

# God for Us

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes that God is for us, and this truth brings joy, peace, and comfort to the soul.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 56:9, Isaiah 41:10, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:31, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 13:5, 1 John 4:19

**Topics:** "God's Love", "Assurance in Christ"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound truth that God is for us, despite our sinful nature and the unease it brings to our conscience. He explains that many live in anxiety, fearing that God is against them due to their sins, yet through Christ's sacrifice, we can find peace and assurance that God is indeed on our side. Darby encourages believers to recognize their unworthiness and the grace that allows them to claim God's love, urging them to trust in God's promises and to boldly confess their faith in Christ. The sermon highlights the transformative power of understanding that God, in His mercy, desires a relationship with us, offering hope and comfort amidst life's trials.

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## Transcript

GOD FOR US

ROMANS 8 : 31

There is much to weary us, dear brethren, much to draw out our anxiety as to present circumstances here ; and there is much as regards the natural mind which shrinks at meeting God. The natural conscience of a man, even while he is engaged in the things of this life, often testifies to him that all is not right : he may not always, perhaps not often, feel this silent monitor ; business, pleasure, gratification, may dissipate the thought that there is something coming which he is not prepared for. But though unwelcome, the thought will obtrude, and weary him, and make him uneasy, particularly if he is externally seeking righteousness ; he will be very weary to find he has not courage to meet what he knows he cannot avoid. Nay, even he who disclaims all outward regard to what is right, who is on the broad road of sin and ruin, delighting himself in abounding iniquity, even in his very heyday of enjoyment and sport, an uneasy thought will at some time or another be felt which tells him, This won't do, this is not the end for which I was made; there is something coming. Perhaps he may not experience this while in the very act of his jovial pleasures ; but when alone, a word that has been dropped, either in a discourse or a conversation, or something he has read, or a passing circumstance, will force him to acknowledge, Well, after all, that is the truth, whether I believe it or not ; this short life must end in a coming judgment, and I am not prepared for it.

This feeling of uneasiness and alarm will obtrude on the mind, whether we view the individual as seeking to justify himself at the approaching day of account, or whether we see him as delighting in the manifested wickedness of his heart. In the one case, he feels his wants, but is looking for strength where it cannot be found, and, making no progress, is very uneasy ; and in the other, the very thought of a God who hates the things he is doing every hour in the day, is a thought fraught with alarm. Now I suppose there is no person who has heard the gospel preached, who has not, at one time or another, been made thus uneasy, whether he is seeking what he looks upon as a means of justification from himself, or whether he is seeking for what he esteems its own present value, present enjoyment in sin. This leads him to the consideration of one great thing which in some moment of time he experiences : Well, perhaps after all, God may be against me. It is this that makes the sinner alarmed ; and he whose conscience is greatly troubled, who feels his weakness, and finds the difficulty by which he is surrounded, his secret feeling is, God is not at peace with me-He is against me. There is the great truth, the great cause of controversy in the conscience, there is no peace. No matter what are his circumstances, they may vary and change, but will make no change in what makes him thus uneasy : for it is the same calm unchanging God he has to meet, and he is conscious that that God is not at peace with him, and he cannot say, I know, come what will, God is for me.

It is this that makes the natural conscience tremble and feel uneasy. There are many under similar experience, even by the teaching of God's Spirit, and are deeply conscious of their not being at peace with God, and continue thus in suffering till God reveals Himself. But I am not now speaking of them, but of those whose natural conscience leads them to know that God is not for them. The Scripture tells us, and the conscience when once enlightened sees, that God met all this in a manner peculiar to Himself-that He met all that a man's conscience can make out against himself, and met it in such a way as to make a man conscious of possessing peace in the Lord Jesus Christ : and it is really wonderful-wonderful beyond our utmost limits of comprehension-when, amidst all our misery, degradation, sinfulness, and weakness, God is found to be for us.

" What shall we say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? " When a man sees God thus settling the question between them, suiting Himself to his peculiar circumstances, and proving Himself to be for him, he has a more realising sense of God's love, and of God's favour towards him, than the angels in heaven who never sinned. When a man is brought to see God for him, there is a breaking down of all that before opposed itself to God : pride, the poor pride of man, is brought down, when once he is brought to the conscious acknowledgment, " God is for us." The soul then sees how completely everything is for him, if God is thus for us. The comfort of the soul consists in this, that God is for it, and that it is for God : then it begins to be conscious of other wants, of which before it knew nothing ; it wants to know more of God, it wants to see Him as He is, it wants the glory. It is a comfort to know that that is what it wants. The soul is led to ask now, Why should God be for us ? have we been for God ? have we rendered God any service ? have we acted by His mind ? We have not. Why then should we plead, God is for us ? It is for nothing in ourselves, for we have slighted His promises, despised His grace, lightly esteemed the more than ten thousand mercies of His daily favour.

We have been like the prodigal son, who wasted his very common blessings in riotous living. In all our circumstances we have forgotten Him, in our intercourse with the world we have been acting without Him, loving our ungodly companions rather than Him. O, the wonder, if after all this we should find God was for us! Look at the state man is really in, as regards the trust he puts in man rather than God. If his neighbour should ask him to do anything, though his conscience may tell him God hates what his neighbour wants

him to do, still, rather than disoblige his companion, he will sin against God. It would distress him more to refuse him, either in going to ungodly places of amusement, or gratification, or indulging in known sin. Sin was the cause of the rejection of Christ ; and therefore every sin has this stamped upon it - the rejection of the Son of God. Our own conscience tells us that sin is against God, and there are few so hardy as to confess that they were for God by the commission of it ; and yet, we may say, there is scarcely one among us who is not conscious of this sin, of (rather than refusing our friend or companion) doing what we know is against God. Seeing such to be the case, we see no reason why God should be for us. His judgments have been disregarded, His mercies despised, His name lightly esteemed, little or no notice taken of any temporal favour, except to abuse it ; and must not this bring to our conscience the upbraiding thought, Why should we expect God to be for us ? What has the world done for God ? What has it done with its natural blessings ? Sinned them away. With the law of God ? Broken it. With the love of Christ and His coming ? Rejected Him. With the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the work of Christ ? Refused it-takes no pleasure in anything belonging to God, sees no glory, no loveliness, no beauty in Him, which just proves this one thing, that there is no real reason from us on earth why God should be for us, but, as far as we are concerned, every reason why He should be against us.

In this state of entire alienation from God, neither seeing nor desiring to see His glory and loveliness, there can be no love in the soul, as long as that soul is living without God, and it has manifestly no interest in the things of God. Being in this position, there is one terrible evil necessarily evident : that if we are living without God, and not following Him, we must be followers of Him who is the enemy of God and of our souls : who is the great deceiver of mankind, and, though he never shews himself, drags his victim down to ruin, and then mocks at his calamity. This is Satan, that arch-deceiver, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; who casts out his bait to decoy man, shewing him that, but carefully hiding the hook, that he may have his unresisting prey in his clutches ; and man rushes to take the bait, willingly selling himself to Satan, though he is morally conscious that he is not acting according to the commandments of God. And this is not said of any one particular class of character or order of men, for all are included in it: " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There is nothing that can meet the glory of God in all this.

There is one great thing as regards unrenewed man : he stands in dread of the holiness of God ; he cannot contemplate God's glory with delight, but in that glory he must stand if ever he is saved; he may be changed, and he must be changed, if ever he meet it with joy ; but that glory changes not. The sun is just as bright when earth obstructs our view of it, as when we behold it; clouds may intervene and hide its glory, but when the clouds are taken away, there is the sun just the same, just as bright, as warm, as glorious as ever ; and the moment the veil is taken away, we see it as such. Where is the soul that can stand in the presence of the glory of God, and contemplate that glory in his sullied and natural mind? "Who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?" A child, in order to see the natural light, must previously be brought into life ; and so must we, for God cannot change. Were it possible for God to give up one atom of His glory, or one particle of His holiness, the effect would be that there would be no place where sin would not enter. Who can tell what would be the consequence if God could suffer the least diminution of His glory ? Where is the spot that would then be sacred ? where would be the place of unfading glory? But God's glory cannot be lessened or diminished, and what secures it is the unchangeable nature of God Himself. It is this, and the consciousness of it, that brings uneasiness and alarm into the soul unchanged by grace ; for it is conscious of its unfitness for that glory, that this glory is far removed from what he loves, and that therefore we must feel convinced that God is not for us. If it be really true that God's glory cannot change, who then can be saved? The believer sees it an unchangeable

glory, and it delights him. The unbeliever is conscious it must be so, and he is angry : If God be thus, he thinks, why should I have anything to do

with Him ? He struggles, but unavailingly, to get away from God; he would be glad then that there had been no God: he has no objection to receive God's earthly favours and blessings, sending rain on the just and on the unjust ; but, provided he could have what he likes on earth, and the enjoyment of it, he would not care ever to see God, or His glory either.

It is not, it cannot be, pleasant to the natural mind to contemplate the judgment. No man likes to be judged; it is not natural to man ; he does not like to have this sounded in his ears : " It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" : that is the fact, and therefore he is always putting it off. Putting what off ? God's presence. He does not want to see God ; and is not this practically testifying that he is not at peace with God, that there is something which keeps him still desiring to be kept from God ?

It is sorrow, brethren, it is grief, to dwell so long on this subject. There is no comfort in it, did we see nothing further than this. It is sorrow to have to dwell on it ; but it is the truth, it is God's truth, that we are sinners, and, as sinners, are averse to God's glory. But, brethren, it is another and a blessed truth that is brought home to the heart of a sinner, when, notwithstanding all this, he finds to his joy and comfort that God is for him. Adam sinned and left God, because he thought more of what Satan offered him ; he thought the devil a better friend to him than God: but he has since found out to his cost that the devil was a liar : that he never had the power of giving him what he promised ; and that by catching at the devil's baits, he has received his hook, and that " the wages of sin is death." This is what man has done. But, oh! the blessedness of the consciousness that, in spite of all we can do, or Satan devise, the blessing is ours, the glory is ours! We come to see the truth that has risen out of this great truth.

The fact turns out quite a different way, when the Holy Spirit is bringing home to our souls that all the time God is for us. O what blessing, what wondrous blessing, is thus brought home to the poor, aching, harassed, anxious soul, when it is given to see that that God whom it despised, that Jesus whom it crucified, that Spirit whom it resisted, are for it! O what gladness to receive daily proofs, that it is one upon whom God is looking in love, in pity, and that He is for it! as the Lord, speaking of the children of Israel, says, " I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, and I am come down to deliver them!" O what wondrous extent of love! nor height nor depth can reach or fathom it! We are frail men, and Satan exercises his subtlety on us ; he knows what to lure us with, and therefore he puts suitable pleasures in our way, and within our reach ; he throws his baits most skilfully ; he knows the bait that is most seasonable, and he presents it just in the time and under the circumstances most likely to take effect. He knows what our natures like, what they are going after; and so he presents the very thing which, if continued in, must lead to destruction. All this is terrible, dear friends ; but under all this there is comfort-the everlasting comfort, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we have seen and found One who is able to bear us through all this, and set us free from the power and dominion of Satan, making us children of the living God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

In this blessed privilege ends all the argument which Paul brings forward in this epistle ; he shews them what they are by nature ; they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so God gave them over to a reprobate mind (that is, a mind incapable of sound judgment in the exercise of what was right or wrong), and the consequence was, they committed all uncleanness with greediness. But " in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Dear brethren, this is the thing that brings comfort and peace and joy to the soul ; this is what sets the devil aside ; this is what brings a man to cease from loving to sin against God, from rejecting

Christ, or refusing the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is the effect of having this blessed knowledge brought home to the soul ; and what a relief it is, after many sad experiences of deeper and deeper misery in the consciousness of sin and anxiety, to be released from it.

An individual under a sense of his own unworthiness looks upon others whom the Lord has enabled to act for Him, with a kind of jealousy, and he says, Oh, if I were like such a one, if I acted as consistently and godly as he does! I do not know how he does it; but it is not so with me: I cannot act as he does. God is just bringing him by all this to acknowledge, I am ungodly; and then God says, Yes, you are ungodly; but " in due time Christ died for the ungodly." How, in due time ? It was just in due time for us, for we were lost, ruined, had sinned away our blessings, and were without strength, and then Christ died; yea, Christ died for the ungodly. O, what blessed intelligence for poor sinners! " God spared not his own Son " ; He gave Him up for the ungodly, for sinners ; for those who have no strength, who are without knowledge. Then none are excluded from the privilege, who will plead they are the ungodly ; and this is so simple as to be as intelligible to the poor and ignorant as to the rich and wise, and perhaps even more intelligible, and for this very reason, that they are poor and ignorant, and that they are dealing with God in their consciences only, and the others are endeavouring to deal with Him by their knowledge. But God, who is rich in mercy, can bring to nothing the wisdom of the wise, and make them see their want of wisdom.

When the Spirit of God brings to the soul of a sinner this conviction, that he is ungodly, and that he has an interest in the death of the Son of God, he is conscious of being in Him also as a risen Saviour, and has therefore ample encouragement to look to the future. He sees One by faith come down from heaven; he sees God determined to save him, and in such a way as comes home to his heart, by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. By faith he is witnessing what Jesus was doing here, and how He was used. He had a purpose, a holy purpose of love, which He came to execute here, and nothing could divert Him from that purpose. He was pledged to perform it, and therefore on He went, amidst all scorn, reproach, poverty, and contempt. The settled purpose of His heart was to save the ungodly, and so He despised all that was in the way of its accomplishment ; He despised the cross; enduring the shame. The laugh of man, the scorn of sinners, was against Him; but what was that to Him? The one thing for which He came down was before Him, and so He went through all, perfectly sinless, and yet unjustly accused ; and not only accused, traduced, ridiculed, and spit upon, but brought into the very dust of death. When once the believer enters into the spiritual apprehension of these acknowledged facts, then does he learn that this holy and much-dreaded God is for him-is on his side-has taken his part ; then the spring of hope is lifted up in his soul; then he sees it is God for him, and not against him; that it is God, and not man is for him. It was God did all this, and He is for me. He is now no longer too proud to be a debtor to God ; the arms of his rebellion and enmity are laid down; he becomes a suppliant; he no longer need dread, as a sinner, to appear before God, knowing, as he does, God's loving-kindness in Christ Jesus ; he no longer need fear the day of judgment, nor be troubled, for his cause is made out, and he stands acquitted.

This is the great truth that brings joy, peace, and comfort, that in all these things God is for us! O what rest, what happiness for the poor soul, when he sees he has to do with One who has conquered all enemies for him, and in whom he has treasured up all glory for him! Before he came to the consciousness of this, the book of his daily transgressions appeared to ascend up before God, black with the catalogue of his offences, on every leaf of which was written-Sin, sin, sin ; but now these blackened characters are effaced, and on each page is transcribed in letters of blood, in the blood of God's dear Lamb-Love, love, love. All the dark spots are now obliterated, for He who is for us has triumphed. He took the load of sin from off us, and suffered the punishment due to the commission of it, and this silences all Satan's

accusations. Satan says to the soul, Oh, you are a sinner, you have broken God's laws. The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledges this, takes the sin, and bears the punishment of it unto death. Satan requires the right of judgment to be passed against us, that the Lord in justice ought not to let the sinner go unjudged ; he accused him. But " who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifieth." Christ has taken the sinner's place, borne the punishment instead of us, poured out His soul unto death, and thus put away sin. He now is risen, and has ascended into heaven. Thus is sin expiated, and His people clear ; thus is Christ proved for us.

To enter into the full perception of this blessedness constitutes the enjoyment of the believer. Here he finds a restingplace from the buffeting waves of the world, when he thus sees that, as sinners, God has proved Himself for us, and in the very act He commends His love towards us ; for it was while we were such sinners, " while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We see just two things in this-that the sinner is without strength, without riches. Like the poor prodigal, he has spent all he had, and now he comes to himself, and is about to return, he has nothing to bring with him. Like a shipwrecked mariner, all is thrown overboard, everything going adrift, and he himself, struggling with the dark billows, is just cast ashore, wearied and poor, having nothing! but, blessed be God, if we have got to shore, God is there, and He is for us ; and this is the mighty point gained, and we know we shall not be cast out again, and that we may lay claim now to all things that God can give. " He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? "

Then, brethren, let us trust Him more ; let us seek to get more from Him; we cannot look for too much of His favour who has not spared His Son for us : and this, dear brethren, will not lead to presumptuous expectations, but a sense of the greatness of His gifts will keep us humble; and the more deeply we are humbled, the more we are in a state to see and feel how God was and is for us, that Christ bled and died for us as enemies, and that the Father gave His Son for us when we were ungodly. O brethren, this is a blessed sight for faith, and nothing but faith can see it, and seeing this we can see everything is ours. Having Christ, we have all. " How shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? " God has bestowed unnumbered blessings on man ; but there was one thing which He had in heaven greater than all His other gifts : that one gift He gave, and having given this, shall He, or can He, refuse us anything else that is for our good ? Christ is ours, and then it follows, all is ours ; " for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God, therefore, gives us all things with Christ; not as man gives, for God gives freely-" He freely giveth us all things." The difficulties in our way may continue. Satan may still endeavour to distress and annoy ; but we may be well assured, that if God has given us His Son, He has given us all things that will bring us through.

He has fitted us for the undertaking, and when once put in order, set off, and set a-going by the power of God, we may be satisfied as to the issue, for Christ has engaged to see us through ; we must arrive safely, for God, who has brought us thus far, is still for us ; and who shall separate us from His love ? " Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? " Shall the deceitful pleasures of a false world, or the alluring baits of Satan tempt our souls to destruction ? Nay, brethren, " in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Be our way dark or thorny, be it difficult or dangerous, be it in the midst of temptations or cares, the same God is for us, and we know that He went through them before us. Christ suffered, He was tempted, upbraided; wept and made supplication, and brought us through them all, even with groanings and tears, to look up to God as our Father, and heaven as our home what have we to do with fear then ?

Brethren, beloved of the Lord, seeing that our God has done such great things for us, we know that God is for us, by the love of Jesus, in going before us in all tribulations, so that nothing should separate us from His love. If you are tempted, dear friends, remember He was tempted before you; if your friends forsake you, remember that Christ is a " friend that sticketh closer than a brother " ; the world may leave you, but it is not your friend, but your enemy, " for the friendship of the world is enmity with God " ; and you are no longer debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, but you live in the Spirit, and therefore should walk in the Spirit, in the same mind that was in Jesus. Whatever temptation you are under, be persuaded, with Paul, of this one thing, 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."

What the devil did was to undo our confidence in God: what Jesus did is to shew us that we may trust Him. And when the believer sees not this, he is looking to the devil and his temptation more than to the love and power of Christ, who has conquered all his enemies for him ; but when our eyes are off all other objects, and on Christ, then, and then only, we can have peace.

Now, dear friends, I would just, in conclusion, ask you, Have you been led to come, as you are, ungodly sinners, to

God? not to bring your own righteousness, which is nothing but filthy rags ; but have you come pleading the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God ? If you have, assuredly there is peace for you, for that is a sure token that God is for you. Or have you been acting against God all your lives, and have never found peace ? Are you still tormented with a guilty conscience, and are you still rejecting and refusing the way of salvation ? I would earnestly beseech you to consider the danger you are in, and I would ask you to look before you, and see where you are going, and what you are doing. You are wandering in the midst of the wide sea of this world, you are toiling through its waves without a prospect of deliverance ; and if persisted in, you will, ere long, sink down into the sleep of death, to wake in eternal misery. Should you be found thus when Christ comes, you will feel, to your shame and grief, that there is One against you greater than Satan, who can destroy both him and you.

But be of good cheer if your hearts are set on Christ : there is your stay the anchor of your soul. If He is such, dear friends, stand forward for Him; be not ashamed to own your relationship to Him, your dependence on Him: be decided, cut short all expedients for deferring the bold acknowledgment of your being His ; confess Him before men, and act for Him, and live for Him in an ungodly world. He is not ashamed to call, you brethren - and will you be ashamed to confess Him as your Lord and Master in the face of all the world ? Be not debating within yourselves, when you shall avow yourselves ; do it at once, decidedly. Make the plunge, and trust God for the consequence. I know it by experience, that an open bold confession of being Christ's is more than half the struggle over. I know the devil tempts, and says, O do not be too hasty, you might ruin the cause by over-forwardness ; this is not the time to confess yourself openly, wait for another opportunity. But I say, dear friends, as one who knows, that if a man, in the strength of the Lord, is just brought to say to his companions and friends, I am Christ's, and I must act for Him that he will not suffer what others will feel who are creeping on fearful and afraid to avow Him whom they desire to serve. Believe me, my friends, it is as I say: by this decided and open opposition to the world he may at first be laughed at and mocked; but what of that -0 Christ was served so. But soon, when his companions find him resolute, they will give him up as a bad case which they can make no hand of, and they Will leave him comparatively free from ridicule.

Are there any of you who are thus halting between two opinions, and afraid to confess your obligations to the Lord? Oh! I once more entreat you to be candid. Be open, be decided, confess Christ's name on earth, and He will not be ashamed to confess your name before the whole assembled universe.

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This feeling of uneasiness and alarm will obtrude on the mind, whether we view the individual as seeking to justify himself at the approaching day of account, or whether we see him as delighting in the manifested wickedness of his heart. In the one case, he feels his wants, but is looking for strength where it cannot be found, and, making no progress, is very uneasy ; and in the other, the very thought of a God who hates the things he is doing every hour in the day, is a thought fraught with alarm. Now I suppose there is no person who has heard the gospel preached, who has not, at one time or another, been made thus uneasy, whether he is seeking what he looks upon as a means of justification from himself, or whether he is seeking for what he esteems its own present value, present enjoyment in sin. This leads him to the consideration of one great thing which in some moment of time he experiences : Well, perhaps after all, God may be against me. It is this that makes the sinner alarmed ; and he whose conscience is greatly troubled, who feels his weakness, and finds the difficulty by which he is surrounded, his secret feeling is, God is not at peace with me-He is against me. There is the great truth, the great cause of controversy in the conscience, there is no peace. No matter what are his circumstances, they may vary and change, but will make no change in what makes him thus uneasy : for it is the same calm unchanging God he has to meet, and he is conscious that that God is not at peace with him, and he cannot say, I know, come what will, God is for me.

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God, and continue thus in suffering till God reveals Himself. But I am not now speaking of them, but of those whose natural conscience leads them to know that God is not for them. The Scripture tells us, and the conscience when once enlightened sees, that God met all this in a manner peculiar to Himself-that He met all that a man's conscience can make out against himself, and met it in such a way as to make a man conscious of possessing peace in the Lord Jesus Christ : and it is really wonderful-wonderful beyond our utmost limits of comprehension-when, amidst all our misery, degradation, sinfulness, and weakness, God is found to be for us.

" What shall we say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? " When a man sees God thus settling the question between them, suiting Himself to his peculiar circumstances, and proving Himself to be for him, he has a more realising sense of God's love, and of God's favour towards him, than the angels in heaven who never sinned. When a man is brought to see God for him, there is a breaking down of all that before opposed itself to God : pride, the poor pride of man, is brought down, when once he is brought to the conscious acknowledgment, " God is for us." The soul then sees how completely everything is for him, if God is thus for us. The comfort of the soul consists in this, that God is for it, and that it is for God : then it begins to be conscious of other wants, of which before it knew nothing ; it wants to know more of God, it wants to see Him as He is, it wants the glory. It is a comfort to know that that is what it wants. The soul is led to ask now, Why should God be for us ? have we been for God ? have we rendered God any service ? have we acted by His mind ? We have not. Why then should we plead, God is for us ? It is for nothing in ourselves, for we have slighted His promises, despised His grace, lightly esteemed the more than ten thousand mercies of His daily favour.

We have been like the prodigal son, who wasted his very common blessings in riotous living. In all our circumstances we have forgotten Him, in our intercourse with the world we have been acting without Him, loving our ungodly companions rather than Him. O, the wonder, if after all this we should find God was for us! Look at the state man is really in, as regards the trust he puts in man rather than God. If his neighbour should ask him to do anything, though his conscience may tell him God hates what his neighbour wants him to do, still, rather than disoblige his companion, he will sin against God. It would distress him more to refuse him, either in going to ungodly places of amusement, or gratification, or indulging in known sin. Sin was the cause of the rejection of Christ ; and therefore every sin has this stamped upon it - the rejection of the Son of God. Our own conscience tells us that sin is against God, and there are few so hardy as to confess that they were for God by the commission of it ; and yet, we may say, there is scarcely one among us who is not conscious of this sin, of (rather than refusing our friend or companion) doing what we know is against God. Seeing such to be the case, we see no reason why God should be for us. His judgments have been disregarded, His mercies despised, His name lightly esteemed, little or no notice taken of any temporal favour, except to abuse it ; and must not this bring to our conscience the upbraiding thought, Why should we expect God to be for us ? What has the world done for God ? What has it done with its natural blessings ? Sinned them away. With the law of God ? Broken it. With the love of Christ and His coming ? Rejected Him. With the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the work of Christ ? Refused it-takes no pleasure in anything belonging to God, sees no glory, no loveliness, no beauty in Him, which just proves this one thing, that there is no real reason from us on earth why God should be for us, but, as far as we are concerned, every reason why He should be against us.

In this state of entire alienation from God, neither seeing nor desiring to see His glory and loveliness, there can be no love in the soul, as long as that soul is living without God, and it has manifestly no interest in the things of God. Being in this position, there is one terrible evil necessarily evident : that if we are living

without God, and not following Him, we must be followers of Him who is the enemy of God and of our souls : who is the great deceiver of mankind, and, though he never shews himself, drags his victim down to ruin, and then mocks at his calamity. This is Satan, that arch-deceiver, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; who casts out his bait to decoy man, shewing him that, but carefully hiding the hook, that he may have his unresisting prey in his clutches ; and man rushes to take the bait, willingly selling himself to Satan, though he is morally conscious that he is not acting according to the commandments of God. And this is not said of any one particular class of character or order of men, for all are included in it: " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There is nothing that can meet the glory of God in all this.

There is one great thing as regards unrenewed man : he stands in dread of the holiness of God ; he cannot contemplate God's glory with delight, but in that glory he must stand if ever he is saved; he may be changed, and he must be changed, if ever he meet it with joy ; but that glory changes not. The sun is just as bright when earth obstructs our view of it, as when we behold it; clouds may intervene and hide its glory, but when the clouds are taken away, there is the sun just the same, just as bright, as warm, as glorious as ever ; and the moment the veil is taken away, we see it as such. Where is the soul that can stand in the presence of the glory of God, and contemplate that glory in his sullied and natural mind? "Who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?" A child, in order to see the natural light, must previously be brought into life ; and so must we, for God cannot change. Were it possible for God to give up one atom of His glory, or one particle of His holiness, the effect would be that there would be no place where sin would not enter. Who can tell what would be the consequence if God could suffer the least diminution of His glory ? Where is the spot that would then be sacred ? where would be the place of unfading glory? But God's glory cannot be lessened or diminished, and what secures it is the unchangeable nature of God Himself. It is this, and the consciousness of it, that brings uneasiness and alarm into the soul unchanged by grace ; for it is conscious of its unfitness for that glory, that this glory is far removed from what he loves, and that therefore we must feel convinced that God is not for us. If it be really true that God's glory cannot change, who then can be saved? The believer sees it an unchangeable glory, and it delights him. The unbeliever is conscious it must be so, and he is angry : If God be thus, he thinks, why should I have anything to do

with Him ? He struggles, but unavailingly, to get away from God; he would be glad then that there had been no God: he has no objection to receive God's earthly favours and blessings, sending rain on the just and on the unjust ; but, provided he could have what he likes on earth, and the enjoyment of it, he would not care ever to see God, or His glory either.

It is not, it cannot be, pleasant to the natural mind to contemplate the judgment. No man likes to be judged; it is not natural to man ; he does not like to have this sounded in his ears : " It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" : that is the fact, and therefore he is always putting it off. Putting what off ? God's presence. He does not want to see God ; and is not this practically testifying that he is not at peace with God, that there is something which keeps him still desiring to be kept from God ?

It is sorrow, brethren, it is grief, to dwell so long on this subject. There is no comfort in it, did we see nothing further than this. It is sorrow to have to dwell on it ; but it is the truth, it is God's truth, that we are sinners, and, as sinners, are averse to God's glory. But, brethren, it is another and a blessed truth that is brought home to the heart of a sinner, when, notwithstanding all this, he finds to his joy and comfort that God is for him. Adam sinned and left God, because he thought more of what Satan offered him ; he thought the devil a better friend to him than God: but he has since found out to his cost that the devil was a

liar : that he never had the power of giving him what he promised ; and that by catching at the devil's baits, he has received his hook, and that " the wages of sin is death." This is what man has done. But, oh! the blessedness of the consciousness that, in spite of all we can do, or Satan devise, the blessing is ours, the glory is ours! We come to see the truth that has risen out of this great truth.

The fact turns out quite a different way, when the Holy Spirit is bringing home to our souls that all the time God is for us. O what blessing, what wondrous blessing, is thus brought home to the poor, aching, harassed, anxious soul, when it is given to see that that God whom it despised, that Jesus whom it crucified, that Spirit whom it resisted, are for it! O what gladness to receive daily proofs, that it is one upon whom God is looking in love, in pity, and that He is for it! as the Lord, speaking of the children of Israel, says, " I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, and I am come down to deliver them! " O what wondrous extent of love! nor height nor depth can reach or fathom it! We are frail men, and Satan exercises his subtlety on us ; he knows what to lure us with, and therefore he puts suitable pleasures in our way, and within our reach ; he throws his baits most skilfully ; he knows the bait that is most seasonable, and he presents it just in the time and under the circumstances most likely to take effect. He knows what our natures like, what they are going after; and so he presents the very thing which, if continued in, must lead to destruction. All this is terrible, dear friends ; but under all this there is comfort-the everlasting comfort, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we have seen and found One who is able to bear us through all this, and set us free from the power and dominion of Satan, making us children of the living God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

In this blessed privilege ends all the argument which Paul brings forward in this epistle ; he shews them what they are by nature ; they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so God gave them over to a reprobate mind (that is, a mind incapable of sound judgment in the exercise of what was right or wrong), and the consequence was, they committed all uncleanness with greediness. But " in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Dear brethren, this is the thing that brings comfort and peace and joy to the soul ; this is what sets the devil aside ; this is what brings a man to cease from loving to sin against God, from rejecting Christ, or refusing the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is the effect of having this blessed knowledge brought home to the soul ; and what a relief it is, after many sad experiences of deeper and deeper misery in the consciousness of sin and anxiety, to be released from it.

An individual under a sense of his own unworthiness looks upon others whom the Lord has enabled to act for Him, with a kind of jealousy, and he says, Oh, if I were like such a one, if I acted as consistently and godly as he does! I do not know how he does it; but it is not so with me: I cannot act as he does. God is just bringing him by all this to acknowledge, I am ungodly; and then God says, Yes, you are ungodly; but " in due time Christ died for the ungodly." How, in due time ? It was just in due time for us, for we were lost, ruined, had sinned away our blessings, and were without strength, and then Christ died; yea, Christ died for the ungodly. O, what blessed intelligence for poor sinners! " God spared not his own Son " ; He gave Him up for the ungodly, for sinners ; for those who have no strength, who are without knowledge. Then none are excluded from the privilege, who will plead they are the ungodly ; and this is so simple as to be as intelligible to the poor and ignorant as to the rich and wise, and perhaps even more intelligible, and for this very reason, that they are poor and ignorant, and that they are dealing with God in their consciences only, and the others are endeavouring to deal with Him by their knowledge. But God, who is rich in mercy, can bring to nothing the wisdom of the wise, and make them see their want of wisdom.

When the Spirit of God brings to the soul of a sinner this conviction, that he is ungodly, and that he has an interest in the death of the Son of God, he is conscious of being in Him also as a risen Saviour, and has

therefore ample encouragement to look to the future. He sees One by faith come down from heaven; he sees God determined to save him, and in such a way as comes home to his heart, by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. By faith he is witnessing what Jesus was doing here, and how He was used. He had a purpose, a holy purpose of love, which He came to execute here, and nothing could divert Him from that purpose. He was pledged to perform it, and therefore on He went, amidst all scorn, reproach, poverty, and contempt. The settled purpose of His heart was to save the ungodly, and so He despised all that was in the way of its accomplishment ; He despised the cross; enduring the shame. The laugh of man, the scorn of sinners, was against Him; but what was that to Him? The one thing for which He came down was before Him, and so He went through all, perfectly sinless, and yet unjustly accused ; and not only accused, traduced, ridiculed, and spit upon, but brought into the very dust of death. When once the believer enters into the spiritual apprehension of these acknowledged facts, then does he learn that this holy and much-dreaded God is for him-is on his side-has taken his part ; then the spring of hope is lifted up in his soul; then he sees it is God for him, and not against him; that it is God, and not man is for him. It was God did all this, and He is for me. He is now no longer too proud to be a debtor to God ; the arms of his rebellion and enmity are laid down; he becomes a suppliant; he no longer need dread, as a sinner, to appear before God, knowing, as he does, God's loving-kindness in Christ Jesus ; he no longer need fear the day of judgment, nor be troubled, for his cause is made out, and he stands acquitted.

This is the great truth that brings joy, peace, and comfort, that in all these things God is for us! O what rest, what happiness for the poor soul, when he sees he has to do with One who has conquered all enemies for him, and in whom he has treasured up all glory for him! Before he came to the consciousness of this, the book of his daily transgressions appeared to ascend up before God, black with the catalogue of his offences, on every leaf of which was written-Sin, sin, sin ; but now these blackened characters are effaced, and on each page is transcribed in letters of blood, in the blood of God's dear Lamb-Love, love, love. All the dark spots are now obliterated, for He who is for us has triumphed. He took the load of sin from off us, and suffered the punishment due to the commission of it, and this silences all Satan's accusations. Satan says to the soul, Oh, you are a sinner, you have broken God's laws. The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledges this, takes the sin, and bears the punishment of it unto death. Satan requires the right of judgment to be passed against us, that the Lord in justice ought not to let the sinner go unjudged ; he accused him. But " who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifieth." Christ has taken the sinner's place, borne the punishment instead of us, poured out His soul unto death, and thus put away sin. He now is risen, and has ascended into heaven. Thus is sin expiated, and His people clear ; thus is Christ proved for us.

To enter into the full perception of this blessedness constitutes the enjoyment of the believer. Here he finds a restingplace from the buffeting waves of the world, when he thus sees that, as sinners, God has proved Himself for us, and in the very act He commends His love towards us ; for it was while we were such sinners, " while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We see just two things in this-that the sinner is without strength, without riches. Like the poor prodigal, he has spent all he had, and now he comes to himself, and is about to return, he has nothing to bring with him. Like a shipwrecked mariner, all is thrown overboard, everything going adrift, and he himself, struggling with the dark billows, is just cast ashore, wearied and poor, having nothing! but, blessed be God, if we have got to shore, God is there, and He is for us ; and this is the mighty point gained, and we know we shall not be cast out again, and that we may lay claim now to all things that God can give. " He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? "

Then, brethren, let us trust Him more ; let us seek to get more from Him; we cannot look for too much of His favour who has not spared His Son for us : and this, dear brethren, will not lead to presumptuous expectations, but a sense of the greatness of His gifts will keep us humble; and the more deeply we are humbled, the more we are in a state to see and feel how God was and is for us, that Christ bled and died for us as enemies, and that the Father gave His Son for us when we were ungodly. O brethren, this is a blessed sight for faith, and nothing but faith can see it, and seeing this we can see everything is ours. Having Christ, we have all. " How shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? " God has bestowed unnumbered blessings on man ; but there was one thing which He had in heaven greater than all His other gifts : that one gift He gave, and having given this, shall He, or can He, refuse us anything else that is for our good ? Christ is ours, and then it follows, all is ours ; " for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God, therefore, gives us all things with Christ; not as man gives, for God gives freely-" He freely giveth us all things." The difficulties in our way may continue. Satan may still endeavour to distress and annoy ; but we may be well assured, that if God has given us His Son, He has given us all things that will bring us through.

He has fitted us for the undertaking, and when once put in order, set off, and set a-going by the power of God, we may be satisfied as to the issue, for Christ has engaged to see us through ; we must arrive safely, for God, who has brought us thus far, is still for us ; and who shall separate us from His love ? " Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? " Shall the deceitful pleasures of a false world, or the alluring baits of Satan tempt our souls to destruction ? Nay, brethren, " in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Be our way dark or thorny, be it difficult or dangerous, be it in the midst of temptations or cares, the same God is for us, and we know that He went through them before us. Christ suffered, He was tempted, upbraided; wept and made supplication, and brought us through them all, even with groanings and tears, to look up to God as our Father, and heaven as our home what have we to do with fear then ?

Brethren, beloved of the Lord, seeing that our God has done such great things for us, we know that God is for us, by the love of Jesus, in going before us in all tribulations, so that nothing should separate us from His love. If you are tempted, dear friends, remember He was tempted before you; if your friends forsake you, remember that Christ is a " friend that sticketh closer than a brother " ; the world may leave you, but it is not your friend, but your enemy, " for the friendship of the world is enmity with God " ; and you are no longer debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, but you live in the Spirit, and therefore should walk in the Spirit, in the same mind that was in Jesus. Whatever temptation you are under, be persuaded, with Paul, of this one thing, 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."

What the devil did was to undo our confidence in God: what Jesus did is to shew us that we may trust Him. And when the believer sees not this, he is looking to the devil and his temptation more than to the love and power of Christ, who has conquered all his enemies for him ; but when our eyes are off all other objects, and on Christ, then, and then only, we can have peace.

Now, dear friends, I would just, in conclusion, ask you, Have you been led to come, as you are, ungodly sinners, to

God? not to bring your own righteousness, which is nothing but filthy rags ; but have you come pleading the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God ? If you have, assuredly there is peace for you, for that is a sure

token that God is for you. Or have you been acting against God all your lives, and have never found peace ? Are you still tormented with a guilty conscience, and are you still rejecting and refusing the way of salvation ? I would earnestly beseech you to consider the danger you are in, and I would ask you to look before you, and see where you are going, and what you are doing. You are wandering in the midst of the wide sea of this world, you are toiling through its waves without a prospect of deliverance ; and if persisted in, you will, ere long, sink down into the sleep of death, to wake in eternal misery. Should you be found thus when Christ comes, you will feel, to your shame and grief, that there is One against you greater than Satan, who can destroy both him and you.

But be of good cheer if your hearts are set on Christ : there is your stay the anchor of your soul. If He is such, dear friends, stand forward for Him; be not ashamed to own your relationship to Him, your dependence on Him: be decided, cut short all expedients for deferring the bold acknowledgment of your being His ; confess Him before men, and act for Him, and live for Him in an ungodly world. He is not ashamed to call, you brethren - and will you be ashamed to confess Him as your Lord and Master in the face of all the world ? Be not debating within yourselves, when you shall avow yourselves ; do it at once, decidedly. Make the plunge, and trust God for the consequence. I know it by experience, that an open bold confession of being Christ's is more than half the struggle over. I know the devil tempts, and says, O do not be too hasty, you might ruin the cause by over-forwardness ; this is not the time to confess yourself openly, wait for another opportunity. But I say, dear friends, as one who knows, that if a man, in the strength of the Lord, is just brought to say to his companions and friends, I am Christ's, and I must act for Him that he will not suffer what others will feel who are creeping on fearful and afraid to avow Him whom they desire to serve. Believe me, my friends, it is as I say: by this decided and open opposition to the world he may at first be laughed at and mocked; but what of that -0 Christ was served so. But soon, when his companions find him resolute, they will give him up as a bad case which they can make no hand of, and they Will leave him comparatively free from ridicule.

Are there any of you who are thus halting between two opinions, and afraid to confess your obligations to the Lord? Oh! I once more entreat you to be candid. Be open, be decided, confess Christ's name on earth, and He will not be ashamed to confess your name before the whole assembled universe.

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