

The Gospel and Its Ministry

by Robert Anderson

Robert Anderson's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Gospel and the necessity of preaching it with faith and grace.

Scripture: Psalm 91:3, Luke 21:34, Romans 11:9, 1 Timothy 3:7, 1 Timothy 6:9

Topics: "Sin And Deception", "Repentance And Freedom"

Description

Greek Word Studies delves into the concept of 'snare' (pagis), describing it as a trap that can unexpectedly endanger or bring one under the control of a hostile force. The snare of sin can entangle both believers and unbelievers, leading them to be deceived about their grave condition. Both groups are in need of repentance to escape the intoxicating power of sin and Satan. The devil's method is to numb the conscience, confuse the senses, and paralyze the will, making individuals unable to free themselves from his snare.

Transcript

THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE THIRTEENTH EDITION.

THE first ten chapters of The Gospel and its Ministry were written some five-and-thirty years ago for a religious "Monthly." When published in book form these chapters were supplemented by a number of appendix notes; and further notes were added from time to time, as new editions were called for. But, in response to appeals from many quarters, the bulk of the Appendix was afterwards recast, and printed as Chapters XI. to XVIII. This will account for the marked difference which the reader cannot fail to notice between these later chapters and the original ten.

I intended to rewrite Part II. before issuing this "Library Edition" of the book. But, yielding to advice, I have abandoned that intention. For it has been urged upon me that as the work has been so long before the public, and copies of it are in circulation in all lands, drastic changes would be undesirable; the more so as foreign editions and versions are beyond my control. Of these the most recent is a Japanese translation which was published in Fukuoka and placed in the hands of all the native workers of the Church Missionary Society in Japan.

R. A.

PREFACE IN these days men have left off faith. The spirit of the martyrs is not in them. Opinions have taken the place of convictions ; and the result is a liberality which is the offspring, not of humility and love, but of indifference or doubt. Opinions are our own, and should not be too firmly held. Truth is Divine, and is worth living for and dying for. But what is truth? Each one, surely, must answer for himself; and does it not resolve itself therefore into a question of opinion after all ?

This is just what characterises the day we live in. Listening to the discordant voices that abound on every side, men are content to give heed only to the points on which the greater number appear to be agreed; and even these are held on sufferance till some new voice is raised to challenge them. FAITH is impossible. If an angel from heaven were heard above the discord, or an apostle should return to earth, then indeed the anarchy of opinion might yield once again to the reign of faith.

Meanwhile, we must be content to drift on in darkness, blindly trusting that when the day dawns we shall find ourselves in safety. Was it for this the Son of God lived and died on earth? Was it for this "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" was preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven"? How different from the spirit of the age is the language of the inspired Apostle! "Though WE or an ANGEL FROM HEAVEN preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Such warnings in Holy Writ are not the words of wild exaggeration. In the last days the new light which men seek for to dispel "the deepening gloom" will not be wanting; but it will prove a wrecker's fire, though seemingly accredited as the beacon light of truth. God has given us a revelation. And, while doubt still lingers round innumerable questions on which we crave knowledge, Divine certainty is our privilege in respect of "all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

The man who would force his opinions on others is a boor. He who would die for his opinions is a fool. But Christianity has not to do with opinions. It is founded on established facts and Divine truth; and faith based thereon is the heritage of the Church. Her martyrs knew the power of faith. The truth they died for was not "the general sense of Scripture corrected in the light of reason and conscience," and thus reduced to the pulp-like consistency of modern theology. In the solitude of the dungeon, or amidst the agonies of the rack, they calmly rested on the Word of God; and, even when assured that all others had recanted, they could stand firmly against both the world and the Church.

Faith, which makes the unseen a present reality, brought all heaven into their hearts, and, refusing to accept deliverance, they braved death in every form. We are not called upon to wear the martyr's crown, but it is ours to share the martyr's faith. We can have no toleration for the veiled scepticism which is passing for Christianity to-day. Agnosticism is Greek for ignorance, and ignorance is both shameful and sinful in presence of a Divine revelation. The Christian is not ignorant; neither is he in doubt.

We do not think this or that: we KNOW. "We know that the Son of God is come." "We know that He was manifested to take away our sins." "We know that we have passed from death unto life." "We know that if our earthly house were dissolved, we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens." "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." It is in this spirit that "The Gospel and Its Ministry" is written. The book is designed to confirm faith, not to suggest doubts. And what distinguishes it from many other valuable works on the same great subject, is that it is not hortatory but doctrinal in character. Addressed to no special class, it is intended for all who are interested in the doctrine of the Gospel. R.A.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY.

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"God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."-JOHN iii:16. Just as an infant's hand "can grasp the acorn which holds

the giant oak" within it, so the youngest child who can lisp "the Nicodemus sermon" may with truth be said to know the gospel, and yet in every word of it there is a depth and mystery of meaning which God alone can fathom. Tell me what it means to perish, and enable me to grasp the thought of a life that is eternal.

Measure for me the abyss of man's wickedness and guilt during all the ages of his black and hateful history, that I may realise in some degree what that world is which God has loved; and then, pausing for a moment in wonder at the thought that such a world could be loved at all, hasten on to speak of love that gave the Son. And when you have enabled me to know this love, which cannot be known, for it passes knowledge, press on still and tell me of the sacrifice by which it has measured and proved itself - His Son, His Only-begotten Son.

Make me to know, in the fulness of knowledge, Him who declared that 'the Father alone could know Him.' And when you have achieved all this, I turn again to the words of Christ, and I read that it was GOD who so loved the world, and I crave to know Who and What God is. I can rise to the thought of love, perhaps even to an evil world, and the conception of love giving up an only son is not beyond me; but when I come to know that it was GOD who loved, that GOD was the giver, and God's Son the gift, I stand as a wondering worshipper in the presence of the Infinite, and confess that such knowledge is too high for me.

At the very threshold, therefore, I charge my reader to think becomingly of the gospel, remembering that it is the gospel of God. And His gospel is like Himself. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet He owns the humble heart as a fitting borne. So also, in its simplicity and plainness, the good news is within the reach of the youngest and most ignorant, aye, and even of the lowest and the worst, for such may hear and believe and live; but in its depth and fulness it is known to God alone, for it is a revelation of Himself.

Hence it is that the old song of the redeemed on earth will be a new song throughout eternity; for every advance we make in the knowledge of God will shed new light on the message we received in our sins and sorrows here. But not only has the gospel a depth and dignity and glory all its own because it is in a special sense a revelation of God, it has also a distinctive greatness and solemnity by virtue of its peculiar mission, and of the issues involved in the proclamation of it.

It is divinely called "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The power of God! no words can add force to this, and words that detract from it are impious. The mighty power which made the worlds and alone can raise the dead, such is its power to the sinner who believes. Let the preacher remember this; and while he humbly consecrates to God every talent he possesses, let him never attempt by unworthy means to add attractiveness to such a message. And what solemn issues are depending while it is being proclaimed!

For the preaching of the gospel must ever tend to life, or else to death, in those who hear. How terrible then to be guilty of levity in such a ministry! In the iron days of Rome, public triumphs were sometimes accorded to victorious generals in acknowledgment of brilliant services. Clad in gold and purple, his feet bedecked with pearls, and a golden crown upon his brow, the victor entered the city of the Empire in a chariot of ivory and gold. Triumphal music mingled with the rapturous shouts that greeted him, and the air was filled with the sweet perfume of flowers and spices scattered on his path.

Waggons passed on before, filled with the spoils and trophies of his victories. The senate and the priesthood attended in his honour. In front of his chariot the doomed captives marched in chains, while behind him followed the company of those who had been set at liberty or ransomed. All Rome kept

holiday, and joined with one accord to swell the triumph of the conqueror. It is to such a scene that St. Paul alludes in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians when speaking of the gospel; for its ministry, whatever the results in those who hear, is Christ's triumph none the less.

"Thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place." We are a savour of life to the ransomed throng, and of death to the doomed and fettered captives. But whether our ministry swell the glad company of the redeemed, or add to the condemnation of those that perish, we are none the less, in the one as in the other, a sweet savour of Christ unto God. Can any amount of education or of training make men "sufficient" for such a ministry as this?

Who," the apostle demands, "is sufficient for these things?" And the answer is not doubtful, "Our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant." And how? The halo that encircled Moses' face at Sinai betokened the glory of his ministry. But that ministry, glorious though it was, had no glory in comparison with the ministry now entrusted to men. What then shall we expect in him whom God has made "sufficient" as a minister of the new covenant?

We turn to behold a poor creature, troubled on every side, perplexed and persecuted and cast down, in bodily presence weak, in speech contemptible, held in repute as so much filth and scum, and in him we find the man whom God deemed fit for a ministry so glorious and so great. And the secret of his fitness was in this, that the knowledge of the glory of God lit up his heart, and was reflected back with a heavenlier light than that which dazzled Israel's gaze. In Ex. 34: 33, the A.V. suggests a false meaning, by inserting till, instead of when.

Moses spoke to the people with unveiled face, but when he ceased speaking he put on a veil that they might not see the glory fading; they were not to know that the glory of the old covenant was transitory. Such was the great apostle, and such his fitness. And can any one suppose that mental training and moral culture can avail if this "sufficiency" be wanting; or that if men lack both culture and training they are in a better case! But this was not all. With natural advantages that were entirely exceptional, and in spiritual attainments unsurpassed, pre-eminent among ministers of Christ in his labours and sufferings, and as to his office "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," for, in proof of his apostleship, he could appeal not only to his unexampled life, but to "signs and wonders and mighty deeds" which he had wrought; yet., when "in the foolish confidence of boasting" he ransacked his history for a crowning proof of his sufficiency" as a minister of Christ, he turned away from all these things to tell how, crushed doubtless, and sick at heart, he was once bundled out of Damascus in a basket to escape the Roman garrison that held the city to apprehend him.

Or if he goes on to tell of being caught up to the highest heaven, and of hearing there unspeakable words impossible for man to utter, he may glory indeed in such a Paul, for this was for him a brief foretaste of the day when the redeemed shall bear the image of the heavenly. But if he must boast of the servant and apostle here, he will point to the Damascus flight and the "thorn in the flesh," "Satan's messenger to buffet him." Would that every one who claims to preach the gospel, whether arrayed in silk and lawn, or clad in corduroy and frieze, would ponder this paradox of the ministry of Paul.

Let us picture to ourselves this mighty apostle, this greater and more glorious than Moses, smuggled out through a window in a buck-basket! and then let us search out the meaning of this mystery, that he appeals to this his shame as the crowning boast of his whole life's labours. The answer in words is not far

to seek, but which of us has grasped its meaning? "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake ; for when I am weak, then am I strong." What God wants in those whom He will put in trust with the gospel, is not that they shall be polished and educated gentlemen, much less that they shall be coarse and ignorant boors; not that they shall be skilled in dogmatic theology, much less that they shall be unlearned in doctrine; not that they shall be brilliant and eloquent, much less that they shall be ungifted and dull.

All He seeks is a fitting instrument upon whom the power of Christ can rest, an empty earthen vessel that He can fill with His priceless treasure. The man, whoever he may be, whether on the highest round of the social ladder, or the lowest, who can say with Paul, "Most gladly will I glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me," and say it with unfeigned lips, and from a heart that has been taught it in the school of God, has gained the secret of this competency for the ministry of reconciliation.

Apart from this fitness, the highest and the greatest are but "clouds without water," while with it the lowest and the least may become "competent ministers of the new covenant." "The ministry of the Gospel is the special subject of these pages but the same fitness is essential to the ministry of the Church. The Apostle Paul was called to the double ministry (" The gospel . . . whereof I Paul am made a minister; . . . the church, whereof I am made a minister,"- Col. I. 23-25).

Both these ministries are, no doubt, included in the title, "ministers of God" (2 Cor. vi. 4), or "ministers of Christ "(2 Car. xi. 23). The ministers are specially named, along with the elders or bishops, in the address of the Epistle to the Philippians (Phil. i. i); and the characteristics which were to be sought for in any who claimed that position are specified in i Tim. iii. 2-13. The word minister is derived from the Latin; deacon from the Greek. Etymologically, and in their origin, the words are synonyms.

But deacon has in English acquired a meaning of its own; and its retention in the Revised Version is a flagrant violation of the avowed principles on which the revision was conducted. It is hard to believe, moreover, that it was not committed intentionally, to perpetuate the popular error of supposing that the deacon was a subordinate office-bearer in the Church. That it is an error is sufficiently clear from the fact that the Apostle Paul so describes himself seven times. The word diakonos occurs thirty times in the New Testament.

In the Gospels it is used eight times, where It means a servant in the ordinary sense, save only in John xii. 26. The other places where it is used are the following passages in the Epistles of Paul Rom. xlii. ~ XV. 8; xvi. i; iCor. iii. 5; 2COor. iii. 6; vi. 4; Xi. 15, 23; Gal. ii, i~ Eph. iii. 7 ; vi. 2! ; Phil. 1. 1 ; Cal. i. 7, 23, 25; iv.7; x Thess. iii. 2; i Tim. iii. 8,12; and iv. 6, where Timothy is called a "deacon." The word is never applied to Stephen and his fellows (Acts vi.), with whom it is popularly associated.

Diakonia is used in Acts vi. i (ministration), and also in ver. 4 (ministry). It occurs thirty-four times in the New Testa-ment; once in its ordinary acceptation of "serving" (Luke x. 40), and generally as equivalent to "ministry ' (e.g. 2 Tim. iv. 5, ii).

II

GRACE.

"THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED GOD!" "Show me Thy glory, I beseech Thee," was the prayer of Moses; and God answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." God's highest glory displays itself in sovereign grace, therefore it is that the gospel of His grace is the gospel of His glory. Let us take heed then that we preach grace.

He who preaches a mixed gospel robs God of His glory, and the sinner of his hope. They for whom these pages are intended, need not be told that salvation is only by the blood; but many there are who preach the death of Christ, without ever rising to the truth of grace. "Dispensational truth," as it is commonly called, is deliberately rejected by not a few; and yet without understanding the change which the death of Christ has made in God's relationships with men., grace cannot be apprehended.

It is not that God can ever change, or that the righteous ground of blessing can ever alter, but that the standard of man's responsibility depends on the measure and character of the revelation God has given of Himself. God's judgments are according to pure equity. They must have strange thoughts of Him who think it could be otherwise. In the Epistle to the Romans we have the great principle of His dealings with mankind. "He will render to every man according to his deeds ; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life " but to the rest, indignation and wrath tribulation and anguish upon evil-doers, but upon well-doers, glory, honour, and peace; and this for all without distinction, whether Jews or Gentiles, under law or without law; for God is no respecter of persons."

But is the standard of well-doing the same for all ? Shall the same fruit be looked for from the wild olive as from the cultured tree ; from the mountain side in its native barrenness, as from the vineyard on the fruitful hill ? Far from it. The first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans are unmistakable in this respect. The Gentile will be judged according to the light of nature, and of conscience neglected and resisted; the Jew, by the revelation God entrusted to him.

Paul's sermon at Athens is no less clear as regards the condition of the heathen. As he said at Lystra, they were not left without a witness, in that God did good, and gave rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. By such things, he declares again in another place, God's eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, so that they are without excuse. And so here, God left the heathen to themselves, not that they should forget Him, but that they should seek Him, even though it were in utter darkness, so that they should need to grope for Him -" to feel after Him, and find Him."

And, though there was ignorance of God, He could wink at the ignorance and give blessing notwithstanding, for " He is a rewarder of diligent seekers." Moreover, this is still the case with all whom the witness of the Holy Ghost has not yet reached. If it be asked whether any have, in fact, been saved thus, I turn from the question, though I have no doubt as to the answer. There is no profit in speculations about the fate of the heathen their judgment is with God. But there is profit and blessing untold in searching into His ways and thoughts toward men, that we may be brought in adoration to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

But to resume: "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness." And the change depends on this, that God has now revealed Himself in Christ, and therefore ignorance of Him is a sin that shuts men up to judgment. See the Lord's sad utterance in John xv. 24, as a kindred truth. Indeed,

the whole Gospel of John is a commentary on it. Darkness had reigned, but God did not hold men accountable for darkness ; it was their misfortune, not their fault.

But He did hold them accountable to value and obey the little light they had, "the candle set up within them," and the stars above their head - those gleams of heavenly light, which, though they failed to illumine the way, might at least suffice to direct their course. But now, a new era dawned upon the world; "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Light had entered in; the darkness was past. the true Light was shining. To turn now to conscience or to law was like men who, with the sun in the zenith, nurse their scanty rushlight, with shutters barred and curtains drawn; like men who cast their anchor because the daylight has eclipsed the stars.

The principle of God's dealings was the same, but the measure of man's conduct was entirely changed. It was no longer a question of conscience or of law, but of the Only-begotten in their midst. It was in words of solemn, earnest truth that the blessed Lord replied to the inquiry, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "This (said He) is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." The question was a right one, and the answer enforced the unchanging principle, that the light they had was the measure of their responsibility.

The same great truth is no less plainly stated in the Nicodemus sermon. This was the condemnation, not that men's deeds were evil, though for these too there shall be wrath in 'the day of wrath, but that, because their deeds were evil, they had brought upon themselves a still direr doom; light had come into the world, but they had turned from it and loved the darkness.' But this is not all; even yet the reign of grace had not begun. Grace was there truly, for "grace came by Jesus Christ" : but, like Himself, it was in humiliation; it had yet to be enthroned.

Grace was there. No adverse principle came in to influence His ways and words; but though pure and unmixed, as it must ever be, it was restrained. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and how was He straitened till it was accomplished! While there was a single claim outstanding, a single tie unbroken, grace was hindered, though it could not be alloyed. But, now was about to come the world's great crisis - the most stupendous event in the history of man, the only event in the history of God!

He had laid aside His glory, and come down into the scene. At His own door He had stood and knocked, but only to find it shut in His face. Turning thence, He had wandered an outcast into the world which His power had made, but He wandered there unknown. "His own received Him not"; "the world knew Him not." As He had laid aside His glory, He now restrained His power, and yielded Himself to their guilty will. In return for pity He earned but scorn. Sowing kindnesses and benefits with a lavish hand He reaped but cruelty and outrage.

Manifesting grace He was given up to impious law without show of mercy or pretence of justice. Unfolding the boundless love of the mighty heart of God He gained no response but bitterest hate from the hearts of men. THE SON OF GOD HAS DIED AT THE HANDS OF MEN! This astounding fact is the moral centre of all things A bygone eternity knew no other future: 'an eternity to come shall know no other past. That death was this world's crisis.' For long ages, despite conscience outraged, the light of nature quenched, law broken, promises despised, and prophets cast out and slain, the world had been on terms with God.

But now a mighty change ensued. Once for all the world had taken sides. In the midst stood that cross in its lonely majesty God on one side, with averted face; on the other. Satan, exulting in his triumph. The world took sides with Satan: His 'darling was in the power of the dog,' and there was none to help, none to

pity. There, we see every claim which the creature had on God for ever forfeited, every tie for ever broken. Promises there had been, and covenants; but Christ was to be the fulfiller of them all.

If a single blessing now descend on the ancient people of His choice, it must come to them in grace. Life, and breath, and fruitful seasons freely given, had testified of the great Giver's hand, and declared His goodness; but if "seedtime, and harvest, and the changing year, come on in sweet succession" still, in a world blood-stained by the murder of the Son, it is no longer now to creation claims we owe it, nor yet to Noah's covenant, but wholly to the grace of God in Christ.

In proof of this I might cite prophecies and parables, and appeal to the great principles of God that are the basis of gospel doctrine, as above both parable and prophecy. Nay, I might leave it to men themselves, as Christ did, to decide between themselves and God. But I rather turn again to that solemn utterance of the Lord, in view of His lifting up upon the tree: "Now is the judgment of this world." "These things the angels desire to look into." And if angels were our judges, what would be our doom!

For ages they had both witnessed and ministered the goodness of God to men. But yesterday the heavens had rung with their songs of praise, as they heralded the Saviour's birth in Bethlehem: Peace on earth, goodwill to men." Goodwill! and this was what had come of it! Peace! and this was what men turned it to! What thoughts were theirs as, terror-struck, they beheld that scene on Calvary! Crucified amid heartless jeers, and cruel taunts, and shouts of mingled hate and triumph!

Buried in silence and by stealth; buried in sorrow, but in silence. He who hears in secret, heard the stifled cry from the broken hearts of Mary and the rest, and the smothered sobs that tore the breasts of strong men bowed with grief - the last sad tribute of love from the little flock now scattered. But as for the world, no man's lamentation, no woman's wail was heard! They had cried, "Away with Him, away with Him!" and now they had made good their cry: the world was rid of Him, and that was all they wanted.

Angels were witnesses to these things. They pondered the awful mystery of those hours when death held fast the Prince of Life. The forty days wherein He lingered in the scenes of His rejection and His death - was it not to make provision for the little company that owned His name, to gather them into some ark of refuge from the judgment-fire. so soon to engulf this ruined world? And now, the gates lift up their heads, the everlasting doors are lifted up, and with all the majesty of God the King of Glory enters in.'

The Crucified of Calvary has come to fill the vacant throne, the Nazarene has been proclaimed the Lord of Hosts! But, mystery on mystery! the greatest mystery of all is now - the mystery of grace. That throne is vacant still. Those gates and doors that lifted up their heads for Him are standing open wide. Judgment waits. The sea of fire which - one day - shall close in upon this world to wipe out its memory for ever, is tided back by the word of Him who sits upon the Father's throne in grace.

When the Son of Man returns for judgment, "then shall He sit upon His glorious throne." And how unutterably terrible will be that judgment! Half measures are impossible in view of the cross of Christ. The day is past when God could plead with men about their sins.' The controversy now is not about a broken law, but about a rejected Christ. If judgment, therefore, be the sinner's portion, it must be measured by God's estimate of the murder of His Son; a cup of vengeance, brimful, unmixed, from the treading of the "winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." 'For the believer, the question of sin was settled at the cross; for the unbeliever, it is postponed to the day of judgment.

Who His own self bare our sins on His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 11. 9). The distinction between judgment and punishment is important. The criminal is judged before he leaves the court-house for the prison, but his punishment has yet to come--it is a consequence of judgment, not a part of it. All unbelievers are precisely on a level as regards judgment. "He that believeth on Him is not judged but he that believeth not is judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John iii. x8).

Here the moral and the immoral, the religious and the profane, stand together, and share the same doom. But when judgment, in the sense of punishment, is in question, there can be no equality; every sentence shall be apportioned to the guilt of each by the righteous and omniscient Judge. See Rev. xx. i3 Matt. xii. 36; Luke xii. 47, 48; Jude 15; and 2 Pet. ii. 9, already quoted. But if grace be on the throne, what limits can be set to it? If that sin committed upon Calvary has not shut the door of mercy, all other sins together shall not avail to close it.

If God can bless in spite of the death of Christ, who may not be blest? Innocence lost, conscience disobeyed and stifled, covenants and promises despised and forfeited, law trampled under foot, prophets persecuted, and last and unutterably terrible, the Only-begotten slain. And yet there is mercy still! What a gospel that would be! But 'the gospel of the glory of the blessed Gods' is something infinitely higher still. It is not that Calvary has failed to quench the love of God to men, but that it is the proof and measure of that love.

Not that the death of Christ has failed to shut heaven against the sinner, but that heaven is open to the sinner by virtue of that death. The everlasting doors that lifted up their heads for Him are open for the guiltiest of men, and the blood by which the Lord of glory entered there is their title to approach. The way to heaven is as free as the way to hell. In hell there is an accuser, but in heaven there is no one to condemn. The only being in the universe of God who has a right to judge the sinner is now exalted to be a Saviour.'

Amid the wonders and terrors of that throne, He is a Saviour, and He is sitting there in grace. The Saviour shall yet become the Judge; but judgment waits on grace. Sin has reigned, and death can boast its victories: shall grace not have its triumphs too? As surely as the sin of man brought death, the grace of God shall bring eternal life to every sinner who believes. One sin brought death, but grace masters all sin. If sin abounded, grace abounds far more. Grace is conqueror. GRACE REIGNS.

"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "I judge no man" the Lord says again in another place. "if any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world but to save the world" (John v. 22, viii. 15). The day of grace must end before the day of judgment can begin. "The acceptable year of the Lord" must run its course before the advent of "the day of vengeance."

Compare isa. lxi. i, 2, with Luke iv. 16--21, and notice the precise point at which the Lord "closed the book."

Not at the expense of righteousness, but in virtue of it. Not that righteousness requires the sinner's death, and yet grace has intervened to give him life. Righteousness itself has set grace upon the throne in order that the sinner may have life : " That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Such is the triumph of the cross. It has

made it possible for God to bless us in perfect harmony with everything He is, and everything He has ever declared Himself to be, and in spite of all that we are, and of all that He has ever said we ought to be.

I have already referred to Paul's allusion to the ancient military triumphs, when writing to the Corinthians. The word there used occurs again in his Epistle to the Colossians : "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, leading them in triumph in Him." In the hour of His weakness, our enemies became His own, and fastened upon Him to drag Him down to death; but, leading captivity captive, He chained them to the chariot-wheels of His triumph, and made a public show of them. Just as Israel stood on the wilderness side of the sea, and saw Pharaoh and his hosts in death upon the shore, it is ours to gaze upon the triumphs of the cross. God there has mastered sin, abolished death, and destroyed him who had the power of death.

God has become our Saviour. Our trust is not in His mercy, but in Himself. Not in divine attributes, but in the living God. "God is for us"; the Father is for us; the Son is for us; the Holy Ghost is for us. It is God who justifies; it is Christ that died; and the Holy Ghost has come down to be a witness to us of the work of Christ, and of the place that work has given us as sons in the Father's house. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation."

THE NIGHT OF THE BETRAYAL.

Hell has gone forth in power.

And ye should wake and weep:

Could ye not watch one little hour!

This night is not for sleep.

Earth trembles in the scale,

Yet knows not of the fight,

And if her fearful foe prevail,

It will be always night.

- Unpitying as the grave,

Fierce as the winter breeze,

And mightier than the mountain wave

That sweeps o'er midnight seas,

The Prince of Darkness came:

Woe to the hated race!

What man can meet that brow of game,

Or live before his face!

No seraph's sword of light,
Reddened in righteous wrath,
Flashed downward from the crystal height
To bar his onward path.
No trumpet's warning cry
Rose through the silent air,
No battle shout went forth on high
From guarding squadrons there.
Above, the holy light
Slept on the mountain's breast;
Beneath, the tender breath of night
Hushed moaning woods to rest.
Yet ne'er shall blackest night
Such deepened horror know,
While stars look down on Olives height,
Or Kedron's waters flow
For who shall tell His woes,
Whose grief out-gloamed the night,
When His strong love, bright star! arose,
O'erfilling heaven with light ?
The gentlest heart on earth
Must taste her sharpest woe,
The tender plant of heavenly birth
Hell's fiercest blast must know.
King! of the wounded breast,
King! of the uncrowned brbw,
What faithful heart shall bring Thee rest

What arm shall aid Thee now!
Lo, sheathed in shining light,
Heaven's wondering warriors stand,
With pinions closed for downward flight,
Waiting their Lord's command.
But never comes that word,
That hight knows yet no dawn,
And still must each impatient sword.
Sleep on each thigh, undrawn.
Not Angels' deathless feet
May dare the darkening path,
Arched by the thunder clouds that meet,
Heavy with coming wrath.
Alone His steadfast eye
Can cleave the rolling gloom,
Where that dread sentence flames on high,
The sinner's death of doom.
Oh! all ye Stars of light
Veil all your glowing spheres;
Weep out your radiance; drown the night
In dew of heaven's tears.
Poor Earth! Go t'nourn beneath
Thy withered roses now;
Thy thorns alone may twine the wreath
To crown the Victor's brow.
Firmer than Carmel's might,
When the long-leaping tide

Shivers its thousand shafts of light
Far up his patient side,
His will unshaken stands
Though that wild sea of wrath,
Upsurging to its outmost bands,
Breaks foaming on His path.
Soft breezes of the West
That, sighing as ye go,
Bear ever on, with kindly breast,
Each whispered human woe,
Here droop your wings and die
Low murmuring at His feet,
Then rise and bear His victor cry
Up the long golden street
High Heralds of His birth,
Make His new honours known!
Tell how the Blood, despised on earth,
Sparkles before the throne!
Lo! struck from Star to Star,
The gracious echoes fall
To this poor world that rolls afar,
Lowest and last of all;
Soft, as from weeping skies
Drops the sweet summer rain,
Yet clear through all earth's Babel cries--
Hear them ye sons of men;
Nor thrust His mercy back,

Who claims your hearts to-day:

Oh! kiss His feet. Their wounded track

Hath crimsoned all the way.

CHAPTER III.

THE CROSS.

"THE preaching of the cross." It is on this the great truth of grace depends. Not the death of Christ merely, but "the cross." Synonyms are few in Scripture, and a change of words is not to please fastidious ears but to express a different or fuller thought. "The preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish." Not so the preaching of the death of Christ, apart from the truths which cluster round "the cross." The whole fabric of apostate Christianity is based upon the fact of that death, and by virtue of it the Scarlet Woman shall yet sit enthroned as mistress of the world.

The Saviour's death is owned as part of the world's philosophy. It is a fact and a doctrine which human wisdom has adopted, and rejoices in as the highest tribute to human worth. How great and wonderful must that creature be on whose behalf God has made so marvellous a sacrifice! And thus God is made to pander to man's pride and sense of self-importance. And as with the world's philosophy, so also is it with the world's religion. The doctrine of the death of Christ, if separated from "the cross," leaves human nature still a standing ground.

It is consistent with creature claims and class privileges. Sinners of the better sort can accept it, and be raised morally and intellectually by it. But the preaching of the cross is "the axe laid to the root of the tree," the death-blow to human nature on every ground and in every guise. It is not merely that Christ has died - the great fact on which redemption depends; but that that death has been brought about in a way and by means which manifest and prove not only the boundless and causeless love of God to man, but also the wanton and relentless enmity of man to God; that that death, while it has made it possible for God, in grace, to save the guiltiest and worst of Adam's race, has made it impossible, even with God, that the worthiest and best could be saved except in grace.

It has measured out the moral distance between God and man, and has left them as far asunder as the throne of heaven and the gate of hell. If God will now give blessing, He must turn back upon Himself, and find in His own heart the motive, just as He finds the righteous ground of it in the work of Christ. There is no salvation now for "the circumcision" as such - for diligent users of the means of grace, for earnest seekers, for anxious inquirers, for a privileged class under any name or guise.

If such were granted special favour, "then were the offence of the cross ceased," and grace would be dethroned. Circumcision did not deny the death of Christ. On the contrary, it betokened covenants and class privileges granted by virtue of the great sacrifice to which every ordinance in the old religion pointed. But it utterly denied the cross, and grace as connected with the cross; for there every covenant was forfeited, every privilege lost. Before the cross, therefore, circumcision was the outward sign of covenant blessing; but after the cross, it became the token of apostasy.

The cross has shut man up to grace or judgment. It has broken down all "partition walls," and left a world of naked sinners trembling on the brink of hell. Every effort to recover themselves is but a denial of their doom, and a denial too of the grace of God, which stoops to bring them blessing where they are and as

they are. The cross of Christ is the test and touch-stone of all things. Man's philosophy, man's power, man's religion - behold their work, the Christ of God upon a gallows!

In distinguishing thus between the death of Christ and "the cross," let me not be misunderstood. It is not that God ever separates them thus. On the contrary," the preaching of the cross is the emphasising and enforcing of the very facts and truths which the heart of man always struggles to divorce from the doctrine of redemption, but which God has inseparably connected with it. The idea of redemption was perfectly familiar to the Jew, and every student knows how entirely it accords with human philosophy.

The Jew and the Greek could shake hands upon it, and set out together to seek the realisation of it. But the one demanded signs of Messiahship, and the passion of the other was wisdom. The death and resurrection of the Son of God, if accomplished in a manner which men would deem worthy of the Son of God, might have satisfied the one, as it did in fact, as soon as the cross was lost sight of, satisfy and charm the other. But the cross was a stumbling-block to the religious man, and folly to the wisdom-lover.

If human philosophy today adopts and glories in redemption, as in fact it does, it is just because the cross is forgotten ; and if, in spite of what Christianity is in the world and to the world, the Jew is still unchristianised, it is just because with him that cross can never be forgotten. It is not, I repeat, that God ever separates them, but that man always does. A gospel that points to the death of Christ in proof of God's high estimate of man, and then turns the doctrine of that death into a syllogism, so that men, in no way losing self-respect, can calmly reason out their right to blessing by it, will give no offence to any one, nor be branded as foolishness.

Such a gospel pays due deference to human nature, and satisfies man's sense of need without hurting in the least his pride. Such a gospel has, in fact, produced that marvellous anomaly, a Christian world. Even in Paul's day "the many" were but hucksters of the Word of God. Their aim was to make their wares acceptable, to secure a trade, as it were, and so they sought popularity and an apparent success by corrupting the gospel to make it attractive to their hearers. "As of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God," says the apostle in contrast with all this, "we speak in Christ."

The gospel he preached would have created a Church in the midst of a hostile world. The gospel of " the many" has constituted the world itself the Church. And the fable of the wolf in sheep's clothing finds a strange fulfilment here, though indeed the metamorphosis is so complete that we are at a loss to distinguish either wolf or sheep remaining. Rationalism and Ritualism are the great enemies of the cross. The First Epistle to the Corinthians touches on the one: the Epistle to the Galatians deals with the other.

A gospel which pays court either to man's reason or man's religion will never fail to be popular. Well versed, no doubt, in Greek philosophy, and no careless student of human nature, Paul might have drawn all Corinth after him had he gone there "with excellency of speech or of wisdom" in announcing the testimony of God. He did "speak wisdom among the perfect," as witness his letter to the Romans, or indeed his letter to the Corinthians themselves. His argument for the resurrection, the germ and pattern of Bishop Butler's great masterpiece of reasoning, would have charmed and won not a few of the disciples of Plato and the other brilliant men who raised unenlightened reason to its highest glory at the very time when the voice of revelation was being hushed amid the sad echoes of Malachi's wail over the apostasy of Jehovah's people.

But just because the Greeks were wisdom-worshippers, he turned from everything that would pander to their favourite passion, and became a fool among them, a man of one idea, who knew nothing "save

Jesus Christ, even Him crucified." The enthronement of Christ on high and the glories of His return, are inseparable from the Christian's faith, but in Corinth it was the cross the apostle preached, the cross in all its marvellous attractiveness for hearts enlightened from on high, in all its intolerable repulsiveness for unregenerate men.

With the Galatians it was against the religion of the flesh he had to contend. He testified to them that if they were circumcised Christ should profit them nothing. How was this? Had grace found its limits here, so that if any transgressed in this respect, they committed a sin beyond the power of Christ to pardon? Grace has no limits. But there are limits to the sphere in which alone grace can act. Circumcision in itself was nothing; but it was the mark of, and key to, a position of privilege under covenant utterly inconsistent with grace.

"The offence of the cross" was that it set, aside every position of the kind ; not that it brought redemption through the death upon the tree, but that because it so brought redemption all were shut up to grace. If Paul had so preached Christ as to pay homage to human nature, and respect and accredit the vantage ground it claimed by virtue of its religion, persecution would have ceased, for the Cross would have lost its offence. Redemption as preached by "the many" in Apostolic days brought no persecution, because it left man a platform on which "to make a fair show in the flesh."

But the cross set aside the flesh altogether. If the death of Christ be preached as a means of salvation, not for lost sinners, but for the pious and devout, where is the offence? But the cross comes in with its mighty power to bring low as well as to exalt, for it exalts none but those whom first it humbles. It calls upon the pious worshipper, if indeed he would have blessing, to come out from the shrine in which he trusts, and take his place in the market square beside the outcast and the vile.

It tells the "earnest seeker" and the "anxious inquirer," that by their efforts they are only struggling out of the pit where alone grace can reach them.. It proclaims to the worthy "communicant" of blameless life, whose mind is a treasury of orthodox doctrines, and whose ways are a pattern of all good, that he must come down and stand beside the drunkard and the harlot, there to receive salvation from the grace of God to the glory of God. They who do thus preach the cross can testify that its offence has not ceased in our day and in our midst.

Redemption is not, first, an easy way of salvation for the sinner, and then a display of the character of God. God must be supreme. A man who makes self his chief aim is contemptible, but in the very nature of things God must be first in everything, else He would be no longer God. The obedience of Christ was infinitely precious to, God, apart altogether from any results accruing to the sinner; and the cross is the expression of that obedience tried to the utmost. In this light, His death was but the crowning act of a life yielded up to God.

"He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross "- the cross, as expressive beyond all else of agony and contempt to the full; and because it was, this, an expression too, the completest and most blessed, of perfect love to God and man. That death was but the climax of His life. It had another character, doubtless, in which it stands alone, for there divine judgment fell on Him for sin, and He became the outcast sin-offering. We do well, truly, at times to think thus of Calvary; but we do not well to think only of it thus. The great burnt-offering aspect of the cross ought ever to be first, and never to be forgotten.

'Even as we preach the sin-offering or the passover, the joy and strength of our own hearts ought to be the burnt offering. And thus, whatever may be the results of our testimony, it will always be itself a

continual burnt-offering, "a sweet savour of Christ unto God" (2 Cor. ii. is). . 'And the burnt-offering could never be accepted without the accompanying meat-offering. The work of Christ, even in its highest aspect, must never be separated from the intrinsic perfectness and majesty of His person. It was the burnt-offering with its meat-offering that Israel daily sacrificed to God; and this aspect of the cross ought ever to be before us, and that for its own sake and not because of special need in us.

The law of the leper may teach us a lesson here. Two sparrows were sold for a farthing, and no more was needed for the leper's cleansing. A farthing! if price was to be paid at all, could it possibly be less? It is impossible that the outcast sinner can have high or worthy thoughts of Christ, nor does God expect it from him. The acknowledgment of Him suffices, if only it be true, how poor and low soever it may be. The bitten Israelite who looked upon the brazen serpent lived; 0 as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole." It was only the leper's farthing offering, but it was enough. And so also now: "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," "they that hear shall live."

But after the sinner has been brought nigh to God, and found peace and pardon, and life, shall the poor estimate he formed of Christ and of His sacrifice, while yet an outcast, be still the limit of his gratitude, the measure of his worship? Shall the farthing gospel that met the banished sinner's need, satisfy the heart of the citizen, the saint, the child of God? The two sparrows restored the leper to the camp, but it then behoved him to bring all the great offerings of the law. Christ in all His fulness is God's provision for His people, and nothing less than this should be the measure of their hearts' worship (Lev. xiv.).

And how we lower everything! In the Jewish ritual we find the passover, the dedication of the covenant, and the sin-offering of the red heifer - the foundation sacrifices which were offered once for all. We have further the burnt-offering, the meat-offering, the peace-offering, and the great yearly sin-offering, besides others still of which I will make no mention here. Each one of all these many types has found its antitype in Christ; but what do Christians know of them? The passover alone would more than satisfy the gospel of to-day, and even that is humanised and lowered.

Christ has died, and that is everything. How He died is scarce thought of, and Who He is who did so die is well-nigh forgotten altogether. Christ has died - that is certain. Rationalists and Ritualists, Protestants and Romanists, all are agreed that Christ has died. Whether it be in our Ragged Sunday schools, or in our Houses of Parliament, as day by day their sittings are begun by prayer, the death of Christ is a fact which need not be asserted, for none but an infidel would question it.

But inquire in what way and to what extent sinners are benefited by that death, and at once the harmony is broken. Upon this every school has its creed, and every "ism" its theories, and the theme is the signal for a scramble and a struggle between all the rival banners of Christendom. Here is a master-stroke of Satan's guile. That which God intended should be an impossibility to the natural mind, he has made the common creed of men. In the wildest fables of false religions, there is nothing more utterly incredible than the story of the life and death of the Son of God.

For one who knows who Jesus was, and what "the Christ" means, to believe that Jesus is the Christ is so entirely beyond the possibilities of human reason that it is proof of a birth from God. He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God is a man with a supernatural faith, a faith that overcomes the world. Yet just as in Him the carnal eye could 'find no beauty,' so in His gospel the carnal mind can see no wonders. But it behoves the evangelist so to preach that gospel that the Holy Ghost may own the word to reveal thereby the mighty mysteries and marvels of redemption; not lowering and humanising it to bring it within the reach

of the natural man apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

If Christians are commonplace in our day, may it not be because the gospel they believe is common-place ? Divine faith is faith in the divine. The difference is not in the faith, but in the object of it. If we have really believed the Gospel of God, we have each one of us received for himself a revelation from on high, a revelation to which flesh and blood could never reach. Let us remember this. These pages are proof how much I value clear and scriptural statements of the truth but it is not on clearness, or even orthodoxy, that the power depends.

The gospel may be so sifted and simplified that none shall fail to understand it, and yet sinners may never be brought to God at all. The preaching that is wanted is not " with persuasive words of man's wisdom," reasoning out salvation, and cheapening the gospel to suit the condition of the hearers, but "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power -preaching that will be "foolishness to them that perish," but to the saved " the power of God." It is one thing to master Christianity ; it is quite another thing to be mastered by it.

And it is the cross that attracts and conquers. The cross, not as an easy way of pardon for the sinner, not as a " plan of salvation," but as a fact and a revelation to change a heartless worldling into an adoring worshipper. The cross, not as the ruling factor in the equation of man's redemption, but as a display of the love and righteousness and wrath of God, and the sin of man, to subdue the hardest heart, and change the whole current of the most selfish and ungodly life.

To faith the unseen is real; and to those who believe in the cross, "Jesus Christ has been openly set forth crucified before their eyes." They have seen that marred and agonised face. They have been witnesses to the reproach that broke His heart, the scorn, the derision, and the hate, of all the attendant throng. They have heard "Emmanuel's orphan cry" when forsaken of His God. And in gazing thus upon that scene their inmost being has sustained a mighty change. Till yesterday, the world and self ensnared their hearts, and filled the whole horizon of their lives.

But now the cross has become a power to divorce themselves from self, and to separate them from that world which crucified their Lord. O for power so to preach the cross of Christ that it shall become a reality to all, whether they accept it or despise it : that men who never were conscious of a doubt, because they never really believed, shall see what priests and soldiers saw, and the rabble crowd that mocked His agonies, and seeing, shall exclaim, "It is impossible that this can be the Son of God !

" that some again shall see what John and Mary witnessed, and gazing, shall cry out, with broken hearts, in mingled love and grief, "My God, was this for me!" and turn to live devoted lives for Him who died and rose again. I conclude in borrowed words, more worthy than my own: "With the loyal-hearted believer, there is one master-object which in measure conceals every other by its surpassing glory; and this is not redemption, which, blessed as it is, is simply a matter of course, if Christ died by this end, but the CROSS itself, with its ignominy - the death of the Prince of Life, the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory; incredible antithesis!

Not only the freedom from eternal and frightful slavery, but the divine price paid for that freedom. And this 'not silver and gold' (though we were not worth so much as brass), but 'the precious blood of Christ,' "And so I would preach to those who hear, and say 'There is life, there is pardon, there is right-eousness for you-nay, there is worth for you- and they are all Divine, besides their own integrity; and they are a free gift to the godless and lost. But I tell you more, and beg you tQ hasten on; this life, these riches, come to you

through His poverty and death; and God and God's love are revealed to you in this poverty, this death, even the death of the cross.'

"And if I were to tell you of forgiveness of sins through His mercy, and leave you there; if I preached to you the results flowing of necessity from the cross to each believer, but not the cross itself, or the cross itself as a judicial work, but not the Crucified One, I should leave you still to self, and I desire to save you from self, as well as from everlasting shame and contempt. But I preach Christ Jesus the Lord, the Son of God, the brightness of His glory and express image of Himself, on the cross made a curse and smitten there by the hand of God judicially for the guilty. - See the dreadfulness of that cross, and know who it is that was lifted up on it, and for whom, and to what end, as it is written.

Look steadily; mark, study, search into those unsearchable moral riches; and blessing after blessing will come to you, and so freely, from this one object, in which all truth and all love are alike declared, and in which you will learn to love, to worship and to obey, to abhor wrong, to forget yourself and think of Him, and to 'count all things but loss,' as the apostle says, not for the grace of your deliverance, but "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord."

Chapter Four - FAITH.

FAITH is a mystery to many, a stumbling-block to not a few. By some it seems to be regarded as the condition upon which God compounds with men who ought to have righteousness, but have it not: with others it is the last mite added to make up the price of our redemption. At times it appears like a new barrier set up between the soul and God, when the work of Christ had broken all the old barriers down; and not unfrequently it is represented as an operation, like the new birth itself, in which the sinner is a passive agent in the hands of God. There is the rationalist view of faith, making it merely the assent of the mind to truth demonstratively proved; there is the Romanist view of faith, which makes it a sort of good work of a mystical and spiritual kind; and again, there is what I may term the fatalist theory of faith, which regards it as a kind of grace imparted to the soul by God. But when we turn to Scripture all such subtleties and errors vanish like mists before the sun. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." What simplicity, and yet what reality and power are here! "Faith cometh by hearing," whether it be faith of the gospel, or of the news of some temporal calamity or good. There are no two ways of believing anything. And hearing comes - the true hearing - by the Word of God: not by reasonings founded on it, it may be rightly founded on it; not by "enticing words of man's wisdom," but by the Word of God. And here is where the difference lies, not in the character of the faith, but in the object of it. The sinner is brought into the presence of God. He hears God, he believes God, and he is blest with believing Abraham, and just on the same ground, for "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness."

In its first and simplest phase in Scripture, faith is the belief of a record or testimony; it is, secondly, belief in a person; and it has, lastly, the character of trust, which always points to what is future. To speak of trust as the only true phase of gospel faith, is wholly false and wrong. In fact, the word generally rendered "trust," is never used in this connection once in Scripture. It is etymologically "hope," and the element of hope invariably enters into it. In what is pre-eminently the gospel book of the Bible, it occurs but once, and in the sermons of the Acts we shall seek for it in vain. "We are saved by trust," is a statement at once true and scriptural, if only we understand salvation in its fullest sense, as yet to be made good to us in glory; but the salvation of our souls is not matter of trust, but of faith in its simplest form. The redemption of our souls is a fact to us, because we believe the record God has given of His Son, no less so is the redemption of our bodies, but it is because of our trust in God. As the apostle writes to Timothy, "We trust

in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." Trust springs from confidence in the person trusted, and that again depends on knowledge of the person confided in. In this sense, faith may be great or little, weak or strong " I write unto you, little children" (says the Apostle John), "because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Here is a testimony and a fact. Upon our state of soul may depend the realisation, the enjoyment of it, but this faith can admit of no degrees. But trust in God has as many degrees as there are saints on earth. Some believers could not trust Him for a single meal others can look to Him, without misgivings, to feed a thousand hungry mouths, or to convert a thousand godless sinners. Our faith in this sense, depends entirely on knowing God, and on communion with Him, the faith of the gospel comes by hearing Him.

At every pier along the new embankment of the Thames, there hangs a chain that reaches to the water's edge at its lowest ebb But for this, some poor creature, struggling with death, might drown with his very hand upon the pier. An appeal to perishing sinners to trust in Christ is like calling on a drowning wretch to climb the embankment wall. The glad tidings, the testimony of God concerning Christ, is the chain let down for the hand of faith to grasp. Once rescued, it is not the chain the river waif would trust for safety, but the rock beneath his feet; yet, but for that chain, the rock might have only mocked his struggles. And it is not the gospel message the ransomed sinner trusts in, but the living Christ of whom the gospel speaks; but yet it was the message that his faith at first laid hold upon, and by it he gained an eternal standing-ground upon the Rock of Ages.

He who truly hears the good news of Christ believes it just as the little child believes a mother's word. And none but such shall ever enter the kingdom. There is neither mystery nor virtue in the faith, in the one case any more than in the other ; the only difference is in the testimony itself. He who believes the gospel, receives a word that is nothing less than "the power of God unto salvation."

The case of Cornelius affords a striking example of this. "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, and prayed to God alway," it might well be asked, What did he lack? Yet to such an one the message came: "Send men to Joppa and call for Simon Peter, who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts xi. i3, Z4).

If, in fact, none can believe apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, the difficulty depends on no peculiarity in the faith itself. It is not a question of metaphysics, but of spiritual depravity and death. As far as the act of faith is concerned, the gospel is believed in the same way as the passing news of the passing hour. The hindrance lies in the apostasy of the natural heart of man. And, doubtless, the reason faith is made the turning point of the sinner's return to God is just because distrust was the turning point of his departure from Him. Disobedience was not the first step in Adam's fall; it was the last, and it followed disbelief.

Faith then in its simplest character is not trust, nor even faith in a person, but belief of a record. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of

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