grateful. Just in proportion as we feel the working of the Spirit of adoption within us, shall we esteem all the Lord's precepts to be right, and hate every false way. We shall wish to keep the least of his commandments, and long for the time when, no longer hindered by weakness within, or opposition without, we shall serve him day and night in his heavenly temple—and our obedience will be pure, perfect, and perpetual! This Spirit produces also a hatred to all that offends God. We hate all that God hates, and because he hates it. As, therefore, God hates nothing but sin, or on account of sin—just so we. We hate sin without hating the sinner—pitying the victim, while we condemn the fault. To be angry and sin not, is the object and aim. Yes, so do we drink into the mind of God, that his thoughts, objects, and aims become ours. Oh, to be entirely and eternally under the full influence of the Spirit of adoption! The Spirit of adoption leads us to cry, "Abba, Father!" No slave-child was of old allowed to call its guardian, "abba;" it was the peculiar privilege of the children. Now, as by nature we are slave-children, in our natural state we cannot, with a feeling of propriety and confidence, call God, Father. The Jews, unless they rose above the spirit of their dispensation, could not, as Paul shows, Galatians 4:22-26. Like the children of Hagar, Abraham's slave-girl, the natural Jews, notwithstanding the privilege of being in Abraham's house, and Abraham's seed, were in bondage; while those only who had faith in Christ were like the children of Sarah, the free woman Abraham's lawful and beloved wife, and enjoyed freedom. Nor can any among the children understand what true freedom means, until the Spirit of adoption is received and enjoyed. Then, as children under a sense of need, who have freedom and access to God, with confidence they cry, "Father, help me out of this difficulty; supply this need; drive back this foe; unveil your lovely face; take off this burden from my mind, dispel this gloom from my spirit, and indulge me with free, familiar, and holy communion with yourself!"

Thus we make it manifest that "God has not given unto us the spirit of fear—but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." We understand our Lord's words, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And again, "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." "Wherefore," as Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Wherefore you are no more a slave," having the spirit of bondage to fear, "but a son," having the Spirit of adoption; "and if a son, then an heir of God through faith."

Mark the true Christian's state—he is adopted. God has put him among his children; he has called him out from the world, and has said, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Now He looks upon him lovingly, and out of the depths of his paternal heart asks, "Will you not from this time cry unto me: My Father,

you are the guide of my youth?" And under the influence of the Spirit of adoption he replies, "Abba, Father, you shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory!"

See the true believer's spirit—it is the Spirit of God's Son, the very Spirit that was in Jesus; as Paul testifies, "Because you are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The Spirit that cries Abba in you is the very self-same Spirit that cried Abba in Jesus! Oh, wondrous privilege, that the Spirit of God's Son should dwell in hearts like ours!

Observe the child's duty. If we are the sons of God by adoption and grace—then it is our duty to love God with a filial love, to fear him with a filial fear, to obey him with a filial obedience, to expect from him with a filial hope, and to depend on him with filial confidence. Everything should be done in a child-like, loving spirit.

Consider the adopted one's privilege—to come to God, to open the whole heart to God, crying, "Abba, Father, help, bless, and make me holy!" Also, to keep the eye fixed on the inheritance, which is the children's portion, and is reserved in heaven, as the object of their hope.

Adoption precedes regeneration, and is an act of grace outside us;

whereas regeneration is a work of grace within us.

Adoption is the gracious act of the Father;

regeneration is the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

Adoption puts us among the children;

regeneration makes us like the children.

Adoption gives us the privilege of a child;

regeneration gives us the nature of a child.

We are sons by God's choice, before we are sons, by the Spirit's work. Therefore the apostle said, "Because you are sons," (that is, by adoption,) "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."

Adoption reminds us of what we were; for we were not the sons of God by nature—but were the children of wrath, even as others. It says, "Look unto the rock whence you were hewn"—and be humble; "and to the hole of the pit whence you were dug"—and be grateful." It was a rock harder than granite—but grace hewed us from it! It was a pit, most horrible and terrible—but grace lifted us out of it.

It reminds us, too, of the honor that is put upon us. Its language is, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Greater honor God could not confer—than to associate us with his beloved Son; to identify us with his Son, so that we shall not only reign in life by him—but with him, as heirs of the same inheritance, objects of the same love, and partakers of the same glory. Glory, everlasting glory be to God, for his unspeakable love!

17. The Twofold Witness

17. The Twofold Witness "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit—that we are the children of God" Romans 8:16 When we hear of witnesses—we naturally think that some point is disputed, or that it is considered necessary to settle some matter of importance in an unquestionable manner. Now, to the Christian, no matter can be so important as that of sonship—as all his future happiness depends on this. The apostle therefore seems to linger over this point, and having spoken of it as proved by the leadings of the Spirit, and by the indwelling of the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption—he now proceeds to speak of a twofold witness to the fact, as if it were fiercely contested: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit—that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). The Matter Contested. Our sonship—and, consequently, our heirship and our inheritance. No sooner do we put in a claim to be considered the sons of God, and begin to rejoice in our high privilege—than Satan comes in to dispute our title, and throw doubts upon our claim. He hates to see us happy. Nor will he allow us, if he can help it, to live up to our privileges. Various are the means he tries—to fill us with doubt and gloom. Sometimes he points us to some very amiable, consistent, and active professor of religion, and says, "There, that is a child of God." Then pointing to our inconsistencies in temper and conduct, or to the deep and terrible corruptions of our hearts, upon which he works, he asks, "Can one with such a temper, guilty of such inconsistencies, and with such a heart as yours—be a child of God?" At other times he will quote certain portions of God's word, and, drawing false inferences from them, will ask, "Are you like this?" And because the fearful soul cannot at once reply in the affirmative, he throws in the suggestion, "Then you are not a child of God;" and we are but too ready to believe his lie. But it is almost impossible to set forth all the means he will employ, and the various ways in which he will try to generate doubts, and fill the sincere soul with fears. The conflict is often terrible, and in some cases it is of long continuance. For lack of clearer light, or stronger faith, or more courage—some of the Lord's people can but seldom rejoice in their adoption. At times, when fresh guilt has been contracted, some temptation yielded to, or some sin committed—our own hearts condemn us; and then Satan finds it easy to persuade us that we have deceived ourselves, that our experience is delusion, and that for us to consider ourselves the sons of God would be presumption. Nor is this any wonder, when we consider the greatness of the privilege. David considered it a great thing to be son-in-law to king Saul, and would risk his life for it—but what is it to be a son of God! No creatures in all God's universe stand in so near and dear a relationship to him—as his children! The honor is great beyond comparison, that creatures so insignificant, so vile, so degraded—should be more nearly related to God than the highest specimens of his creative power. Sons of God, and, consequently, heirs of God—what an honor is this!

How must Satan envy us! and filled with rage against our gracious God, and against ourselves, can we wonder if he contests the point with us? There is nothing like it in this world; nor have we any idea that there is anything like it, much less anything to surpass it, in the world to come. Well may John exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us—that we should be called the sons of God!" The Twofold Witness To The Fact. "In the mouth of two or three

witnesses every word shall be established." Here we have the testimony of our own spirit, and the testimony of the Spirit of God.

1. By "our spirit," we may understand our conscience, sometimes called our heart. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Here, by the "heart," we understand the conscience. The word of God furnishes us with evidences or proofs, from which we may draw the conclusion that we are the sons of God. We read the word—we compare what we read—with what we have experienced, and the conscience testifies that we have the privileged character. Take a few instances.

John says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." Reading this portion, I look back and remember when I first felt my need of Christ; how I was led to the cross of Christ; when I renounced self and all dependence on anything and everything of my own, and received the Lord Jesus Christ to be my complete Savior. My whole dependence was placed on Christ then, and has been ever since. Receiving Christ proves that I am born of God, and entitles me to the privilege of sonship; my spirit therefore comes to the conclusion, "I am a son of God!"

Again I read, "Unto you, therefore, who believe—he is precious." If I know anything, I know that Christ is precious to my soul; but he is only precious to those who believe: therefore it is clear that I believe. But I read again, "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" and, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." As I believe, it is clear that I am born of God, that I am one of his children; and my spirit bears testimony to this.

Again, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Now, I feel an inward consciousness that if I love any people—I love the people of God, and I love them just in proportion as they love Christ and resemble him; loving the children of God proves that I have passed from death unto life; and if so, I am a child of God, the privilege of adoption is mine.

Once more, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Now, though my obedience is very imperfect—yet I have the testimony of my conscience that it is the habitual desire of my heart, and the aim of my life—to keep God's commands. This proves that I know him and love him; but to know him is life eternal, to love him proves that he first loved me: if God love me, and has given me eternal life, I am his child, the adoption is mine. In this way, and in other similar ways, our own spirit bears witness that we are the children of God.

2. The Spirit of God lays down the evidences in the word of God; he then works the dispositions or the answerable evidences in our hearts, and enables us to draw the conclusion from our own filial feelings that we are the children of God. In this way he may be said to witness to our spirits. But he also witnesses conjointly with our spirits—so that we have a twofold testimony. He personally witnesses, or gives evidence; sometimes by shining on the promises of the word, and showing us our interest in them, or by applying them to our hearts with a secret, soul-conquering, and assuring power. When we see the promise in his light, or feel it brought home with his power—we have no doubt of our sonship.

Sometimes he sheds abroad God's paternal love in our hearts, which produces filial love to him in return, and filial confidence in him; and then the evidence of our adoption is so satisfactory that we cannot doubt.

Sometimes he fills us with holy joy, profound peace, and indescribable love; so that every view we take of God seems to deepen our joy, our peace flows like a river, and loving God, we seem to enjoy a present heaven; there can be no questioning our adoption then.

Sometimes he draws out the soul in prayer, gives us to feel such nearness to God, enables us to hold such familiar fellowship with God, and to feel so much at home with God, that we wonder at ourselves. The promises flow in so sweetly, the soul pours itself out with such fluency, and God appears to be so full of love, that to doubt at such a time would be impossible.

Sometimes he secretly and indescribably assures the soul or the conscience that all is right between God and us, that we can call God Father with strong confidence; and yet, apart from the power felt within, we know not how to account for it that we feel such certainty, nor could we describe it—if our life depended on our doing so! But besides these things, by making us like Jesus, in spirit, temper, and disposition, and enabling us to exhibit something of his likeness to others; and especially by producing a deep, abiding, increasing love to, and desire for holiness—he bears witness that we are the children of God. For as we are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, by his conforming us to Jesus he proves our predestination to adoption, and so our sonship. In these, and other ways, "the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." And whenever his witness is borne, it always brings its own evidence with it; and at such times we believe and are sure that we are the sons of God, and can say with John, "We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." The Holy Spirit must be a person, or he could not bear witness to our spirits, and with our spirits, that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, or he could not search out this secret, which lay hidden in the mind of God. "For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man—but the Spirit of God." Neither could the Spirit bear his witness to such a fact to such multitudes at the same time, scattered as they are over all countries, except he were a divine person. The Holy Spirit is actually received by the believer; nor do we more really receive the Lord Jesus to be our Redeemer, than we receive the Holy Spirit to be our Sanctifier, Guide, and Witness. Having taken up his dwelling in the believer, he sets his whole person apart for God, claims him as the property of the Lord Jesus, and bears his witness with the heart to its sonship in union with Christ. To the conscience first, and with the conscience after, he witnesses to our adoption. His witness is not in all alike—clear, distinct, and powerful; nor is it in any always in all alike—powerful, distinct, and satisfactory. Some of the Lord's people are long before they enjoy that satisfactory witness of the Spirit, which others enjoy immediately upon believing. Some have gone mourning all their days, and only when on the dying pillow have received that full and all-convincing evidence that they were God's children. The reason for this we may not know—but unquestionably there is a cause. Some secret sin may be indulged, all confidence in the flesh may not be renounced, or some error may be fostered in the soul. In general, where the truth is received in simplicity, where Christ is embraced as a perfect Savior, where the desire to be wholly, entirely, and altogether the Lord's is nourished—then the witness of the Spirit is enjoyed. It is the privilege of all the Lord's people alike, and was never intended to be confined to a favored few. No

Christian should be satisfied without it—but, by earnest, fervent, believing prayer, should seek it until it is obtained. The Holy Spirit always leads to the written word and ordinances; and the clearer his witness, the more powerful his testimony, the more are they prized and improved. Some have slighted the Bible, under pretense that the indwelling of the Spirit rendered it unnecessary; but such were under a delusion. Some have neglected the ordinances, because they imagined the Spirit's witness rendered them unnecessary; but such were deceived. Depend upon it, the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures; and everything in religion is to be tried by them. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word—they have no light in them." Even the work of the Spirit within is to be tested and tried by the word of God. Just in proportion as we experience the presence, the power, and the work of the Holy Spirit, in our hearts—shall we cleave to the written word, and prize God's own instituted ordinances.

Holy Spirit, teach me to draw right conclusions from the experience of my soul and the testimony of the word, as to my state and standing before God; and let me daily experience your inward witness, bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. O for certainty, habitual certainty, on scriptural premises, of my adoption, regeneration, and meekness for the inheritance of the saints in light!

18. Heirship

18. Heirship

"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" Romans 8:17 Our apostle has now fully proved that all that are in Christ are not only free from condemnation—but are the children of God—adopted by his grace, constituted his family, led by his Spirit, calling him Father, and enjoying an inward witness that the privilege and relationship are theirs. From this he draws a glorious inference, and says, "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" (Romans 8:17). The Inference. "If children—then heirs." We have the right of inheritance, which flows in the channel of relationship. No feelings, no duties, no desert, can give this right; we must be born to it—OR an act of sovereign and gracious adoption must confer it upon us. As children, we are certain that we shall inherit, for it belongs to all the redeemed seed. Nothing could deprive us of it but death; but in God's family there is no death, for Jesus says, "Because I live—you shall live also." The inheritance is inalienable. The kingdom was prepared for us from the foundation of the world. It was our Father's good pleasure to give it unto us! It is reserved in heaven for us; and we on earth are kept by the power of God, through faith, until we are put into the possession of it!

If we are God's adopted children—then we are entitled to the inheritance; our possessing it is rendered certain by God's promise and oath; and it never can be alienated from us, for it is family property, thoroughly secured to us. We do not come to it by our desert, or merit, or even by purchase, otherwise there might be some dispute; but we come to it by relationship.

"Heirs of God!" Heirs of his promises: for to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. Every promise, and every promised blessing, belongs to the children of God.

Heirs of his mansions: heaven is our Father's house; there are the many mansions which are being fitted up and prepared for the reception of the heirs as they come of age.

Heirs of his kingdom, which he has promised unto those who love him—the kingdom of grace on earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven.

Heirs of God himself; for he himself is our inheritance. We have a saving interest in his glorious nature, and in all his sublime perfections. God with all his immense wealth—is ours! With the prophet we may say, "God is my portion; therefore will I hope in him." With the psalmist we may sing, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; you maintain my lot."

"Joint heirs with Christ!" We have the same life as Jesus; for Christ lives in us. We fill the same relation as Jesus; for we are the sons of God. We shall enjoy the same inheritance as Jesus; for Christ and his people are one. We inherit in Christ, as the member in the head. We inherit through Christ, as the wife through her husband. We inherit with Christ, as the family with the father. God loves us with the same love—as he loves Jesus! He has given us to each other—us to Christ, and

Christ to us. He has appointed us to share with Christ in his kingdom and glory. Jesus is appointed heir of all things; and we being joint heirs with him—all things are ours. This we are to believe at present, and shortly we shall enjoy it to our hearts' content! The Proof Or Evidence. "If so be that we suffer with him." All the children have to pass through the same experience. We must resemble him in his humiliation, before we do in his glorification. "Though he were a Son—yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Just so must we. We must be prepared to suffer, to part with all, even with life itself, if required: "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." Be prepared to suffer, if called to it, even as Christ did.

We are to suffer WITH Christ; in union with him, in his cause, sharing in the sufferings of his people. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." As Jesus by sympathy suffers with us, so we by sympathy are required to suffer with him.

We are to suffer FOR Christ—for our love to him, our zeal in his cause, our identification with him. Christ suffered for us, on account of his love to us, his zeal for us, and his identifying himself with us; and so must we.

We are to suffer AS Christ. His was a life of suffering. He suffered from his sympathy with man, and more from his sympathy with God. Therefore he said, "The reproaches of those who reproached you, have fallen upon me." In consequence of the holy sensitiveness of his nature, he could not come in contact with sinners without suffering, both on their account and his own. Their sighs—called forth a sigh from him; and their groans—made his heart groan. He was familiar with grief.

If we were more like Jesus, we would suffer more. To see God dishonored would give us intense pain; and to see our fellow-men hastening to perdition would fill us with grief.

We must suffer together, or in connection with Christ—if we would be "glorified together," or in connection with him. We must suffer through our connection with Christ, not only as Christians—but because we are holy Christians; for "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus—he shall suffer persecution." It is "through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God." This is our earthly lot, and is preparatory to our heavenly portion.

"That we may be also glorified together." The Head and the members; the Shepherd and his flock; the Bridegroom and his bride. What a wonderful thought, that we, poor, sinful, unworthy creatures—should be glorified as Christ is! To sit with him on his throne, even as he has sat down with his Father on his throne! to appear with him in glory! to be glorified with him—in the same place, with the same blessedness, from the same unfailing Source! Forever with the Lord!—oh, how blessed!

Glorified for Christ's sake—in honor of what he has done—as a reward for his deep and dreadful sufferings—to his honor and everlasting satisfaction—this was the joy that was set before him, stimulating him to endure the cross, despising the shame. To be glorified together with Christ, will include entering into the joy of our Lord; sitting down with him at his table in his kingdom; inheriting the kingdom he appoints us; and sharing the glory given him by his Father. "Where I am—there shall also my servant be."

If we are Gods children, we shall be treated as sons—now as minors, but shortly as of full age. Our heavenly Father now requires us . . .

to believe Him without questioning,

to obey Him without objecting,

to follow Him without hesitating, and

to submit to Him without murmuring or complaining.

Many things must be left for clearer light, for our heavenly Father will not give account of many of his matters. As God's chosen, adopted, and redeemed children—filial love, filial confidence, and filial obedience, should characterize our lives.

If the Lord treats us as sons, we shall share with Christ, and as Christ. Look at his life, and as in a mirror—you see yours. What Christ WAS—you must be; therefore be not surprised at sorrows. What Jesus IS—you will be; therefore anticipate glory. Our elder Brother trod the road before us, showing that the journey is practicable; he took possession of the inheritance, showing that eternal life is certain.

Union to Christ insures suffering now—and glory in future. We must be like Jesus! We must pass through the same experience. God has predestined it. We pray for it. Our eternal welfare demands it. We must drink of his cup of sorrow—before we drink of his cup of joy. If we are united to Christ, we shall be conformed to Christ—both on earth and in heaven.

We now hold the promises as the title-deeds of our heavenly estate, and we shall soon be invited to take possession of it. No tide-deeds were ever so plainly written, so solemnly confirmed, so legibly signed, or more legally sealed. We may read them every day, examine them as often as we will. Nor can we trust them too implicitly, or rest too well satisfied with them. They have been confirmed by the sacred and solemn oath of God, in order to put an end to all our doubts, fears, and misgivings, and to fill us with strong consolation. Grace ordained our relationship, and relationship brings us heirship.

We owe everything to grace—free grace, sovereign grace! Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption; grace in the Savior effected our redemption; and grace in the Holy Spirit produced our regeneration. Being the sons of God, both by regeneration and adoption—our heirship is clear and unquestionable. Hence the apostle testifies, "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Suffering leads to sanctity—and sanctity leads to glory. Suffering alone never sanctifies; but suffering as covenant discipline, and as accompanied with the grace and teaching of the Holy Spirit, does! Our characters are now being formed for eternity. On earth—we are being trained for heaven. Our afflictions and sufferings as Christians, and for Christ's sake, not only fit and qualify us for glory—but in some mysterious way, according to God's all-wise arrangement, will actually increase it. Therefore we read, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen—but at

the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." Glory be to God, for making us, who were children of wrath, and consequently heirs of hell—children of grace, and consequently heirs of heaven!

19. No Comparison

19. No Comparison

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" Romans 8:18 The mortification of sin—proves that we have the life of God;

the life of God—proves that we are the children of God;

being the children of God—proves that we are the heirs of God;

and being the heirs of God—proves that our inheritance is sure!

We shall share with Christ. We shall share as Christ, being joint heirs with him. As we shall be like Christ in his glory—we must be first conformed to him in his humiliation; and if we are conformed to Jesus when he humbled himself, we shall suffer, and perhaps suffer greatly. But however great, varied, or long-continued our sufferings may be, we are encouraged to endure them with patience and fortitude from the conclusion of the apostle, when he says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!" (Romans 8:18). Let us consider, The Comparison. Paul compares present sufferings—with future glory. Believers are exposed to all kinds of suffering, and instead of obtaining an exemption on the ground of their sonship or heirship, they are assured that it is through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God. How much some suffer in mind from doubts and fears, from horrid suggestions, vile insinuations, and violent temptations, from the working of corruption, and the constant conflict between the flesh and the spirit!

Some endure inward suffering, with which no one is fully acquainted but God himself;—such darkness, gloom, distress, and sorrow, as it would not be easy to describe; such agitation, trouble, bondage, and distress, that it is not easy to set forth.

Some suffer much in body, from the stressed and disordered state of the nervous system, from chronic diseases, or deformities in the physical frame. They seldom move without suffering, and for years together have but little freedom from weakness and pain. They live a life of suffering, a kind of dying life, and think much of heaven as of a place where there is no more pain.

Some suffer much financially; scarcely anything seems to prosper with them; losses, crosses, and opposition meet them at every turn; and though they wish to live honestly, and conduct their business honorably, they are thwarted, hindered, and filled with perplexity. No one can tell what they suffer from financial trials and difficulties.

Others suffer from reproach, misrepresentation, strife, and persecution in the world, or in the Church, or both. No one seems to understand them, or is prepared to sympathize with them; they are like "a sparrow alone upon the house-top." False friends and open enemies unite to trouble and distress them, so that they often sigh, and say, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I

fly away and be at rest!"

Others suffer in the domestic circle, or from some of the relationships of life, are called to suffer long and seriously. But whether from trouble of mind, sickness of body, trials in business, family disorder, or persecution for Christ's sake—all suffer, and most believers suffer much! But compare their presentsufferings—with their future glory:

Glory which will exclude all pain and suffering, all sin and sorrow.

Glory beyond the reach of all foes and the cause of all trouble.

Glory which includes happiness—perfect, perpetual, never-ending happiness.

Glory which includes honor—the highest, holiest, and most satisfying honor.

Glory, or splendor, which will fill the soul, clothe the body, and dignify the entire person forever!

If the face of Moses shone when he had been for a short space on the mount with God—then much more will the entire persons of the saints shine when they are forever with the Lord. As on the mount of transfiguration the face of Jesus shone like the sun, and his clothing was white and glistening; even so, the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Filled with light, peace, and joy; clothed with beauty, brightness, and magnificence—they will appear with Christ in glory—filling them with wonder and unutterable delight!

It will be put upon us; and so Jesus will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those who believe. It will be possessed by us, as part of our marriage portion and inalienable inheritance. But we can form no adequate idea of the glory which shall be revealed in us; for "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9. We must die to know it; or live until Jesus comes, in order to understand it.

We will now look at, The Conclusion. Paul had reasoned, compared, and weighed the present with the future, and after careful comparison he arrives at the conclusion, and says, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Paul was qualified to judge, for if any one knew what sufferings were—he did; and he knew what glory was too. He suffered much, he suffered often, and he suffered long. He could say, "We are troubled on every side, we are perplexed, we are persecuted, we are cast down, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; we are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." And comparing himself and his sufferings with some others, he writes, "Are they servants of Christ? I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Here is a list of sufferings! Where shall we find a parallel? Yet this great sufferer says, "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. As far as sufferings are concerned, Paul was quite qualified to judge between present sufferings and future glory. But he knew something of glory too; for he had been in Paradise! He had witnessed the happiness, heard the songs, observed the services, and seen the glory of the spirits of the just men made perfect. This honor was peculiar to himself. Peter, James, and John had seen the Master transfigured on the mount, and could therefore form some better idea of what glory was than the other disciples; but Paul had been up in the third heaven! Hear his own testimony: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell." 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. Having been in paradise, in the third heaven—having seen, heard, and tasted something of the joys of glory and the glorious joys of the blessed—he was qualified to judge between present sorrow and future joy.

Let us, then, when called to suffer—to suffer severely, to suffer long—let us look forward, by the help of the word of God, and compare the present with the future.

Present good compared—with future evil. This decided Moses: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ—as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward!" Hebrews 11:24-26.

Let us compare present evil—with future good. This decided others: "Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated!"

Again, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions."

Let us compare temporal good and evil—with the good and evil which are eternal, as Paul did. He looked at . . .

sufferings as from man—and glory as from God;

sufferings as earthly—and glory as heavenly;

sufferings here as short—and glory as eternal;

sufferings as light—and when contrasted with an eternal weight of glory;

sufferings as very much confined to the body—and glory as including, filling, and overflowing both body and soul;

sufferings as very much from outside us—and glory as within us.

Let us look at the two subjects as we shall—if we look at them scripturally, soberly, and through a spiritual medium—we must come to the conclusion, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!"

Sufferings, then, are not inconsistent with sonship. Many of the Lord's little ones are tempted to think that, if they were the Lord's children, they would not be tried as they are, or would not feel their trials as they do. But this is a mistake. All God's children suffer, more or less; and all feel, and feel acutely too. No one ever suffered as God's First-born did; nor did any one ever feel suffering so acutely as he did. Reproach, he said, broke his heart. Our sufferings are connected with sin. Sin is the natural source of all suffering. If there were no sin there would be no suffering; there could be none. Jesus never could have suffered if God had not laid on him our iniquities. But for sin in us calling for stripes—or but for sin in others stirring them up to afflict us—we should not suffer as we do. But many of our sufferings come upon us for Christ's sake, and are called "the sufferings of Christ," which we are called to fill up in our bodies.

If I suffer for sin in myself—then I may well abhor myself.

If I suffer from sin in others—then I may well pity the inflicter of the punishment, and admire the distinguishing grace of God which makes me to differ. But if I suffer for righteousness' sake, for Jesus' sake—then I may well rejoice; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon me! Our present sufferings—are mixed with many mercies. What alleviations we have . . .

in the kindness of friends,

in the means of grace,

in the comforts of the Holy Spirit,

in the knowledge of our pardon,

in the sense of our acceptance with God,

in the testimony of a good, enlightened, and honest conscience!

We never have unmixed sorrow or unmixed suffering here on earth.

The light mingles with the darkness;

mercy mixes with our misery;

joy blends with our sorrow. But our glory will be unmixed, either with shame or pain. In glory we shall never blush, hang down the head, or avert the face; but shall be as fearless and bold as a lion, and as unconscious of guilt as a holy angel!

There we shall feel no pain. Nothing will ever agitate the mind, trouble the soul, or pain the body.

Unmixed holiness, unmixed happiness, perfect health, and perpetual youth—will be our unfading, our changeless portion! The present is our only suffering time. As, therefore, our sufferings are but partial—so they must be short. Time, at best, is not long. But what is our time? Like the insect, we are born, flutter about—and die in a day. True, an hour's suffering—appears longer than twelve

hours' pleasure; but the sufferings of all time will be as nothing—if compared with the joys of eternity! For believers in Jesus, sufferings are confined to earth; they cannot enter heaven; they are confined to time; they cannot run forward into eternity.

Present sufferings—will introduce us to future glory. Our sufferings are only those of children who are going home to take possession of the family inheritance.

If the inn is not pleasant—we shall leave it tomorrow!

If our conveniences and comforts are not now first-rate—they soon will be!

If the road is rough—we have only to pass over it once.

If the weather is harsh—it will very soon be fine; storms are not generally very long-lived.

We get nearer home every day! The last pain will soon be felt;

the last groan will soon escape us;

the last conflict will soon be ended.

We shall soon cross the threshold of our Father's house!

Soon, very soon, we shall be absent from the body—and be present with the Lord. Our glory is prepared; it only waits to be revealed. Glory and honor are to be brought unto us at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is laid up for us in heaven. It is reserved in heaven for us. When Christ who is our life shall appear—then shall we also appear with him in glory.

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling!" 2 Corinthians 5:1-2. What, O what will it be—to be clothed upon with our heavenly dwelling! How shall we feel—when we inhabit a body which is spiritual, powerful, incorruptible, and immortal! Is it not a wonder that, in this world of sin and sorrow, suffering privations and sorrows, pained as we are both in body and mind—that we do not look, long, and cry aloud for the coming of Jesus! If we sympathized with the sorrows of others—if we were properly affected with the groans of a suffering creation—if we desired as we should the manifestation of the sons of God—surely, surely, we should daily, yes hourly, cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus! Come Quickly!"

20. The Attitude of Creation

20. The Attitude of Creation "For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God" Romans 8:19

Although the Church and the World are distinct—yet the one very much influences the other; for believers cannot see even the lower creation suffer without sympathy and concern. In consequence of sin, both the world and the Church suffer; and until sin is completely gotten rid of, even creation will not cease to sigh and groan. But the word of God presents a glorious future, towards which the Lord's people look, and for which even creation is represented as longing: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19).

What Is Intended by "The Creature?" Not men in general, though the gospel is to be preached to them; for to many it will not be a savor of life unto life—but a savor of death unto death. Nor is there anything like such an expectation in them. Nor the Gentiles as distinct from the Jews; for Paul was a Jew writing to Gentiles, and recognizing them as all one in Christ, and fellow-heirs of the same grace. Nor angels; for the following verses will in no sense apply to them. Nor devils; for to them no promise is made, in them no hope is excited, for them no deliverance will be proclaimed. Nor even believers; for the apostle distinguishes between the creature and them when he says, "And not only it—but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body." The word translated "creature" in this 19th verse is translated "creation" in the 22nd verse, and should have been so translated in each verse. And then, if we did not seek to be wise above what is written—if not cramped and fettered by some system—if prepared to receive just what God testifies—the meaning is plain. "Creation" here means the same as creation elsewhere. We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The earth, with the skies spread around it, was intended for the residence of man. It was fitted up and prepared for his reception. Eden was a kind of palace for the residence of the monarch, to whom was given dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. But man sinned, and God pronounced a curse upon creation as the result; so that it is not now by any means—what it originally was. Its very position appears to have been changed; for Peter tells us, "that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also, the world of that time was deluged and destroyed." Does Peter expect any change to be wrought in creation as it appears now? Hear him: "the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness!"

Paul personifies creation (which is often done in the Scriptures), and ascribes to it emotions and passions peculiar to men; and therefore he speaks of its "earnest expectation" and "waiting." David did so before: "Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice! Let the sea and everything in

it shout his praise! Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy! Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth!" Creation, suffering in the Lord's absence, is called upon to rejoice in the prospect of the Lord's coming.

Again: "Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the earth and all living things join in. Let the rivers clap their hands in glee! Let the hills sing out their songs of joy before the Lord! For the Lord is coming to judge the earth!"

Once more: "Praise the Lord from the earth, you creatures of the ocean depths, fire and hail, snow and clouds, wind and weather that obey him, mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all livestock, small scurrying animals and birds!" So also the prophet: "Join in the chorus, you desert towns; let the villages of Kedar rejoice!" Again: "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands!"

After such language as this from the pen of inspiration, shall we take language in a non-natural sense, because we read of "the earnest expectation of the creation" or of its "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God?" Let us notice, The Attitude of the Creation. It is not at rest, or in repose, or rejoicing; but it is looking forward, with outstretched neck, for a blessed time which is coming. It is earnestly expecting a great and glorious change. Like the mother of Sisera, it is looking and anticipating the return of the Conqueror. It is waiting, as if patience were added to hope; as if, like Job, it were saying, "All the days of my appointed time I will wait—until my change comes!"

What is it waiting for? "The manifestation of the sons of God." Then they are now hidden, or pretty much concealed. This is true of their persons; as John said, "The world knows us not." Therefore Malachi predicted, "Then you shall return—and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God, and him who serves him not." Looking forward to the day of the Lord's coming, we may say with Moses, "Tomorrow the Lord will show who are his, and who are holy, and will cause him to come near unto him."

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right—and the goats on his left." Here is the separation, and the manifestation of the sons of God. The life they live now is a hidden life: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "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 in the Son of God." Externally they are often poor, debased, and despised; yet James asks, "Has not God chosen the poor of this world—to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?" They are considered anything but reputable, at times: "When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world!" But for them Paul prayed: "We constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." So also many of their privileges are hidden. "The King's daughter is all glorious within;" her glory is not now seen by those around her. Her peace is

unspeakable, and passes all understanding; but it lies hidden in the heart. They eat of the hidden manna, and have the white stone, in which a new name is written—which no man knows, but he who receives it. They dwell in the secret place of the Most High; and, as Job said, the secret of God is in their tabernacle.

They cannot tell to, or make the world understand—all that they possess or enjoy. Indeed, they know but in part themselves; as it is written, "For we know in part—but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away." But though hidden, concealed, or unknown now—they will be revealed or manifested when Jesus comes to receive them unto himself! Of our heavenly Father we read, "He shall send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

Therefore, as Peter says, we should "look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

How will they be manifested? "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white clothing; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life—but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Here are the white robes of victory, and the public confession.

Again: "Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word: Your brothers who hate you, and exclude you because of my name, have said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy!' Yet they will be put to shame." Here is fullness of joy, and realization of their hope.

"They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed!" Here they are a glory to Jesus, in consequence of their purity, splendor, and magnificence; and their beauty, grandeur, and glory, will fill all who behold them with admiration of the grace, goodness, and power of the Savior.

They will be separated from all others; they will be perfect in body and soul; and they will appear like Jesus, so that every eye will recognize at once their relation to God, their interest in God, and their joint heirship with the only-begotten Son of God.

Creation will be changed. This was anticipated, as we read, "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end!" They have been changed for the worse, in consequence of the first Adam's sin; they shall be changed again for the better, in consequence of the second Adam's righteousness.

They will be changed by fire, as Peter has testified—refined and purified, not destroyed or annihilated. The old materials, like the well-purified metal, will be re-molded and re-fashioned, and become a worthy residence for Jesus and his beloved bride—a fit theater to display all Jehovah's

glory, and disclose all his wondrous purposes. The change predicted ought to be looked for and expected. If creation is represented as earnestly looking for and desiring the manifestation of the sons of God—then how much more earnestly should the sons of God themselves hope for and desire it!

Like the spouse of old, we should cry out, "Hurry to me, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices!" As that light, swift, and agile creature, leaps and bounds from hill to hill, from crag to crag, almost as if possessed of wings; so, O Lord, do you cut short the hours of your delay, and come with all possible speed! Our posture should be that of looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior; seeing there is laid up for us crowns of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give unto us at that day, even unto all who love his appearing.

NOW is our time of trial. We groan in this tabernacle; we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!" Yet we endeavor patiently to wait, having turned, as the Thessalonians, to wait for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come! We expect and desire deliverance; for "our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body!" As Paul said, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body—and to be present with the Lord."

Let us often direct our attention to the excellency of our hopes. We expect our sonship to be clearly and gloriously manifested. We expect creation to be renewed; for Jesus will sit upon his throne, creating all things new! We expect the tabernacle of God to be with men, and that he will dwell among them. Then his glory will be displayed, his wisdom will be magnified, and his grace will shine forth in unequalled luster. There will be no more curse, neither sorrow, nor crying—for the former things will have passed away! The voice of nature is in harmony with the voice of grace. Nature suffers, nature cries; but nature hopes. Just so, the believer suffers, the believer cries, and the believer hopes. This harmony, which is now partial and imperfect, will by-and-by be perfect and complete. Earth will be in full harmony with heaven. The two worlds will be united. The heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the heavens. All that separates the Lord's people, or divides their affections from each other—will be done away. There will be one flock and one Shepherd—one Lord, and his name one.

Gracious Lord, as the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God—so may we in earnest expectation wait for the revelation of your Son from heaven; and, in the prospect, be enabled to say with Paul, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!"

21. The Present State of Creation

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"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly—but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope" Romans 8:20

There is something so terrible in the nature of sin, that it affects everything it comes into contact with. It disturbs God's order, mars his work, and dishonors his name. The change it has produced in creation must be astonishing; and to get rid of it requires the power of God. All evil must be traced to sin—and it is the greatest blessing to be delivered from it! All mischief and misery must be traced to sin—and all solid happiness and true joy are the result of being freed from it! Let us now briefly look at the representation of the apostle: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly—but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope" (Romans 8:20). The passage places before us— The Present State Of Creation."It is subject to vanity."

God created the heavens and the earth, being wisely and judiciously arranged, displaying the most consummate skill. Each part and portion occupied the place assigned to it, and answered the end intended by it—and all was in perfect order.

Like some great machine, each part fit perfectly into its fellow part, and all worked harmoniously together; consequently there was perfect peace.

All were so connected, and each part was so exquisitely finished, that there was no jar, no confusion—but perfect harmony.

All was perfect purity; therefore all was perfectly healthy.

There was nothing to affect the health of the vegetable, animal, or intellectual part of creation—there was no corruption, nothing to contaminate or defile; therefore there was perfect happiness.

Each portion was fitted for its place, and all combined to produce peace and joy. In this state, we are informed that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Not only good—but "very good,"—perfectly good, incapable of improvement; for there was no defect, nothing wasteful or superficial. But sin entered into the world, and God's curse followed sin; and now:

instead of perfect order—there was disorganization;

instead of perfect peace—there was almost universal conflict;

instead of perfect health—everything became diseased; and

instead of perfect happiness—there was misery, wretchedness, and woe! The creation was "subjected to vanity," or as it is designated in the next verse, "corruption." Frailty, misery, and

death—followed upon sin. And now the wisest of men pronounces his verdict, after seeing and enjoying as much of creation as most, "Vanity of vanities—all is vanity!" Creation is diverted from its proper end, which was to reveal God and glorify him. Like some polished mirror, creation beautifully reflected God's character; but that mirror is broken, and every portion of it is become dim. The creatures revolted, and refused to obey man—their fallen sovereign, or to serve the enemies of their Creator. They have been partially brought into subjection; but they are now used for, and applied to, vain and sinful purposes. They are now used to foster ambition, gratify avarice, and feed carnal lusts. They are applied to the purposes of idolatry, cruelty, and crime! Who can think of dog-fighting, boxing, or even hunting—and not see that creation is made subject to vanity, and diverted from its proper and legitimate end! Who can look at oppression, or the slave trade, or at war with its horrors and terrors—and not see that earth is under the bondage of corruption!

Everything is changeable, fading, and transitory; so that though there are many traces of divine beauty, glory, and benevolence left on creation, notwithstanding the curse—yet we must admit that it is subjected to vanity.

How Did Creation Come into this State? Not willingly, or by its natural inclination or propensity; for there was nothing in it or about it, originally, to bring it into such a condition. Neither was it by its own fault; it was altogether by the act of another. It was by reason of man's sin—which has polluted all things. The heavens and the earth, all are defiled, deformed, and degraded by man's transgression. The very heavens are not clean in God's sight, however pure and glorious they were once; and therefore they are to be changed. Man, the sovereign, sinned—and all his subjects were involved in his guilt. Adam fell—and all creation suffers!

"To Adam God said: Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Genesis 3:17-19 So also Lamech rejoiced in the birth of his son Noah: he said, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed." So again, when God was about to bring the flood on the earth: "So God said to Noah, I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth!" Genesis 6:13 So also in the latter days will it be, as says the prophet:

"The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The Lord has spoken this word. The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left!" Isaiah 24:3-6

Again, at the end: "The earth has broken up. It has utterly collapsed; it is violently shaken. The earth staggers like a drunk. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for the guilt of its rebellion is very heavy!" Isaiah 24:19-20 Man's sin corrupted creation, brought upon it God's curse, and subjected it to vanity! As man's sin was the procuring cause, God as the just Judge pronounced the sentence. In man it was crime—in God it was justice. He subjected creation

to vanity, having a glorious end to answer thereby. Out of this dreadful evil—God will educe the greatest good. It was in the prospect of this that the covenant of grace was entered into, the plan of salvation was drawn, and Jesus was appointed to be the second Adam, the bearer of the curse, the repairer of the breach, and the glorifier of God on earth. But for the fall and its consequences—we could have known nothing of redemption and its results! Nor would God's full and complete character have been revealed, as it now is! God had a profound, a wise, and a holy purpose to answer, by all that he permitted and all that he did. Of this the apostle speaks when he says, speaking of his own office and work, "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!" Ephesians 3:8-11

He will bring all to a satisfactory and happy outcome; for not only shall his glory cover the heavens—but the earth shall be full of his praise. Where the curse once rolled—the blessing shall flow; and the oath once sworn shall be ratified and fulfilled, "As I live, says the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory!"

Creation is not what it originally was. Nor can we tell what creation was, when God, having inspected every part of it pronounced it "very good." It is now a fit residence for a sinner, not for man as created in God's own image, after his own likeness. There is still enough of the divine impression left upon it, to set forth the eternal power and godhead of its Maker, so as to leave the heathen and all unbelievers without excuse; but its original grandeur and glory are gone.

Creation is not what it will be. It will not always be subject to vanity, nor be held in the bondage of corruption; but it will emerge from its fiery baptism, cleansed from pollution, robed in glory, and fit to be the residence of the Son of God and his beloved Bride! As we know not what we shall be, who are now the sons of God; neither do we know what the world will be—when there shall be no more curse, neither sorrow nor crying, the former things having passed away.

Adam's fall shook heaven and earth, and produced a most alarming change. It was a dreadful catastrophe! The fall of angels, no doubt, produced a strange sensation in heaven—but it affected heaven alone; the fall of man produced a still greater effect—it affected both heaven and earth. In the howling winds, in the roaring storms, in the rattling thunder, in the flashing lightnings, in avalanches and earthquakes, in destructive fires and overwhelming floods—we may trace the effects of the fall, and imagine we hear creation groaning for what man has done! The subjection of creation to vanity, accounts for many things which we cannot reconcile with the government of a good and gracious God. If earth had always been what it now is, or if the change had been effected by God's sovereignty alone, we might wonder at much that takes place! But seeing that creation is changed in consequence of man's sin, and is now the dwelling-place of those who are rebels against its Creator—is it any matter of surprise if we cannot harmonize what we see and hear—with God's benevolence and love?

Now, as believers, we must walk by faith, and leave all that puzzles us to be explained when the almighty creator comes with his new creation. Nor should we be surprised that all on earth is uncertain and unsatisfactory. How can it be otherwise, if the creation is subject to vanity? If there

had been no sin—all would have been certain and satisfactory; but it cannot be so now. As man's sin subjected the creatures to vanity, we should sympathize with them, and treat them well. The brute creation should be treated kindly by all Christians. They are God's creatures—and suffer on man's account! We do not wonder at the converted drunkard saying, "Why, my cat knew when I was converted!" Before, when he came home drunk and abusive—it fled from him; but now perched on his knee, it sat and purred, as if in order to commend and please him.

We should also bear our trials with patience, our privations in hope, and our sufferings with faith, while, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness dwells. Our trials will not be long, our privations will soon be over, and our sufferings will be lost in the blaze of glory which will burst upon us at the appearing of the great God, our Savior Jesus Christ.

We may go down into the grave, as Israel into the Babylonish captivity—but it will only be to rest a while with our brethren, until the mystery of God shall be finished; and then, as the ransomed of the Lord, we shall return, and come back to earth with singing, and everlasting joy upon our head, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!

22. The Hope of Creation

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"Because the creature" (or the creation) "itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God" Romans 8:21

Who, having received into the mind the glorious idea that God is love, and looking round upon creation as it now appears—but must conclude that some terrible change has taken place in it? And who, carefully reading God's most holy word, and receiving its truths into the mind, can do otherwise than believe that another and very different change will take place in creation yet. And how it pleases and gratifies the benevolent heart to look forward and anticipate the deliverance of creation from its misery and gloom, while happiness and glory take up their residence in it! This is our subject: the apostle directs our attention to it, saying, "Because the creature" (or the creation) "itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). The Hope of Creation. "Because the creation also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." This furnishes the reason for its hope; but some read, "that the creation also shall be delivered;" which makes it the object of its hope. Anticipated deliverance is both the reason and object of its hope. It is now in bondage, having lost its freedom. The very soil is bound to bring forth noxious weeds, and thorns, and thistles. The animals are in bondage to cruel instincts, generating destructive habits, which disturb harmony, and prevent peace. Everything is altered from what it was. Everything is perverted from its original design. Disorder and confusion everywhere abound. All is in a state of frailty and degradation—in bondage to corruption, which decays and destroys it. But it shall not be always so. The creation will not be done with when the present dispensation ends. It shall in some way partake of the glorious liberty of the children of God. The globe will be renovated and renewed. It will be reorganized, and be made far more lovely than it was before man fell. It will be elevated, and shine forth as the most glorious orb among the myriads that roll in space. It will be the home of happiness, having all the elements of happiness impressed upon it, and reigning in it. Everything will be free, vigorous, healthy, pure, and happy!

It will be delivered from all that came in by sin, and from all that arises out of, or exists by corruption. All the offensive will be removed—removed perfectly, and removed forever. All that is artificial will be done away; all will be natural, useful, ornamental, and lovely. The works of man, whether prepared for punishment or reformation, as required no longer, will be swept away forever—all our prisons and dungeons, all our hospitals and reformatories, all our arsenals and instruments of war! The spear shall be beat into the pruning-hook, and the sword into a ploughshare, and men shall learn the art of war no more. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. No longer shall man need to say unto his brother, "Know the Lord;" for all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest. Creation shall be delivered from its bondage, by the glorious liberty of the children, at this the time of the restoration of all things, spoken of by God's holy

prophets—into the glorious freedom of the saints; for it shall participate in some measure and degree in the glorious liberty of the holy, happy family! The Prospect of the Church. "Glorious liberty." We have liberty now—but it is imperfect—it is not complete. We are delivered from prison, and freed from our fetters; but we have still our prison wounds uncured. The diseases caught there are not healed. Our old bad habits, contracted when in bondage, cleave to us still. Our education is not complete. Our liberty is gracious—but not yet glorious. It is like the law when compared with the gospel. We may, therefore, apply the apostle's words to it: "It has no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excels." But we shall soon have "glorious liberty." It will extend to the soul, which will enjoy what the Redeemer anticipated: "You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore!" Therefore we look forward, and say with David, "As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness!" The SOUL will be gloriously free:

free from every fetter that binds it,

free from every conflict that tries it, and

free from every burden that bows it down. The BODY will be gloriously free! It will be a glorious body; in every respect like the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. No more disease, no more weakness, no more pain! But health, strength, and ease will characterize it forever! The whole person, body, soul, and spirit—will be in perfect liberty:

free from the curse—and every cross;

free from every foe—and all our fears;

free from every fault—and our numerous failings;

free from frailty—and free from folly;

free from all internal, external, and eternal evil.

It will be freedom crowned with glory—with . . .

glorious beauty,

glorious brightness,

glorious majesty,

glorious honor, and

ineffable splendor!

Eye has never seen, ear has never heard, nor has the heart of man ever conceived of anything so grand, so magnificent, so glorious—as what God has provided, and has in store for His people! The fabric of heaven and earth will be restored. Satan shall never triumph in the destruction of a world like this. In full perfection and unsullied grandeur shall the earth lie beneath God's paternal eye, righteousness dwelling in it—and characterizing it forever! As restored, it will be a glorious monument to reflect the praise of God.

It will reflect the praise of his wisdom in frustrating effectually and eternally all the designs of Satan. The serpent's head will appear not merely bruised—but crushed!

It will reflect the praise of his power, by which he over-ruled all the conflicting events of time, all the changes which took place on earth, for his own glory and his people's good.

It will reflect the praise of his goodness, which will shine forth with all the glory of the noonday sun, and be written, as it were, in large capitals—on every portion of Paradise restored. It will be a proof of the perfect and eternal abolition of death—and a display of the wondrous triumphs of his free and sovereign grace!

It will be the completion of Gods original grant to man. We read, "What is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet." Man was made to have dominion; but he forfeited and lost it by sin. What was lost by the first Adam—shall be restored by the second, as Paul testifies (Hebrews 2:5-9). What Paul testifies the Lord Jesus confirms: "Behold, I make all things new! He who overcomes shall inherit all things."

"They shall reign forever and ever!" Dominion is restored, the original grant is confirmed, and the Church, with Jesus, is put in possession of the forfeited world. This will fill saints and angels with delight and gratitude!

Creation shall share in the glories of redemption. The first Adam ruined it; the second Adam shall restore it! He shall be the repairer of the breach, and he shall restore it completely. It witnessed the humiliation of the Son of God, and sympathized with him at his death; it shall also witness the glorious triumphs of the Son of God, and share in his glorification.

Glory is the end of redemption. This is our support at present. However we may be despised, however we may suffer now—we shall shine, we shall be happy, when Jesus, the great Deliverer, comes; for "the creation also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God!"

If any of these things should appear difficult, or even counter to our pre-conceived opinions, let us remember that we are but learners, and that in the way of humble, diligent waiting upon God—our light will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Nor let us overlook the fact, that some things which relate to this subject are confessedly difficult; as Peter, alluding to these very things as spoken of by Paul, says, "Our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which those who are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." May the Lord preserve us from such a spirit, and enable us to receive with meekness whatever he has revealed in his word, whether difficult or plain.

23. Nature and Grace Groaning

23. Nature and Grace Groaning

"For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they—but ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body!" Romans 8:22-23 No part of the earth is without the effects of the curse. All creation more or less suffers. Nor does the grace of God free us from suffering—but very often increases it. It sanctifies our sufferings, and turns the curse into a blessing.

Look wherever we will—we see the disorder introduced by sin. Listen in whatever direction you choose—and you will hear the discord produced by sin. "For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they—but ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:22-23). The State of Creation. It is groaning, like a man under a heavy burden, or some one in deep affliction. "The field is wasted, the land mourns." "The beasts of the field cry unto you." "How do the beasts groan!" Everything seems to be painfully affected, and, as Solomon says, "full of labor,"—the sun, the wind, the rain.

"All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." The very clouds are represented as weary: "Also by watering he wearies the thick cloud; he scatters his bright cloud." All is more or less in pain in consequence of man's sin—the whole earth is uneasy—and groans. "They have made it desolate; and being desolate, it mourns unto me." It is in pain—as a travailing woman, travailing for life, not death. And as in the case of the mother, so is it with the earth, as our Lord says: "A woman when she is in travail—has sorrow." So creation at present groans and travails in pain together, and has continued to do so since the day that Adam fell. The groans of creation seem to upbraid us—for we are the cause of them. They should awaken us to a sense of our sin and guilt. They teach us the evil of sin, the vanity of earthly things, and our need of patience. Has creation been suffering and groaning for nearly six thousand years—all because of man's sin; and shall we be impatient if called to suffer for a short time for our own sin—especially when we know that our case is not singular, that we do not suffer alone—but that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren which are in the world?

We have need to exercise patience, repentance toward God, and hope in the midst of sorrow. Creation has suffered long, in hope of the deliverance promised—and much more should we. The groans of creation seem to accuse us of cruelty—because we caused them! They seem to complain of us—because we show so little sympathy. We live in a groaning world—a world that travails in pain, a world that looks forward to a glorious deliverance! Let us, therefore, walk wisely, humbly, and hopefully too—expecting the blessed hope. The State of God's People. Not only they—but as creation groans and wails—so also do we. Yes, we "who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body." Notice the description of the persons, "we who have the first fruits of the Spirit."

Under the law—the first fruits were the Lord's; he claimed them; they were presented unto him, and accepted by him. Under the gospel—the saints are God's first fruits; he claims them, accepts them, and will have them as his own. But here, Jesus having died, as a grain of wheat fallen into the ground—the Holy Spirit is given as the first fruits of his redemption, to quicken his people, and ripen the glorious harvest. We have the Spirit, which is the first fruits of the Savior's accepted work. We have the first fruits of the Spirit, which he imparts to, or produces in, all believers. We have his graces and his comforts.

We have his graces. He has given us the grace of LIFE, or imparted to us a new, divine, and never-dying life—a life superior to that which Adam lost, superior to that which the angels in glory possess—a life which hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and which cannot be satisfied, until all within and without is perfectly holy! This is a life which came from Jesus, leads to Jesus, and will ultimately conform us to the image of Jesus.

He has given us the grace of FAITH, by which we receive God's word, apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest upon his finished work—by which we believe the whole of God's revelation, are fully persuaded of the truth of the prophetic word, and confidently expect him to make good every promise which he has given.

He has given us the grace of PEACE, even reconciliation to God, and that holy tranquility of mind which springs from it. We have peace with God. We feel peaceful in the prospect of all that is before us. We are peaceably disposed always and everywhere. Peace keeps our hearts, pervades our souls, and rules in our bosoms.

We have the grace of JOY, which makes us happy amidst all our tribulations, lifting us up above the sorrows and sadness of time. We joy in God. We rejoice in the midst of sorrow. We triumph in Christ.

We have the grace of LOVE, of love to God as our Father, to Jesus as our Savior, and to the saints as our brethren and fellow-heirs. We love God, because he first loved us. We love Jesus, because he laid down his life for us. We love the saints because they belong to Christ, and also because they resemble Christ.

We have the grace of HOPE, which is a lively and vigorous expectation of all the great and good things which God has promised, especially of being with Christ and like Christ forever!

Indeed all the fruits of the Spirit in greater or less degree—are possessed, enjoyed, and exhibited in true believers; as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We have his comforts too; which comforts are a pledge of our inheritance, and assure us that we shall possess the whole, when life and its trials are ended. They are also foretastes of celestial happiness, being the same in kind—but not in degree. In hallowed fellowship with God, we are sometimes lifted out of ourselves, and are raised above everything earthly; we are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. These comforts are to us, what the cluster of grapes from Eschol was to the people of Israel in the wilderness—both a pledge and foretaste of the glorious fruits of the promised land!

Let us now glance at the representation of experience: "We GROAN within ourselves." We groan over the sin that dwells in us, and the misery experienced by us. Our misery arises from the conflict within: between light and darkness, grace and corruption, the law of the mind and the law in the members, between the flesh and the Spirit. Our misery also arises from the temptations, insinuations, and devices of Satan: which things trouble, depress and often cast us down. Then there are persecutions from the ungodly: these are not violent, as formerly—but very often they are harassing enough. Besides which there are the afflictions of mind and body which spring from disease and other causes.

These things, combined or separately, make us cry out with David, "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my groaning is not hidden from you" Psalms 38:4-9. Or with Paul, "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death!" "We who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened."

We are waiting also for "the adoption, namely, the redemption of our BODY." We expect the resurrection of the body—in glory, in power, and glorious. Then it will be a fit and suitable residence for the soul in its perfect and glorified state. For this we wait in hope; for this we look with submission; to this we shall be introduced, and perhaps soon! The lost sinner is the enemy of creation. Earth fares ill on his account. Because of his misconduct and criminality—the earth mourns, the whole creation groans. Believers are more sensitive than others. Grace softens and refines our nature. The stony heart is removed—and the heart of flesh is imparted; in consequence of which true Christians suffer more than others. "In this tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

ADOPTION may be viewed in a threefold light: In the light of election, when it is a secret in God's bosom. He chose whom he would adopt, and predestined them to this privilege—but no one knew it but himself. In the light of regeneration, when it is made known to us—but remains a secret to all others. In the light of the resurrection, when it shall be revealed to all. In election, God wrote our names in his book of life, which is his family register.

In regeneration, he gave us a new nature, sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, and put us among his children. In the resurrection, he will openly acknowledge us as his children, and place us before his face forever. The reception of the first fruits of the Spirit is an invaluable blessing:

It confirms our faith, and strengthens our belief in the testimony of Scripture.

It teaches us the excellency and blessedness of the promised inheritance.

It clears our title to the heavenly mansions and all the glories of the adoption.

It prepares for the enjoyment of what God has provided for us, and stimulates us to run the race which is set before us with confidence and courage.

Redemption is a complete deliverance. It is not only the rescue of the soul from the power of sin, the curse of the law, and the second death—but it includes the complete deliverance of the body

from all disease, corruption, and pollution. It is called a redemption, because at a great price, and by the exertion of almighty power, the body comes forth from the grave, as a prisoner from his dungeon, into the light and liberty of resurrection glory. Then death shall be swallowed up in victory, and we shall be fully and forever recognized as the children of God, being the children of the resurrection! To this blessedness the Holy Spirit seals us. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." This sealing is putting God's mark upon us, by which we are declared to be his own. It is putting God's seal upon us, by which we are rendered safe and secure—for no man can break God's seal.

Oh, the wonders of God's ways! The law introduced grace, and grace introduces glory. It was an dreadful day when God spoke from Sinai; it was a solemn day when God incarnate laid down his life on Calvary; and it will be a glorious day when he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied! The law drove us from self;

the Holy Spirit led us to Christ; and

Christ will present us to his Father faultless and spotless in everlasting glory!

Praise, everlasting praise—to the God of grace, the God of glory!

24. Salvation by Hope

24. Salvation by Hope "For we are saved by hope" Romans 8:24

Salvation is of the Lord! "By grace are you saved." So testifies the divine word; and yet Peter says, "Save yourselves;" and Paul adds, "That I may by all means save some;" to which James appends, "He shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

God is the author of salvation;

grace is the source from which salvation flows;

Jesus is the Savior;

faith is the grace that receives salvation;

while separation from the world and dedication to God—prove that we are saved. To all this our apostle adds another view, and says, "For we are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24).

The NATURE of Hope. Hope is a grace of the Holy Spirit, produced by him in the believer, and drawn forth into act and exercise by the promises of the word. It is made up of desire and expectation. Its object is something good; for we cannot desire evil; nor is hope the right word, when evil is the object. It must be good, or what appears to be good.

Hope it is something future; for we do not desire or expect that which is present or possessed. It is unseen, hidden in God, laid up for us in heaven, reserved against that day.

It is good promised; for we cannot expect good from God, except he has promised it. Therefore David said, "I wait for the Lord; my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope." So again he pleads, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope." "I have hoped in your word." "My soul faints for your salvation; but I hope in your word." "I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words. I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise." The blessings promised by God drew forth the psalmist's desire and expectation. So the sinner, when he feels his sin, perceives his danger, and is alarmed at the wrath of God—has his desire and expectation drawn out to the Savior, who by the word is presented to him; and the description given of him is, that he has "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him." As God's promises embrace both body and soul; both this life and the next, so does hope; for "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." For "this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life." Our heavenly Father knows that we have need of all these things. All things needed for life and godliness are promised; and everything promised may be lawfully desired, and steadily expected, because promised. But hope only expects good things in God's way. If we hope for eternal life, it is as Jesus said, "This is the will of him who sent me, that every one who sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life." So we hope for eternal life through believing in Jesus. Or, as David says, "Lord, I have hoped for your salvation, and done your

commandments." We expect to be saved in the way of evangelical obedience.

Hope is the child of faith, which faith is the confident expectation of things hoped for, the full persuasion of things not seen. We cannot hope for what we do not believe, or expect but as we believe God's promises. The highest object of our hope is complete salvation, called "the hope that is laid up for us in heaven," even the full possession of God's glorious salvation, which is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Hope is founded on God's mercy; "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy!"

Hope is founded on the immutable promise of God; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie promised before the world began"

Hope is founded on our relation to God as our Father, who loves us, cares for us, and is bound to provide for us!

Hope is founded on the faithfulness of God to his word; for it is "impossible for God to lie," "faithful is he who has promised, who also will do it!"

Hope is founded on the perfect work of Christ, which atoned for our sins, brought in everlasting righteousness, and made perfect and never ending peace.

Hope is founded on the resurrection of Jesus, which attested the truth of his mission, the perfection of his work, and the pleasure of God in him; as we read, "God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope may be in God."

Hope is founded on his intercession, as within the veil in the presence of the Father pleading for us; therefore the apostle says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever."

Sometimes we found our hope on, or encourage it by, our former experience; as Manoah's wife reasoned with her husband, when he thought they must die because they had seen an angel of the Lord; she said, "If the Lord were going to kill us—he would not have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering. He would not have shown us all these things or spoken to us now like this." So the believer now reasons, "If God did not intend to save us—he would not have convinced us of sin, led us to Jesus, or raised our hearts above; therefore I will hope in his mercy, and expect everlasting life."

Hope is founded on the covenant of grace, as it includes the gifts and promises of the Father, the offices and engagements of the Son, and as ordered in all things and sure—our hope finds a firm, a settled, an immovable foundation!

Hope, or the strongest desire for the greatest good, and a lively expectation of the most glorious blessings, is warranted, fully warranted in God's most holy word—and becomes at once one of our greatest privileges—and a most solemn duty.

The OFFICE of Hope. "We are saved by hope" Not in the same sense as we are saved by faith, which delivers us from guilt, degradation, and eternal death, by receiving from Christ, and confiding in Christ. To be saved by hope—is to be kept, preserved, upheld, or sustained, in the

midst of foes, dangers, and trials.

Hope quickens us in duties—and preserves us from becoming cold and dead.

It comforts us in tribulations—and keeps us from being disheartened and gloomy.

It enables us to overcome temptation—and so to hold on our way, looking unto Jesus.

It gives us peace in death—in the sure prospect of victory over the grave.

Thus hope saves us:

by preventing despair—into which we can never fall while hope lives within us;

by preserving us from desperation—to the verge of which we are sometimes brought;

by guarding us against rebellion—the seeds of which are still thickly sown in our corrupt hearts;
and

by protecting us against apostasy—into which we can never fall so long as we hope in God. From many evils, at many times, in many ways—we are saved by hope.

Hope is possible to all wherever the gospel comes—none have reason to despair; but it is a certainty in the experience of the Christian. He can say with Paul, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly," but with a holy expectation of gaining the prize.

Hope always generates patience, therefore we read of the "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." The stronger our hope, the steadier our patience; and the steadier our patience, the more unruffled our peace.

Salvation includes our election—which is past;

our effectual calling and sanctification—which are present;

and our glorification—which is future.

We were chosen to salvation by the Father;

we are redeemed by Jesus Christ;

we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit; and

we shall be glorified by the cooperation, and as the joint work, of the whole of the divine persons in the Godhead.

Hope is in God—as its highest object and best end.

Hope is through Christ—who is the way to the Father, the truth, and the life.

Hope is on the ground of the Word, which warrants, excites, and regulates it.

Hope is for all that God has promised, whether temporal or spiritual, in this world or the next.

Hope should be encouraged—as it brings . . .

glory to God,

comfort to our souls,

credit to religion, and

honor to our Lord Jesus Christ.

O God of hope, we beseech you to fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, you are our hope: as such be ever present with us, unfolding your glory before us, and imparting more and more of your Spirit unto us.

Holy Spirit, fill us with a lively hope, and teach us to expect . . .

all that God has promised,

all that Christ has procured, and

all that You have revealed in Your most holy Word.

25. The Object of Hope

25. The Object of Hope

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we do not see—we wait for it with patience." Romans 8:24-25

Some have no hope, being destitute of the very form of religion. To them . . .

there is no God;

the Bible is no more than a book of fables,

hell is a fabrication, and

heaven is but a dream!

Millions have a false hope, having only a form of godliness—but being destitute of its power.

Some have a good hope through grace—a hope . . .

wrought in them by the Holy Spirit,

excited and drawn forth by the everlasting gospel,

and fixed upon invisible realities. This hope always purifies the heart and regulates it; for they hope to be like Jesus when He comes, and to be with Him forever—and every man who has this hope in Him, purifies himself, even as He is pure. This hope prompts the soul . . .

to expect great blessings,

to aspire to lofty privileges, and

to attempt the most difficult duties. This hope protects the man from many dangers, and preserves him from many evils. This hope is well-grounded, on . . .

the oath of God,

the blood of the covenant,

and the pledge of the Holy Spirit. This hope is well-tried . . .

by Satan and the world without,

by unbelief and corruption within, and

by God in the dispensations of his providence. This hope is well-supported, having for its support . . .

all the promises of the Word,

the experience of the Lord's people,

and the glorious character of God. This hope is a lively hope—being full of vigor, buoyancy, and energy, so that it rises above all that opposes its progress, and enables its possessor to reach the goal.

Well, then, may the apostle say, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:24-25). The OBJECT of hope is . . .

the unseen—the invisible;

something great and glorious;

something durable and eternal. In a word, it is HEAVEN! That heaven which God has prepared for those who love Him—where He dwells Himself with all His holy angels—where Jesus is, in all His majesty and glory! That heaven . . .

to which the sanctified heart aspires,

for which the renewed spirit longs, and

after which our warmest and most enlarged desires go forth! That heaven in which we shall enjoy perfect holiness . . .

purified from all sin,

freed from all corruption, and

delivered forever from all filthiness of flesh and spirit! That heaven in which we shall possess complete happiness, so that there shall be . . .

no aching void,

no unsatisfied desire,

no longing wishes left!

We shall be

full of light,

full of life,

full of peace,

full of God! That heaven where we shall have blessed employment, serving the Lamb who was slain—performing a perfect service—a service which at once honors and pleases Him, and satisfies and delights us—a service full of holiness, full of love, and therefore most pleasant! That heaven made up . . .

of eternal union to God,

of perfect enjoyment of God, and

of everlastingly glorifying God. No mourning His absence there! No sighing for communion with Him there! No lack of anything there!

Every power will be employed—and will enjoy its employment forever! This heaven is promised us in the word. We believe in its existence and excellency.

It is attainable; for whoever believes on Jesus has everlasting life—and he will raise him up again at the last day. He who endures to the end—shall be saved.

It is certain to every believer—as certain as the promise of God, the care of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of Jesus can make it. It is certain, for Jesus has taken possession of it in our nature, in our name, to prepare it for our reception. Many of our brethren are already collected there, and have entered upon it as a part of the family to whom it is bequeathed. Our treasure is laid up there; our hearts and our hopes are there, and we shall soon be there too.

We are in the way, we have made considerable progress, and the end will be safely reached. We are kept by the power of God, which guards, protects, and enables us to persevere. "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." Yes, heaven is certain to every believer, for he is passed from death unto life—and shall never come into condemnation! The COMPANION of Hope. "But if we hope for what we do not see—we wait for it with patience."

It is distant—and we must journey in order to reach it.

It is future—and we must wait for it.

Between us and it . . .

there is time—which should be spent to God's glory;

there are sufferings—which must be endured in God's strength;

there are enemies—which must be conquered by faith in Christ;

there is work—which must be done, that grace may be honored;

there are trials—which must be borne with fortitude and courage;

there is death—which must be experienced and overcome in the strength of the ever-living One.

We must therefore wait for it—and we can wait, for . . .

strong desire will produce steady expectation, and

steady expectation will produce great patience, and

patience will enable us to do and suffer all God's holy will. This hope will enable us to bear our trials, however numerous and however great they may be; for supported and sustained by faith, it will never flinch or give way.

Therefore the apostle exhorted the tried and persecuted Hebrews, "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You have need of patience—so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while—He who is coming

will come and will not delay!"

Patience will enable us to do God's work, however arduous, trying, or self-denying it may be; so that by patient continuance in well-doing, we shall look for glory, honor, and immortality—even eternal life; and when our Lord reports on our state, he will say, as he did of his church at Ephesus, "I know your works, and your labor, and your patience."

Patience will enable us to wait God's time, both for the blessings of grace and the possession of glory. We shall take the advice of James when he says, "Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near!" Yes, we shall be found "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." A good hope of a glorious heaven enables us to wait with patience, and we become, "followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises!" And as it was with Abraham—so will it be with us;—of him we read, "And so, after he had patiently endured—he obtained the promise." The blessing is certain—as certain as the oath and promise of God can render it; and therefore, however God may act towards us in a way of providence, we may still say with Job, "Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him!" The blessing is so great, that it will be a full and sufficient reward for all our sufferings, toils, and waiting here below; therefore let us take encouragement from Peter's words: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." If we suffer for Christ and with Christ now—we shall share in all the glory of Christ at his revelation.

Patient waiting is opposed to complaining, which is one of the fruits of the flesh, and indicates carnality of mind.

Patient waiting is opposed to anxiety, which ought never to be allowed to harass or distress the believer's soul.

Patient waiting is opposed to idleness; for he who patiently waits in hope of glory will be diligent to be found of the Lord in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Patient waiting is opposed to despondency; for how can he despond who hopes for glory, and patiently waits for it?

Patient waiting produces courage, and casts out all slavish fear.

Patient waiting generates comfort, and leads us to sources of the richest consolation.

Patient waiting makes us constant and persevering; so that those who unite hope and patience never draw back unto perdition—but always believe unto the saving of the soul.

Hope tranquillizes the troubled soul, even in the midst of its troubles; and therefore David repeatedly says, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

It also protects in the hour of conflict and danger, and is therefore compared to a piece of defensive armor, as Paul exhorts, "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate

of faith and love; and for an helmet—the hope of salvation. "For God has not appointed us to suffer wrath—but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep—we should live together with him." Thus the head is screened and protected—by the hope of salvation; while the heart is protected—by faith and love.

Beloved, have you a lively hope? That is, a vigorous expectation of everlasting glory, as the free gift of God, coming to you through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered? Fully expecting the rest of heaven, and to share in the glory of Christ when he comes—do you patiently wait for it?

There will be much to tempt you to doubt; much to agitate, disturb, and distress your mind; but the hope of glory should keep you steady, as the anchor cast on the rock does the vessel, in the midst of the troubled sea. As your hope is—so will your patience be. A lively, earnest, vigorous hope—will produce settled, steady, and enduring patience; so that you will:

quietly bear your troubles,

mEEKLY carry your cross, and

calmly press on toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.

Gracious Lord, give us a steady hope of glory, and enable us patiently to bear all that falls to our lot below—ever remembering, that it is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God!

26. The Spirit's Help

26. The Spirit's Help

"Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26
The apostle had been comforting and cheering the Lord's people, under their trials and troubles, by the hope of the glory which God has provided for them, and which the gospel has presented to them; which hope upholds and animates the Christian's bosom, and enables him to press on through the much tribulation. It preserves him from looking back, or turning aside to the right hand or to the left.

Now, for the same purpose, he sets before them the agency and operation of the Holy Spirit, saying, "likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). As hope gives patience and support under sufferings—in the same way does the gracious help of the Holy Spirit. Our Need of the Spirit. We are infirm, and we are afflicted—and painfully affected therewith. Just as was the apostle, only in a less degree, who said, "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak—then I am strong!" 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ."

Paul felt his weakness; but he also turned his infirmities to account, by going to Jesus for strength to bear them, and believing that his power would rest upon him. He felt that he was not sufficient of himself either to do or bear; but he found that his sufficiency was of God.

Just so, we are weak, our infirmities are many, and we cannot do the things that we would.

We are weak to withstand evil, which works powerfully within us, and sometimes as powerfully outside us. This leads us to cry out at times, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." Not only weak to withstand evil—but weak to perform good. The least precept, without divine assistance, requires more than we can do; therefore we are sure to fail—either in the motive, the manner, or the aim of every action. The law is spiritual, and requires a spiritual obedience; which, without the Holy Spirit, poor fallen human nature is unable to perform.

We are also weak to obtain benefits. Though plainly promised, though deeply needed, though many have already been received—we still need the help of the Spirit to enable us to succeed at

the throne of grace. As we are weak and infirm—so we are ignorant and distrustful. As the Jews were—so are we; and therefore our High Priest must have the same qualifications which theirs had. "Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness."

Jesus, our High Priest, can have compassion on the ignorant, for he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. In consequence of our ignorance, like the two sons of Zebedee, too often we know not what we ask. We are apt to be blinded by self-love, and lose sight of the claims of others, as also of the glory of God. We consult the flesh, study worldly gain, and neglect the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. At times we are so filled with confusion—that we do not know what we want, or what will be best for us! At other times, we are so harassed with temptations that we cannot collect our thoughts, fix our affections, or grasp the promises we ought to plead. Sometimes, when we have yielded to bad temper, or some way have fallen into sin—guilt burdens the conscience, bewilders the judgment, darkens the understanding, and closes the mouth! We cannot pray; all we can do is to sigh, groan, and condemn ourselves, crying out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" From these, and a variety of other causes, we know not what to pray for as we ought, and therefore deeply and painfully feel our need of the Spirit's help; which leads us to notice— The Help of the Spirit. "The Spirit himself;" not merely the word he has inspired, or an influence he may exert—but "the Spirit himself helps our infirmities!" Never let us lose sight of the fact that the Spirit is a person—a divine person; and therefore, by virtue of his divinity, he can be present with, and dwell in each and every one of the saints, be they as numerous as they may. He helps our infirmities:

by stirring up the mind to feel the need of prayer, and to approach the Lord in prayer;

by suggesting what mercies are needed, and what promises may be pleaded;

by throwing light upon the state of the heart, upon our covenant relation to God, upon the position and priesthood of Christ, and upon our welcome to the throne of grace—as it stands in God's gracious invitation;

by inflaming and exciting the affections, which give fervency, energy, and importunity to our prayers;

by imparting power and boldness, so that we take hold on God, wrestle and prevail with God—even as Jacob of old did.

He helps our infirmities, which are often wearying, and therefore need an antidote; which led the apostle to say, "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." The psalmist appears to have sunk into this state, which led him to say, "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" This weariness, you see, is apt to produce dejection and depression of spirit, which leads to fainting; therefore the church at Ephesus is commended: "You have borne, and have patience, and for my name's sake have labored, and have not fainted." And the Hebrews were exhorted "not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when rebuked by him." In such cases, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, we obtain strength.

"In the day when I cried—you answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." He helps our infirmities in prayer, not always by supplying us with words—but by exciting desires, sighs, and groans, which are not uttered. In these the power of prayer consists; and these are produced by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

He helps us to bear the burden that is laid upon us; opens the way for us to approach unto God; and performs the part of an advocate or intercessor, enabling us to carry our cause.

He helps us, for we painfully feel that we cannot support ourselves. Like Job, we should soon give way, and may be addressed as he was: "Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands. Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees. But now trouble comes to you—and you are discouraged; it strikes you—and you lose heart." When we feel our need of supernatural assistance, then comes the Spirit, and we are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.

Thus we are enabled to hold on and hold out, and prove what Paul said to the Corinthians: "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."

He helps—not does all—but assists us in doing, bearing, praying, and persevering; therefore with David we say, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart! Wait, I say, on the Lord."

See, then, the OFFICE of the Holy Spirit. He is an intercessor, advocate, or comforter—for the word includes all. Jesus intercedes for us—as our great high priest before the throne of grace; and the Holy Spirit intercedes in us. Jesus pleads, presenting his precious blood; and the Holy Spirit pleads, producing groans which are not uttered, and sometimes such as are unutterable. As Jesus displays his love by interceding for us in heaven—so the Holy Spirit equally displays his love by interceding in our hearts. If the intercession of Christ in heaven is a reality—and so is the intercession of the Spirit in the heart. If the interceding Savior is a person, so is the interceding Spirit.

See, also, the work of the Spirit to help us poor infirm creatures—to help our infirmities. This he does by teaching and leading us into the truth:

by teaching us to know ourselves, our Savior, our Father, our standing before God, and our many exceeding great and precious privileges;

by directing us to look away from ourselves and our infirmities, and to look to Jesus, and to Jesus only;

by directing us to the throne of grace, there to pour out our hearts, leave our burdens, and obtain grace to help us;

by quickening us when dull, drowsy, and weary; and stirring us up to run our race, face our foes, and plead with our God;

by producing confidence and courage in our hearts, giving courage to the faint, and in those who have no might

increasing strength.

O blessed work! O gracious and glorious Comforter!

See YourNeedof the Spirit. If you do not feel your need now—you soon will, if you are a real Christian. Yes, you will need the Spirit:

to excite and draw forth your desires in prayer;

to relieve your mind and comfort you in suffering and sorrow;

to help and instruct you in prayer.

All through life, and in the hour of death, we shall need the Holy Spirit to make intercession for us. Nor is the work of Jesus more necessary for our acceptance with God—than is the work of the Spirit to sanctify and enable us to persevere.

See the design of the weakness and trouble you experience. They are intended:

to drive you to God;

to strip you of self;

to bring you to rest only on Christ; and

to prove to demonstration your need of the Spirit's office and work.

Blessed weakness—which leads us to Christ, and brings the power of the Spirit into our hearts!

Blessed trouble—which endears the Savior, and teaches us to live out of self—upon our God! The prayers of the godly come from God. When God breathes upon us—we breathe toward him. The Spirit within us—leads us to Christ outside us; and through Christ we have access to the Father.

There is no true prayer—without the whole Trinity. If we worship the Father acceptably, it is through the Son; and if we worship the Father through the Son, it must be by the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit. We worship the person of the Father—through the person and mediation of the Son—as the effect of the personal operations of the Holy Spirit.

See, then, the full provision made for us. All that we could possibly need—was devised by infinite wisdom, provided for us in the everlasting covenant, and is revealed to us in God's inspired word. A throne of grace is erected: that throne is always accessible; before that throne Jesus the great high priest and intercessor stands; on that throne God, as our heavenly Father, is seated.

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27. God's Prerogative

God's Prerogative (N.B. The first page of this article is missing!)

"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Romans 8:27

"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." "The Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts." "Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?" The ever-present, omniscient God, is ever active, inspecting, examining, and observing all things, especially the heart of man. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, throughout the whole earth." Hence that affecting testimony of Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." The Lord searches all hearts, and knows what is hidden in every mind. He must do so as the Creator: "He who planted the ear—shall he not hear? He who formed the eye—shall he not see? He who teaches man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knows the thoughts of man." As the ever-present God: "The Lord looks from heaven; he beholds all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike; he considers all their works." Also as the Governor of the world: he is not far from every one of us: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being—For we are also his offspring." Hence the striking statement of the apostle, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Well then may the psalmist, filled with profound and adoring reverence, exclaim, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast!" Psalms 139:7-10 This solemn fact should be realized by us, in order to deepen our devotion and render our reverence more profound. Solomon felt it at the dedication of his magnificent temple, and therefore said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built?" And, pleading with God to hear the prayers of his people, he said, "Hear in heaven your dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart you know." This would prevent our dissembling, or falling into the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied unto God; and make us sincere in all we say and do. Then we should worship God in sincerity and truth; which is the worship he requires and approves. "He who comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him."

God knows our persons, our circumstances, and our experience; and Jesus has said, "All the churches shall know, that I am he who searches the thoughts and the heart." The Lord ever hears our prayers, and understands them, whether we make our desires intelligible or not. Nothing is

hidden from him, nothing can be; for each of us may say with David, "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue—you know it completely, O Lord." Psalms 139:1-4. His eye is ever fixed on the heart: he turns over its folds, and sees all that is working there. The Apostle's Conclusion. "He knows what is the mind of the Spirit." That is, of the Holy Spirit, who is working within us. He knows, though men may not. Man may be ignorant; "but he who searches the heart, he knows what is the mind of the Spirit." In praying, we exercise the natural spirit, or the human soul; the new nature, or that which is born of the Spirit; in addition to which we have help that is supernatural, even the help of the Holy Spirit. He knows and recognizes the working of the heart though we do not speak, though we cannot speak—though, through guilt or fear, we dare not speak.

God ever knows what his Spirit produces. Not only so—but he approves and accepts. The carnal mind is enmity against God—but the mind of the Spirit is agreeable, acceptable, and pleasant to God. Oh, what a mercy, God knows our desires and our wishes—what we would be, what we would do, and what we would say! When we feel as if we could not pray, or feel ashamed and deeply humbled on account of the carnality, worldliness, and wandering of our minds in prayer; all our desire is before him, and our groaning is not hidden from him. He knows the desires we cannot express, the purposes we cannot perform, and the wishes we cannot accomplish. Oh, infinitely blessed God, I thank and praise your holy name, that, as the searcher of the heart, you know, observe, and approve of my willing and desiring—as weak and feeble as they are. The Reason Why Prayer Succeeds. "Because he makes intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." Mark the character, "for the saints." He regenerates the sinner; he intercedes for the saints. That is, those who are set apart for God by the decree of election; separated from the world by the power of divine grace; united to Jesus by faith and love; and made fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Observe what he DOES, "makes intercession." He excites the mind—and disposes it to pray; he directs the mind—and teaches it to pray; and he assists the mind—and enables it to pray. All real prayer is from the Holy Spirit; yet it is the believer's prayer. If there is the mind without the Spirit, there is no prayer; if there be the Spirit without the mind, there is no prayer; but the Spirit influencing the mind, the saint prays.

Mark HOW the Spirit intercedes, "according to the will of God," but never contrary to it. The Spirit, being God, knows the mind of God, understands clearly and fully the will of God: for as no man knows the things of a man—but the spirit of a man which is in him; even so the things of God knows no man—but the Spirit of God. This is proof of the personality and divinity of the Spirit; for he searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. Knowing all God's purposes, promises, and designs, he directs and enables the soul to pray in accordance therewith.

If, therefore, we are taught of God, we shall pray in conformity with the revealed will of God, or in submission to his secret will. The one we know in all its grand outlines by his word; and to the other we yield ready submission, knowing that it is holy, just, and good. A consciousness that we are praying in accordance with God's will, inspires us with confidence and courage; hence John says, "This 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 hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." As what we pray for accords with God's will, so the manner in which we pray, when the Spirit makes intercession for us, is well pleasing to God; and we have liberty to open the mouth, speak boldly, ask largely, and expect without doubting. For through Jesus we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Oh, to experience more of the presence, power, and assistance of the Holy Spirit in prayer! In prayer there should be faith, fervor, humility, and aiming at a right end; but this will not, cannot be the case without the Spirit. Unless we have confidence in God, plead fervently with God, lie low before God, and aim at the glory of God—how can we expect to succeed? But can we thus pray without the special help of the Spirit? Never! Therefore let us ask for the Spirit, look for the Spirit, and yield to the gentle working of the Spirit.

Some things we pray for may be lawful—but that is all; some are commanded, and should, therefore, be earnestly sought; and some are good and necessary, and on these our hearts should be set. The Spirit first sanctifies, and then intercedes. He sets us apart for God, and then gives us power with God. He imparts life, gives light, produces appetite, awakens desire, leads us to the throne of grace, and lovingly assists us there. In prayer, there are three things which should greatly encourage us:

God's heart is toward us,

Jesus in heaven pleads for us, and

the Holy Spirit works within us.

God loves us,

Jesus is in office for us, and

the blessed Spirit makes intercession within us. The intercession of the Spirit in the heart is the echo of the intercession of Christ in heaven. What Christ pleads for with the Father above, the Holy Spirit disposes us to desire and pray for on earth.

See, then:

the party praying—a saint;

the petition presented—it is for something lawful, desirable, commendable;

the end aimed at—something good, worthy of the Spirit's attention; the state of the heart—it is warm, enlightened, excited, and energetic.

"The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much." May we ever live as under God's all-seeing eye, and do everything as in his immediate presence. May we never forget that God knows by intuition all that we think, desire, purpose, or plan, in the deep recesses of the soul. Everything is uncovered before him. The first springs of thought and volition are fathomed and examined by him.

He knows what the Spirit intends, by the impressions he makes, the thoughts he suggests, the feelings he produces, the desires he kindles, and the emotions he awakens in the soul. Next to Jesus, our best friend is the Holy Comforter. As Jesus manages our affairs in heaven—so the Holy

Spirit manages our affairs in the heart. The Father gave his Son for us, the Son sent the Spirit to us; and the Spirit leads us, through the Son, to the Father, enabling us to plead with him as a man pleads with his friend.

O what a glorious mystery is the experience of the Christian!—his heart knows the bitterness that arises from sin, and it knows, too, the exquisite joy that flows from sovereign grace! Lord, give me a more full, powerful, and abiding acquaintance with it, that I may live as in your sight, walk as under your eye, realize that you are searching my heart, and enjoy the sweet and holy influences of the blessed Spirit, making intercession for me with groanings which may not be uttered.

28. Strong Consolation

28. Strong Consolation

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 The apostle never seemed to think that the Lord's people could be too happy, or that he could comfort them too much. He therefore opens one source of consolation after another to them, so that they may be filled with all joy and peace in believing. He had pointed them to their bright hopes in the future, to the work of the great Comforter in their hearts, and to the knowledge which their heavenly Father has of their desires and prayers; and now he seems to bid them look around upon all that is taking place in the world and in the Church, and says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). The Sweet Persuasion. "All things work together for good." As if everything were in motion—as if all things were in combination—as if all things, being combined, were under a special direction—as if the end to which all things so directed were to do the Lord's people good, the greatest possible good. Yes, all things are at work, at work in connection, and our good will be the end of the whole!

All GOOD things for our good.

Everything in God: all his divine perfections; all his gracious purposes; all his glorious attributes.

All things in Christ: all his offices; his perfect obedience; his precious blood; his constant intercession.

All things in the Church: all the ordinances; all the supplies sent; all the operations wrought; all the manifestations granted.

All things in the world: good government; the bounties of Providence; the benefits of citizenship.

All the work of the Holy Spirit: his convictions and consolations; his unction and his teachings; his leading and guiding; his sealing and confirming.

All the good things of heaven, all the good things of earth, all temporal good things, and all spiritual good things—work together for the good of the Church of Christ.

All BAD things for our good.

All our sufferings and sorrows;

all our temptations and trials;

all our sadness and grief;

all our persecutions and privations;

all our desertions and conflicts;

—the law in the members, the corruptions of the heart, the weakness of the flesh, the sadness of the spirit, and even our doubts and fears—are overruled for our good. What we would be without these things, we know not; but we are too worldly, too carnal, too proud, too selfish with them. God uses them as ballast to the vessel, as medicine for the soul.

All things work together, not separately and apart. They co-operate as workmen in a great manufactory, each having his place to fill and his work to perform. They mutually assist each other, as the different wheels in some great machine, or the different parts of a magnificent steam-engine.

They work together as the storm and calm, the cold and heat, the sunshine and shade, in the world of nature. All under God's direction, unite to fulfill God's promise: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Just so, all things in providence co-operate and combine to perform the word, "I will rejoice over them to do them good." The END God has in view, in all that he does and in all that he permits—is the present and everlasting good of his people. But of WHAT is for their good, God is the judge, whose knowledge is perfect, and whose wisdom is infinite.

It may be for their temporal good, as were the persecution and sufferings of Joseph; therefore he could say to his brethren, "But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

It shall be for their spiritual good. Upon this, God's heart is set. To this, all things in heaven, earth, and hell are directed; so that in reference to our most painful trials, we shall have to say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." And again: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept your word. You are good, and do good; teach me your statutes."

It will be for their eternal good. The things of time—have their outcome in eternity. They prepare us for it, and are most intimately connected with it: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Therefore says James, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him."

Mark the certainty of Paul: "We know that all things work together for good."

He knew from the oath and promise of God. He knew from his own personal experience. He knew from the history of the Church in all ages.

He knew from God's relation to his people, which is close, tender, and abiding; so that if Zion should say, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me," he at once replies, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget; yet will I not forget you!" He knew from God's care of his people, which is constant, active, and paternal; so that whatever temptation or trial may overtake them, or in whatever trouble they may be, he always makes a way for their escape, that they may be able to bear it.

He knew from God's purpose, too, according to which he called, and will preserve and bless them; and the counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart unto all generations." Let us

notice now— The Interested Parties. "Those who love God." This is man's act toward God. All his people love him, and love him because he first loved them. They love him as a God in Christ, in whom he has revealed and made himself known. God in Jesus is a just God and a Savior. All his sublime and glorious attributes are revealed in all their beauty and harmony in Jesus, and we see how God can be just—and yet justify ungodly sinners such as we are; and this draws out and fixes our love upon him.

They love him as a Father—the Father of Jesus, and their Father in him. His paternal love draws out their filial affection, and they love him as the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort and consolation.

They love him for what he has done for them, for what he has said to them, and for what he has prepared for them.

They love him supremely, above and beyond all beside; and even when their comforts are lowest and their temptations strongest, there is still abiding in their hearts a love to his adorable name.

They are "the called according to his purpose." This is God's act toward them. Called, not merely with the outward and general call of the gospel, which is addressed alike to all who hear the word—but with a special effectual call. Jesus calls them as his sheep, and they hear his voice, as he said: "He calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." And again: "Truly, truly, 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." The voice of Jesus is a powerful voice; it awakens the sleepers, it arrests the careless, it raises the dead.

Through the word, as written or preached, the Lord generally calls his people to himself—a secret power attending it, and rendering it effectual.

God calls "according to his purpose." He determined in eternity, and he carries out that determination in time. He drew his plan in the secrets of his own heart, and he works out that plan before all intelligences.

He calls his people "according to his good pleasure, which he has purposed in himself." And all his called ones may say with Paul, speaking of Jesus, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." And again: "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And this is in order "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works—but of him who calls."

All events are under God's control and direction.

He works—when only man is seen;

he works all things—when only the laws of nature can be recognized;

he works all things after the counsel of his own will—when everything appears to be left to chance. He controls every element, every mind, every event; he directs every creature, even the sparrow in its flight. The very hairs of our head are all numbered by him. "The way of man is not in himself; it

is not in man who walks to direct his steps." The severest afflictions are for our good. They are blessings, though they may be blessings in disguise.

They are God's fire, by which he purges, purifies, and consumes our dross.

They are his fan, by which he separates the chaff from the wheat. They are his pruning-knife, with which he prunes the fruit-bearing branches, that they may bring forth more fruit.

They are his medicine, by which he brings health to the sick, and preserves the health of those who are strong in the Lord.

Grace as in us, is the effect of grace in God. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Grace was given us in Jesus before the world began, and grace was given us through Jesus when we were dead in trespasses and sins; grace provided salvation for us, and grace wrought salvation in us. By grace, and by grace alone, we are saved.

Grace chose us in Christ;

grace gave us to Christ;

grace called us to know Christ;

grace makes us like Christ;

grace will glorify us with Christ. That which sways our hearts now—influenced God's heart in eternity. We love God, not only because he first loved us—but because he shed abroad his own love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Calling in time—is the effect of God's purpose in eternity. God does nothing now—but what he eternally purposed and determined to do. His counsels of old—are carried out in present times. He does what he determined beforehand should be done. His purpose being wise, holy, and just, could not fail of being carried out, as it involved his glory, the honor of his Son, and the happiness of his beloved people.

Believers are safe, for everything shall do them good in the end. Safe! yes, for thus it is written, "No weapon 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, says the Lord." Safe! yes, for Jesus has said, "I give unto them eternal life—and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand!" Safe! yes, for Paul said, "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."

All things shall work together for their best. Wants and woes, losses and crosses, doubts and darkness, fears and forebodings, as well as supplies and supports, gifts and graces, confidence and courage, comforts and consolations—shall work for their good. Happy are the people, who are in such a case! But unconverted sinners are miserable, and are in the greatest danger, for all things work against them. The gospel may be a savor of death unto them. Mercy may harden them. It did so to Pharaoh, even more than judgments. During the plagues he trembled, relented, and called for Moses; but when he saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and said,

"Who is the Lord—that I should obey him!" Kind providences may lead them further from God. They did so to king Saul. When he was a private individual, he was little in his own eyes, and his case was hopeful; but when he became a king, he forgot his duty, rebelled against God, consulted a witch, and perished in his sin!

Oh, how many are hardened by the mercy which should melt them; are filled with pride by the providences that should humble them; and who stumble over the foundation stone God has laid in Zion, to their own destruction! How many now are living illustrations of that solemn truth, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil!" To how many in this our day is the apostle's words applicable, "The preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness!" Reader, how is it with you? I beseech you to inquire, if you have not; examine, if you have not; nor allow anything to satisfy you but love to God, flowing from faith in Christ, which proves that, let what will happen—all shall work together for your good!

29. Predestination

29. Predestination

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" Romans 8:29

Having comforted the Lord's people with the assurance that all things work together for their good, our apostle proceeds to assign a reason for this. The present not only introduces us to, and prepares us for, the future—but it is connected with the past, and only forms part of one glorious, complete, and perfect plan. Hence we read, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). God, in the exercise of his infinite foreknowledge, formed a plan by which he at once secured the greatest happiness of his people—and the highest honor of his Son. The End of God's Plan.

God's end in reference to US—that we should resemble Jesus—be conformed to his image. The person of the Lord Jesus is the most glorious conception of the divine mind—God's finest, grandest thought. He is the image of God's glorious nature, of his holy mind. To him, his whole Church is to be conformed; and each member of that Church must resemble him.

We must resemble Jesus in his character as the Holy One of God; for "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." His Spirit dwelling in us—his graces and excellences will be shared by us, and so we shall show forth his praises by exhibiting his virtues. We must be like Jesus, "But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct." Holiness must characterize us in body, soul, and spirit.

We must resemble Jesus in his destiny. He humbled himself. His whole life below was humiliation and suffering. He had nowhere to lay his head. To the comforts of home, he was a stranger. He was the man of sorrows; with grief he was most familiar. His afflictions were great and constant. And as the Head was afflicted, the members must be so too. This enters into the divine arrangement; therefore says the apostle, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." Afflictions are appointed for us—and we are appointed to afflictions. If we suffer with Jesus—we shall also reign with him. On earth we resemble him as serving; in heaven we shall resemble him as reigning. His happiness will be our happiness, and his glory will be our glory. "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Even now, "our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body!" We shall be like Jesus, perfectly like Jesus, and like Jesus forevermore.

God's end in reference to JESUS, "That he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Jesus is to be preeminent, always and everywhere. As it is written, "I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure!" His

authority is to be unlimited. He possesses, as the privilege of the firstborn, the double portion and the blessing. Hence the apostle's magnificent testimony of him: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

Jesus is also to stand in fraternal relation to many. He is to be "the firstborn among many brethren." His Church will be large, composed entirely of his brethren: "For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Thus Christ and his people have one nature, and constitute one vast and glorious family.

Jesus is to be also the source of every blessing. He is the heir of all things. He is the possessor of heaven and earth. It has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. He is thus first in existence, first in office, first in dignity, and first in glory. All things are under his feet. All resources are at his command. His will rules heaven, earth, and hell. Men are blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. This is God's great end in predestination. Let us notice— The Means of Accomplishing His Design. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine." God's knowledge is infinite. He knows all things at once. He always knew—all that he knows now. There is nothing new, nothing contingent with him. He from all eternity knew the persons of his people, the state into which they would be plunged by sin, and the danger to which they would be exposed as transgressors of the holy law. Let what will take place in the world, or in the Church, whatever errors may spread, or deceivers may arise—we may still say with Paul, "Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are his. And, Let everyone that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

God's foreknowledge embraces all people, things, times, and events; and God foreseeing what man would become, what man would do, and how he would certainly destroy himself—determined to prevent it, at least so far as his Church is concerned. To foreknow indicates, not simply to know beforehand—but love. Whom he loved before, he predestined. He loved his people—as early as he loved his Son. He loved his people with the self-same love as he loved his Son; therefore Jesus said, "You have loved them—as you have loved me." To foreknow is to determine before. God determined to do, or permit to be done, all that occurs in time. He knew what effect every cause would produce, and determined to get glory to his name, secure the salvation of his people, and give the fullest possible manifestation of himself; in order to which everything was determined, fixed, and settled. Therefore we read of the death of Jesus, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And again, "Against your holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, were gathered together—to do whatever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done."

God loved, foreknew, and decreed. He predestined—which is to set apart his people to be saved: in order to which the Son of God was appointed to be the great sacrificial victim, to put away sin by

the sacrifice of himself. Hence we read, "You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who truly was foreordained before the foundation of the world—but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." On the ground of what Jesus engaged to do in the everlasting covenant, and which God gave him credit for, elect sinners were saved from the foundation of the world. God determined to deliver us from evil, and therefore he committed us to Christ, gave us grace in Christ, and appointed us to be one with Christ; hence Paul says, "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works—but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Predestination includes the provision made for us in the everlasting covenant, the fullness stored up for us in Christ, which is opened up to us, and set before us in the precious promises of the word. As we read, "Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will."

What God does for us now—is the effect of his love to us, and what he did for us in eternity. Time reveals God's eternal thoughts. Providence fulfils God's deep decrees. The Holy Spirit carries out the secret purposes of the Father. Our sorrows—and joys, our baseness—and glory, are alike in accordance with God's gracious purpose, or predestination. All flows from his love, which prompted his wisdom to draw the plan and make the appointment; and he only performs the thing that is appointed for us, in all that he works both in providence and grace.

Let us therefore adore the divine wisdom, seek grace to fall in with God's plan, and to acquiesce in the Lord's pleasure. His arrangement is perfect, his plan is complete, his purposes must be fulfilled, and his glory will be great in the consummation. If we cannot rise so high as to enjoy God's predestination, let us hold fast by his promises; but never let us cavil at his decrees, or dispute his right to do as he will with his own. Wrong he cannot do; and when all the cavilers and disputers of this world shall appear before him at last, he will say, "Friend, I do you no wrong!"—in which conscience will acquiesce, and the dispute will be settled forever.

30. Effectual Calling

30. Effectual Calling "Moreover, whom he did predestine—those he also called" Romans 8:30
Justice and grace are essentially different.

JUSTICE is every man's due, and at the hand of God—no man will ever have less than perfect justice. God will deal justly with all, and at last every man will see that he has had his due.

GRACE no one can merit or claim. It is the highest form of goodness, and manifests itself in showing kindness to, and conferring favors upon, the unworthy. It is God saying, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious;" and, "I will be gracious because I will be gracious."

Justice flows naturally from God to all—but grace is given or manifested in the exercise of his sovereignty. Predestination is of grace; yet it is strictly just, for no one is the worse because God has predestined others to everlasting life. In the act of predestination, God intervenes for the salvation of millions, in strict accordance with the holiness, justice, and infinite goodness of his nature. It is part of a grand scheme to people heaven, frustrate the designs of Satan, and manifest and display all the glorious perfections of his nature. It breathes love, prevents eternal death, and confers everlasting life. It undertakes to make all the objects of God's choice—exactly like his beloved Son. It laid a foundation in eternity for all God's glorious acts of grace in time, and when time shall be no more. It is one of God's grandest acts, and stands at the head of many others; therefore the apostle adds, "Moreover, whom he did predestine—those he also called" (Romans 8:30). Notice— The Nature and Properties of this Calling.

It is not that general and external call which by the gospel is addressed to all. That is sent to men as men: "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is unto the sons of men." It is sent to sinners as sinners, who need all God has provided: "As many as you find, bid to the marriage." It leaves multitudes where they were: "Many are called—but few are chosen." This is the call of the Spirit, which is effectual, and is the commencement of salvation in the soul.

It is a call into the grace of Christ—to know, enjoy, and live in his favor; to be saved by his grace; to be the subject of his grace; to be the means of glorifying his grace.

It is a call into the fellowship of Christ—to participate with him and his people in the love of his Father; to share in all the privileges of his house; and to live in the prospect of being forever with him, and forever like him.

It is a call to suffer with Christ. We must take part in all that is Christ's, the painful and the pleasant. Therefore, under all the unkind treatment we receive, under all the grief we suffer, and under all the wrong that is done us, we should remember what Peter says, "Even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in his steps."

It is a call into liberty:

from the bondage of the law,

from the vassalage of the world,

from the service of sin, and

from the tyranny of Satan—

we are called into the freedom of the gospel, into the fellowship of the Church, into the service of God, and to wear the yoke of Christ. This is real liberty—liberty which will last forever.

It is a call into God's kingdom and glory. Therefore the apostle exhorts, "That you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory,"—into the kingdom of his grace now, as introductory to his kingdom of glory in the end. This led Peter to say, "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." This calling is of grace, as Paul testified of his own case: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me." No one deserves to be called; no one naturally desires to be called. In every instance it is a favor—an act of free and sovereign grace.

It is a SPECIAL call. It comes direct to the individual, as if no other person were present or addressed. As in the case of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened," so in every case, a power attends the word, the attention is arrested, the mind is impressed, the conscience is awakened, and the heart opens to admit the Savior. If ten thousand are present, it comes to the party intended—as if he were alone!

It is a HOLY call. Coming from a holy God, through the medium of a holy gospel, it produces holiness in the heart. Holy desires spring up, holy enjoyments are felt, and holy employments are undertaken. Thus the Lord saves us, and calls us with a holy calling; not according to our works—but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

It is a HEAVENLY call. Not like the call of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, or of Israel out of Egypt, which was earthy. This is a heavenly calling; for we are called into a heavenly state, to enjoy heavenly privileges, and be thereby prepared for heavenly glory. Our eye and our heart, therefore, should be set on heavenly things; and our pleasures and enjoyments should be of a heavenly nature. The object of our faith, hope, and love, should be Jesus—Jesus always, and Jesus ever: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

It is an INVINCIBLE call. Where the word of a king is, there is power. Resisted it may be, conquered it can never be. Therefore we read, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power." The dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear live. At the voice of Jesus, diseases fled, devils trembled, and the dead were raised to life; so all whom he calls by his grace obey his voice and follow him. The Means and Agency Employed. The means are various: though none are absolutely necessary—yet he who can work without them is pleased to employ them. The word of the truth of the gospel, either heard, or read, or brought to the mind—is usually employed. Sometimes a solemn warning arouses the mind; sometimes a gracious invitation attracts the soul; and sometimes a representation of the nature, claims, and goodness of God, affects the heart. But by what portion of the word he pleases, employed in whatever way he thinks

proper—God calls the soul out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Sometimes the Lord will work by a dream or a vision of the night, alarming the slumbering sinner, or exciting and drawing forth attention to divine things; at other times by afflictions, by the loss of property or friends, by disease and pain, by privations and distresses. Many a one has lain down on a bed of affliction a hardened sinner—but has been raised up a new creature in Christ Jesus. By a variety of providential dispensations, the Lord works in bringing sinners to himself. Providence is always the handmaid of grace; sometimes going before and preparing the way, and sometimes accompanying it. But whatever means may be employed, the agent in every instance is the same—even the holy and ever blessed Spirit of God. It is his part in the economy of the covenant to quicken and enlighten, to teach and lead, to dispose and dedicate, to convert and consecrate the soul to God. All whom the Father predestined, the Spirit calls—and Jesus receives.

Mark, then, the privilege of the saints.

Before time, they were chosen in Christ, loved with an everlasting love, and predestined to eternal life. In time, they are called from death to life, from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God, and from earth to heaven.

After time, they will be all glorified with Christ, to the praise of God's glorious grace.

Spiritual blessings form a chain. They are connected, and gracefully and orderly follow each other.

If we are chosen, we shall be called;

if called, we shall be justified; and

if justified, we shall be glorified.

God's order can never be broken; his plan can never be disturbed; his purposes can never fail of their accomplishment. Those whom God calls—always call upon God. If God speaks to us in grace—we shall speak to him in prayer. Grace from God—always leads us to God. I may, therefore, prove my calling—by my praying. When God called Saul of Tarsus, it was soon said of him, "Behold, he prays." So will it be said of us. Prayer will become a necessity. Breathing is not more necessary for the life of the body—than prayer is for the life of the quickened soul.

Beloved, are you called of God? Do you call upon God? If called of God: you leave the world; you love to be alone with God; you prize the society of the saints, and you go to the Lord's people as to your own company. If you can prove your calling, your election is sure.

Gracious Lord, show me clearly that you have called me with a holy calling. Give me a heavenly mind; enable me to set my affection on things above; and draw me more and more from the world, setting my affection on heavenly things.

31. Justification

31. Justification "Whom he did predestine, those he also called: and whom he called, those he also justified" Romans 8:30

All the doctrines of the gospel are important, and should be held fast by all the Lord's people. But every doctrine is not alike important. Sweet, precious, and important as the doctrine of our election is, it is not to be compared with the doctrine of our gratuitous justification by simple faith in Christ. To this doctrine the apostle now calls our attention, and shows its connection with our election and effectual calling on the one hand, and our glorification on the other. For "whom he did predestine, those he also called: and whom he called, those he also justified" (Romans 8:30).

Calling and justification differ from each other. Calling is a work wrought by the Holy Spirit within us; justification is a sentence pronounced by the Father respecting us. Calling is inward, in the heart; justification is outward, in the high court of heaven. Calling makes us holy; justification pronounces us righteous. Calling gives us a fitness for heaven; justification gives us a title to it. Calling, therefore, changes our nature; justification changes our state. We will now consider— The Natural Condition of the Persons Justified. They are designated "ungodly," as we read, "To him who works not—but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The man is a sinner—he may be a great, a notorious sinner—but not less than a sinner. His nature is desperately depraved, his heart is enmity against God, and his life is in direct opposition to God. Every imagination of his thoughts may be evil, only evil, and that continually. To those who killed the prophets, murdered the Son of God, and filled up the measure of their iniquities as a nation—was free justification preached. To such, the apostles proclaimed Jesus a Savior, and said, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Nothing that a man has done, or thought, or said—nothing that a man is in himself—can hinder his justification, if he believes in Jesus. The character justified, therefore, is designated "ungodly"—one in antagonism with God, careless about God, a rebel against the government of God. The desert of the sinner whom God justifies is punishment, only punishment, eternal punishment. He has merited the wrath of God, and deserves to have that wrath, without any mixture of mercy, poured out upon his guilty soul forever. Hell, with all its horrors—hell, with its fire, brimstone, darkness, and never-dying worm—is the portion, and the only portion, he has merited at the hands of God. The wages of sin is death, eternal death, and only death. The state of the man—is a state of condemnation. The law has condemned him; it has cursed him with all its terrible curses, and has doomed him to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. As an unbeliever, he is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. As a law-breaker, his condemnation is just. As one who has trifled with mercy, despised the Son of God, and neglected the great salvation—his condemnation is most fearful. As one living without God and without hope in the world, his condemnation is registered in heaven, and recorded in God's book on earth. An ungodly sinner, deserving only punishment, and condemned already by a just and holy God—is addressed in the gospel, is invited to Jesus, is called by the Holy Spirit, and is justified from all charges by

simple faith in Christ. This brings me to— The Privilege. "Those he also justified" WHO justified them? God, the judge of all: God, whose law condemned them, and who had been grossly injured by them! God, whose judgment is just, and who has said, "You shall not justify the wicked;" and who has declared that he will "never clear the guilty:" God, whose judgment is just, and from whose judgment there is no appeal. If justified in a lower court, the man may be condemned in a higher; but if he is justified in the highest court, condemned he cannot be. And so Jesus speaks: "He who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

WHAT does God do? He justifies them. What! declare them righteous? Yes! How does he do this? First, he makes them righteous, and then pronounces them so. He transferred all their sins to Jesus, as their representative, substitute, and surety; he laid all their iniquities on him; he exacted and received full satisfaction from him: "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He made atonement for all our guilt; he suffered all the shame, pain, and agony our sins deserved: "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed." Our sin, therefore, was expiated, put away, cast into the depths of the sea!

But, if we are rid of sin, where is our righteousness? This Jesus wrought for us, when he magnified the law, by obeying it as the incarnate God; and made it honorable, by rendering to it an obedience that was divine—when it only asked for one that was human. The perfect, the finished work of Christ, in all its worth, value, and infinite merit—is placed to our account, is imputed to our souls, is put upon our persons as some costly robe; so that we may sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Thus, though sinners in ourselves, and nothing but sinners, we receiving "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness," are made righteous. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believes. All that the law threatened, he endured; all that the law required, he produced; and all he endured and produced was done—in our nature, in our stead, in order that we might be saved by him. In ourselves, we are sinners; in Jesus, we are righteous. As part of the world, we are condemned; as not of the world—but part of the mystical body of Christ, we are justified. We are righteous, righteousness, the righteousness of God in him.

Having made us righteous, God pronounces us just; and, pronouncing us just, he treats us accordingly. He evermore treats us as his children, dear and tenderly beloved. Chastise us—he may, he will; but condemn us—he will not. Put us to pain he may; but put us to death he will not, he cannot. What a mystery of mercy! What a merciful mystery! Well may we exclaim, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!"

HOW does God justify?

1. By grace—as opposed to desert; for desert is not taken into account at all in our justification before God. It is wholly of grace, as Paul asserted: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." By grace we are saved.
2. By righteousness—as opposed to injustice. God does not pretend that we are righteous, when we have no righteousness; for there are no make-believes in the gospel. He makes over the

righteousness of his Son to the sinner, and declares the same in the glad tidings, as we read: "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus."

God is justified in justifying us, because his Son paid our debts, atoned for our guilt, and did all that law and justice could require at our hands. So that, while our justification is wholly of grace, it is at the same time strictly righteous.

3. It is by faith—as opposed to works. Our best works are sinful. They flow from people who are in rebellion against God. For the sake of our works, therefore, God cannot justify us. Nothing that we do, or can do, can be well-pleasing in the sight of God, until we believe in Jesus. But the moment we believe in Jesus, our sins are forgiven us, and our persons are justified: our works, therefore, can have no influence in our justification. In believing, we renounce self—and trust in Christ. We renounce self entirely—and trust in Christ wholly and only. Thus trusting in Jesus—we are justified from every charge, we are freed from the guilt and are safe from all the penal consequences of sin. It is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that it may be sure to all the chosen seed. "A man is not justified by the works of the law—but by the faith of Jesus Christ." "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Our very best works in our unregenerate state deserve death, and are therefore called "dead works,"—works deserving death, and works polluting all who touch them. With the heart—man believes unto righteousness; or, the faith of the heart—puts us in possession of God's righteousness, and so we are justified. We are therefore justified by faith, not as if faith were our righteousness, or were accepted instead of righteousness—but because faith brings us to Christ, identifies us with Christ, and so we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

4. We are justified by works—as opposed to opinions. By faith some mean simply a cold credence, or a certain opinion in the head. Can such faith save? Never! True faith brings us into union with Christ, and while it entitles us to his perfect work wrought for us, it also derives from his fullness grace—which invariably brings forth good works. Or, by faith, the faith that confides in Jesus, we receive the Spirit; and, as the result, we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, to the praise and glory of God.

Therefore, though works have no influence in our justification before God—yet without good works we are not justified; because without good works we have no faith, and without faith we cannot be justified. While, therefore, the perfect work of Christ justifies us before God, and faith as receiving, resting in, and pleading that work; works justify us before men, and justify our profession of faith, and prove it to be true.

If, therefore, I look for the origin of justification—I find it in the free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace of God.

If I look for that on the ground of which God pronounces me just—I find it in the perfect work of Christ, called "the righteousness of God."

If I look for the instrument by which I receive this righteousness, and so come into a justified state—I find it in simple faith. And if I look for the external proof and evidence of my justification before men—I find it in good works, "which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

Blessed, therefore, be God the Father for his marvelous grace, from which my justification flows. Blessed be God the Son, who wrought out and brought in the everlasting righteousness, for the sake of which I am justified. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, for working faith in my heart, revealing Christ to my soul, and enabling me to appropriate him, and so justifying me by faith in Christ. Not only so—but for enabling me to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, by which faith is justified and God is glorified. Thus God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the one all-glorious Triune God of salvation—is revealed, honored, and glorified—in the justification of every sinner. WHOM does God justify? "Whom he called, those he also justified." All who are called by his grace—are justified in his righteousness; and all are alike justified. In sanctification there are degrees, for all do not receive the Spirit in the same measure, therefore all are not alike holy; but in justification there are no degrees, for each one receives the whole work of Christ on believing, and therefore all are alike justified.

There is no intermediate state between guilty and not guilty—between being righteous and unrighteous—one or the other we must be; if guilty, we cannot be innocent—if unrighteous, we cannot be just. Here, then, lies the glorious mystery: believing on Jesus, his obedience is accepted as ours—his dying for sin, as if we died. His person goes for our person; his work for our work; and his life for our lives.

All believers, therefore, are alike justified, however weak their faith; for it is not the strength of their faith which justifies them: only let faith be true, and then, however weak it may be—it justifies them. The weakest faith brings us to Christ, enables us to cast ourselves on Christ, and leads us to commit ourselves to Christ; and the moment we do so—we are justified.

All believers are alike justified—the timid and fearful as much so as the courageous and confident. It is not our courage or confidence that justifies us—but Jesus, on whom the timid and fearful depend. Strong faith is a great blessing, as it brings us great comfort, and enables us to give great glory to God. Boldness and courage are to be highly valued, as they adorn the Christian character, and are very useful in the world and in the Church; but it is faith, which cleaves to Christ, like the ivy to the oak—which acquits us before God, and brings peace into our souls.

If God justifies us—who can condemn us? Many may be willing, yes, wishful to do so—but there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Neither men nor devils can substantiate one charge against the believer in Jesus; all has been met, answered, and satisfactorily adjusted! Therefore Jesus said, "He shall not come into condemnation."

If we are effectually called—we are fully justified. Do we realize this? It is our privilege to do so. But if we do, we must simply receive into our minds—the plain statements of God's most holy word. We must keep the eye fixed on Jesus, and not be too often looking into ourselves. Indeed, in the matter of our justification, we must not look into ourselves at all, nor at anything connected with ourselves—but at Jesus alone; and at Jesus as delivered to death for our offences, and as rising again for our justification.

If we are justified—we ought to know it; if we know it, we ought to realize it, and daily live, walk, and work under a sense of it. If we are fully justified, ought we not to rejoice, love, and labor? If the justified are not happy, who should be—who can be? If we stand acquitted of all charges before God; if we are invested with God's righteousness; if Jesus is to us "the Lord Our Righteousness,"

—then we ought to joy in God, we ought to rejoice in Christ Jesus, renouncing all confidence in the flesh.

If we rejoice, we ought to love God—because he first loved us; we ought to love Jesus—because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to love the Holy Spirit—because he has revealed these things unto us, wrought faith in us, filling us with all joy and peace in believing. If we love God—we ought to labor for him. Every talent should be employed. Every opportunity to serve him should be seized. Body, soul, and spirit, should be consecrated to his service; and everything we can do to serve his cause, benefit his people, and bring others around us to enjoy the same blessedness with ourselves, we should do.

O You who justifies the ungodly, and who has justified us—pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and let all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God! O may the whole earth be filled with your glory, and may heaven and earth praise you forever and ever!

32. Glorification

32. Glorification "Whom he justified—those he also glorified" Romans 8:30 The golden chain of salvation is complete. Every link is perfect, and all its links are safe. It is of pure gold, or rather of something infinitely better—of pure grace.

Predestination secures effectual calling;

effectual calling secures justification;

and justification secures glorification. The people who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, are effectually called into his fellowship; those who are effectually called into the fellowship of Christ are justified; and all those who are justified, the self-same people in each case, are glorified. But some object, because the past tense is used, and say the apostle refers only to those who are safe in heaven. As well may they object to the birth of Christ, and say the prophet meant someone else, because, several hundred years before he was born, he said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Such forget that God calls things that are not—as though they were; that tenses are nothing with the great I AM, to whom all times, past, present, and to come, are One Eternal Now. When Jesus spoke of his own work, before he laid down his life, which was included in it, he said, "I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do." And before he left the earth he said, "I am no more in the world." So, speaking of his disciples, he said, "He who believes on me has everlasting life;"—yet they were not glorified. And the apostle tells us that, by God's appointment, Jesus is made unto us wisdom—in our calling; righteousness—in our justification; sanctification—in our fitness for heaven; and redemption—in our complete and everlasting salvation. It is the language of certainty, because, as it depends upon the sovereign will and omnipotent power of God, all is certain; and in every instance it has been, and ever will be, that "Whom he justified—those he also glorified" (Romans 8:30). Notice—

What It Implies. The work of sanctification shall be carried on. It was commenced with this intention, and He who commenced it is without variableness, or the shadow of turning. It was begun without asking our leave—yes, though we opposed and fought against it; and it shall be perfected by the same agency, to the glory of the same grace. This led the apostle to speak so positively, and to feel such certainty, when he said, "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." As certainly as God carried on the work of creation until the close of the sixth day, surveyed it, pronounced it very good, and then rested on the seventh; so certainly will God carry on the work of grace in the hearts of his people until it is perfected, and they are completely conformed unto the image of his Son.

It implies that supplies shall be granted—all that is needful for the body, and all that is requisite for the soul. These were provided in the everlasting covenant, are promised in God's gracious word, are secured by the faithfulness of God, and shall be communicated as circumstances require. So that, let our trials be ever so severe, or our troubles ever so heavy, we may say of every one, with

Paul, "This also shall turn to my salvation, through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." And the assurance given to the Philippians, each believer may take to himself: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." God, who provided our supplies, has arranged for their communication; so that, as Israel in going up to their solemn feasts of old, so all the Lord's people, "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God."

It implies guidance through all difficulties. And as God led Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire—so by his Spirit, word, and providence, he guides all his family now. It is written, "He who has mercy on them shall lead them;" and so each one of them may say, "You shall guide me by your counsel—and afterward receive me to glory." Of God, as great and gracious, as faithful and true, as immutable and unchangeable, we may say with David, "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death,"—yes, through death, and beyond it.

Once more: it implies protection in all dangers. And this is guaranteed; for God, who created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and brings forth an instrument for his work; and who creates the waster to destroy; he has said, most solemnly and most plainly, "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, says the Lord." And as Jesus said of each, and the whole of his sheep, "They shall never perish!" So Peter informs us that all believers "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." How, then, can they be otherwise than safe?

If, then, the work of sanctification will certainly be carried on;

if full and sufficient supplies are granted;

if guidance through all difficulties is promised;

and if protection at all times is insured—

must not all who are justified by grace—be glorified in God's good time? Yes; "whom he justified—those he also glorified."

Notice—

What Is Asserted. "Those he glorified." The BODY shall be glorified, and shall shine as the body of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. It shall be spiritual, powerful, honorable, incorruptible, glorious, and immortal. The SOUL shall be glorified, freed from all that is corrupt, defiling, debasing, and impure; and made holy, happy, and glorious beyond our conception. Both body and soul, or the entire person, will be made like the person of Jesus; as John said, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

God will make his justified ones glorious in person—and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

They shall be glorious in place—for if they reign on earth, the whole earth shall be filled with his glory; or if they reside in heaven, it is the habitation of his holiness and of his glory.

They shall be glorious in their society; for they will be with the glorified patriarchs, prophets, and priests of the Old Testament; with the glorified apostles, martyrs, and ministers of the New; and what is better than all, they will be with the glorious Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one all glorious and ever blessed God.

They shall be glorious in their employments; for they will ever be employed for God, and in the service of their beloved Savior; and their employments will accord with the spirituality, dignity, and full bent of their ransomed spirits.

They shall be glorious in their enjoyments, too; for he shall make them drink of the river of his pleasures. Their joy will be full, perfect, and perpetual. No need will ever pinch them, no fear will ever agitate them, no wish will ever excite them; but fully satisfied, filled to repletion, overflowing with joy and gladness, they will be forever with the Lord. In glorifying us—God will make us like Jesus, settle us with Jesus, so that we shall be as Jesus. Filled with the same glory, flowing from the same love, we shall inhabit the same place, share the same blessedness, conferred on us with the same design, through the same glorious eternity. Glorification includes the highest honor, and the fullest happiness—and both crowned with immortality!

God's AIM is our glorification: Are we chosen? "God has from the beginning chosen you to 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." Are we called? "We exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory." Are we begotten again? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you." Are we afflicted? "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." The future DIGNITY of the saints is unspeakably great:

It is called "life,"—that which we value most; as Satan said, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Not only life—but "eternal life;" life without cessation or interruption; life in health; life in wealth; life in peace; life in plenty; life in the possession and enjoyment of all that can render life desirable, or a blessing.

It is called "glory," including all that is bright, beautiful, brilliant, and blessed: a "crown of glory,"—majesty with beauty, sovereignty with blessedness: a "weight of glory,"—not a burden or a pressure—but such an amount of glory that we cannot estimate its value or worth, its vastness or extent!

It is called a "kingdom," an immovable kingdom, where there are order, arrangement, nobility, dignity, and all that is really desirable!

It is called an "inheritance," an incorruptible inheritance; embracing all a Father's love could give—all a Savior's blood could procure—all that a ransomed, elevated, immortal creature can enjoy! The believer, however he may be tried, is safe. Being justified—he will be glorified. He is appointed to glory. He is being fitted for glory. He is legally entitled to glory; for law and gospel

combine in awarding glory to him. He shall possess glory; for our God "raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." The great source of our blessedness is union to Christ. From this all flows. By this all is secured. Union to Christ raises us above Adam in his unfallen state; it gives us greater security, and entitles us to higher glory. We lost much by union to Adam; we shall gain more by union to Christ. We sunk low in the fall of Adam—but we are raised gloriously high through the ascension of Christ. As one with Christ, as predestined to be like Christ, as called to the knowledge of Christ, as justified by the righteousness of Christ—we shall be glorified together with Christ! And then we shall be more exquisitely beautiful than Adam ever was; we shall possess a paradise more lovely than Adam ever did; we shall share more suitable and delightful society than Adam ever knew; and we even now enjoy a security which Adam never possessed. O the wonders of redeeming grace! O the riches of God's saving mercy! O the miracles wrought by eternal love! To God in Christ be eternal glory!

33. The Question

33. The Question "What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us—who can be against us?" Romans 8:31

Paul's epistles were written to be read, not merely by priests, or one class of people—but by all Christians. Every believer, therefore, should carefully and frequently read God's word. Nor is reading enough: we should read with prayer; nor only pray—but exercise our thoughts, our common sense, on what we read. Paul expected the Romans to do so, and to be able to draw just conclusions from the truths he placed before them. He therefore appeals to them, and says, "What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us—who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) The Question: "What shall we say to these things?" Paul referred in general to the sufferings the Lord's people endured—and to the supports they enjoyed. Through much tribulation they were entering into the kingdom—but they found that strength was given them equal to their day. But, in particular, he refers to: their deliverance from the law of sin and death, which fettered, harassed, and kept them in bondage—and their being now under the favor of God, and at peace with him; to the indwelling and gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, helping their infirmities, teaching them to pray, and supplying them with all needed consolations; to their recognition as the children and heirs of God, and of their joint-heirship with the Lord Jesus Christ; also to their predestination to holiness on earth, as preparatory to their perfect happiness in heaven.

It is, then, as if he had said, 'Seeing you are free from condemnation, by being delivered from the law; seeing you are renewed by the Spirit, and have the Comforter dwelling in your hearts; seeing you are recognized as the children and heirs of God; and seeing you were predestined to holiness and happiness—what shall we say? How do you treat these solemn and important truths? Do you believe them? Have you confidence in their reality? Do you trust in them, and expect God to act towards you in accordance with them?

They are to feed your faith, support your minds, and comfort your hearts. Do you meditate upon them? Mere reading of Scripture truth does but little good—without meditation. By reading we gather the grain; but by meditation we thrash it out, prepare it for food, and feed upon it. Collecting the grain, looking at the grain, examining the grain—will not feed us; it must be made into bread and be actually eaten. So hearing or reading the word will not feed, support, or strengthen the soul—without meditation. Do you apply it or appropriate it to yourselves? This we should do. We should seek to claim every promise, to appropriate every doctrine, to enjoy every privilege, and to perform every precept. Are some free from condemnation? then I will seek to be free too. Have the Lord's people the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, working in them, comforting and supporting them? then I will not rest without enjoying the same blessing. Are believers God's children and heirs, and do they know and enjoy it? then I will seek to possess the same privilege. Do other Christians know their election of God, and their predestination to everlasting life? then I will not only believe the doctrine—but I will make my calling and my election sure.

If we do so, we shall draw sweet and hallowed comfort from God's word; we shall be happy, rejoicing in the Lord always; we shall be courageous, and even glory in tribulation, and fearlessly face every foe; we shall acquire confidence, strong confidence in God—so that, however rough our road, however trying our path, we shall walk by faith, and be able to say with our apostle, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Such treatment of God's truth will excite gratitude and draw forth the praises of our hearts. We shall love him, because he first loved us; and we shall praise him for his loving thoughts, gracious purposes, glorious promises, and the invaluable privileges which he has conferred upon us!

It will preserve us from sin; for how can we indulge in sin against a God so good, so infinitely gracious, so plenteous in mercy, so abundant in goodness and in truth?

It will urge us to duty, and help us in duty. We shall be prepared for every good work: nothing prepares us for good works, assists us in doing good works, or urges us to abound in good works—like the comfort, the confidence, and the gratitude which flow from the right use of our privileges. "What shall we then say to these things?" The Conclusion: "IF God is for us—who can be against us?" The "if" does not suppose a doubt—but expresses certainty. It is used by the reasoner, not by the doubter; and is the same as if he had said, "SINCE God is for us—who can be against us?" God IS for his people—this was settled in the everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure. It is plainly revealed in the promises, in which God engages to be with us, and to do for us exceeding and abundantly above all that we ask or think. It is proved in the experience of all the Lord's people, from the beginning of the world until now. If we are believers—then God is ever with us, God is always for us. He is on our side; he is our ally. He says, "Fear not: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

Who, then, can be against us? MEN may—men will. It may be, great men—men in power—men influenced by prejudice—the very last men we would have expected. But what then? Can they injure us? Ponder well Peter's question: "Who is he who will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?"

SATAN, and all influenced by him, will be against us. Therefore it is said, "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." But though that old serpent, the devil, deceives the whole world—yet Christians overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony; and the God of peace will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

If the Lord be for us, we may rejoice and say, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Malice he may have, cruel he may be—but where is his power? If God is for us, he will be with us.

Think, then, of his omniscient eye observing and discovering every foe, every purpose, every plan. All things are open and naked before him.

Think of his omnipotent arm dispersing, crushing, or converting every foe. Who can withstand him?

Think of God's loving heart sympathizing with all his people, always and in all circumstances, and how can you doubt or fear? With the eye of God upon you, and watching all your foes; with the arm of God made bare and his hand lifted up to defend you; and with the heart of God yearning over you in tenderest love—who can injure you? who can destroy you? The Lord will take your part with those who help you, and will oppose himself to all who would harm you. Who, then, can be against you? Believe this—and be happy.

Believers must have TRIALS. This is God's appointment, and it is needful for them. Tribulation lines the way to the kingdom. FOES will awaken fears: this is natural, and many believers are very timid. But every foe is limited; he cannot go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more. Fear must not be encouraged. God forbids it; every promise is opposed to it. One portion of God's word ought to be enough to prevent it. As to Israel, so to you that word speaks: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them!"

God being for us, we may be confident. With David we may sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my heart, of whom shall I be afraid?"

Every view of God as our covenant God—as a God in Christ—is calculated to disperse our fears and inspire us with courage:

If we look upon him as our Judge, he is satisfied; for all the claims of law and justice are met.

If we view him as our Friend, he cares for us; and his care is tender, constant, and unwearied.

If we consider him as our Father, he loves us, and loves us with an infinite, eternal, unchanging love! As Judge, Friend, and Father, he is our Defense, and, as such, controls all things for our welfare: "The Lord is our defense, and the Holy One of Israel is our king."

If God is for us, ought we not to be peaceful, contented, and happy? But God is for us; how, then, can we justify our anxiety, worry, and uncomfortable frame of mind? With one of old we may say, however numerous our foes, when we see our brethren inclined to fear or faint: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

Beloved, do you daily live realizing the cheering fact that God is for you—that God is with you? It is your privilege to do so; and if you do, you will glorify his dear name, magnify his rich grace, and honor his sovereign mercy. You will be a match for Satan, live above the world, and overcome the corruptions of your own heart. God is either everything to you—or he is nothing. You look to him for all, and trust him notwithstanding all—or you do not make a God of him. He is pledged to his people; he is engaged to them. He will fulfill every word to them; he will make all his goodness pass before them. He will prove his love to them, display his power in dealing with them, and rejoice in every opportunity of doing them good.

Blessed, forever blessed be the Lord, for his great love, free grace, abounding mercy, and precious, precious promises! Holy Spirit, in all times of weakness, in all seasons of sorrow, when fears arise, when Satan harasses, when providence appears to frown—then, O then, whisper to my soul, "God is for you! God is with you!"

34. The Great Giver

34. The Great Giver

"He who spared not his own Son; but delivered him up for us all—how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32

Having spoken of God's hidden love, the love which he secretly had for his people—Paul now comes to speak of it as revealed and avowed. He proves his secret love—by his public acts. He shows the love he had for us in eternity—by what he does for us and confers upon us in time. He is our sun—the Father of lights, giving all good; and he is our shield—preventing all evil. The passage we are about to consider is truly wonderful, and full of the richest, choicest comfort: "He who spared not his own Son; but delivered him up for us all—how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

God's Glorious Gift. "He spared not." To spare sometimes refers to justice. "God spared not the angels that sinned—but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." As bright, as beautiful, and as glorious as they were—God would not spare them when they sinned. Nor would he spare the old world, nor the cities of the plain—but destroyed them for sin.

So, when his beloved Son had our sins laid upon him, and became answerable for them, God, as the God of justice, would not spare him—but cried, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord Almighty!" No mercy was shown to Jesus. No abatement was made. The whole debt was demanded. A full and satisfactory atonement was required. Therefore "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief: his soul was made an offering for sin." "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace—was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed!" The punishment deserved by our iniquities—was laid upon him, and he endured it all. He suffered the whole of it. So that justice is fully satisfied, and the law is fully magnified, its dignity being maintained, its demands met, and its authority acknowledged. To spare sometimes refers to benevolence, and indicates profusion. God is most unsparing in his gifts, his benevolence is most profuse. He so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son. He gave him for sinners, to be their sacrifice and Savior. He gives him to sinners, to be their life, their safety, and their portion. If he had withheld anything, it would have been his Son. But, to show the depth, the intensity of his love, he "delivered him up for us all."

"He spared not his own Son,"—his only-begotten Son. What could be dearer to him, or be more valued by him? Think of his worth and excellency. The Jews said that he made himself equal with God; and he never attempted to deny it—but said, "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." The apostle says he was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Who, then, can estimate his worth? If the Israelites thought that David was worth ten thousand of them—how many was Jesus worth? All creation was produced by his power, and

is sustained by his word; what, then, was the estimate his Father would put upon him? Yet "he delivered him up for us all!"

Think of the love that existed between the Father and the Son. Paul calls him "his dear Son," or "the Son of his love." And himself, speaking in the character of Wisdom, says, referring to his working of old, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." What love the Father must have had for his co-equal and coeternal Son! In him he saw all his own perfections, attributes, and glorious excellences; and to represent the infinite nearness and dearness of his Son to him, he is said to be "in the bosom of the Father."

Yet, wonder, O heavens! be astonished, O earth! for God spared not his own, his well-beloved Son—but gave him up for sinners—vile, base, rebellious sinners!

Think of his infinite greatness. It is higher than heaven, what can you do? It is deeper than hell, what can you say? Ponder well the divine testimony as to the greatness of Jesus, the all-creating Son of God. "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." As vast as creation is, in comparison with him—it is nothing. As numerous as the creatures are, the whole of them, in comparison with him, are less than nothing and vanity. O how marvelous then the fact, that rather than we should perish, rather than we should reap the due desert of our deeds, "God spared not his own Son!"

"But delivered him up for us all." God was the great agent who delivered Jesus—to be condemned, buffeted, spit on, scourged, and crucified! To the insults of Herod and his degraded soldiers, to the cowardice and cruelty of Pilate, to the rage and malice of the priests, and to the madness and folly of the unfeeling populace—God delivered his only-begotten Son! To this Peter testifies: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And this was done to commend and illustrate his wondrous love to us, as Paul witnesses: "God commends his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners—Christ died for us." Men were but instruments, allowed to display their hatred to goodness, their opposition to God, and the deep and total depravity of their hearts. Judas wickedly betrayed him, and delivered him up to the officers and priests; therefore Jesus said to Pilate, "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above: therefore he who delivered me unto you has the greater sin." The priests delivered him to Pilate: "The chief priests and elders took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: and when they had bound him, they led him away and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." Then he was delivered to the people, not only to the Jews—but to the Gentiles, as we read: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." Thus when God delivered him up, men were let loose upon him, and all parties conspired and combined to insult, torture, and punish him.

He was delivered up for us all. The Father delivered him up as a lamb, God's lamb, the lamb that God could accept, and with which he could be satisfied, to be the sacrifice for our sins. Our sins, therefore, were transferred to him, they were laid upon him, and he was treated as if he had been guilty of them. The globe was turned into an altar; upon that altar the victim was laid; there he expiated our transgressions, and put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself. The smoke of that

sacrifice darkened the heavens; the sufferings of that victim shook the earth, rent the rocks, opened the graves, and hid the face of God—as if the sight had been too dreadful even for God to bear.

He was made a curse for us, therefore he was hanged on a tree. The curse of the law was transferred from us to him; and by enduring it, he removed it from us, and opened a way for the blessing of Abraham to come upon us.

He really suffered for our sins. He suffered for us—that is, instead of us; and in this way we are spared, and spared in strict accordance with all the claims of law and justice.

He was delivered up "for us all," for all whom he represented—all for whom he became a surety—all for whom he was accepted as a substitute; for all who ever did, or ever will, believe on his name; for all alike and equally; for each one who shall trust in his blood; for all who shall be saved from wrath through him. Whatever the word "all" may mean in some places, it cannot here mean every individual who had lived, or should live; but those whom the apostle had been speaking of as predestined, called, justified, and glorified; or, all his sheep, as Jesus said, "I lay down my life for my sheep;" or the whole church, as Paul wrote, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." This leads us to—

Paul's Comforting Inference. Having given his only-begotten Son, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Having given, which displays the benevolence of his nature, he will give. Having given the greater—he will not withhold the less. If there had been any difficulty, it would have been in parting with his Son, and in delivering him to die, even the death of the cross; but having done this, assuredly he will now withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly. As the Father of lights, represented by the sun, he will pour down showers of blessings.

He is not, he cannot be, under any obligation; for "who has first given to him—that it shall be recompensed to him again?" Yet, though there be no obligation, he will give, and freely give us all things. We have now the covenant grant: all things are ours—all things necessary for both worlds—for "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" all things needful for the whole man, both body and soul, as Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,"—that is, all temporal good things necessary for us. So Peter speaking of the promises says, "According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Everything, therefore, that will really benefit us, or turn to our spiritual advantage—God will give us, and give us freely. O wondrous benevolence! What faith it requires to believe it; what hope to expect it; and what love sufficiently to praise God for it! Freely, certainly, with Jesus God will give us all things!

God has proved and pledged his great love to us. And this he has done in such a wonderful, glorious, and stupendous way, that we may well exclaim, with the apostle, "Herein is love, not that we loved God—but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins!" He has already given us the greatest and most precious gift. The gift of heaven—is not to be compared to

the gift of Christ. Nothing greater, nothing more costly—can God give. Can he give anything so great, so costly? Are all his other gifts to even be compared with this one? Ought we not, with Paul, to exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift?" This is the grand commendation of God's love. Paul considers ultimate salvation to be less than this; therefore he says, "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."

God gave his Son in order that he might give other things honorably. In the person, work, and death of Jesus, he demonstrated his justice, and kept up the authority of his law. "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." By a glorious ransom price he bought us; and having met all the claims of the law, he delivers us; and now, God, in perfect consistency with the claims of law and justice, can treat us as beloved children, and confer all kinds of favors and blessings upon us.

He gave Jesus freely—to show in what way he would give us all other blessings;—not for our duties or deserts; not for our feelings or merits. Freely, as a matter of grace, and on the ground of grace alone—God will give us all things. Let us not, then, look within at our feelings, nor without at our works, for a reason why God should give us the blessings we ask; for the reason is in himself—in his own free and exuberant grace!

God gives all—with Christ. In receiving Christ, we receive a title to all new covenant blessings. Having Christ, we may now expect every good thing together with him. To those whom he has given Christ, he will give anything he consistently can. Those who have given themselves to Christ, may expect anything, however good or great, from God.

God's love is infinitely great. It passes knowledge. It defies description. It cannot be conceived by us. Our powers are too feeble to comprehend or fully know the wondrous love of God. We may believe it; we may trust it; we may enjoy it; but we cannot fully know it. Our comfort is inexhaustible. The love of God is the ocean that contains it, the fountain from which it flows, the great and grand cause of it. While, therefore, the love of God is infinite—our comfort must be inexhaustible. Our obligation is endless. If God has so loved us, how ought we to love him? how ought we to adore him? how ought we to obey him? We are bound by the sweetest, strongest ties, to dedicate and devote ourselves, with all that we have and are, to the Lord's service and praise; and it is the highest ingratitude to withhold anything from God, or to think anything hard that he requires of us. O for grace, evermore to glorify God, in our bodies, souls, and spirits, which are his!

35. The Challenge

35. The Challenge "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies!" Romans 8:33

We are frequently struck with the apostle's reference to Christ and his atoning work. To Christ—his mind naturally turns. From Christ—he derives his comfort and his courage. Of Christ—he continually writes and speaks. Jesus is his center. On this foundation he builds not only the safety—but the triumphs of the Church. Not only the triumphs of the Church as a body—but the triumphs of every believer too. Having referred to the gift of Christ, and his being made a sacrifice for us all, he sees sin so completely put away, and the believer so perfectly justified, that, as if excited to rapture, he asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of Gods elect? It is God who justifies!" (Romans 8:33). The Happy Party:"God's elect." That God has an elect people, is clearly revealed in His Word, and is as plainly manifested in God's world. The question is, Did they elect God—or did God elect them? If God elected them, did he choose of his own loving heart to bless, save, and dignify them; or did he choose them because he foresaw they would be more pliable, better disposed, and more easily wrought upon than others? In other words, "Was the CAUSE of election found in God—or in man?" The Scriptures represent the doctrine of election—as a sovereign act of God, who, of his own free grace, for the manifestation of his mercy, chose a multitude, too vast to number, to be made holy on earth—in order to their being made happy in heaven. If we are willing to receive the Word of God as a little child, one or two portions of that word will be sufficient to satisfy the mind: At Ephesus—depraved, licentious, idolatrous Ephesus—God had a church; to that church the apostle writes, and identifying himself with them and all his fellow-believers, he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:3-6

How carefully the creature is excluded here! There is no reference to his faith, feelings, or works, as in any sense the cause, or as affording a reason why he should be chosen. GOD chooses his people. He chooses them in Christ as their head. He chooses them in Christ before the foundation of the world; so that in the decree of God there is a connection between them and Christ before the world was. They are chosen in Christ to be holy—not because they were so, nor because God foresaw they would be so—but in order to their being so. As chosen in Christ, they were blessed with all spiritual blessings, and were pre-appointed to be God's children, by adoption and grace.

All is of God, all is by God, and all is to the praise and honor of his glorious grace, by which he has made us acceptable and pleasant in the Beloved.

So, also, writing to the Thessalonians, he says, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the

sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

They were chosen by God, chosen to be saved, to be saved through the work of the Spirit and the exercise of faith—to this faith they were called by the gospel, in order that they might obtain the glory which Christ has to share with his people.

Just so it is, with all the Lord's people.

Election is a glorious fact which God ever keeps in view. For the elect's sake—the days of tribulation are shortened. For the elect's sake—Paul endured all things. The crafty deceivers would seduce many—but it was not possible to deceive the elect! The disciples were directed to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. That we may be steady, fruitful and happy—we are exhorted to make our calling and election sure. Let us not, then, cavil at the doctrine—but let us seek to enjoy our personal interest in it, and to glorify and praise God for such a marvelous display of his grace!

God's elect, being chosen by him—are drawn to Jesus.

Coming to Jesus—they are received by him. And being received by him—he conducts them to the Father. In nature—they are dead in sin. By grace—they are quickened and made alive to God.

Naturally—they are enemies to God. By grace—they are reconciled, and become his friends.

They are naturally unbelievers—but they obtain faith through the operation of God, which is called "the faith of God's elect." As they were chosen in Christ—they are brought into union with Christ. Being in union with Christ—they are entitled to the perfect work of Christ. As entitled to the glorious work of Christ—they are fully and forever justified. And as righteous in the sight of God—they are careful to work for Christ, and ever live in the performance of good works, which God has before ordained that they should walk in them. The Challenge. "Who will bring an accusation against God's elect?" Who will lay anything to their charge? Will GOD, the judge of all? No! for they are his dear children, the beloved of his soul, and for all their sins he has received full and eternal satisfaction. Will JESUS, who is to judge the world at the last day? No! for they are his brethren, and rather than condemn them—he would take their nature, identify himself with them, and die the most horrid death in their stead! Will CONSCIENCE? Not when it is enlightened with gospel truth, and cleansed with the blood of atonement. Then it ever takes part with God, echoes the sentence of the Savior, and justifies us as believers in his name. Will SATAN? Right gladly he would—if he could. But he is a convicted liar, and his testimony will not be received in court. The accuser of the brethren is cast out, who accused them day and night before God. As the accusers of the woman in the temple went out one by one, and left Jesus and the woman alone—so will Satan retire when the eye of Jesus is fixed on him; nor will he be able to substantiate a charge against God's elect. Will the SAINTS? No! they may disagree and argue, like little children, for a time—but they will be reconciled to and be pleased with each other. Intercede for one another they will—but bring a charge against one another before the judgment-seat they will not. Will the ANGELS? The angels!—no! They rejoice at the conversion of the sinner, at the restoration of the backslider, and at the glorification of the believer. They sympathize with Jesus too deeply to attempt to lay anything to the charge of his people. In heaven, on earth, or in hell—no one will be found who can bring forth any cause of condemnation. God's elect are guiltless. God's elect are

righteous. God's elect are justified. The Reply: "It is God who justifies!" If God, the judge of all the earth, acquits—then who shall condemn? If he exonerates—then who shall prove a charge? Three things, on this subject, God has plainly told us in his word:

First, he will not impute sin. He imputed it to Jesus, that he might not impute it to us. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well may the apostle quote Old Testament Scripture with rapture, saying, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin!" If the Lord will not—then who shall?

Second, he will impute righteousness. If God will not impute sin, how can we be condemned? If God will impute righteousness, must we not be justified? "God imputes righteousness without works." It is not, therefore, our own righteousness—but the righteousness of God, which becomes ours by faith in Jesus Christ. With no sin charged upon us, with the righteousness of Jesus imputed to us—who shall lay anything to our charge?

Third, he will pronounce them just. This he does from the judgment-seat. Christ is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and they are made the righteousness of God in him. Being righteous, even as he is righteous, they are declared just; and the prediction of the prophet is fulfilled, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

All God's people were chosen in Christ. This was an act of pure grace, an expression and proof of God's distinguishing love. Jesus was chosen out of the people to be the head of the Church; and they were chosen to constitute his body. Thus Christ and his people are one. Election, which is a glorious privilege, lies at the root—and is the foundation of all our other privileges.

All God's chosen believe in Christ. He who chose them in eternity—brings them to Jesus in time. By his Spirit he works faith in their hearts, and they trust in Jesus, yield themselves to God, and look for salvation from the cross alone. Faith in Christ, proved by obedience to his precepts, makes manifest our election of God.

All who believe are justified. Faith leads us to commit ourselves to Christ, so that we become identified with Christ, in consequence of which his perfect work becomes ours, and we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus—justified from all things—justified for evermore.

All whom God justifies are safe. Against them no enemy can prevail. Against them no charge will stand—every accuser will be silenced. They have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; who has declared that they "shall not come into condemnation." No weapon formed against them shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against them in judgment they shall condemn. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, says the Lord." No accusation against them can be sustained. God as a lawgiver is perfectly satisfied, having received an infinite atonement for all their sins. God as a Father is well pleased with them, and loves them as he loves his only-begotten Son. How, then, can their accusers succeed? If for them the law is magnified and made honorable; if God is well pleased with the righteousness wrought out and brought in by the Son of his love; if they are precious and honorable in God's sight, and they are—how then can accusers be listened to, or how can their accusations be sustained?

God is satisfied and pleased, because the work of Jesus is perfect and glorious. He has gone to the very end of the law for righteousness, in order to meet the case of all those who believe. The work the Father gave him to do comprised all that was necessary to meet every claim, silence every foe, and honorably secure their certain salvation. Of that work he said, "I have glorified you on the earth, I have finished the work which you gave me to do." How, then, can their accusers prevail against them? The work of Christ, in all its glory and perfection, is ours, made over to us on believing. By faith we receive Christ, and receiving Christ, we become entitled to the merit of all that Christ did and suffered for sinners here on earth; and not only so—but the fullness of Christ is thrown open to us for the supply of all our needs, and the everlasting security of our persons.

Once more, then, we ask: If, as believers— Christ, and all that he did, suffered, and possesses are ours—ours to justify us before God—ours to sanctify us and satisfy us before men—how can an accuser lay anything to our charge? Blessed be God, exercising faith in ' Jesus, and resting alone on him, we can throw down the challenge of the apostle, and ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" and fearlessly present, as a reply to all, "It is God who justifies!"

36. The Demand

36. The Demand

"Who is he that condemns? 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!" (Romans 8:34)

Paul had called for an accuser, if there was one, to come into court, and to lay anything to the charge of God's elect; but he found none. For though, as in the case of Jesus, no doubt many false witnesses may be found—yet their evidence would be so contradictory, that it could not be received. He now calls for the judge, and asks, 'Who will pass a sentence of condemnation?' God, the supreme judge, had justified. Jesus, the wondrous advocate and Counselor, was in court. Boldly, therefore, with the utmost confidence, he asks, "Who is he that condemns? 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!" (Romans 8:34). The Demand: "Who is he that condemns?" The apostle, like some noble champion in the days of old, clad in full armor, and mounted on some noble war horse, rides into our midst, and, with his sword drawn, and his eyes flashing fire, he throws down his glove, and demands, 'Who will come forward to condemn God's elect?'

He looks up to heaven, and, with voice strong and powerful, he cries, until the eternal arches ring, "Who is he that condemns?" But in heaven profound silence reigns. There is no one to pronounce sentence there.

He looks down into the pit, and, throwing his voice into the depths of hell, asks, "Who is he that condemns?" The challenge echoes through all the profound abysses—but there is no voice, nor any to answer.

Again he lifts up his head, and looking over the earth, eastward, westward, northward, and southward, he shouts, "Who is he that condemns?" His voice travels with lightning speed, and dies away in the far off distances—but there is no reply. The universe is silent, for there is no voice, nor any to answer. Men have condemned and killed the just; they have put the Lord's people out of the synagogues, and thought they were doing God service when they killed them. Proud priests and prelates, cardinals and popes, kings and emperors, have done so; but it was illegal and unjust—God would not ratify or confirm their sentence—but summoned them to answer for such conduct before him.

Condemnation is most dreadful, if it is just, as it exposes one to the most tremendous losses, and inflicts the most terrible punishment. Once, we were all under condemnation, as violators of God's holy law, and were the children of wrath, even as others. The righteous law condemned us; the holy gospel condemned us; our own consciences condemned us; and God, who now justifies, condemned us. In ourselves—we still deserve condemnation; yet we need not fear it, because we are in Christ. For us he honored God; for us he satisfied all the demands of the law; in us he has magnified the glorious grace of God; and in nothing does God get greater honor than in our complete, gratuitous, and irrevocable justification. Well, therefore, may we ask, "Who is he that

condemns?" Let us pass from the challenge to notice— The Foundation on Which it Rests. Who will condemn? Shall Christ, who died? He is appointed to judge the world in righteousness; to him every knee must bow, before him every fallen creature must stand; but will he condemn God's elect? Never!—he died for them! His death was the price he paid to ransom them, and effectually to reconcile them unto God. He was their atoning sacrifice, expiating their sins. For them he made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. He is their propitiation, covering and concealing their sins from view, and becoming a meeting-place, where a pacified God and a believing sinner can meet in harmony and peace, loving and blessing each other. As our ransom price, atoning sacrifice, and propitiation, he procured for us a perfect pardon; for we have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. He obtained our sanctification, separating us from the unclean, and setting us apart for God; as we read, "Wherefore Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate." This was according to our Father's will, as it is testified, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." This sanctification secured the removing from us every spot, stain, and charge; therefore we read again, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Again: "By one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified."

He perfectly atoned for all their sins, and provided a righteousness which will perfectly and forever justify their persons. If, then, Christ died for his people, as their ransom, atoning sacrifice, and propitiation; if, by so doing, he procured their pardon, reconciliation, sanctification, and perfection—will he, can he condemn them? "Who is he that condemns?" Shall Christ, who not only died, "but is risen again?" He died for their offences, and he was raised again for their justification. The resurrection of Jesus proves his Sonship, for he was gloriously demonstrated to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead; and his Sonship being proved, all his claims must be allowed, and the truth of all he testified is made clear. His resurrection proves the perfection and acceptance of his work, manifests his victory over death, and testifies his discharge from all obligation on our account. If, therefore, Jesus not only died for his people's sins—but is raised from the dead; and if his resurrection proved his divine Sonship, the acceptance of his work as his people's substitute, his victory over death, and the discharge of all the obligations he undertook for them in the everlasting covenant—then how can he condemn them? If he had been detained in the grave, the proof of the perfection of his work would have been lacking, and then, perhaps, there might have been found some cause of condemnation; but says the apostle, "Christ died, yes rather, he is risen again!" Therefore we ask, "Who is he that condemns." Shall Christ, who is gone into heaven for us, and "is even at the right hand of God?" Jesus, having finished his work, having discharged the bond he had given in the covenant, having pleased and satisfied his Father, having completed his victory over all our foes, ascended up on high and entered heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. He is now at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world—but also in that which is to come. He is there associated with the Father in power, dignity, and authority. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him, to employ for his people. In regal dignity and authority he is equal with his Father; and he rules and reigns to carry out the purposes of his love, to accomplish the will of his Father, and secure the everlasting happiness and honor of his people. In heaven he sees all that transpires on earth, and frustrates the designs of every foe, fulfils every

promise of his word, and prevents the condemnation of every one of his people. Christ in heaven secures the salvation of his people on earth. Christ, in heaven for us now, will prevent our condemnation at any future time. If Jesus has gone into heaven for us; and if he is, as the reward of his work, associated with his Father in power, dignity, and majesty—if he has finished his work, discharged his bond, pleased his Father, gained a complete victory over every foe, and opened the gates of heaven to all believers, will he condemn his elect, or will he allow any one else finally to do so? "Who, then, is he that condemns?" Shall Christ, "who makes intercession for us?" Blessed Redeemer! Not only did he die for his people—but he arose again; not only did he arise from the dead—but he ascended to heaven; nor did he only ascend to heaven—but he ever lives to intercede for them! He is ever employed for them! For them he presents himself, as their forerunner; for them he sprinkles his precious, speaking blood, before the throne; for them he opens his mouth and powerfully pleads.

Jesus intercedes for his people, as an advocate for his client, whose cause he is engaged to carry; as a brother for his brethren, whose interests he has espoused and lays to heart; as a husband for his bride, for whom he laid down his life, and whose love is wholly set upon her; as a head for the members of his body, which he cannot consent to part with—no, not the least of them. For his whole Church and every member he intercedes—to obtain for them the choicest, richest blessings; to prevent the ills that would befall them, and the dangers into which otherwise they would fall; to answer every accuser and silence every foe; and that he may present them faultless before his Father's glorious presence!

Precious Lord Jesus! You intercede for transgressors even now that you are in your glory: on earth your Father always heard you, and now that you are in your glory you can not plead in vain! If Jesus intercedes for his people, as their advocate, brother, husband, and head, he will not condemn them;—and it Jesus will not, who can? Who is he that condemns? Jesus died, that his people might never die; he arose, that his people might ever live; he has gone to heaven to prepare their places, and secure their safe arrival there; he also makes intercession for them, that, having once passed from death to life, they may never come into condemnation.

Am I a believer in Jesus, living upon Christ, and living for Christ? then am I one of God's elect. And if I am one of God's elect, then I may fearlessly ask, Who is he that condemns me? Condemn ME, for whom Jesus as my substitute was condemned! Condemn ME, for whom Jesus as my Savior died, that I may never be condemned! No! For me there is no condemnation, for Jesus has paid the full penalty of my sins. God is honored more in my salvation—than in the condemnation of all the lost! The law has had on my behalf all that it can require or receive. Grace is glorified much in my present state, and will be glorified more in my enjoyment of everlasting life. How, then, can I be condemned?

Every believer is in a justified state, and therefore his fears are groundless. What has he to fear, when Jesus and all he is is his? Whom has he to fear, when God is for him, and Jesus is identified with him? Whom will he have any reason to fear, seeing he is saved with an everlasting salvation, and God has pledged his word that he shall never be put to shame? God forbids him to fear; has removed all cause for fear; requires him to be strong and of good courage. Though weak as worms, though timid as doves, though in themselves all sinful and depraved, God says to each believer, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God!" The attempts of all our

foes to injure us shall be in vain, and therefore our hopes should be bright and our confidence strong. We cannot expect too much from God, after what he has given us. We cannot ask him to do too much for us, after what he has already done. Nor can we exercise too much confidence in God. With such great and glorious promises, all which are confirmed with the blood of his Son, we cannot be too confident in God. It is impossible for God to lie. His faithfulness is like the great mountains. He graciously made his promises, and he delights to fulfill them. Never are we so ready to receive—as our God is to give; and the only reason why he ever withholds anything from us is, because he loves us too well to indulge us to our injury. Jesus having conquered for us, will conquer in us. Our foes are his foes, and if they injure us—they injure him. Let us, then, rejoice in the near and precious union that exists between our souls and him; and let us expect the largest, richest blessings from him, and exercise the strongest possible confidence in him. As Jesus died, arose, went to heaven, and ever pleads for us there, he should be the constant object of our faith, hope, and love. What a mercy, Jesus died for us! We are not half enough affected with this glorious fact! Jesus arose for us, having abolished death, and perfumed the grave for us. Jesus went to heaven for us, that we might have a friend to receive us when we go there ourselves; one whom we know, love, and long to see. Jesus ever pleads for us; how, then, can our cause fail or our enemies triumph?

Yes, the eye of faith should be fixed on Jesus, on Jesus always, on Jesus in every relation and every character in which he is revealed in the word; but more especially on Jesus as dying, rising, ascending, and living in heaven for us. On him all our hopes should be built; and from him our hope should draw all its life and vigor. What! Will not the death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus warrant me to hope for?

Jesus also should be the object of my love—a dying, risen, living Jesus. He loved me first. He loved me so much that he would die for me, if he might but have me for his own. Having made the purchase, he went into heaven to claim me. His eye and his heart are incessantly fixed upon me, nor will he ever be satisfied until he has me with him—holy as he is holy, happy as he is happy, and glorious as he is glorious.

O infinitely blessed One, I do love you—but not half enough! I do adore you—but not half enough! O that every thought were full of you! O that every talent were employed for you! O that every moment were taken up with you! Well, soon, and it may be very soon, this will be the case, to the praise of your glorious grace!

37. Who Shall Separate?

37. Who Shall Separate?

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:36) No one can substantiate a charge against the believer in Jesus, because all his sins have been atoned for by his Surety. No one can pass a sentence of condemnation on him that will take effect, because God justifies him. No one can separate him from Christ, with whom he is identified, and with whom he stands or falls. Our apostle had comforted the Lord's people in reference to sin, and he now turns to afflictions and troubles. He had fortified them against fears within, and now he would fortify them against fears without. He holds out the strongest consolation. He challenges the universe: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:36). The Privilege. This is great, and very precious! We love Jesus—and Jesus loves us. We love him—because he loved us. Our love to Jesus, though often feeble and fluctuating—yet, being supplied from his fullness, never ultimately fails. No one can separate a believer from Christ—or Christ from a believer. But the apostle refers not to our love to Jesus—but to the love of Jesus to us. Not to our love, which is a passion; but to his love, which is a perfection. Not to our love, which is an effect; but to the love of Jesus, which is a cause. We are beloved of Jesus. Sweet and precious truth!

He loves us as his sheep. The Eastern shepherd highly values his flock, loves every sheep and lamb, and calls each and every one by name. He loves them so as to feed them, fight for them, and show the utmost kindness to them. Jesus loves his sheep much more. As the gift of his Father, and as the reward of his work—he loves them. But, not only for his Father's sake—but for their own sakes he loves them. What he sees in them to draw out his love to them we know not—but he does love them so intensely—that he loves no creatures like them.

He loves them as his children. However much a man may love his sheep, he loves his children more. He may prize and value his property—but in his affection his children stand before the whole. So with Jesus, who is called "The everlasting Father," and whose people are the travail of his soul; he loves them more than all creation besides. They are peculiarly beloved by him, with a paternal love.

He loves them as his bride; his bride, whom he has chosen from all others; his bride, whom he received at the hand of his Father and her Father; the bride for whom he left the realms of glory, became a poor laboring man, suffered all kinds of privation, insult, and pain, and then laid down his life; the bride upon whom his heart is set, around whom all his affections twine, the center in which all his love meets; the bride, sooner than part with whom he would part with everything besides!

He loves them as himself. They are himself; for their union to him is so close, so real, so vital, that they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Jesus and his people are

one—mystically, really, and eternally one. The love of Jesus to his people, then, is most tender. The tenderest love we know is a mother's love; but the love of Jesus is tenderer than a mother. She may forget her offspring; he can never forget his people. She may be unkind to her children; he can never be unkind to his people. Her heart may be alienated from her child—but his heart can never be alienated from his people. He says, "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you." His love is as strong as it is tender. We read of love that is strong as death; but the love of Jesus is stronger than death. Many waters, or afflictions, sins, and sorrows—cannot quench his love; nor could the floods of his Father's wrath or of his people's ingratitude drown it! So strong is the love of Jesus, that it sways all the perfections of his nature, and employs all his vast resources to do his people good. His love is as durable as it is strong. Like his nature, it is without variableness or the shadow of turning. It changes not. It is everlasting love. Whom once he loves—he loves unto the end. "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ?" O blessed privilege, to be beloved of Jesus—to be loved with such a love! Let us consider— Its Permanency. Who can change the mind—or turn the heart of Jesus? What shall be able to divide us from his love? Paul enumerates seven evils, and rejoices in security against them all.

"Shall tribulation?"—the common afflictions that befall us, and line all the way to glory; pressure from without, from circumstances or men. Our Lord told us to expect them, saving, "In the world you shall have tribulation." And the apostle exhorted the brethren to continue in the faith, reminding them "that through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God." No amount of tribulation shall separate us from Christ! Shall "distress?" The word signifies to be pent up, to lack room; and represents difficulties, straits, and anxieties, through which believers have to pass: as Paul says of himself, "Our flesh had no rest—but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." But shall the difficulties we have to combat with, the straits we have to pass through, and the anxieties we have to endure, separate us from Christ? Never! Shall "persecution?"—which signifies to cast out, pursue, and punish. We may be cast out of the church, and have our names cast out as evil; we may be pursued by persecutors, like the wild goat, or the partridge upon the mountains; we may be punished with all the most dreadful punishments which the cruel mind of man, assisted by Satan, can invent;—but shall persecution separate us from Christ? No! it makes the Christian cleave closer to him; and in persecution he reveals himself more sweetly to his suffering children. Shall "nakedness?"—exposure to cold, heat, and shame. This primitive believers often had to endure. This Paul suffered: "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." And so multitudes besides: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Shall nakedness separate from Jesus? Never! for though naked, "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Shall "peril?" or imminent dangers, of diverse sorts and kinds. Look at what Paul passed through: "In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." But did any, or all these perils separate him from Christ? No; they only made him cleave closer to his Lord, and gave his Lord an opportunity of glorifying his grace in him. Shall the "sword?" or a violent death, inflicted in any way, or by any means. Millions have died for Christ, and died, some of them, by every kind of death which depraved man could invent; but did

death by the public executioner, or death in any way, however cruel, or lingering, or dreadful, ever separate a believer from Christ? Never! for "in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us." The Christian should expect great and sore troubles, for "many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all. His troubles and trials but conform him to his Lord and Master! They prove the power of those immortal principles which grace implants in his heart. They expose the world, manifesting its enmity against God, its opposition to Christ, its hatred of all that is holy and spiritually good. What harm did ever Christians do to the world? and yet the world has treated them as the offscouring of all things—as too vile to be tolerated, too base to be allowed to live! And the more exact their conformity to their Master—the more cruel and determined has been the world's opposition!

Troubles and trials are permitted by the Lord, to humble the heart, subdue the spirit, and meek the mind. It is "if need be" they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. But no troubles, however deep—no troubles, however many, shall ever sever them from Christ. Their union to Christ is strong, and endures forever. Their union to Christ is sure, and can never be disturbed. The love of Jesus originated this union, and that love will maintain it. The love of Jesus—is the cause of our love to him; it makes us safe, and keeps us safe forever. The love of Christ would bear anything, and do anything for us;—and the love which Jesus kindles in our hearts will bear anything for him, and will part with anything, even with life itself, rather than part with him. Real grace ever lives, ever lasts, and ever overcomes.

God will try us, and perhaps try us very severely, and it may be for a very long time; but he will sustain us in the trial, and will deliver us out of it, as he has promised. "He shall deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven shall no evil touch you." Our trials, come from whatever quarter they may, are permitted and arranged by our God; and rightly viewed, and rightly improved, will make us cleave closer to him;—as the Church of old, alluding to her deep, successive, and apparently overwhelming troubles, says, "All this happened to us, though we had not forgotten you or been false to your covenant. Our hearts had not turned back; our feet had not strayed from your path. But you crushed us and made us a haunt for jackals and covered us over with deep darkness." So Job in his deep trial testified, "My foot has held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

Every one of the Lord's people, then, should expect and reckon upon trials;—not painfully anticipate them, or live in a state of foreboding—but be ready to meet them, and to do battle with them, so as not to be taken by surprise, or be filled with alarm when they come. Trouble, more or less, is every believer's lot.

We should be thankful for the times in which we live. Our fathers labored, and we enter into their labors. They fought, and we reap the spoils. Human rights are better understood. Civil and religious liberty is more generally honored. Government, which once persecuted, now protects. Laws which were once against the peaceful and devoted Christian, are now in his favor. Ours is a happy land, and we are a much favored people. Let us, then, be thankful and praise the Lord. Nor should this be all: we should improve our privileges, and employ our liberty, to honor our Master, and do good to the souls of men. That nothing may separate us from the love of Christ, he lives to do four things for us:

1. He lives to intercede for us. His pleading is powerful, it is prevalent, it is perpetual. As he prayed for his disciples on earth that they might be kept from evil, be sanctified through the truth, and be with him in his Father's house, so he pleads for us now.

2. He lives to give us the Spirit. He sent his Spirit permanently to inhabit the Church, to abide with his people forever; but there is, in addition to this, "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The Spirit was given at first, to set us right; and the supply of the Spirit of Christ is continued, to keep us right.

3. He lives to govern the world; and he governs the world for the good of his Church, for the fulfillment of his predictions, and for the performance of his own precious promises. The reins of universal government are in our Savior's hands; and in his hands are the hearts of all men; and as the rivers of water—he turns them wherever he will.

4. He lives to love us with an unconquerable love. His love is nerved with omnipotence. Nothing can divert it from its object, turn it out of its course, or impede its progress. As soon might Jesus cease to live—as cease to love his people. The immutability of his divine nature prevents anything like changeability in his love.

O precious, precious Savior! how can I sufficiently bless you, or praise your glorious name, for loving a worm like me; for uniting me to yourself in love, in a union so firm, so strong, so sure, that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword—shall ever be able to separate me from you and your love! Everlasting praises be given to your thrice blessed and adorable name!

38. The Sword

38. The Sword

"As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter!" Romans 8:36 The apostle continues his challenge. He supposes that the believer may be put to the sword—but he affirms that the sword shall not separate from Christ. The union is so strong, so close, so lasting, that all attempts to dissolve it are in vain. Once in Christ, in Christ forever. The greatest trials imaginable may fall to the Christian's lot—but they do not affect the love of Christ to him, nor can they sever him from Christ. Above condemnation, secured against the possibility of being separated from Christ—we shall endure anything, we shall overcome all. "As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Romans 8:36). How wondrous the trials the Lord's people have endured! how terrible the deaths to which they have been exposed! This Is Set Forth Literally: "For your sake we are killed all the day long." Note the cause of their sufferings, "For your sake." This was true of Israel of old. Being separated from the nations, and forbidden to hold any religious fellowship with them, they were the objects of the world's hatred, scorn, and opposition. It is equally true of Christians. As chosen in Christ, as set apart for God, they are separated from the world, and are required to live in separation from the world. They can acknowledge no God but Jehovah in Jesus. They can adopt no rule of life or worship but God's own inspired word. They are for Christ, and for Christ alone. To them he is the true God and eternal life. They can hold no religious fellowship with any who do not live in fellowship with God.

They look upon themselves as God's children, who must not mix with ungodly worldlings;—as the members of Christ, who must not be united with the members of Satan;—as the temples of the Holy Spirit, which can have no agreement with idols. To them the Holy Spirit says, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Attending to this message, they not only separate from the world—but live in separation from it; thus condemning it and its religion. This provokes envy and jealousy, and stirs up enmity and malice. The proud world feels insulted—by the testimony of the Church, and has ever been determined to destroy it. For the sake of Christ's truth, which they firmly hold; for the sake of Christ's cause, which they endeavor to extend; and because they associate together in Christ's name, to do him honor; therefore the world hates them. As Cain hated Abel on account of his religion, and slew him because the token of God's approbation was enjoyed by him, just so is it

with the world. As he who was born after the flesh persecuted him who was born after the Spirit, even so is it now.

Observe the extent of their sufferings. They were not only robbed of their property; they were not only deprived of their political rights and, religious liberty; they were not only banished from their homes and expelled from their fatherland—but they were KILLED. The most barbarous, cruel, and lingering deaths were selected for them: and as it was with the apostles, so with many of the disciples; as Paul said, "I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake."

See, too, the continuance of their sufferings: "We are killed all the day long." A Christian could die but once—but Christians were daily slain. They were always exposed to death. They stood in jeopardy every hour. They lived in constant hazard of death; as Paul said of himself, "I die daily." They lived a life of constant exposure to death; and though they might have no fear of death, they were in daily fear of dying. This Is Represented Figuratively: "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter!" As sheep for sacrifice; for Jesus said, "Whoever kills you—will think that he does God service." And as such they gave themselves up; as Paul, when sentenced to a cruel and violent death, exclaimed, "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 me at that day: and not to me only—but unto all them also who love his appearing." But the reference seems rather to be—as sheep for the shambles: "You have given us as sheep appointed for meat." This expresses the little value the world sets on the lives of Christians. To kill a Christian, once, was no more thought of than to kill a dog;—they were not considered fit to live. The conduct of the enemies of the Jews fitly represents the conduct of the world towards the Church; as the Lord speaks, "Thus says the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and those who sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not." The treatment received shows the meekness of Christians when in the hands of their enemies; as Jesus said, "Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." It sets forth, too, the meekness of believers under persecution. As the Master was, so in a measure they were. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent—so he opens not his mouth." As the lamb licks the hand of the butcher which holds the knife that is to be thrust into its throat—so did the primitive believers pray for and bless their bloody persecutors and murderers!

We should also be prepared to part with all for Christ, even life itself, in any way and at any time he pleases! Hence Jesus stipulates with us: "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also—he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after me—cannot be my disciple." And again: "Then Jesus said unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it, and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

We must love Christ more than all. We must prefer Christ to all. We must be prepared to do anything for Christ; to part with anything for Christ; and to suffer anything for Christ. God's people

have always been a poor, oppressed, and persecuted people. They have always, more or less, been "accounted as sheep for the slaughter;" therefore it is not strange if we are called to suffer, nor should we think it so; as Peter exhorts, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 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!" 1 Peter 4:12-14

These trials, troubles, and persecutions, are permitted to fall on us, to prove the nature of our religion—that it is divine; to show its reality—that it is a substance, a life, a mighty principle, not merely a form; to display its strength—manifesting that it is invincible, and cannot be conquered either by earth or hell. They are intended also to exercise our grace—our faith in the unseen, when, like Moses, we endure as seeing Him who is invisible; our love to the spiritual, when, with David, we exclaim, "Because your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you." Also, they manifest our hope in the future, when, with Jude, we are found "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Severe as our trials may be, terrible as our persecutions sometimes are, they are only a rough road to a certain glorious end; for "we must needs die." "It is appointed unto all men once to die;" and, at the worst, we only die a little sooner, and arrive at home by a short-cut. We are traveling across a desert, passing through a terrible wilderness, to take possession of a better country. As it was said of the patriarchs, so it may be said of those who suffer persecution and death for Christ's sake: "Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he has prepared for them a city."

Let the believer die when he may, how he may—death to him is great gain! He leaves a worn-out and uncomfortable tent—to take possession of a glorious building of God. He realizes, in and after his fiercest conflicts and trials, the words of Jesus: "Truly I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's—but he shall receive an hundredfold more in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

What folly, then, to prefer ease—to the honor of Jesus; or life—to the glory of God! If we will not give—he can take. Which, then, is wisest, which is best;—to give to Jesus out of love; or leave him to take, to chastise our cowardice and fear?

O may the words of Jesus ring in our ears whenever we are tempted to flinch, or to withhold anything from him: "I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, who after he has killed—has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear him!"

Gracious Lord, give us so much godly fear that we may ever stand in awe of you; and never let us so fear man as to dishonor you! O for that confidence in God, that zeal for the honor of Jesus, that concern for the good of God's people, that shall raise us above the love of life, the fear of death, and the hatred and opposition of the world! The world, when not restrained by divine providence, or influenced by education, thinks no more of killing a Christian than a butcher does of killing a

sheep! It has no remorse. Yes, it has more pity for a murderer, than for a Christian. It was so in the experience of the Master. When the Jews had placed themselves in a wrong position before Pilate, by delivering up the Savior out of mere envy, Pilate declared him to be guiltless, and then turned to the people and priests, and in substance said, 'You are in the wrong, for I can find no fault in this man, nor can Herod: but it is customary for me to release to you one prisoner at this feast: ask for Jesus, and I will release him.' But how did they act? They asked for Barabbas! Now Barabbas was both a thief and a murderer—yet they preferred him! What had Jesus done? what had his harmless disciples done? yet they treated them with more contempt and with more cruelty—than they did robbers and murderers! And this was done, not merely by the excited rabble—but by the most learned, the most religious, and the best educated among them! Are we exempt from such treatment?—we must ascribe it to the goodness of God. Human nature is the same; and had not our fathers suffered and bled to procure liberty for us, and had not the providence of God co-operated with them, we would still have been "killed all the day long," and been "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." If ever such trials come on us as were endured by our forefathers, we must look to the end, as they did, and carry out the admonition of James. He brings the charge against the wealthy, "You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed the just; and he does not resist you." Then he turns to the persecuted, and says, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the gardener waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws near."

Suffer as the prophets suffered. We consider them happy which endure; and, as in the case of Job, we see the design of the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy. Lord, give us grace that we may so walk through the present evil world, and so endure the toils, trials, and troubles that come upon us for your sake, and on account of our religion, that we may joyfully look forward unto the end, and patiently wait for your coming to set all things right. O that we may so live, so labor, so suffer, and so die, as to bring great glory to our Savior's precious name! Amen.

39. More than Conquerors

39. More than Conquerors "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!" Romans 8:37 Can anything separate a believer from Christ? Paul had supposed some of the worst things that could happen—some of the most horrible evils that could be endured; but he will not admit that any, or all of these, have the power. Being united to Christ by the Spirit, that bond can never be broken. Being a part of Christ, as a member of his body, he will not allow us to be amputated. No enemies, however numerous—no trials, however great—no sufferings, however severe, can sever us from Jesus! To the supposition that they can, Paul triumphantly exclaims, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!" (Romans 8:37).

We May Be Sorely Tried. Many are the afflictions of the righteous.

Some are much tried in the BODY, with painful diseases and physical infirmities. They seldom eat with pleasure, and have but little enjoyment of temporal things. The nerves are sources of fear—and the muscles are seats of pain!

Others are much troubled in MIND—harassed with doubts and fears; tormented with jealousy and suspicion; hindered and hampered by unbelief. They have a daily conflict within, between the law in the members and the law of the mind. They would do good; but evil principles hinder them. They would be entirely holy; but carnal thoughts, earthly desires, and the working of a sinful imagination, prevent them.

Others are tried most in the FAMILY circle. An ungodly husband is the trial of a godly wife. A worldly wife is the trial of a spiritually-minded husband. Wild or perverse children try Christian parents. Few are the families in which a wandering Dinah or a treacherous Absalom is not to be found! How many believing parents find in the family circle their heaviest cross!

Others find the WORLD the source of their bitterest sorrows—its unprincipled conduct, or its persecuting spirit; competition in business, heavy losses, and bitter disappointments. The poor man needs employment, or is not properly remunerated for the work he does. His family is large—and his income small; his needs are many—and his sources of supply few and insignificant. The merchant is tried on sales, the tradesman in the market, the laborer in the field or warehouse, and the servant in her situation.

All are not tried in the same way, or to the same degree—but all are tried. To some the CHURCH is a source of deep affliction:

its divisions and disagreements;

its inactivity and lukewarmness;

its worldliness and lack of spirituality;

its selfishness and carnality. Nor are the troubles of the believer brief—they continue long, and even seem often to increase—the further the pilgrim progresses. So perplexing, so wearying, and

so depressing often is the hardness of the way—that he wonders where the scene will end. Can Our Trials Sever Us from Christ? Can any one trial do so? No! Can any number of our trials do so? No! Can all supposable trials, meeting and uniting, do so? No! Our union to Christ is so strong, so durable, that nothing shall be able to separate us from him. Nay, in the very midst of them—we triumph; as says the apostle, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ!" The spirit of the true Christian, as living upon Christ, and in union with Christ, is indomitable. It cannot be subdued—or conquered! Notwithstanding all that we may be called to suffer, however numerous our foes, however feeble our powers—still we are privileged to cry, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Blessed thought! we shall overcome every difficulty; we shall conquer every foe; and when earth and hell have done their worst against us—we shall triumph in the glorious presence of our God and Lord forever!

We Not Only Conquer—but MORE than Conquer. We keep what we have, and gain by all our conflicts. We have victory—without loss. Some conquer—but lose their limbs, or eye-sight, or something dear unto them; but we lose nothing—we are gainers by all we endure!

We gain holiness, which is God's design in all he sends, or permits to happen to us. We become unearthly, heavenly-minded, and fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light; or, in Paul's words, we are "made partakers of his holiness."

We gain happiness. At times our sweetest enjoyments are when we are in conflict with self, the world, and sin. After a victory, our joys are often great, our gratitude profound, and our thanksgivings unto God abundant.

We gain courage, until, perhaps, we become bold and undaunted—facing our foes, and, in the prospect of the very worst they can do, exclaiming, "None of these things move me!"

We gain renown: so all the Lord's valiant soldiers have—one becoming renowned for his faith, another for patience, another for fortitude, another for meekness, another for love—and all for their attachment to their Lord and his cause.

We shall have a reward—every one that overcomes will be rewarded by Jesus, with some special token of his love—some peculiar mark of his approval. We not only conquer—but triumph, and take the spoil—we increase the weight of glory. What wondrous words are these of the apostle, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

We conquer—because God loves us, and is with us; for God is ever with those he loves, in a special and peculiar manner.

We conquer through him who loved us—through his Spirit, which he gives us; which Spirit is a source of life, light, and comfort to us. The Spirit in the believer is greater than all that is in the world; therefore he overcomes.

We conquer through the strength he imparts to us, which is always according to our day. The more the foes—the more the strength which God gives! The greater the conflict—the greater the strength given us to endure it!

We conquer through his love, which he sheds abroad in our hearts, and which becomes a powerful principle within us. This love is as strong as death. It is unconquerable! It never has been destroyed—and it never will be!

We conquer through his promises, which support and animate us—precious promises—scattered through God's most blessed book! Precious promises—applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit! How they encourage us, in the cloudy and dark day! How they stimulate us, when tempted to flag and relax our efforts! How they fortify us, when the enemy comes in like a flood! How they strengthen and embolden us, when we are weak and ready to faint! With God's Spirit within us,

with his strength made perfect in our weakness,

with his love cheering and animating us, and

with his precious promises to strengthen and sustain us,

is it any wonder that we are conquerors—yes, more than conquerors, through him who loved us? Through him we can do all things, bear all things, believe all things, and become more than victorious!

Nothing can alienate Jesus from us, nor us from Jesus. His love is determinedly set upon us, and never can be diverted from us. His union with us is so firm, and so sure, that nothing can ever affect it. His love to us is most tender—no mother's love can compare with it. His love to us is so constant—that nothing can divert or turn it aside. It is always in operation for us—repelling our foes, or securing for us the choicest blessings. His love to us is transcendent—it has heights to which we have never soared; depths which we have never fathomed; lengths and breadths which we have never traveled!

Yes, His love to us unfathomable! Wondrous love—of a more wondrous Savior! Source of my happiness, object of my faith, and subject of my most profitable meditations!

Union to Christ gives us life, and a determination to preserve it. Because he lives, we shall live also: and we desire to live, and to live forever with him; therefore we are prepared to part with anything, and everything, rather than let go our hold of him. Besides this, it places us under his protection. As the head is concerned for the protection of every member of the body, so is Jesus concerned for the protection of all his people. He could part with his life for them—but he can never part with them; yes, to part with them would be to part with his body, his flesh, and his bones. Our triumph is from Christ's love to us—rather than from our love to him. "He has loved us," says the apostle—not merely, he does love us. He has always loved us; he does still love us; he ever will love us. Blessed be his holy name, we know it, for he has told us so; and in our deepest trials, in our sorest afflictions, we can say, "He loved me—and gave himself for me!"

Divine love is eternal love—it is unchangeable love. Jesus having loved us in the past—is a guarantee that he will love us in the future. Every believer overcomes: "For whoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world—but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" True faith always overcomes; and every believer has faith: therefore every believer overcomes. Every Christian is in the hand of Christ, in the hand of his invincible power; and is loved with the love of his heart, which is infinite love. A believer may be overcome for a time; but he will recover himself and conquer.

Like Gad, a troop may overcome him—but he shall overcome at the last. His will be the victory. He shall take the spoil.

Among men there may be victory—but no advantage thereby; yes, there may be victory with loss. The victory, as in David's case once, may be turned into mourning (2 Samuel 19:2). But with us it will be better than if we had never suffered. We shall gain by all we endure—by all we pass through. The pains of earth—will sweeten the joys of heaven! The trials of time—will heighten the joys of eternity! We shall look back on the constancy of a Savior's love, and it will endear him yet more to our hearts. We shall reflect on our conflicts, and be fired with unspeakable love and gratitude for our victories. In every trouble and sorrow, under all my pains and sufferings, may I never forget that, for every well-managed trial, and for all the pains I patiently endure—I shall be the better in eternity. Never, then, let me repine at my trials, complain of my troubles, or think that God deals harshly with me when in pain; but rather let me rejoice in the assurance that I shall be a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, through him who has loved me.

40. The Persuasion

40. The Persuasion

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" Romans 8:38-39 Are believers conquerors—and more than conquerors? They are! Whence is this? Because God loves them, loves them in Jesus, and nothing can separate them from his love. Paul was not a man to speak rashly or unadvisedly, apart from the inspiration of the Spirit of God. He carefully examined his subject, he thoughtfully surveyed his theme, and, having done so, exclaimed, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" (Romans 8:38-39). Sweet and precious assurance! holy and blessed confidence! Gracious Comforter, unfold and apply this precious scripture to our souls! The Enemies Supposed. They are numerous and formidable. It can be no child's play to overcome them. Yet every believer shall do so, through the sovereign grace of God.

"Death" and its terrors—and death in some forms, and at some times, is a terrible thing. But death, come as it may, or when it may, cannot affect God's love to us.

"Life" and its trials—and what a trying life many Christians have to live! But neither the fear of death nor the love of life—shall separate us from the love of God.

"Angels"—neither good nor bad. Good angels would not attempt it; but if we suppose an impossibility, as Paul did when he supposed that an angel might preach another gospel (Galatians 1:8), they could not if they would. Evil angels, numerous as they are, cruel, malicious, and determined as they may be, can never separate us from the love of God.

"Principalities"—neither celestial, infernal, nor human. Neither emperors nor kings, judges nor magistrates, popes nor prelates, priests nor inquisitors, with all their power, craft, and refined cruelty, can separate us from the love of God.

"Things present"—neither the inward conflict, violent temptations, the hidings of the Lord's face, the working of corruption within, nor the power of evil without, can separate us from the love of God.

"Things to come"—all that has ever happened—has never done so, nor shall anything that ever will happen do so, He who has kept us in the past will keep us in the future.

"Height nor depth"—heaven nor hell: nothing above us, nothing beneath us; the highest honor nor the deepest ignominy; the loftiest dignity nor the deepest disgrace.

"Nor any other creature"—nothing that God ever has created, or may create. The whole creation is too feeble to separate us from the love of God—the creatures, singly or combined—nothing outside of God.

Oh, blessed state of safety! Oh, glorious security! God himself is for us, and nothing outside of God can separate us from him.

Look, then, at all things that have been, are, or may be, and consider— Their Inability. They may distress us; they may put us to pain; they may cause us bitter grief; they make life a burden, and death appear terrible—but they cannot separate us from the love of God, or God from our love! Nothing ever shall—for nothing ever can. Of this said Paul, "I am persuaded." It was a matter of his greatest confidence, a subject in which he had the strongest faith. As he speaks of himself, to the honor of his Lord, "For I know whom I have believed," whose word I have taken and trusted; "and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." So, speaking of the life and death of the patriarchs, he testifies, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises—but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Their faith was full persuasion; and so was Paul's here.

He says, 'I am confident, not for myself only—but for all believers.' As he says in another place, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law—but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." And Paul, like Abraham, "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." And this was written, not for his sake alone—but for us also which shall believe.

Oh, blessed truth! The promise is the same to every believer, and it is sure to all! It was made to them in Christ; was entrusted to the keeping of Christ; was confirmed to them by the death of Christ; and shall be fulfilled in the experience of every one of them, to the honor of Christ.

Paul says, "I am certain." It is the language of strong, unwavering confidence. More certain he could not be, more strongly he could not express himself. Oh, glorious fact, God loves his people! As long as he loves them—they are safe; and he loves them with an everlasting love—therefore they are eternally safe! Noah was not so safe in the ark as the weakest believer in Christ. Jesus is not more safe at his Father's right hand than all his people are in him. From the love of God, nothing can sever his people, for his love is immutable. It cannot be affected by anything out of himself, and he is without variableness or the shadow of turning. How blessedly he speaks to his poor, wavering, fickle, and wandering people! "I am Jehovah; I change not: therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." He rests in his love. That love is in Jesus, and Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our God put us into Jesus, fixed his love upon us in Jesus, and ever loves us as in Jesus.

Nothing can sever us from his love, for the merit of Christ is infinite. That merit expiated all our sins, met all the demands of justice forever, and made our peace with God. In that merit every believer is interested, and is interested in it forever. How, then, can we be severed from God's love? What can separate us, when all our sins are atoned for, an everlasting righteousness is

imputed to us, and Jesus ever lives to plead our cause at God's right hand?

Nothing can ever sever us from his love, for the covenant of grace is unchangeable, and it is ordered in all things and sure. It anticipates and provides for all the future. It guards against all that is evil, and secures a supply of all that is good. One of its blessed clauses is, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Another is, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." And the crowning one is, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God."

Nothing can ever sever us from his love, for Christ and his people are one—one glorious mystic man, one body, one Church, one family. While God loves the Head, he will love the members too. While he loves his First-born, he will love all the other members of the family, who are to be conformed to his image. Jesus said, "You have loved them—as you have loved me." With the very selfsame love, and while he loves Jesus, he will love them also. Sweet and precious truth this: God not only loves us in Christ—but he loves us as Christ; and he will love us as long as he loves Christ!

Once more: nothing shall sever us from his love, for the power of God is infinite. He has us in the grasp of his omnipotence, and what shall force us thence? His power can conquer every foe, rule every providence, subdue every corruption, prevent every catastrophe, and keep us forever safe. If God has set his heart upon us—will he not use his hand to defend us? If God loves us with his whole heart, and with his whole soul, and if with perfect ease he can prevent anything from accruing to alienate our hearts from him, or awaken and stir up his wrath against us, will he not do so? Unquestionably he will!

Therefore, with the apostle, we may cry out and shout, "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!"

We ought to be fully persuaded of this, for the gospel plainly and frequently asserts it. No language can be plainer or stronger than that which we are now considering. Equally strong and precious is the language of Jesus: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and They shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." So are the words of Paul to the Colossians: "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory."

However, then, we may feel within, whatever may be the state of things without, let us hold fast God's faithful word, and rejoice that nothing shall sever us from the love of God. We ought to be fully persuaded, if taught by the Holy Spirit. It is his office and work to unfold and apply the glorious truths of the gospel to our minds: as it is written, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world—but the Spirit who is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." And surely this is one of those precious things—the knowledge of our everlasting security in Christ, and of God's unailing love to us, in his beloved Son.

We ought to be fully persuaded, as an act of faith in God's plain and precious word. Our loving God and Father intends to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of

his glory, with exceeding joy. Nor will the purpose of love be accomplished until we are exactly like Christ, and eternally with Christ. Now, as this is so clearly revealed in the word, and so plainly stated in the everlasting gospel, we ought to believe it, and feel fully persuaded of it.

So, also, from past experience. Has the Lord kept us thus far? And will he not keep us in the future? What has the Lord brought us through thus far? And will he not do in the future as he has done in the past? Can he have greater cause to give us up than he has had? Can he find a greater reason to withdraw his love from us than he has found already? With our apostle we ought to be prepared to say, "God, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." And so he found it, as he writes just before his departure: "No man stood with me. 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 now for the FUTURE: "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever. Amen." So should we conclude from the past to the present, and from the present to the future; and so feel fully persuaded that nothing, celestial, terrestrial, or infernal, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can eventually harm a Christian. For if nothing can sever him from the love of God, nothing can keep him out of heaven; and if nothing can keep him out of heaven, nothing can eventually harm him. No one can harm him now but himself; and no thing can harm him but sin! Let us, therefore, live out of self—upon Christ, and jealously watch against sin, and No One, nor Any Thing can harm us! No Christian should fear trials. They are sent in mercy. They are covenant blessings. They may try us, pain us, and give us much pain; but they will only unsettle us, purify us, and fit us for our inheritance. Despondency has no foundation. Nothing should make a Christian fear. It is sin for a believer to despond. Despond! what, when all our sins are pardoned! Despond! what, when the perfect work of Christ is placed to our account! Despond! what, when nothing can sever us from the love of God! Despond! what, when all things are working together for our good!

God's love is certain and immutable. He loves all who love Jesus: if Christ is precious to me, it is a proof that God loves me. He loves all who love the brethren: if I love the children of God, it is certain that God loves me. If God loves me once, he loves me forever. God is not, cannot be, fickle or changeable. If he loves once, he loves forever. All believers are safe, and always safe. Safe! the object of God's love must be so! Safe! those who are the care and charge of Jesus must be so! Safe! the temples of the Holy Spirit cannot be in danger! If immutable love, if infinite merit, if omnipotent power, if covenant engagements, can make us safe—then we, as believers in Jesus, are safe, and safe forever!

Reader! have you any doubt of your interest in these precious and invaluable privileges? then put yourself into the hand of Christ. If you have done so before, do so again. If you have never done so, do so at once; commit yourself, body, soul, and spirit, unto him. He will receive you, he will accept the deposit; he will save you, he will keep you; and all the blessings of grace, all the privileges of God's house, all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and all the riches of glory are yours!

Love God for loving you. Be grateful, and praise his blessed name. Be diligent, and do his holy will. Be watchful, and wait for his Son from heaven. Jesus will soon send and fetch us home; or he will come and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also. O the wonders of free and sovereign grace! O the riches of God's covenant mercy! O the blessedness of every true believer! Let us rejoice in the thrice blessed fact, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ; and let us sing aloud, in the language of the apostle, "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." Jude 1:24-25

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