FOURTH COURSE
OF
PRACTICAL SERMONS.

BY
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On the New Year.

This year thou shalt die
A FOURTH COURSE

OF

FAMILY SERMONS.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME,

PRACTICALLY INTELIGIBLE SOLELY UPON THE DOCTRINE OF A TRIUNE DISTINCTION OF PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD.

ST. JOHN VI. 66—69.

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

How striking is the opposite effect produced in different minds by the same truth! To some, the words of the Divine Saviour, of whom even his enemies testified, "Never man spake like this man,"* caused this effect: "They went back, and walked no more with

* John vii. 46.

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Him." And some could go to none other: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

This has always been the same in the teaching of the doctrines of the cross: "Some believe, and some believe not." The absolute denial of all human merit as any cause of man's justification; the necessity of an entire change of heart, and of personal sanctification, are a great offence: to some "a stumbling-block," to others "foolishness." We must be made teachable in God's way before we can be brought to learn; and, in learning the truths of the gospel, we must be made willing to bind pride and reason down to acknowledge the things which are above reason. The carnal mind is always enmity to "the things which are Jesus Christ's;" for they are "spiritual things," and therefore can only be "spiritually discerned." This is the spirit of all who will learn wisdom in the school of Christ; "I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned child."*

It was not this spirit which dwelt in the disciples, who "went back, and walked no more with" Christ. What Christ had spoken offended them; and they cared not to ask Him any more. They rejected their opportunity.

* Psalm cxxxi. 3.
In the instructions which Christ gave to these disciples, there were several things to which they were opposed. The whole course of reasoning was intended to show the supreme importance of being brought to Christ. To this end, our Lord preached first, deadness to the world: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."* He then told them, that faith in Him must be the foundation of all their deeds: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent:"† and, for their encouragement, added, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst:"‡ "and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."§ Our blessed Lord progressively illustrated all this, and so showed Himself willing to have taught them fully. Much of what He spake they called "a hard saying: who can hear it?" But when He proceeded in His doctrine, and had repeated His solemn assurance, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father," it is immediately added, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

* Ver. 27. † Ver. 29. ‡ Ver. 35. § Ver 37.
advantage of that knowledge which, in His personal ministry, He was at all times ready to have communicated fully to those who might have received it at His mouth. What He then taught, when these disciples were offended with Him, and forsook Him, was a portion only of the whole truth. They were unwilling to hear more. The whole consists of that mysterious doctrine which shows that each Person in the Godhead equally administers to the salvation of the soul. And if, as I shall endeavour to show, Holy Scripture makes this plain and express, it will prove how essential it is that our faith be right: faith, I mean, in regard to the stupendous plan of our redemption, in the scripture doctrine of a Trinity in Unity, Three Persons in One God.

The meritorious ground of our acceptance is stated, in the most unqualified terms, to be in Christ alone. His own words were these: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."* This truth is seen throughout the Word of God: "To Him give all the prophets witness."†

We are instructed by the type divinely ordered to be sacrificed in the Old Testament, and by the clear doctrine of Christ crucified,

* Ch. xiv. 6. † Acts x. 43.
The Christian Scheme of the Trinity.

preached unto us in the New Testament, as the great antitype of all sacrifices, that "without shedding of blood is no remission."*

Of the types themselves we are also told, that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."† It was for the thoughtful Israelite always to look beyond the type: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul?"‡ "Sacrifices which can never take away sins.".§ The only atoning blood "is the blood of the Testament, which God hath enjoined."|| "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us:"¶ "The blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God."** This is the scripture doctrine of Christ the Son being the sole propitiation: for this, "search the Scriptures," and you will find them "witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Christ should suffer;"†† His blood he offered up, "to finish the trans-

* Heb. ix. 22.  † Ch. x. 4.  ‡ Mic. vi. 7.  § Heb. x. 11.  || Ch. ix. 20  ¶ Ver. 12.  ** Ver. 14.  †† Acts xxvi. 22, 23.
gression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."* When Christ, therefore, declared, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," He asserted the merit and the fulness of His redemption of our souls: He gave spiritual food and nourishment "to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood."† Thus it is taught, that "no man cometh unto the Father but by" Christ.

In another part of the same chapter from which the text is taken, Christ also declares, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."‡ Here are exhibited the love and power of the Father in the great work of redemption. And this truth was supported by our blessed Lord in the appeal to their own scriptures: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."§

Hence we are taught, that the Father loveth us; that our salvation is also in the Father equally with the Son: for no man can go to the Son except the Father draw him. What a source of joy and gratitude is here, in the scripture assurance of the interest felt and

Dan, ix. 24. † Acts xx. 26. ‡ Ver. 44. §1b. 45.
manifested for sinners' souls in the great Father of the universe! "In this," surely, "was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."* It is the Redeemer's especial instruction, that we thus ascribe the mercies of our redemption equally to the Father and to the Son. For He draws the soul to Christ, and so shows a heavenly Father's love, that gracious Father "who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."†

We have, then, two distinct propositions in reference to the meritorious cause of our justification through a Redeemer: each separately ascribes our salvation to the Son, but only through the intervention of the Father. Christ positively declares, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me;" but also declares, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw Him."

If we keep these two distinct assertions in our view, and look into the word of God to

* 1 John iv. 4.  
† Eph. ii. 4, 5, 7.
see how the Father draws souls to Christ, we shall see that it is solely by the power of the Third Person in the sacred Trinity.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminds them of what they had been: "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." He then shows them by whose converting power it was that they had been brought to better things: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed," denies Christ, or "crucifies the Son of God afresh," by his sins; "and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."* He then sets forth the gifts and graces in the believer's soul, and expressly ascribes them all to the immediate power of the Third Person: "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."† This same truth is also taught by Christ himself: his words are peculiarly forcible: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing:" and, to identify Himself with this Giver of all good, He directly adds, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."‡ This, too, was the conviction strong upon the souls

* 1 Cor. xii 2, 3.  † Ver. 11.  ‡ John vi. 63.
of the apostles: "Our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." *

There is indeed much said in scripture upon this great and essential truth: and the holy apostle sums up the believer’s privileges and the believer’s caution in this memorable saying: "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." † Hence we arrive at a third conclusion; that every believer’s final salvation shall be accomplished by the third person in the adorable trinity equally with the other two. This is the only mode of deducing a spiritual benefit from "the mystery of godliness." All other views perplex the soul, and lead to confusion in the understanding, to wrong desires and feelings in the heart, and to unscriptural conduct in the life. But this view makes the revelation of God to our finite understanding consistent with itself: it puts the believer into an experimental possession of the great scripture truth; for it gives him "the witness in himself" to this beautiful summary of the Christian scheme: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which

* 2 Cor. iii. 6. † Eph. iv. 30.
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we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” *

With this key to the great mystery of our Christian faith, we have the scheme of salvation made as plain and practical as we need, and as the nature of a revelation from infinite to finite will allow. The humble-minded Christian can quite rest upon it. From this he learns the same lesson which in another manner, but under the guidance of the same Spirit, was learnt by the humble-minded Jew converted to the faith of Christ: “Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” † To the converted Jew, and to the believing Christian, the conclusion is one: each comes to the Father through Christ; each is brought through the same principle of faith, the special gift of the Holy Ghost.

* Tit. iii. 4—7. † Gal. iii. 23—26.
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It seems a wonderful providence in the administration of divine truth, that three such texts should be found as those which we have now separately considered. Look at them together: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Put this extraordinary combination of scriptural truth together, and it can no longer appear to any mind at all to be convinced by Scripture truth, that right views of the Christian doctrine of a trinity of persons in the Godhead is unimportant. Upon each person Scripture shows that our salvation hangs. And which of the Eternal Three, as now exhibited in their separate office of redeeming love, shall man put aside? "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with" us "all."*

But how strange in opposition to revealed truth are the corrupt ways of the human soul. No sooner had the blessed Jesus proclaimed His own mercy and His heavenly Father's love in the salvation of sinners, than the sacred historian draws the sad result: "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." But some few

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
remained. In the worst of times there has always been "a little flock" around the person of our Lord, who from their heart could speak unto Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him."* That eye which penetrated the hearts of those who stood around His person, and shewed that "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man,"† that all-seeing eye at a single glance discerns us: at this moment looks into the deepest recesses of each of our souls: "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."‡ To such a scrutiny what do our own consciences reply? We are separated in the sight of "that God with whom we have to do:" none, perhaps, more separated from that God, than those who may be tempted to deny the need of any distinctions at all. But it is for God alone to assure us that His word is already past upon the fact: "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel."|| And from the beginning to the end of time, His omniscience allots the separate proportions: amid the thousands

* John vi. 64.  † Ch. ii. 24, 25.  ‡ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.  || Rom. ix. 6.
and tens of thousands of outward worshippers, 
He only can separate the good from the evil: 
"Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, 
all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, 
and every mouth which hath not kissed him."* 
He only can separate the evil from the good; 
"discern between the righteous and the wick-
ed, between him that serveth God, and him 
that serveth Him not."† 
To you, my brethren, who are made willing 
to receive that truth from the sacred word of 
Christ, at the hearing whereof: "many of His 
disciples went back, and walked no more with 
Him," I would speak much, did time permit; 
but I must briefly refer you to your high pri-
vileges, and from them to your Christian 
duties. Christ has told you of the Father's 
love towards those who believe in Him: "For 
the Father Himself loveth you, because ye 
have loved me, and have believed that I came 
out from God."‡ "My Father who gave them 
me, is greater than all: and none is able to 
pluck them out of my Father's hands."|| 

Of Himself, on your behalf, He proclaims 
the same thing: "I and my Father are one. 
My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, 
and they follow me: and I give unto them 
eternal life; and they shall never perish, nei-

* 1 Kings xix. 18. † Mal. iii. 18. 
‡ Pet. xvi. 27. || Ch. x. 29.
ther shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* And what was to be the practical
effect upon the soul in the revelation of this
mystery? "That all men should honour the
Son, even as they honour the Father."† "He
is antichrist that denieth the Father and the
Son."‡

Of the Holy Spirit Christ also speaks as of
your equal benefactor in the great matter of
your soul's salvation: "The Comforter, which
is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send
in my name, He shall teach you all things;"
"the Spirit of truth—will guide you into all
truth: for He shall receive of mine, and shall
shew it unto you."§ These are your privileges
in the love of the eternal three in one: "God
sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made
under the law, to redeem them that were un-
der the law, that we might receive the adoption
of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath
sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your
hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou
art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son,
then an heir of God through Christ."¶ Upon
these privileges in Christ are founded the
knowledge and the performance of your pro-
per duties. "They that are Christ's have
crucified the flesh with the affections and

* Pet. xvi. 30. 27. 28. † Ch. v. 23. ‡ 1 John ii. 22.
|| Ch. xiv. 26. § Ch. xvi. 13, 14. ¶¶ Gal. iv. 4—7.
lusts.”* They are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”† Understand rightly your privileges in the cross of Christ crucified, and you will not be unmindful of your allegiance to Christ glorified. “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged,”‡ and you will not cease to remember, in regard to your Christian duties, the strong command: “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”|| “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”§

To you, my brethren, who partake of the same spirit with those who “went back and walked no more with” Christ, I can say nothing so strong as that which is implied in Peter’s question, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” Put this question to your own hearts. To something, perhaps, you do go in the way of salvation chosen by yourself, and sanctioned and encouraged by the world. But of Christ’s salvation you think but little save only to condemn and be offended with those who endeavour to win you over to embrace it. When

* Gal. v. 24.  † Eph. ii. 10.  ‡ Isa. li. 1.  
|| Gal. v. 1.  § 2 Cor. iii. 17.
Christ told these same truths to the Jews, they were equally offended at the hearing of them, and yet boasted of their own way; declared openly that God was their Father. And yet our Lord showed them that if they received not the true doctrines of His gospel into their hearts, and exhibited them in their lives, they "did the deeds of their father the devil."
"If," said Christ, "God were your Father, ye would love me."* And he showed them their real condition: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."† They had despised and resisted it. "And because," He added, "I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."‡ It is "the truth" which is always unpalatable to the world: mixed truth, qualified truth, compromising truth, the world will admit: but "the truth as it is in Jesus," it cannot hear.
Let me urge this consideration upon you who evidently live opposed to the pure and simple doctrines of the cross: opposed to them, because in your present state and manner of life they are opposed to you. True doctrines are the only right and effectual foundation of true holiness. Deprive Christianity of its doctrines, and it is reduced to a vain thing; a shadow without substance, a body without spirit: "For whatsoever is born of God over-
cometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."* 
"Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."†

Upon no other ground can evidence be given that faith is right; and upon no other ground can it be made to appear that the life is holy. If you are content to continue as you are, opposed to the real truths of a religion which must first touch the heart before it can be manifested in the life, you will meet with much encouragement to do so; and much opposition against your coming to better views. But both the opposition and the encouragement will be from any thing but friends; they will be urged by your enemies alone: the world from without, Satan and your own evil hearts from within.

If, on the other hand, the gracious calls and providence of God be at length hearkened to, and you are brought, before it be too late, to mortify pride, and to turn a willing ear to the truth, "the mystery of godliness" will soon cease to be otherwise than most welcome to your soul. You will be prepared to expect mystery in a divine revelation; but no mystery will then so pain and surprise you as the mystery of sin. You will then be led to the reception of that which shall cause you to

* 1 John v. 4. † Ch. iii. 3.
triumph over doubt and difficulty; and the Saviour's promise shall be fulfilled on your behalf: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." * Holier feelings and happier ways will then more and more be yours, and you shall find your souls set free by a great deliverance. You will give your personal testimony to what the children of God are all brought to acknowledge: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him: for He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." † May His gracious Spirit bring you to Himself; to the real belief of that revelation of Himself in Christ's blessed gospel, "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." ‡ "For so," but so only, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." ‖

* John vii. 17. † Ps. ciii. 13, 14.
‡ 2 Pet. i. 19. ‖ Ver. 11.
ST. PAUL'S DETERMINATION TO KNOW NOTHING BUT CHRIST.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Such was this holy apostle's firm determination in the commission which had been entrusted to him of God; and such, too, must be ours in the reception of that gospel which he preached. It will be of great importance, therefore, that we have right and clear views upon a point of so much magnitude; that we may thoroughly understand what is intended by knowing nothing but Christ.

Let us, then, first consider what St. Paul meant in his application of this determination to himself. He could not mean that, among his Corinthian converts, he would literally never speak or write to them upon any other subject than Christ. For his two epistles to them are full of other things: he reproves, he praises, he instructs, he warns, he encourages...
them continually, according as a great variety of matter is suggested to his mind by the Holy Spirit, upon which to make known to them the will of God. In his personal ministry among them he did the same thing; and both while he was present and when he was absent, he "shunned not to declare unto them all the counsel of God." In delivering his faithful message he showed to the Corinthian church, as he showed to all the churches, that he was "pure from the blood of all men."* His own testimony concerning himself herein was this: "We have wronged no man; we have corrupted no man; we have defrauded no man."† "In every city" and in every place he had shown by his whole ministry among them, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."‡ It could not be, therefore, that this apostle meant, by the expression in the text, that all his preaching, all his writing, all his instruction, should be confined literally to the one only subject of Jesus Christ. For there is not a point in which the mind can be properly interested in regard to religious truth,

* Acts xx. 26, 27. † 2 Cor. vii. 2. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.
human relationship, personal cares, duties and expectations, which is not treated of, illustrated and enforced in its good, or forbidden in its evil consequences, in the ministry of this holy man. In his eagerness to manifest the extent of his commission, and the ardency of his zeal, it was his constant desire thus declared to the Church at Corinth: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you."* And again: "For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things."†

We shall now better understand the right meaning of this holy apostle in the text, by looking to the reason which seems to have led him to make the determination, "not to know any thing among" them, "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The Corinthian Church was beginning to be under the influence of false teachers; divisions had already sprung up in it; and some who knew but little or nothing of what the gospel was, were endeavouring to exalt themselves in the opinion and confidence of the Church, by lowering St. Paul's ministry among them. To this end they had recourse to the philosophy and studied artificial eloquence of the day, and so

* 2 Cor. xii. 15.  † Ch. xi. 5, 6.
St. Paul's Determination to

strove to entice the Christians away from the simplicity of gospel truth, in which they had, from the first, been taught by the apostle. He, on the other hand, disdained all such aid: the gospel, he knew, had its own force in itself, and in the Spirit of Christ accompanying it. His bold testimony of what the gospel is, apart from all help from such human means as these, was this: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." * He wanted no art of human eloquence, no mixture of Greek philosophy to recommend his plain preaching of the doctrines of the cross: he tells the Corinthians at once, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." † "We have this treasure," ("the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," ‡) "in earthen vessels," human instrumentality, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." ‖ Not only does he not seek to recommend the gospel by such arts as the false teachers were then having recourse

* Rom. i. 16. † Ch. ii. 4, 5. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 6. ‖ Ver. 7.
to, but he disavows them altogether: he knew that the gospel in itself contained all things necessary for the conversion of the sinner, the guidance of the saint, human wants in life, divine consolation in death, and most glorious things after death. He knew that this blessed gospel needed not such recommendations as those false teachers made use of. They had not received "the truth as it is in Jesus," and therefore their human preaching was not to magnify Christ, but to disparage the ministry of St. Paul. Such views the apostle rejects altogether: he at once tells the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech," (the studied, ornamented figures of Grecian eloquence,) "or of wisdom," (man's folly termed human philosophy,) "declaring unto you the testimony of God." And then immediately declares, in the words of the text, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." It was in the same view of meeting the evil attempted by some false teachers in the church of the Galatians, that he again proclaims the same things. "As many," saith he, "as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. They—desire to have you cir-
cumcised, that they may glory in your flesh."

The holy apostle, on the other hand, knew that the gospel was to be preached free and disencumbered of all the mere rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law; therefore he tells them plainly, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."† And so, in warning the Philippians against their false teachers, still desirous of mixing the signs and ceremonies of the law with the truth and simplicity of the gospel, he speaks of his own manifold privileges under the law in order to show what was the precise value which he put upon them now that the gospel was come, and now that he had that gospel given to him to preach. "We," he saith, "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.—Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss

* Ch. vi. 12, 13.  † Ver. 14.
for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him.”*

From these passages thus illustrating the text before us, St. Paul has himself defined what he intended in the determination to know nothing but Christ. It was to preach the gospel in its own strength and purity; it was to preach it apart from all intermixture of heathen philosophy, and Jewish signs and ceremonies; it was to preach it as a system from God, and not as dependent upon human help, and personal privileges.

It is from misunderstanding this passage of Holy Writ, which the apostle thus applies to himself, that many have been led to a wrong interpretation of it as applicable to themselves. Some, ardent in love to the person of their Lord and Saviour, have deemed that, though Christ is all in all, no other thing should be named or treated of, in the management of religious truth, than the person and offices of Christ. Hence they seem to forget what man is, what this world is wherein man is to be tried for eternity, and what Satan is doing in this world, with all his varied ways and instruments of temptation for man’s everlasting

* Ch. iii. 3—9.
ruin. But this is not the right way of regarding scripture truth. We must look to the Word of God as a whole, and must not mutilate it in any of its parts. So regarding it, we shall find that, as a foundation of hope under every fear, as a rule of life in all duties, as a refuge to flee unto in all dangers, the whole Bible is full of Christ. He is shown to us, first, as having made the world; for St. John says, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."* Then as having redeemed the world; for it was the Baptist's great testimony of Him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."† Then as affording means of sanctification through the gift of the Holy Ghost; for in Scripture it is addressed unto Him thus: "Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."‡ And, lastly, as the future judge of men and angels: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."§ Thus, in our restored character related to Christ, as unto Him

* John i. 3. † Ver. 29. ‡ Psalm lxviii. 18. § Ib. v. 22, 23.
through whom we were created, by whom we have been redeemed, through whom we can be sanctified, by whom we shall at last be judged, we may truly say, and ought to feel, that the whole Bible, teaching unto us doctrine, laying down for us precept and instruction in righteousness, providing for us in our wants, comforting us in our sorrows, regarding us in our relationships to earth and to each other, and providing for us the hope of eternal life in heaven, with "the spirits of just men made perfect;" that the whole Bible is full of Christ. In this way, therefore, the Christian will be brought to this conclusion; and, in reference to his condition, his duties, his pains and pleasures, his hopes and fears, will feel his privilege, and understand all that is implied in his firm resolve: "I determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

When we read thus the word of God, we read it in its true and proper character, of a revelation of love from God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Unless Christ be thus preached unto us, what will it profit us? We shall follow a hope without foundation: we shall be as the Israelites, who having "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteous-
ness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God:”* we shall live without right motives, and die without redemption: “for,” as scripture testifies, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”†

How strongly illustrative of this construction of the bearing of all our duties, is the principle given by our Lord Himself, upon which the process of the last judgment will be carried on. The motive and end of our duties must be Christ: “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”‡ “For,” as our Lord speaks in another place, “whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward.”§

From all that I have now stated in the way of scriptural illustration of the zeal as used by the holy apostle in reference to himself; and as that very same text now applies to us, this simple question remains for me, my brethren, to put, and for your own conscience to answer: Have you “so learned Christ?”

* Rom. x. 3.  † Ver. 4.
‡ Matt. xxv. 35, 36.  § Mark ix. 41.
Some there are who have been led, in conviction of sin, and of their utter ruin in themselves, to seek their deliverance taught in the doctrines of grace, and so have joined themselves unto the Lord.” Is it your desire, my brethren, to know nothing, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified?” In much prayer then seek to be instructed by the Spirit of Christ, to discern, in life as in doctrine, “the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Read Christ in all the revelation of God’s Word, as “the author and finisher of your faith.” Exhibit Christ in your various duties and relationships, so piously, holily, and unblameably in love, that all may “take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus.” The work of grace, remember, must go on in your soul; must go on, not as a ground of confidence, but as an evidence of faith: and look to faith itself as an evidence, and not as the ground, of your acceptance “in the Beloved.” Do what Satan will tempt you not to do: look stedfastly at Christ, and from Christ, to your duties. Think it no detraction from His merits, nothing taking away from the ascription of the freeness of grace unto Him alone, that you keep a most watchful eye over all your relative obligations. It is you only, and such as you, who are enabled, as well as commanded, to “adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.” Consider how comprehensive
are those words, "in all things." You are parents; be Christian parents. You are masters and mistresses; be Christian heads to Christian households. You are sons and daughters, servants and dependants: the Christian bond is upon you in these to serve Christ. You are rich; let Christ be glorified in the distribution of your riches. You are poor; let Christ be glorified in the endurance of your poverty. You are young, or in health; let Christ have the first-fruits of his own gift. You are old, or in sickness; be Christ the staff of your age; the hope in your declining health Christ. You live now, and soon must you die. The believer's trust herein is Christ; "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."* Upon this only right principle of your holy calling, live unto Christ. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without," (who know not the Lord,) "redeeming the time." To them, especially, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man;"† that so, "speaking the truth in love," ye "may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."‡

*Rom. xiv. 7, 8. †Col. iv. 5, 6. ‡Eph. iv. 15.
Among those whose hearts the Lord hath opened to join with you in magnifying His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus your Lord, exercise Christian love, increase each other's knowledge, pity and resent not each other's remaining infirmities: in this, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* This spirit and this rule are the scriptural mark of the true believer: "Then," saith the prophet, "they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name."† Thus loving, serving, and committing the keeping of your souls unto this gracious Saviour, you form your principle, and you show forth its proper character, you yield forth its best fruits; for so you "determine not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

But there are many among you who "know not the Lord." No such determination has yet been made by you, my brethren, as that which we have now been considering. And how should it? How can you, who as yet live in and for this present world, make a determination which marks the heart and lives of those only who are not of this world,

* Gal. vi. 2.     † Mal. iii. 16.
of those who are the people of God? While you remain in ignorance of Christ, it is not to be looked for that you should make His cross the standard by which to measure all your knowledge. We none of us know Christ before we have been brought to know ourselves: and this first lesson you have yet to learn.

If, as it frequently happens, many of you have that knowledge of religion which shall cause you, as the preaching of the Baptist caused Herod, to "to do many things," you substitute what little you know, and what still less you do, for the true gospel of Jesus Christ. If, as it also frequently happens, many of you have no knowledge of religion beyond what you hear, but understand not, some stated outward observances which religion enjoins, you are far distant from the determination made by the apostle in the text. And why in either of your cases is this? Because you know not the plague of your own hearts: you consider not your present condition of being: you regard not, to any really profitable purpose, what shall be hereafter. In proof of this, look at the picture drawn in scripture of the heart of every man born into this world: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* "The imagi-

* Jer. xvii. 9.
nation of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”*

“Who,” asks Job, “can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” † “Behold,” saith David, in his right knowledge of the human heart, since man fell from original righteousness, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” ‡ When Christ was upon earth, it is testified of the intimate knowledge which He possessed in Himself of the secrets of all hearts, that “He knew what was in man:” and His own words were these: “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” § In your real ignorance of these truths, you impute these sayings to those whom you deem sinners of the Gentiles, avowing and practising sin with a high hand against the Lord. But the scripture tells you expressly, that it is the natural condition of every one of us. Read the first three chapters of St. Paul’s epistle to the Romans, reasoning upon the ground of the natural corruption of Jew and Gentile, in proof of the necessity of “the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ,” and you will there have the opportunity of seeing the argument at full, which shows in all of us “an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” ||

* Jer. viii. 21. † Jer. xiv. 4. ‡ Psalm li. 5.
§ Matt. xv. 9. || Heb. iii. 12.

FOURTH COURSE.
Thus ignorant, how can you properly consider your present condition of being? You know that sin and evil are everywhere; and perhaps, as far as sin in your fellow-creatures, no one complains more of it than yourself. But you do not, at least in that sense which would bring you to the holy apostle's determination in the text, you do not class yourself in the view of what scripture asserts: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* And if you acknowledge some sins in your heart and life, as causing you to be less perfect than you ought to be, you see not what sin is, nor understand the condition in which all sin places you, when God's solemn word hath declared, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."† You know not that yours ought to be the cry. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"‡

In addition to this ignorance of your heart, and your not considering the present condition of your being, you regard not, to any really profitable purpose, what shall be hereafter. As a proof hereof, take this simple statement of scripture truth. Sin is the transgression of the law. The punishment of sin is death, "the second death" in hell. You have transgressed the law, and have therefore incurred the penalty. Has the question put for

* Rom. iii. 23. † Ezek. ‡ Rom. vii. 24.
you in Scripture ever yet been profitably asked of your own heart: "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Your ignorance and your present condition show that it never has been.

Then what remains? Ignorant and thoughtless will you perish thus? Why did the apostle reason with us all upon these very grounds? Why but for the very purpose of showing to such as you in particular, who in a Christian land are perishing through the lack of Christian knowledge, that "the law," the pure and holy law of an all-holy God, the sacrificial and ceremonial law of a gracious and most condescending heavenly Father, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."* "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."†

Look, then, to the whole question in its scriptural bearing. Consider what we all are by nature; how, by the Spirit alone, we can be changed from that state; how, without that change we all live under the power of sin; and how, without a true knowledge of Christ, we all die under the condemnation of sin; and remember what this means, "De-

*Gal. iii. 24. †Ver. 22.
part ye cursed.” Consider these things, and then say whether it was too much for the apostle to determine for himself, “not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Give this thought its due consideration; and, before this hour shall pass over you, may God give you grace to make this same determination yourself.
THE BELIEVER'S INTEREST IN CHRIST.

1 ST. PET. II. 7, 8.

"Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even unto them which stumble at the Word; whereunto also they were appointed."

St. Peter here speaks of Christ, our heavenly Father's "unspeakable gift" to men. The passage is addressed to the believer; but it heavily warns the unbeliever. The imagery made use of is frequent in the Word of God; and, in virtue of the noble edifice of the temple at Jerusalem, would be familiar and most welcome to the Jew, newly converted to the gospel. The apostle makes this outward provision of the law illustrative of the benefit of Christ: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as
lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* When imagery like this was put before the converted Jews, how agreeable to their minds would be the long-loved associations connected with their temple service! They would remember their songs of Zion: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts: my soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."† They would remember how the thought of Jerusalem comforted Daniel, a "man greatly beloved:" how, when persecuted in his captivity, "he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."‡ They would return to the scenes of their own captivity, when they mourned over their temple taken from them: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."§ How

* 1 Pet. v. 4, 5.  
† Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2.  
‡ Dan. vi. 10.  
§ Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 4—6.
true is it, in experience, that many of our purest earthly joys are the associated feelings of past remembrances! and these should not be dissevered from religion.

Well, therefore, did the holy apostle illustrate the beauty and the unity of Christian faith and worship by the temple services. It was a powerful way of assuring believers "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."†

The text may be divided into three parts: first, the assertion of the unspeakable value of Christ: secondly, the description of those to whom it is valuable: and, thirdly, a most fearful warning for those who value Him not.

May that gracious Spirit which taught the holy apostle to write these things for our learning, prepare our hearts to receive them; so that this opportunity may not pass over us without its fruit.

And first, the inestimable value of Christ: "He is precious." The full extent of "the unspeakable gift" of Christ can never be known in this life. It involves a mystery of mercy and ineffable goodness, which exceeds all our understanding. It is far too big for human con-

* 2 Cor. v. 1.  † Heb. xi. 10.
ception. The very manner in which it is spoken of in the word of God, shows how far short of its whole character we must be prepared to fall, while we continue under "the burden of the flesh." It is called "the end of our faith," even the salvation of our souls: of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; things which are now reported by them that have preached the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; "which things the angels desire to look into."* "Toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be."† And when the prophet Isaiah speaks of Christ, it is in the same spirit: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation."‡ In every part of the word of God it is the same. Christ is shown to us in His own infinite perfections, as "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."§ "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."|| And there—

* 1 Pet. i. 9—12.  † Exod. xxv. 20.  ‡ Exod. xxviii. 16.  § Eph. i. 23.  || Col. i. 19.
fore, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."* We cannot, then, have adequate conceptions of all that is intended by the simple declaration, that "Christ is precious." But perhaps it is capable of a sufficient degree of illustration. Consider the revealed truth of what man was; the experienced fact of what he is; the merciful assurance in the gospel covenant, through Christ, of what he may be.

Once, my brethren, we lived in our great original, the representative of our race, amid the trees and flowers of Eden, and walked in sweet communion with veiled but present Deity, in native innocence and unmixed blessedness in the Paradise of God. This was the gift of our great Emmanuel: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:" "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made."† To man in Paradise was not Christ "precious?"

Now we are changed from the image of God into the image of fallen man: for "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;" but "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image."‡ But

* Col. ii. 9. † John i. 3. Col. i. 16. ‡ Gen. v. 1. 3.
Christ by his Spirit renews the soul, and it becomes new-born unto God, and the image of God returns. His intercession is accepted: "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."* When, in the confidence of the Saviour's prayer, a sinner converted from his sins may exclaim, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me,"† is not Christ "precious?"

Here, under the fallen condition of the soul, we live amid pain, disease, and sin: but Christ "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;"‡ for us He endured the bitterness of His Father's wrath; for us He experienced a temporary dereliction of His Father's consolation, and confessed the intenseness of His agony in—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" To each of us He calls from the sufferings of His cross—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."|| Thus humbled, forsaken, dying, for our sins, is not Christ "precious?"

Thus we see the Lord "Jesus made a little lower than the angels, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man."§

* John xvii. 21. 23. † Gal. ii. 20. ‡ Is. liii. 4.
|| Lam. i. 12. § Heb. ii. 9.
Man also must himself die; for "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." *
But it shall be quickened: "This corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." † "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." ‡ Sin, which is "the sting of death," is answered for; death is conquered; the grave is burst; and an eternal victory won: the everlasting doors of heaven shall be open, and the gates of hell shall be for ever closed, and all in the triumphant love of Christ "in the greatness of His strength." || Is not Christ "precious?"

Yes, my brethren, but not to all: to the eyes of many still "He hath no form nor comeliness; and if they think they "see Him," they seem to confess, "there is no beauty that we should desire Him." § "He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." ¶ Not to all, therefore, but "unto you, which believe, He is precious."

This was our second head.

Belief in religion is, as to its operating principle, as any other belief. It is confidence; it is trust. What do any of us believe in, of a personal and practical application, unless we deem it valuable in its

* 1 Cor. xv. 36. † Ver. 54. ‡ Ver. 26.
|| Is. lxiii. 1. § Is. liii. 2. ¶ Ver. 3.
measure, for the end which we look after? Why does the tradesman value his merchandise but that he expects profit from it? Why are the toils of the husbandman endured but from the hope of an expected harvest? Why does the misanthrope invert the ordinary expectations of the human heart, and hate his fellows, but from his belief of their unprofitableness to himself? Why does the selfish man so value self, but that self is his only good? Why does the man of pleasure make a willing offering of time, energy, health and fortune, in the pursuit of pleasure, but from real belief that his own valued good shall be found therein? And so in all worldly strivings.

Now we cannot err in the expectation that it will be the same in spiritual things. Those who would value spiritual things, from a belief that their supreme good is in them only to be found, will value Christ. To such alone is Christ "precious:" "to you which believe." For you, my brethren, know your wants; and you also know your remedy. "It is an evil time:" and there are many adversaries stirred up round about us, warring against your souls. But hearken to the Shepherd's voice. "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein
is no water. Turn you to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope."* "Your life is hid with Christ in God." To you, therefore, upon the view of your wants and weaknesses, Christ "is precious."

You have felt, still feel, the burden of sin. But you have been led to know all that was intended in the father of the faithful's confidence: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering."† The Spirit hath brought you to believe that "Messiah" hath been "cut off, but not for Himself."‡ You have understood the word. "And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then He shall answer, those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts:—and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones:—they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."|| These things, my brethren, you believe: to you Christ "is precious."

But you have contentions still: perhaps "through much tribulation entering the kingdom of God:" "without were fightings, within

were fears."* In experience you learn the believer’s conviction: “We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”† But you believe in God: that “God was in Christ.” You believe, therefore, that “the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, destroy them. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?”‡ To you Christ “is precious.”

You look upon the world around you, and see that it lieth in wickedness: that you live amid sin and misery. They “watch for iniquity;” they “make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.”|| But you have a refuge at hand. You can say, with the apostle, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”§

You can look to the faithful record of the Saviour’s words: “Let not your heart be

* 2 Cor. vii. 5. † Eph. vi. 12. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 27. 29.  
|| Is. xxix. 20, 21. § 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.
troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.”* “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”† This is your consolation. To you, then, Christ “is precious.”

And what shall be the fruit of these your Christian privileges in Christ? Take one short summary, full nevertheless and altogether practical: it is “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.”‡ This is the expected fruit of your covenant privileges in Christ: “Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom,” as the holy apostle tells us all, “we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”||

But the third head of the subject before us brings a sad and painful discrimination: Christ is not precious to all. “Who hath believed in our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”§ Many still reject the counsel of God against themselves; count

* John xiv. 1. † Ver. 27.
‡ Col. i. 10, 11. || Ver. 28. § Is. liii. 1.
The Believer's Interest in Christ.

the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and so put Christ to open shame: many turn away from the Lord our righteousness, and fulfil the ancient prophecy: "A worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people."* To those who persevere in despising Him, the latter words of the text awfully apply: "even unto them which stumble at the word, whereunto also they were appointed." It is the case of the finally impenitent; not those whom God hath made so; but who, like Pharaoh, have first hardened their own heart, and then God hath withdrawn His Spirit from them for ever. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."† "Long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."‡ But if the sinner set his face against the Lord, and harden himself in his own iniquity, upon that man "the day of the Lord will come, the day of His fierce wrath:" a day wherein it shall be seen how "God," in their day of grace, "endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted," by their own sins, "to destruction."|| Beware how you charge God foolishly in a wrong view of such awful passages as these. Beware of "an evil

* Ps. xxii. 6. † 1 Thess. 9.
‡ 2 Pet. iii. 9. || Rom. ix. 22.
heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."* "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" † "Of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." ‡ Say not that, if you perish, you perish by the previous appointment of God. Sin loved and persevered in is the sole cause of eternal destruction: for God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. But when the sinner hath hardened himself against all the invitations to mercy, then, and then only, shall it be the time of judgment: "For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work;" ‖ "for He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." §

It was the condemnation of unbelievers in the first age of the gospel from the inspired apostle: "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness:" ¶ Two divisions, my brethren, which include all unbelievers, of all ages and in every condition

* Heb. † Rom. ii. 4. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 4. ‖ Is. xxviii. 21. § Lam. iii. 33. ¶ 1 Cor. i. 22, 23.

FOURTH COURSE.
of life. Some of you whom God's word regards as those to whom Christ is not precious, because you believe not, have still an outward show of religion in this Christian land. You seem to "require a sign." And some of you treat all seriousness in religion with professed enmity and contempt: "Unto the Greeks foolishness." And yet you have credit in this Christian land of believing the gospel. In its evidences, as a revealed truth, you may believe that the argument, which avowed and daring infidels have brought against it, fails. This is the extent of your creed. It begins and ends with the understanding. And external evidence is quite within the grasp of the natural power of the mind.

But real faith, that faith which brings the true believer to the cross of Christ, and from his heart to acknowledge Christ, (for in his heart the feels that to him Christ "is precious," that faith is not a barren faith: it is a "faith which worketh by love." Examine what are the fruits of yours; for the Saviour says expressively, "By their fruits ye shall know them."* Some of you act the part of Herod at the preaching of the Baptist: "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard

* Matt. vii. 16.
him gladly.”* Yet Herod murdered the Baptist. So of this same Herod, “When” he “saw Jesus he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him.”† And yet could this same “Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.”‡

Some of you, with Felix, feel the awakening, but resist the converting power of the word: “He sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”|| Thus you also resolve.

But some make no resolutions. Bound in the chains of sin and worldly pleasure, as are the spirits of darkness with their eternal bonds in the nethermost hell, you, with them only “believe and tremble.” While, on the contrary, some hear with unmoved indifference; and with Gallio of old, “care for none of those things.” It is the very case which touched the soul of the mourning prophet: “O Lord, they have refused to receive correction: they

have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.”

Thus you believe not, and therefore to you Christ is not, cannot be “precious.” But a period must arrive, (O how soon will it arrive to some of you!) when these things shall appear as they are in themselves. Your course will be interrupted, and you will learn in mercy, or in final condemnation, that your present faith is vain. True faith, though it may begin in the understanding, never rests there. It is in the heart; deep, fixed, operative. It is of kindred spirit with the word: “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword.”

Whence is it, then, that not believing with this faith, to you Christ is not precious? Is He less powerful to save, less inclined to love you than others? Is His arm straitened that He cannot save? No, my brethren, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” But “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” It is His constant complaint against you: “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” Christ cannot reign in that heart wherein Satan and this world are already enthroned. You discern

* Jer. v. 3.
not "spiritual things;" for they can only be "spiritually discerned:" and "the carnal mind is" always "enmity against God."

Hear, then, your case. It is legibly set forth to you; pictured in that of those who follow the path that leadeth to destruction. Anticipate the termination of that broad and crowded way. Then you must be convinced: but then it will be too late. The evil day will be come; and the remembrance of past mercies and opportunities will bring a bitter pang; fixed despair in the remembrance of such words as these: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"*

Let this thought not speedily pass away from you. It may be blest, in the fulness of God's grace, to your good: for "who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Be you persuaded. Christ is still mighty to save. His word and His ministers yet bid you come unto Him, under the sure promise, that "him that cometh unto" Him He "will in no wise cast out;" still and ever "able to save them to the uttermost that go unto God through Him." In His strength make trial of this word. You will then believe: and to

* Matt. xxiii. 37.
you also will Christ then be "precious." You will see Him as He is: in this world, your peace and sanctification; in the next world, your crown of rejoicing for ever. Thus believing wait upon the Lord. Begin to "set your affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth."* Be mindful of "all the counsel of God," and "add to your faith virtue." Renounce all trust in any thing but Christ, that blessed and all-sufficient Saviour, "who His ownself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."† May the Spirit of the Lord impress this truth deeply upon your heart; and then shall that sacred passage of His word, which instantly follows this, be your consolation also: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."‡

* Col. i. 2. † 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Ver. 25.
CHRIST "THE GOOD SHEPHERD."

St. John x. 6.

"This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them."

It was to the Pharisees that our blessed Lord spake the parable, the application of which they could not understand. The parable was this: "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."*

To us, my brethren, this parable, though not understood at first by the Pharisees, does not

* Ver. 1—5.
seem difficult. For we have our blessed Lord's own explanation of it; and it is that which I shall endeavour to put before you for our present meditation. But, let us remember, that though we may understand what our Lord meant by the figures of the parable, there is a sense, in its spiritual application, in which we Christians may be as dangerously ignorant as were the Pharisees. It is not merely because we know what is meant by a parable, that, therefore, we necessarily understand its right character and peculiar use. Parables used in God's word, like every method used therein for the good of souls, are spiritual things; and the un-renewed mind can no more understand them, as to any saving purpose, than could the Pharisees understand the parable of the good shepherd. This is quite clear. St. Paul, speaking of these spiritual things, expressly says of them: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But," he immediately adds, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* He then tells us how he was brought, and how only all others must be

* 1 Cor. ii. 13, 14.
brought to understand profitably any of the things of God: "But we have the mind of Christ."* Looking, therefore, to the Spirit of Christ, let us humbly pray and hope that He will be now mercifully present to our minds, and enable us fully to understand, to its best and happiest purposes, that gracious parable which is now before us.

It was a thing quite familiar to the Jews to have spiritual knowledge imparted to them under the images and figures of things around them. Emblems of things spiritual, "water out of the wells of salvation," † the word of God, "a lamp unto" their "feet, and a light unto" their "path," ‡ and the power and the wrath of God under imagery taken from the storms and tempests of these lower regions, all this mode of illustration was perfectly natural to the Jews. And the figure which our blessed Lord made use of, in the shepherd tending his flock, as illustrative of His tender care of His church, had been much and frequently dwelt upon by their own prophets. Much, therefore, of what Christ added as an explanation of His parable to the Pharisees, would at once be made intelligible to them: "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and

* 1 Cor. ii. 16. † Jer. xvii. 13. ‡ Ps. cxix. 106.
robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

The lesson to ourselves here is, that as Christ condemned the false doctrine of those who, before He came, had assumed the character of the Messiah, or had taught other ways of salvation but His, the only right way, so He still condemns whatever adds to, or takes from, the pure and simple truth of salvation, through the doctrines of the cross. He tells us most expressly that, as He is “the way, the truth, and the life,” if we enter through Him, we shall be saved: shall have free ingress into heaven itself; and both here on earth, and hereafter in heaven, shall “find pasture;” promises, consolations, help, and supplies of grace in this world, and the eternal enjoyment of the light of His countenance in the next.

To guard us against erring from “the truth as it is in Jesus,” our Lord’s parable puts before us the opposite ends sought after in what He teaches and does for us, and what false and deceitful teachers, whether by influence, instruction, example or encouragement in sin, would bring us to learn and practise: “The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy;” to steal away from us the

* John x. 7—9.
bread of life; to kill the growth of all grace in the heart; to destroy both body and soul in hell: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* This was but the amplification and fulfilment of prophecy, which had been since the world fell into sin, of salvation through a Mediator; "the seed of the woman;" the "Shiloh" to come; "the Prophet like unto" Moses; the "Star out of Jacob;" the "Sceptre out of Israel;"† "Emmanuel, or God with us:" all pointed to Christ, and all was thus fulfilled in Christ.

But the Saviour of souls was mercifully willing that the Pharisees should see how He was to save those who were lost; and how entirely in that point, too, He differed from the teachers of the false way: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep: but he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."‡

As the Word of God teaches us that no sorrow was like unto Christ's sorrow, so the very nature of the covenant in His blood shows us

* John x. 10. † Numb. xxiv. 17. ‡ Ver. 11—13.
that no love was ever like Christ's love. His was the love of souls: He laid down his life to save souls: and, long before he appeared as "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," He had appealed to his rebellious people upon the tender and compassionate ground of His own gracious declaration of the love of souls: "Behold, all souls are mine:" His by right of creation, and much more His by right of redemption in Himself. It is this great principle of love which brought Him from the throne of glory to the cross: and it is this only principle by which any of us can be brought to right thinking and zealous acting, either in the matter of our own soul, or the souls of our fellow-creatures. Without this, we are but trifling with the great question of the salvation of the soul, and shall more and more assimilate ourselves to him whom Christ calls the hireling, who feels no real interest in immortal souls, but leaves them a prey to their spiritual enemy, who "goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

See, my brethren, how carefully our blessed Lord, in the unfolding of this parable, shows us the marks by which we may each ascertain whether we yet belong to his fold or not: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."* There is a reci-

* Numb. xxiv. 14.
procal knowledge between Christ and His people. This is a point much pressed upon us in the divine Word: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His."* And other passages show who are His: "The Lord knoweth them that trust in Him."† "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous."‡ "The Lord knoweth the days of the godly; and their inheritance shall endure for ever.".§ And thus "The Lord will show who are His, and who is holy."|| But the people of the Lord also know Him: they know Him in His ways and dealings towards them; they know Him in watching the course of His providence; they know Him in believing His word, that He numbers the very hairs of their head. They know Him in His word; and, that they may still know Him more and more, they meditate therein day and night. They know Him in grace; for they commit their souls unto Him as unto a faithful Creator, and Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and, whether with strong or weak faith, desire none other Lord over them. Thus Christ knows His sheep, and, in different degrees of a growing faith, is known of them.

And that this parable might come to us with the divine attestation of its having pro-

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.  † Mal. i. 7.  ‡ Ps. i. 6.  
§ Ps. xxxvii. 18.  || Numb. xvi. 5.
ceived from God, our Lord stamped upon it the impress of His own divinity: "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father."* There was in Christ a "fulness which filleth all in all," and which, even under the lowly appearance of the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," was not hidden. "I and the Father are one;" "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;" "Before Abraham was, I AM;" "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" were plain declarations that He was not only man. So, in the explanation of this parable, He expressly declares, that the very knowledge which the Father had of Him, He also had of the Father: this could no merely created being dare to have asserted. And then, to identify that mutual love for His people which Himself and His heavenly Father equally manifested in their redemption, He again adds, "And I lay down my life for the sheep."†

See, too, my brethren, how alive to the eternal interests of the gentile world did our blessed Lord even then show Himself at the very time when He was labouring to impress upon His hearers the truth of His divine mission to the Jews: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there

* Numb. xvi. 15.  
† Ver. 15.
shall be one fold, and one shepherd."* "God," we are expressly told, "is no respecter of persons;"† and it has always been the language of prophecy, that we gentiles should be made "fellow heirs." When Christ, therefore, preached salvation in Himself alone, He was not unmindful either of the spiritual wants, or the written covenant privileges of us gentiles: "The Lord, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to Him, beside those that are gathered unto Him."‡

It was thus that the blessed Jesus explained His gracious parable of the good shepherd for the immediate instruction of the Jew, and the future hope and consolation of the Gentile. Salvation in Himself alone He mercifully, and fully, and freely offered to both; a "salvation" "prepared before the face of all people: to be a light to lighten the gentiles, and to be the glory of" His "people Israel."§

And, now, let us see what was the immediate effect of this parable, and the explanation of it, upon the minds of those who heard it with their own ears. The sacred history tells us, "There was a division, therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad:

why hear ye Him? others said, These are not
the words of Him that hath a devil. Can a devil
open the eyes of the blind?* a miracle which
had recently been publicly wrought by our Lord,
most closely investigated by His enemies, and
entirely established to their utter confusion.

But was it peculiar to the Jews that there
should be a division among them for the say-
ings of Jesus? No, my brethren, from that
day to this very hour it hath always been
the same: the words of truth from the gospel
of Jesus Christ are never spoken in public,
but in heart, if not in special avowal, there is
a division caused by them: neither, in this
melancholy view of these sayings of our Lord,
which should be tidings of universal joy, would
it be well for me to say, or for you collectively
to hear it spoken, that there is not the same
division here. It would be as faithless in me,
as your minister, not to assert it, as it would
be cruel to your souls, in their best spiritual
interests, for you not to hear it. The assertion,
then, painful as it is true, is mine; but the ap-
lication of it must be your own. You ask me,
justly, who shall mark this sad and fearful divi-
sion here? I answer, nothing from man: it
must be the Spirit of God upon your own con-
sciences. And what, again you ask, shall be
the boundary line; what shall mark the op-

posite views and characters of those whom that line separates? What better test than the very words of the Lord Jesus Himself?
"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Now, if those who are Christ's are thus marked by His own description of them, as hearing His voice, His word and doctrine; as known of Him in committing their souls to Him alone; as following Him in heart and manner of life; and so striving to "adorn the doctrine of God" their "Saviour in all things:" if this be so, there must be, I fear, many now present, whose conscience, in the fair and honest exercise thereof, cannot allow them really to believe themselves as yet of Christ, the good Shepherd's spiritual fold. But, my brethren, you who thus separate yourselves from Christ's flock, who live in sin, or who live careful for this life, regardless of the next, who use not, or who resist, the means of grace, why do you thus? Your little span of life, like a summer's day, will soon hasten to its end; your cares will soon eat you up as a canker-worm; your pleasures will soon pall upon your power of enjoying them; and then, lost and wandering sheep, how can you pass through the valley of the shadow of death, if Christ, the good shepherd, be not at your

* Luke ii. 27.
side to cheer you with his presence, to pro-
tect and guide you with His rod and His
staff? You are deceiving yourself, and you
suffer Satan to go on deceiving you con-
tinually. Because time is present, and eter-
nity future, you are not impressed with the
force of this truth, that your time must be
almost over, and eternity at the very doors.
Because pleasure is sweet in the mouth, you
will not anticipate the fact of its exceeding
bitterness in the lower parts of the belly: it
excites and keeps up something like real en-
joyment for a while; but it soon passes away,
and you cannot bear to look back upon it;
for it is full of most uncomfortable conse-
quenices. You did not feel its sting until it
was gone by, nor knew the wound it would
so surely leave behind it. And then, if the
pleasures of time thus give, or most certainly
will give you very bitter pain, why will you
not learn from hence how dreadful must be
the pains of eternity? Why will you not have
the same feeling and pity for yourself, which
God, in your Redeemer Christ, has so merci-
fully put before you, and which he has joined
with the very mention of those "terrors of the
Lord" by which he would "persuade men"?
Why wander all your life long away from the
Shepherd of the sheep in paths of your own
choosing? Your case, could you be persuaded
to read it there, is, with most touching pity and kindliest warning, exactly drawn for you in the word of Christ: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."*

Read your case in the tenderness of a Saviour's warning, and exchange it for better and happier privileges in the fulness of a Saviour's love.

But there are those who, in an humbling view of the greatness of divine love towards lost souls, have been awakened from sin; and with hearts changed by the power of the Spirit, have fled to the only refuge; who, in holy faith, penitence, and prayer, know the good Shepherd, and are known of Him. How blessed, my brethren, are your privileges! what a debt of endless gratitude do they lay upon you! Look stedfastly at the Saviour's gracious promise of love and mercy on your behalf: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."†

Thus safe in the power of Jehovah, thus pledged in the Redeemer's word

* Phil. iii. 18, 19.  
† Ver. 28, 29.
on your behalf, what an endless source of comfort, what a firm and animating ground of trust is this your kind and watchful Shepherd's promise! But, at the same time, your very privileges, thus put before you, warn you of your danger. When the Saviour, as the shepherd of His sheep, declares, that no one is able to pluck them out of His and His heavenly Father's hand, it is a most plain and significant intimation to them, that there are enemies on the watch to do so. If you feel your weakness, Christ shows you your dependence upon His strength; and that He has an arm which none can resist, stretched over you in every hour of your spiritual contest. While, therefore, you need fear no harm, for He is with you, you are told of the dangers with which you are surrounded, to keep you close in your trust in Christ. So trusting, no power shall force you; for it is a word of violence which our Lord has made use of: no power shall force you from Him. But what force from your foe cannot perpetrate against you, fraud, deceit, and allurement may accomplish to your ruin. For, in holy scripture you are much cautioned upon this very point: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."* "Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are

we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."* "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."† "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."‡ Now, though these, and a great many similar passages in God's Word, are not only not to lessen, but, upon a right scriptural view of your redemption in Christ, are intended to increase your confidence, and to comfort you in reposing implicit confidence in Him, yet are they set forth for the further purpose of most merciful warning. We are still weak and sinful in ourselves, at whatever point of the true believer's path towards heaven we may be arrived: and therefore the holy St. Paul himself has shown us how to construe these promises in Christ: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."§ What a living comment did this great apostle thus give to the words previously spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself in the days of his flesh:

* Heb. iii. 6.  
† Heb. v. 14.  
‡ Rev. ii. 10.  
§ Phil. iii. 11, 12.
Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”*

With this your warning, and with these your privileges, each from the mouth of Christ, in the Spirit of Christ, persevere unto the end; be not weary in well-doing, nor faint in your minds. We live in a spiritual wilderness; we need the good Shepherd's constant care. Like the natural sheep, we are prone to wander from the fold; and if we wander, like the natural sheep, we seek not our fold again; and if the Shepherd seek us not, and bring us back, like the natural sheep, we perish amid the number and fierceness of our foes. Valuing, therefore, your privileges, be mindful of your dangers. Conscious of your defenceless condition in yourselves, look evermore to your Almighty Protector in Christ, the good Shepherd of His sheep. Whether you are young or old in the faith of Christ crucified, the promise of His shepherd care is suited to every case: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”† Under the guidance

* Mark xiii. 35—37.  
† Isai. xl. 11.
and protection of such a Shepherd, all who seek Him shall be safe: for every page of eternal truth, in the word of God, as well as in the experience of believers, proclaims the same thing: "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."*

* Isai. xl. 28—31.
"NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD."

THE SIN OF MAN NOT THE PROPER CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL.

St. Matt. x. 34.

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Were the literal meaning of this passage the true meaning, it would give a force to the infidel's argument altogether irresistible. And this very consideration, (knowing as we do know, that Christianity in its evidences is established upon proof which all the sophistry of man, and all the malice and art of Satan have never been able to shake,) this very consideration will teach us how dangerous it is to construe single and difficult passages in the word of God by themselves; that is, without going to those plain and obvious rules for the construction of God's word, which are deducible from itself. In that word it is assumed for us that there are difficulties; but at the
same time we are shown how they are to be met: "Which things also we speak," saith St. Paul, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."*

The difficulties which occur in the construction of such passages as that which I have chosen for my text, may be best resolved by considering the manner in which the sacred writers speak: we must look to the genius of the language, their ordinary habits of thought, and the known and customary ways in which instruction through the medium of their language was conveyed. This, under God's Holy Spirit, will be our proper rule for Bible criticism.

If one assertion which, under these rules, will admit of different constructions, be made of something, either doctrine or practice, in exact opposition to another assertion which can in no way be made capable of more than what the first meaning of the words teaches, we cannot, we dare not say, that scripture contradicts scripture. There may be, and there undoubtedly are passages in the word of God, which are not to be explained by other passages, simply because we are not in possession of knowledge sufficiently extensive,

* 1 Cor. ii. 13.
nor of faculties sufficiently acute, to make them tally. They only do not contradict. But whenever two passages occur which seem to clash, and contain matter, each of them, which we can clearly comprehend, the scriptural rule is, that we must "compare spiritual things with spiritual;" and if we do this, we shall be led to see their utmost harmony.

Our blessed Lord, in the text before us saith, "I came not to send peace but a sword." Now no one can read either the prophets which foretold the gospel of Jesus Christ, or the evangelists who have given the history of it, or the apostles who have unfolded its doctrines; no one can read what Christ Himself spake concerning His gospel, its principles, its proper effects, and its most gracious design, but must acknowledge that His doctrines of grace, and His precepts of holiness and virtue, are the only things which could give peace; the doctrines of grace, peace between God and man; and the precepts of holiness and virtue, peace among all mankind.

And, first, see what the prophets speak of the true character of the everlasting gospel. Isaiah thus introduces it: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that pub-
lisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"* The same prophet, too, shows, in a striking passage of most speaking imagery, what shall, one day or other, be the proper fruit of that gospel in gospel times: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."† And to the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel and all the prophets: "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and

* Ch. lii. 7. † Ch. xi. 6—9.
sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.” *

The character of this blessed gospel, as exhibited in its proper colour by the evangelists, is all summed up in the angels' chorus: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.” †—And, when the holy apostles, taught by the Spirit of Christ, unfold the doctrines of Christ, it is in the fullest confidence of peace being the very substance and end of His gracious gospel. And, first, St. Paul: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both” (Jew and Gentile) “one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” ‡—Next St. James: “The

wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”*—Then St. Peter testifies to the same truth: “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.”†—So also testifies “the disciple whom Jesus loved:” “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things,” the gospel, “write we unto you, that your joy may be full,” its proper consequence.‡—And

* Ch. iii. 17, 18. † 2 Pet. i. 2—4. ‡ 1 John i. 1—4.
"Not peace, but a sword."

Lastly, as taken in the order of our Bibles, St. Jude: "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied."*—Thus, my brethren, is peace, as exhibited in the writings of the apostles and prophets, the peculiar character of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and such He Himself declared it to be: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:" † "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." ‡

Now when our blessed Lord, as in the words of the text, declared thus; "I came not to send peace but a sword," He never could be thought to contradict all this: He merely made use of a form of speech easily understood through the spirit of other scriptures. God is constantly said to cause or do what (for wise, and oftentimes inscrutable purposes, hidden, at present, from us all) He only permits; and Christ therefore, foreseeing what evil would arise through men's passions and sinfulness perverting the gospel of peace, showed what would arise in the world in public wars, in private enmities and heart-burnings, under the pretended plea of contending for the truth.

* Jude 1, 2. † John xiv. 27. ‡ Ch. xv. 11.
If you look to the second of Samuel (xxiv. 1.) you will read thus: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel, and Judah:" as though the Lord tempted David to commit a sin, in the pride of His heart, merely to give the opportunity for punishing the people. This, we are quite sure, could not be: for the scripture speaks most expressly upon this very point: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."* The fact then was, that David was tempted by his own pride of heart; God permitted him, for the trial of his faith, to be tempted; and the parallel passage in the first book of Chronicles shows us at once who was the instrument of the temptation: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."† Other passages go to the same point, that God is said to do, what in His all-wise providence He sees right to permit; such as that in Ezekiel: "And if the prophet," the false prophet, "be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from

* James i. 13, 14.  
† 1 Chron. xxi. 1.
the midst of my people Israel.” * That, too, in Jeremiah, who himself exclaims, “O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.” † So also the prophet Micaiah: “Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.” ‡ So in the mouth of Job: “With Him,” God, “is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are His.” ¶ And again St. Paul: “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved—God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” § These, and all similar passages in the word of God, mean no more than that when men will not hearken unto God, He permits them to fall through the power of temptation, in their own weakness. This is the construction which God Himself gives of His ways: “But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own heart’s lust: and they walked in their own counsels.” ¶¶

I have dwelt the longer upon this view of scripture truth, as well from the general usefulness of such a rule of Bible criticism taken

* Ch. xiv. 9. † Ch. xx. 7. ‡ 2 Kings xxii. 23.
¶ Ch. xii. 16. § 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. ¶¶ Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12.
from the Bible itself, as from the particular need of it in rightly understanding that passage which is now before us: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." I would now endeavour to apply this saying of our blessed Lord, first, to the case of true believers; those who, through grace, have chosen Him for their portion, and rest their only hope of salvation upon Him.

When Christ, my brethren, thus warned you, not of the intended purpose, but of the sad consequences of His gospel of peace, through the evil passions of mankind, He did it to create in you the utmost care and watchfulness over yourselves. As believers in the doctrines of the cross, and separating yourselves, as you are bound to do, from the world and its sinful ways and habits, you will, more or less, be subject to painful trial in regard to those, perhaps very near and dear to you in the flesh, who do not and cannot yet say, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you:"* for "on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."† The gospel rule herein is this: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."‡ You must not give

way to evil feelings which Satan, or the remaining corruption of your own heart, shall
kindle up there. You must not, as some have done, in needless separation, of a kind not
called for by the gospel of peace, and in angry feelings forbidden by that message of love,
you must not shelter yourself under the saying of our Lord, and repose in an evil conse-
quence, and say it must be so: your special duty is to guard against this very thing, that
so you may exhibit a Christian temper from Christian knowledge; and from Christian doc-
trine most tender sympathy and love. If, instead of this, you give needless offence under
false views of what Christian love and Chris-
tian duty inculcate upon you, you yourself
then become accessory to the promotion of
that very evil, from which the Lord Jesus, in
foretelling, would preserve us all. “When ye
sin so against the brethren, and wound their
weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.” *
You cannot do your duty to Christ unless you
also do your duties to your fellow-creatures,
and whenever you become forgetful of any of
your relative calls of love and kindness to
them, you dishonour Christ, for Christ is
wounded through them; and He hath already
told you that, upon this very ground; the
solemn process of the last judgment will be

* 1 Cor. viii. 12.
conducted—"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." * "I am Jesus whom thou," in my brethren, "persecutest." † Was the gospel designed, can you for one moment believe, merely "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law?" Was the intended design of a Saviour's propitiation, (that gracious gift to man,) that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household?" It is blasphemy to speak it so. The gospel takes us all as it finds us. Tares are among the wheat; and Christ says, the tares must not be rooted up by man. "Both" must "grow together until the harvest." You, remember, are to be "the salt of the earth:" you are to "let your light shine." How can this be accomplished in you, if you needlessly burst asunder the natural ties which God hath fastened, and exercise a temper which must at once mar your usefulness, or quit a post which is your proper sphere of duty? The word of God teaches you that a true believer, acting in his proper post, may be oftentimes blest as an instrument of spiritual good: "God," saith St. Paul, "hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man,

* Matt. xxv. 45. † Acts ix: 5.
"Not peace, but a sword."

whether thou shalt save thy wife?"* "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."† If you act not according to this spirit, the same apostle tells you, that "ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"‡

The rule which you are bound to observe herein is this. If the will of man, the will and desire of those whom, by natural ties you should most love in this world, the parent's word, the husband's command, the master's or the ruler's order and law, at once urge you to violate your rightly informed conscience, and sin against the law of Christ in doing dishonour to His name, and manifesting even the appearance of enmity or indifference to His cause, the law of man then becomes no law; and be the consequence what it may, you must be guided by the law of Christ, "for hereunto were you called." "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."|| "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."§ But what you cannot do, comply with, or promote,

* 1 Cor. vii. 15, 16.  † Ver. 24.  ‡ Ch. iii. 3.  
|| Matt. x. 37.  § Ver. 38.
through the fear of God, you must refuse with a Christian spirit, and solely from Christian motives, and purely for Christian ends. Those with whom you cannot and dare not communicate in worldly ways, and unchristian habits, pity rather than despise; instruct by the silence of example where you cannot otherwise reprove; win, if God's grace and mercy make you the blessed instrument thereof, win them over to the cause of Christ, "while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."*
The gospel, in the heart of a true believer, will never dissolve the links of relationship, blood, and ancient friendship: it will draw them still closer by a holier bond: and if, my brethren, you cannot, for conscience' sake, now in your renewed state exercise the same feeling as once you exercised it, by conformity with what grace hath now brought you to shun, still—your example, your prayers, your Christian love remain as what may one day or other, in the wonders of God's grace, make you the instrument of saving a soul alive: "And thus are the secrets of the heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."†

And now I turn to you, my brethren, who are still opposed, through love of sin, the cares:

* 1 Peter iii. 2.  
† 1 Cor. xiv. 25.
and pleasures of this life, ignorance of God and your own hearts, carelessness of the truth of Satan's power now prevailing over you, through all or any of these causes, still opposed to the gospel of Christ. Though your case, whatever specific character it bears, is included in what our blessed Lord intended, when He showed that too often would the consequences from His gospel in the world be "a sword" and not "peace," yet you do not all profess that enmity to His word and grace which, nevertheless, in your heart you feel. You are "enemies to the cross of Christ," because in life at least, and oftentimes in thought, expression, and desire, you are enemies to those who endeavour to show, that, through the converting influence of the Spirit of Christ, they would "come out" from a "world lying in wickedness." It would be well for you to dwell upon what was said at the beginning of that resistance which man, in his natural state of enmity against God, always makes, and which the first opposers to the gospel made, as it had been foretold long before. Soon after Christ's resurrection, "Peter and the other apostles," having been imprisoned, questioned, and threatened for teaching the gospel of Christ, returned their firm answer, "We ought to obey God rather than men."* This bold

* Acts v. 29.
avowal of their steadfast determination not to betray the cause of their blessed Master, added to what they further spake of the gracious message of salvation in Him alone, produced the most bitter feelings in the hearts of the council of the Jews against them: "When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them."* From this sin of murder which they meditated, they were at that time holden through the reasoning and advice of one of their own number: "Ye men of Israel," said he, "take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.—Let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight against God."†

It is now nearly two thousand years since these words were spoken; and during that period, up to this very hour, "this counsel and this work," though much resisted by man and evil spirits, hath never been overthrown. It is the cause of God, "the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ:" "He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end."‡

* Acts v. 33. † Ver. 35. 38. 39. ‡ Dan. vi. 36
This kingdom of God you still continue to oppose. In heart and manner of life "you fight against God." In your hostility to others, your enmity against God, your real prevention of your own happiness, you help to fulfil our blessed Lord's prophecy of His gospel, that it would not bring "peace but a sword." This contest will soon be at an end. "God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?"* Whether you are young or old in this your virtual denial of God, your real opposition to His will, it must soon be over. You will, through grace, repent in this world, and be brought nigh; or you will experience, in the next world, what you set your souls against here; the power of "Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." While this life lasts, and your day of grace be not gone by, the door of mercy may be opened. "Knock," saith your Redeemer, "and it shall be opened:" a little while, and "the door" will be "shut." Anticipate, in imagination, that fearful hour; you exclaim, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." You hear no other answer than "I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."† Be warned by this thought now to hearken to other

* Job ix. 4.  † Luke xiii. 27.
words. Hear this from a forbearing Saviour: "Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." Pray one earnest prayer to Him to show you the plague of your own hearts: the corruption of your soul which hath so long caused you to choose the evil and to forsake the good. Be converted and live. The Spirit only can bring you to the state needful for us all: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." You have a redeeming Saviour in Christ Jesus the Lord, but none other save He only. He hath purchased a full, and a free salvation for all who seek it in Him: "He is able to save them to the uttermost who go unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."* While you remain in your sins, "the cry of them is waxen great before the Lord:" but the warning is given unto you as once it was given to the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah: "Up get you out of this place: for the Lord will destroy this city."† Linger not. The Lord is merciful yet: but you know not how long. Tempt Him no more. Flee for your life: flee from sin, flee from yourself, and go to Christ. Humble yourself before His cross with the prayer of faith. Throw yourself simply upon His great propitiation:

* Heb. † Gen. xix.
"Not peace, but a sword."

"This do and thou shalt live:" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."
Then will His gospel be to you, as in itself it is to every one that receives it into the heart, no more a "sword," but "peace:" "righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost."
ON THE UNION OF THE PEOPLE OF CHRIST WITH CHRIST THEIR HEAD.

St. John xv. 1.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

We shall better understand the force of this parable of our blessed Lord, if we go back to the fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah. God there compares His church to a vineyard fenced in, planted, and carefully cultivated by Himself; His exceeding care of which is tenderly expressed in this gracious question: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"* The cultivation of the vine had always been an object of considerable importance in those countries; and the Jews, therefore, would well understand all those numerous allusions which were made to a common fact, intended to illustrate spiritual instruction. This spiri-

* Isai. v. 4.
tual vineyard of the Lord had failed: the Lord Himself complained of its failure: "Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"*

In His instructions to His people, our blessed Saviour still made use of the same figure; but changed its more immediate application. Instead of any more speaking of His people as God's vineyard, each, as it were, a distinct vine in himself, He declares that He Himself is the vine, the only vine; that no one thenceforth should be considered as any portion of God's vineyard, save only as he should be made one with Christ, an integral part of "the true Vine."

It is my intention, and most earnest desire, to put these kind and tender illustrations used by our blessed Lord, of the union which subsists between Him and His people, in the order in which He has Himself condescended to apply them; and may the Spirit of Christ now deign to bring this matter home to our hearts, that we may each be so led to feel the importance of this vital union with Christ, that we may be fruitful branches of this sacred tree.

The chapter begins with the solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

* Isaiah v. 4.
Christ thus identifies Himself with the whole body of the faithful: He shows that there is a close and vital union always subsisting between Himself and every true believer: and we see that, in the economy of grace, it must be so. Our nature is alien from God; and as it is only through an intervening Mediator that we can draw nigh to God, we must be spiritually united to our surety, "one with Christ, and Christ with us," before we can appear in the ineffable presence of "the Majesty on high."

To effectuate this intimate union, Christ speaks of an agency higher than that of man. For sinners to become united to the Vine, the mystic body of Christ's church, there is a cultivation spoken of; a "preparation that cometh of the Lord." "My Father is the husbandman." The believer will not forget the love of God the Father in the close relationship in which he now stands to God the Son, through the holy and renewing influence of God the Holy Ghost. Whatever, in mediatorial love, Christ hath wrought and suffered for His people, the Father, through the Spirit, consecrates in their souls, and applies to their affections and desires. The Vine has a gracious Husbandman, constantly watching, cultivating, and preserving it. The outward and the inward means of grace the Father ordains
and blesses to His people's good, through sanctification of the Spirit, in the accepted merits and sufferings of His dear Son. To warn the unprofitable servant of the Lord, and to encourage the faithful and obedient, Christ continues His parable in its most solemn and impressive character: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."*

We have here two very opposite descriptions of persons intended by our Lord: those who are outwardly joined to Him, but, continuing unprofitable, are at last cut off; and those who, following His ways, are chastened and corrected, that they may follow still closer the steps of His most holy life. Of the first, those who belong to Christ by outward membership, Christ still says that they are His branches: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit." In one sense, therefore, all who live in a Christian land, and have been engrafted into the body of Christ's church at the sacramental waters of baptism, and have the means of grace, the ordinances of religion, and the word and ministers of God still open and ready for their spiritual use, in that sense all are branches of this "true Vine," for Christ thus plainly declares it. But how aw-

* Ver. 2.
fully is the assurance held out by Christ, that if we prop up our confidence in these our outward privileges, and so fall away from the spiritual grace which they are intended to communicate to the soul, we must be cut off, like the useless vine-branch severed from its vine!

It is, my brethren, our peculiar privilege to belong to Christ as His redeemed; but, when we think upon this privilege, we must remember from what we have been redeemed—“from all iniquity;” and for what purpose Christ hath thus redeemed us—“to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* Satan will strive, and, alas! too often does he successfully strive, to keep the soul from dwelling much upon this sacred truth. In this Christian land there are few, perhaps, who have any knowledge at all upon these things, who would not speak of themselves as redeemed by Christ, and so would seem to consider themselves as branches of the Vine. But there is a sad forgetfulness, among many who would thus speak, of the distinction made by Christ Himself, betwixt the “branch that beareth fruit,” and the “branch that beareth not fruit.” This latter “He taketh away:” it is a useless branch: it disfigures and disgraces the tree; and though once an

*Tit. ii. 14.
integral part of the Vine, it must now be cut off. It is not a mere outward profession that will secure the continuance of church membership: the outward privileges are good; but with the cold and careless professor, as well as with the open and acknowledged sinner, they are but as "riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." *

When the branch thus continues to bear no fruit, the heavenly Husbandman "taketh it away:” but He forgets not the branches that remain: “Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth,” cleanses of its moss, prunes of its useless shoots and tendrils, trains and supports, "that it may bring forth more fruit."

It was thus in the parable of the vine watched and cultivated in its fruitful branches by its heavenly Husbandman, that our blessed Lord so emphatically pointed out a solution to the mystery of the sufferings of the people of God. Grafted upon the true Vine, the believer, spiritually united to his Saviour, must still, in experience, learn the lesson of wisdom and happiness in the discipline of the school of Christ. The Lord ever chastens those whom He loves: and, in the natural world, it is not a surer mark of the husbandman’s care of his vine that he prunes, guides,

* Eccles. v. 13.
and watches the bearing branches, than, in things spiritual, it is a proof of our heavenly Father's love, when He corrects and chastens, with spiritual or with temporal sorrow, those who bear fruit in Christ: He does it as the husbandman does, expressly for the purpose of more fruit.

It is most tender and merciful treatment of our present mixed condition in this world, for Christ thus to unravel the mystery of the evils oftentimes falling upon the faithful people of God: and it is most tender and merciful to themselves especially thus to show them the motive, in the gracious will of Him who chastens; and the end to be furthered for the best happiness of those who are chastened. There is matter of great consideration herein either way; whether we are branches, and bear not fruit, for these "He taketh away;" or whether we are branches bearing fruit, for these "He purgeth, that they may bring forth more fruit." May the warning warn, and the consolation cheer and encourage those who are here assembled, as it may respectively concern each of us.

Happy, my brethren, is the case of those to whom the next portion of our blessed Saviour's parable applies: "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." How well is Christ called "the author and
finisher of our faith.” Every step in the believer’s life is grounded upon Christ, directed by Christ, and tends towards Christ. The branch is not nearer to the vine than Christ’s members are to Him, their body and head. When clean, they are clean through His word, that word which first called creation into being, foretold the Redeemer to come, and affirmed of His own advent, when come, “I am He.” In Him the true believer stands complete: “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” But how instantly is the antidote provided against the temptation incident to the true believer to abuse his highest privileges. “Abide in me, and I in you,” is the Redeemer’s caution, and the Redeemer’s promise. It is elsewhere spoken to the same point: “Be not high minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”*

And in His parable of the vine, the Lord Jesus condescended to show the reason of His great argument: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no

* Rom. xi. 20—22.
more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me, ye can do nothing."

See, my brethren, how much our great Teacher presses over and over again the necessity of this spiritual fruit from His engrafted branches. If these, and other similar declarations in God's Word, have awakened your minds to a sense of this, pray for its holiest effect upon your souls. Be one with Christ, and Christ with you; "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things;" for in His strength He commands you to bring forth much fruit. The parable of the vine, I well know, touches you very nearly, and often kindles in your soul sentiments of gratitude and love. But in the tenderness of the imagery, be not forgetful of its literal import: "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation and godliness." Go out of the figured union spoken of in the metaphor, into its intended plain and practical teaching. When you read of the vine, love and glory in your privileges in Christ; and when you read of the fruit, seek to understand, and diligently perform your duties as a disciple of Christ. Your Christian privileges must redound to
the glory of Christ in your manifesting the Christian life in all its varied relationships. Study the completeness of the Christian character; see it drawn for you in God's word, exemplified for you in the saints who were upon earth as recorded there, and as exhibited in its great and most perfect exemplar, the holy Jesus.

Valuing your salvation in Him, for so have you been led by His Spirit, deem nothing little in His service. The very expressions of your outward walk through this scene of your earthly trial—amid some who believe as you have been brought to do; amid some who as yet only believe and tremble; amid some who hesitate between Christ and the world, striving to serve two masters; amid many who believe not,—must bear the stamp of your Redeemer's image. In word be gentle, kind, and useful; in temper be meek, calm, and watchful; in outward demeanour towards others be affectionate, sincere, and cordial; in outward and in inward management of yourself be humble, sober, temperate, and spiritual. This, my brethren, is what the Lord intended when He urged you to abide in Him, and bear much fruit. Let the love of Christ constrain you to do so; and the Spirit of Christ will accomplish it on your behalf, "for without Him you can do nothing:" with Him you can do every
thing: it was instruction for you, as well as a consolation for himself, when the holy apostle St. Paul declared of the true disciples of their Lord in his day, "We can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth us." Hence he showed how needful it is for the professed follower of Jesus Christ not only to lean upon Christ to enable him to do all things, but that he himself set about doing them. If the branch hath already brought forth fruit, it must still bring forth more fruit. See what an assemblage of Christian graces the zealous apostle St. Peter pointed out to be necessary for the followers of Christ; for "them," he says, "that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ."* "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." See, too, how essential this holy apostle knew these things to be in the life of the follower of Christ, and how well he thus comments upon the Redeemer's parable now before us: "For," he adds, "if these things be in you and abound, they make you

* 2 Pet. i. 1.
that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

It is thus, my brethren, that the scriptures speak to you, who, upon right scriptural grounds, trust that you have been led to put on Christ. And they speak the more powerfully to you upon this point, because the Spirit of Christ foresaw how much evil would oftentimes redound to His cause from a sad defect in the conduct of many of those who should still have right knowledge, and really prize the privilege of Christian faith. The Christian world hath ever exhibited, in every age of the church, this sad and painful circumstance: and at no time is it more likely to be exhibited, than, as in our own day, when knowledge abounds, and the true spirit of the doctrines of the gospel has revived. When that knowledge in the mind of the apparently anxious disciple of his Lord, does not produce correspondent fruits, more careful disciples are pained, the world rejoices, and Satan triumphs; while the

* 2 Pet. i. 5—10.
ignorant are astounded, and the weak and timid believer is perplexed. And well may it be so. It does seem strange that the knowledge and real belief of the doctrines of the cross should ever be found otherwise than accompanied by their proper effects upon the heart, the manners, the temper, and the constant call upon relative obligations: and stranger still does it appear, that in many who evidently know not the Lord, but are guided by other motives in the conduct of life than what He would supply, there should frequently be kindlier feelings, better practical recognition of relative duties, more inviting and more endearing intercourse with their fellow-creatures, than in some who seem thoughtful upon the great matter of the soul's salvation in Christ, and fully aware of their being to be saved by none other.

You, then, my brethren, who would desire to love, and who do love the Lord Jesus, take these considerations as the scriptural comment upon His own blessed and encouraging parable now before us: "He is the vine; ye are the branches;" and His own instruction upon this parable, He now puts before you: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that
your fruit shall remain. These things I command you that ye love one another.”* 

But there is another issue spoken of in the parable of the vine which must not be passed over. “If,” said our divine Master and Redeemer, “a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch,” that is, a branch for ever separated from its vine, “and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

You, my brethren, whose conscience may now testify against you, not in the humbling and profitable character of a remembrancer for better exertion in the cause of Christ, and of a still deeper and deeper sense of your own nothingness, but as a solemn warning of your not being in Christ through the wilful neglect of the soul and the too much love and pursuit of the cares and pleasures of the body, you would do well to consider the tenderness and the severity of Him who offers you His redeeming mercy, and still urges you to accept it. Your Saviour expressly tells you of your great privilege in Him: as the branches are a component part of the natural vine, so are you, in your having been made a partaker of your sacramental covenant in Christ; a member of His body. He also tells you that as the unfruitful branches are severed from the vine,

gathered together and burnt, so shall the unprofitable professor of His gospel be first deprived of all spiritual nourishment from his Christian privileges, and finally and for ever separated from Himself, gathered among those who know not the Lord, and punished with everlasting burning in a hell prepared, not originally for man, but "for the devil and his angels."

Some of you, who thus live in opposition to your better knowledge of what your privileges in Christ really are, are oftentimes pained in your minds at what you are doing; and grieve in the loss of that peace and happiness, from which, through sin and worldly-mindedness, you knowingly deprive yourselves. Others among you care not for these things: with a conscience hardened through long-continued habits alien from every thing spiritual, or, through the flattery of the world around you triumphing in the gain of those who have some knowledge on its side,—you can now make a mock at sin, and laugh at reproof; retort upon the argument which condemns you, or feel angry and bitter displeasure against whatsoever brings that argument before you.

In either of your different cases how foolish is the bargain you are making; a little worldly pleasure for eternal ages of pain; the adorning
and pampering the body for the improvement and cultivation of the soul; the society of the wicked and of them that know not God, for the high joys of Christian love and kindlest intercourse with the real servants of the Lord; and the sure result of endless banishment from all good into the place and among the sufferers of everlasting torment when this short life shall have past over you. This, you know, must be the issue of your mad and ruinous choice. For, though you are living as without knowledge, you are in possession of sufficient knowledge to pain you in what you do now; or if your heart be hardened against your better knowledge, to condemn you hereafter. Every thing around you, did you but open your eyes to the instructive lesson, warns you of your danger; and every thing within you, did you but regard this inward monitor, points to your extreme folly and madness. Christ even now puts His parable before you, and tells you of the vine, tells you of all the branches, but tells you of the fearful difference in the speedy treatment of those branches that bear fruit, and of those that bear none. But Christ rejoices not in your fearful and dangerous condition; "nigh unto burning." Christ's arm is stretched out to snatch you from the burning. Hear Him remonstrating with you in His word: "O ye sons of men,
how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity?"*
But does He remonstrate to condemn? Hear His continued and merciful admonition following instantly this merciful address: "Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still."†
Would doubts and misgivings arise at the remembrance of your great, your continued, your aggravated wickedness? The Redeemer is at hand with His gracious remedy: "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord;"‡ a sacrifice which He has Himself offered up on your behalf, now urges you to take unto yourself through faith, and so shows how entirely you may put your fullest trust in Him, "able," as He is, "to save them to the uttermost who go unto God through Him."||

If, in this point of your awakened state, Satan tempting you, or the world with its ties endeavouring to retain you among its own, should strive to put a flattering invitation before you to remain as you have been, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?"§ Christ would put words of prayer and consolation into your heart and mouth, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy

* Ps. iv. 2. † Ver. 4. ‡ Ver. 5.
|| Heb. vii. 25. § Ver. 6.
countenance upon us."* Then would a glorious and a happy contrast be soon formed in your soul between what Christ shall have given you, and what of the world and its vanities and pleasures you shall have given up. Then would your language be the experience of a true child of God; your fruit that of a branch of the true vine purged that it might bring forth more fruit: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."† Then would a growing peace soothe you into the repose of a soul resting upon Christ; and then, when the time should arrive for you to cease from your earthly labours, the language of your heart to your all-gracious Saviour may then, as your Christian privilege, thus flow from your expiring breath: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."‡

This, my brethren, is the instruction now held out to you in the Redeemer's parable of the vine. It is not the instruction in religious truth which the world will give you; for it comes from Christ, and Christ and the world teach opposite things. The world's instruction you have already submitted to: and it profits you nothing: and though haply you may not yet confess it, it is a lesson of misery

* Ver. 6. † Ver. 7. ‡ Ver. 8.
whose bitterest consequences must be known in eternity. Now learn wisdom in the school of Christ. His parable is a lesson of mercy; and His forbearing goodness towards you would still have you apply its happiest result to yourself.
CHRIST WALKING ON THE SEA.

St. Matt. xiv. 27.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid."

When ancient prophecy was fulfilled in the personal appearance of our great Emmanuel, two grand purposes of God's providence were accomplished: the Lord Jesus Christ made manifest His own divinity, and then, in our human nature, by the sacrifice of Himself, completed the stupendous work of redeeming love. In the sacred history of His holy life on earth, these two are the great points constantly put before us. They are not, indeed, treated upon as a laboured system; neither are they introduced as though they needed something to be said in vindication of the mystery of redemption. They everywhere give a solemn unction to the whole matter of the Christian scheme of salvation, as manifested in the perfect life and expiatory death.
of the Saviour. They are made so to mingle, in plain and simple narrative of what the Lord Jesus was, and what He did, that the Holy Spirit hath left the historical record thereof as the public testimony to His apostle's doctrine: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."*

In that portion of our blessed Lord's life on earth from which the text is taken, we have a clear statement of his divine nature, not set forth in laboured argument, but abundantly evident in the very works themselves, as connected with the consideration of the manner of His performing them. He had fed "five thousand men, beside women and children," by an act of creation, a miracle that God alone could perform, and in the way in which Christ performed this miracle, at once distinguished it from all other miracles which proceeded from a delegated power only. Christ showed that the power was His own, in the same way by which He showed that the divine law of the gospel was his own, when He said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time," referring to

* 1 John v. 20.
the law as a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ:" "but I say unto you," setting Himself forth as Christ actually come.

The same truth appears as of the doctrine, so of the divinity of Christ in the miracle which immediately followed this instance of Christ's creating power, in His walking upon the sea, and bidding the elements hearken to His voice. Accompany me, my brethren, first, with hearts raised up to Christ for His blessing upon His word now before us: and then, with earnest attention to the spiritual instruction which, through His Spirit, we may each of us receive from it.

When our Lord, in the exercise of His divine power, had satisfied this large multitude with bread in public, the evangelist carries us to the knowledge of His retirement into solitude for the purpose of private devotion. "And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone."*

The redemption of our souls from the curse and eternal ruin of sin, rendered it necessary that the Saviour should be man as well as

* Ver. 22, 23.
Christ walking on the Sea.

God: had He been less than God, the divine and therefore the infinite and sufficient expiation could not have been paid; and had He been only God, the atonement in personal suffering could not have been undergone. For the sufficiency of the price, the ransom of our souls, and for the endurance of the pain, the penal consequence of our sin, it must be "God—in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Hence we see our Lord, in His human character, after His divine deed of creating power, retiring into solitude for the exercise of prayer, and adoration unto His heavenly Father. It is in this character of the Saviour in which St. Paul speaks of Him as praying unto the Father: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."*

But while the Saviour was thus engaged in prayer and meditation in the mountain apart, his disciples were, in most expressive figure, what human life itself always is when passed

* Heb. v. 7—9.
without the Saviour's presence: "The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary."* Our life is a perilous voyage over a most tempestuous ocean. Temptations on every side are as rocks and quicksands which endanger our course; and the innate corruption of the soul engenders bad and violent passions and perturbations of mind, aptly represented by the storms and tempests howling upon the agitated waves of the great deep. In spiritual things well may it be said, that we are "tossed with waves; for the wind" is "contrary."

And, in the storm of nature around them, what saved the disciples from perishing in the waters? It was that which only can save us amid our known and our unknown dangers and difficulties on the sea of life. The Lord Jesus thought upon them when they knew not that He was always near them in Spirit, and soon, in bodily presence and almighty power, would be near them, to do away all their fears. While the storm beat upon them from without, and fear and terror disturbed their souls within, "In the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."† But how did they receive Him? The darkness of the night concealed Him from their full knowledge of Him; and though they saw some

* Ver. 24. † Ver. 25.
Christ walking on the Sea. 115

Presence, they knew not that they saw the holy Jesus; for "when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear."* And so, to the unrenewed mind, will the presence of any thing, real or imaginary, connected with the spiritual world as pertaining to spiritual things, be either unseen altogether, i.e. totally despised and disregarded, or be made an object of inward apprehension and dismay: it will either be, in careless indifference about the things belonging to the soul and to eternity—"their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not;" or, in inward and suppressed terror of conscience—"the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"†

The believer, too, has his doubts and fears. He does not always see clearly amid storms without, and darkness remaining within. But, as comfort was preparing for the disciples on the troubled sea, so is there help at hand in the lowest state of the believer's hope, and in the most threatening aspect of his spiritual danger. As an encouragement in spiritual depression, picture to yourselves, my brethren, the strong and affecting contrast to the disciples' fears and terrors, when the well-known

voice of the Saviour brought the testimony to their affrighted minds, that it was not a spirit to alarm, but their almighty Protector to save and comfort them: "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid." *

Words thus full of gracious consolation are still proceeding from the Saviour's voice amid the lowest depths of sorrow and conflicting danger in which the believer must be prepared to find himself. It is the character of true faith to be thus tried; and oftentimes depressions of heart will scarcely permit the words of Christ to be applied, or even heard. Such passages as that which is now before us, are mercifully intended to allay all unreasonable fear and despondency of soul, if we be willing to look unto the Lord Jesus, although darkness may seem to conceal Him from us; or the prevailing storms of trial and temptation make us think we see a spirit, something to alarm rather than to comfort us. We must look and wait; and we shall speedily hear—"Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid." These words were not lost to any of them: His was not the voice of a stranger: it was the Shepherd calling His own sheep by name, of whom the Lord Himself hath testified, "My sheep hear my voice: I know my

* Ver. 27.
sheep, and am known of mine.”* All, doubtless, well recognized it then. But it was for the zealous and affectionate devotedness of Peter first to give utterance to his feelings; and, in the awful issue of what he meditated, to learn a lesson of humility and trust, to be made profitable to himself, as well as to every future believer in the holy Jesus: “And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”† The Lord was pleased to answer his request. “And He said, Come.” Peter’s faith was less grounded on Christ than built upon his own conscious love of Christ. Though he very dearly loved his Lord and Master, he had yet to learn more of what we are all to learn in—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.” Peter expected that his own love for Christ was sufficient, apart from the immediate and constant supply of the power of Christ. “And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”‡ His faith supported him so far as to lead him to make the bold attempt, and for a little space to effect his purpose. “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”||

* John x. 14. † Ver. 28.
‡ Ver. 29. ‖ Ver. 30.
If our faith be weak, our prayer must be strong. We must be as Peter was when our faith fail, and be in the attitude of prayer to Christ, though sinking under the weakness of our faith. It is a proof that faith remains, though its failure in the specific call for its efficacy be permitted, as an humbling lesson to the too much confidence in ourselves. Happy will it be if, under any of our fears and sinkings, our prayer unto the Lord Jesus do not fail, and if we can still feel our best resource in, "Lord, save me!"

It is a prayer, my brethren, which never, since the world was, has been uttered in vain. Did Peter now utter it in vain, when his faith had so failed, that he was sinking fast unto the bottom of the great deep? Not a moment was suffered to pass; for the danger was real and imminent: "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"*

How merciful is Christ to reprove His people for not having that which is still His own peculiar gift! One such reproach as this should for ever silence all doubt and difficulty upon the deep and hidden things of God's enabling, and man's acting power. It is God's gift if we have faith; but it is our own sin not

* Ver. 31.
to have it. Here is a secret thing, but here also is a revealed thing. What, then, in practice shall we say to this? That only which the Scripture puts into our mouth: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."*

As the Lord God in Paradise first gave the promise of a deliverer before He uttered the condemnation upon fallen man, so now, in His human nature, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," did the merciful Jesus first stretch forth His hand, and caught His trembling disciple, before He reproached him for the weakness of his faith.

The remaining portion of this history of the Redeemer's power and goodness teaches the never-failing fulfilment of His intended benefit to His people, and the effect which His continued love and mercy are to have upon them: "And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased."† The deliverance was complete. The storms of nature obeyed the command, and were hushed by the word of the God of nature. And so the believer, when all his spiritual conflicts shall be ended, and he finds himself safe in the presence of his God and Saviour, shall find how exactly

* Deut. xxix. 29. † Ver. 32.
Christ walking on the Sea.

Christ, amid sometimes apparent forgetfulness of His promise, hath not failed in the most literal accomplishment of it: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The deliverance of Peter from sinking amid the waves, and of those who were his companions in danger, from being oppressed by the storm, produced its proper fruit: "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."* As "in all our afflictions Christ was afflicted," so in all our mercies and deliverances Christ must be exalted. He is the fountain from which flow all the streams of divine love towards men. Do away what is taught by the acknowledgment of "Thou art the Son of God," and we no longer know God in any other way than as a God of strictest holiness and justice, who cannot look upon iniquity, and whom, in that character, no man can ever approach unto. But see God in Christ, and all His terrors are gone. We may then say, "Abba, Father:" He then delights to do us good: for in us He sees the image of His "beloved Son, in whom alone He is well pleased;" and for us He ever remembers and exercises His own most merciful and comforting declaration, that "God is love."†

* Ver. 33.
† 1 John 4.
And thus, my brethren, looking to the miracle of our Lord Jesus walking upon the sea, we have once more had brought before us the spiritual application of this portion of His sacred life upon earth. But, in regard to the Word of God, though all hear, all do not receive. We may best answer to our own consciences herein, if we seek to know "who are on the Lord's side," and who still take no other than a passing interest, and perhaps even no interest in His word, by looking to the effect which has been produced upon our hearts and lives by our former hearing of this, or of any other portion of the Word of God. When Christ had bestowed His bounty upon the multitudes, He retired for purposes of meditation and prayer. When God, in His manifold mercies of providence and grace, hath befriended you, has your soul been led to seek the Lord by closer communion with Him in the exercises of a devotional spirit in meditation and prayer? Amid the storms and dangers of your mortal pilgrimage, do you feel that Jesus Christ is nigh? or, in the weakness of faith, is it your real and heartfelt desire to see Jesus Christ, though, through fear and trouble, you see Him in the darkness, and are ready to cry out for fear? If some merciful providence brings Him evi-
dently before you, as one who careth for your soul, "Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid." Can you go unto the Lord, when thus He says, "Come"? And should your faith fail, amid manifold temptations, can you still, while you sink in your own weakness, "look unto Him whom they pierced," and to Him say, "Lord, save me"? And when caught from your instant danger of losing body and soul in hell, and the winds and storms around you, at Christ's word, have ceased, can you look with a single eye to Him, "Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith," and feel and acknowledge all that you are taught in, "Thou art the Son of God"?

In whichsoever of the opposite descriptions of professed believers in Christ, and to whom these questions apply, you find yourself placed, you have not heard these questions put, without an additional responsibility resting on your soul. Whatever brings Christ before you, God, of His infinite mercy, offers. What Christ once spake to the then little flock of true disciples around His sacred person, He now speaks to you, my brethren, who receive His word into your hearts, and strive to give its gracious fruits in your lives: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have
tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* Amid the storms above, and dangers of the deep below, "Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid."

But what Christ also once spake to unbelievers around His sacred person, He now speaks unto you, my brethren, who are regardless of "the things which are Jesus Christ's, and who live in ignorance, carelessness, or in the vanities and pleasures of this deceitful world: to you He still declares, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Once more I am permitted to put the alternative before you. Heretofore you have rejected Christ: for your outward Christianity only, your compromise with the world, your false shame, your carelessness, or your continued resistance to the Spirit, all prove you none of His. The human heart, if really awakened, cannot hear of the love of Christ, and remain indifferent, as you remain, to what it teaches. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiator for our sins;"† "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."§ Such texts as these

* John xvi. 33.  † 1 John iv. 10.  § John xv. 13.
cannot be heard with interest, if they produce no fruit. Your blindness to the view of Christ’s mercy is now your sin: and if not removed by the means still put before you, will hereafter be your condemnation. Remember, my brethren, that those your subterfuges and excuses which you now make to conscience reasoning with you, to friends reasoning with you, to God’s Spirit convincing you, will all be exposed in that day: “There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.”* Better that you should now, in this your day, look unto Jesus Christ. Amid the dangers which surround you every moment of your being, He is near you, though you discern Him not: and still, in tender pity to your souls, He puts His word before you. Are you hardened through the deceitfulness of sin? He has the remedy: He offers to “take away the heart of stone, and to give you a heart of flesh.” Are you tormented oftentimes by inward misgivings, a conscience not yet obdurate, a mind not at ease? Then, amid these mental storms, Christ still invites you to Him; tells you He is nigh to all who seek Him; assures them of His constant presence with most gracious words: “It is I: be not afraid.” May His pity for you at last bring

you to have pity upon yourselves; and may His Spirit give you that blessed experience which His people have in their growing faith in Him. In words you know the truth: in spirit may you learn to apply it. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich."* Take this truth as God offers it to you, and then of you also shall it be spoken, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."†

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.  † 1 Cor. i. 30.
OUR BLESSED LORD'S INSTRUCTIONS
TO THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA.

St. John iv. 41, 42.

"And many more believed, because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

This, my brethren, was the result of Christ's preaching the gospel among the people of Samaria, on what in human language would be called an accidental journey through that country. May a similar result be made manifest among ourselves this day, while we hear, from the same divine word, "that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

We learn from the sacred history of this portion of our great Redeemer's life on earth, that He had left Judæa, and, on His way into Galilee, "must needs go through Samaria," a country, as we well know, peculiarly hateful
to the Jews, and one which they seem to have considered under the especial curse of God.

"Being wearied with His journey," our Lord sat on Jacob's well, (a spot much remembered from its past sacred history,) and there, among other instances, did the holy Jesus prove how entirely He partook of our nature, subject to the pains of hunger and thirst, weariness and infirmity, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hence the sacred lesson, that as He, for purposes of redeeming love took upon Himself our nature, so we, in the renewing influence of sanctifying grace, must put on His; be raised and conformed to His image for purposes of grace and glory, as He lowered and conformed Himself to ours, for purposes of propitiatory mercy.

Never did this gracious Saviour omit a present opportunity of imparting His holy word for the benefit of a sinner's soul. The single circumstance of "a woman of Samaria" coming "to draw water," put the merciful occasion before our Lord of teaching some of the great and fundamental truths of His gospel to the saving of many a lost and benighted soul. Follow me, my brethren, while I endeavour for your, as well as for my own stronger feeling for the love and mercy of such a Saviour, manifested thus towards us His professed
disciples, to consider this holy incident and
dialogue consequent thereupon in its strictest
application to our own hearts.

In the object first, then, in the knowledge,
and afterwards, in the effect of that knowledge
upon the soul of this Samaritan, we may trace
the process of a sinner awakened by the truths
of the gospel unto the entire reception of its
most gracious message of the soul's salvation
in Christ.

"It was about the sixth hour. There cometh
a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith
unto her give me to drink." How often does
this same Jesus still speak to every one of us
in language at first as unintelligible to our
souls, as was this simple request, in the matter
which it was mercifully intended to precede,
to this Samaritan! We set about a worldly
proper duty: and some providence, small per-
haps, and at first hidden from our view, rises
amid matter of ordinary occurrence, to show
us Christ speaking through some instrument
of mercy, judgment, admonition, or remem-
brance, to bring us to hear and to do better
things than we had ourselves meditated.
Happy if we let no opportunity of better ac-
quaintance with the Lord Jesus pass by un-
improved.

As the Jews had "no dealings with the Sa-
maritans," our Lord's request necessarily sur-
prised the woman of Samaria: "How is it," she asked, "that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria?" The unawakened soul cannot read Christ in any of His providences: they may lead to inquiry; they may produce surprise, but they will not unveil the Saviour. How does the word of Christ expose the ignorance upon these points of a merciful interference for the soul's ultimate good, in the soul unlearned in the school of Christ! What Christ answered to the woman of Samaria is but the unfolded state of the natural man in every nation under heaven, before the soul begins to consider ordinary or special providences as "the finger of God:" "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

It will not be an unprofitable lesson to us, my brethren, to look into our own experience, and see whether we have not ourselves often resisted, whether we do not still resist some argument urged by the good providence of the Lord, with some such reasoning as this woman used against the power of the Saviour to give her "living water." While the heart remains ignorant of the love and redemption of Christ, it constantly argues against the
Our blessed Lord’s Instructions

providence of Christ, as did the woman of Samaria against the power of Christ to give the gift He offered; “Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?” By nature, all our reasoning against what the Lord would do for our souls, is as blind and worldly as was such an answer to the Lord’s personal assurance that He had “living water” to bestow, from this ignorant Samaritan.

But what does Christ herein? By mercy upon mercy, one providence after another, He more and more puts the true nature, and the blessed power and effects of His great salvation before our naturally unwilling souls. What was His reply to this woman, but, in substance, the very same argument He ever uses against all our vain reasoning and excuses for not accepting the free offer of His love: “Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again:” the soul made sensible of its wants, yet knowing not the Lord, seeks other remedies than that only “name whereby it can be saved;” but still remains forlorn and unsatisfied: must “thirst again.” It is Christ alone who can administer that balm which heals the wounded spirit: it is still His re-
corded truth as first uttered from His divine mouth to the woman of Samaria: "But who-soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

There are few hindrances to the true and saving knowledge of Christ so inveterate as the want of a right understanding of what Christ here so plainly declares: that this "living water," this "everlasting life," the means and the end, are His peculiar gift. We are tempted to mix, in our hope, something from ourselves with much that we may be really seeking from God. But until we ask as entirely destitute; until we seek as having yet found nothing from any other resource, we ask and seek in vain. "The Lord alone must be exalted in that day;" and if we would receive any thing from Christ, we must ask it as His free and unmerited gift with the heartfelt prayer and acknowledgment of—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." *

Our blessed Lord's reply to the woman seems to have called up in her mind a certain degree of faith in what He promised to bestow: the

* John vi. 68, 69.
offer in itself was full of plain and palpable advantage to her; but at present she did not appear to believe it more than a promise of an extraordinary temporal gift: still she asked for it: “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” May we, my brethren, take heed lest our prayers be tainted with that worldly character which shall show us to Him, before whom “all hearts be open, and all desires known,” as hoping for things temporal while we use words significant of things spiritual.

When the woman had so far manifested a belief that Christ had power to bestow a gift as to ask it at His hands, He was graciously pleased to show Himself to her as one capable of bestowing better things than what, in her worldly view, she sought to obtain: He showed her that He had a power which proved Him at least a prophet, one possessed of knowledge which must have been imparted to Him from above. “Jesus saith unto her, go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her; Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”
to the People of Samaria.

Our natural expectation here would be that her next question would bespeak an eagerness to inquire of this acknowledged prophet something of most near and vital consequence to her soul. She did, indeed, ask Him on a point, in its general character, of great importance; she asked Him whether the Samaritans were right, who worshipped elsewhere than in Jerusalem, or the Jews, who observed herein the strict letter of the Mosaic law: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say,” that is ye Jews say, “that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

But it is an humbling truth that thus hath it continually been since. The soul is oftentimes tempted with Peter to ask of Jesus in reference to the final condition of others, “Lord, and what shall this man do?”* And so to forget how personal a thing the gospel of Christ is, and how it should be constantly pressing home to our own hearts the far more profitable inquiry—“Lord, what shall I do to be saved?” Watch this feeling, my brethren, common at all times, and especially abounding among us in these times, when increased knowledge of the truth puts the temptation before us to be more searching after obscure and deep things, which regard God’s ways

* John xxi. 21.
and dealings towards others, than diligent in seeking after and applying those plain points of gospel knowledge which clearly belong to ourselves. We may not only not neglect, we are to be anxiously alive to whatever really affects the spiritual condition of our fellow-creatures; but we must not forget any opportunity in God's grace and providences, of some spiritual lesson to ourselves, in exercising a needless and a forbidden curiosity concerning the secrets of God's counsels in regard to our fellow-creatures.

The point which the woman of Samaria put before our Lord was most graciously answered in bringing other matter than what she was prepared to expect for her soul's instruction in "the things which are Jesus Christ’s." "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The force of instruction like this, its reasonableness, its holy tendency, its character
to the People of Samaria.

throughout, so unlike the usual mode of teaching, to which this inquiring Samaritan had been accustomed, brought her to the real feeling of her own ignorance; and to the confession of her belief, that in these and all other spiritual truths, she and others would one day or other be taught of Christ: "The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things."

How near, my brethren, is the experimental knowledge of the Saviour to every soul who, like this Samaritan, feels that it needs His instruction, and is made willing, "in the day of His power," to learn of Him! The very desire to know Christ as a divine teacher of the truth, is the certain prelude to our receiving the fulness of the knowledge of His great salvation of our souls, immediately from Himself. No sooner had the woman made this heartfelt acknowledgment of what Christ could and would do for her soul, than the Lord Jesus instantly revealed Himself to her: "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He." And what was the effect of this manifestation of the Saviour, whom she and her nation were at that time looking for? She talked of Him to others; made known His coming among them, anxious that those who needed Him equally with herself should know that
Christ was come. All other thought vanished from her mind. She was altogether wrapped up in the knowledge of this great truth. "The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" By a natural figure of speech she acknowledged His power literally to have told her the whole history of her life, from that single point of which He did tell her, and which showed Him as one to whom nothing was hidden. And how much was this communication of the woman, now awakened to a real knowledge of the truth, blessed to others also! "When the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

There is a great practical lesson to ourselves in this acknowledgment. Let each of us ask our own hearts what is the exact state of our belief in this Saviour of the world. Do we believe in Him because others tell us of Him; and so conceive, that because we live among a people professing Christianity, we
are therefore necessarily true believers? or have we the witness in ourselves? Have we well considered, that it is not the bare testimony of others which will make the Saviour our Saviour, but the experience of our own hearts? Have we ourselves felt the want of a Saviour? and have we sought after and “found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets spake?” and can we, in the giving up of ourselves to Him, testify with these Samaritans, “We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world?”

As a help in the decision of this momentous question, look to and apply the progressive incident in the providence which brought the woman of Samaria to the true belief in the Lord Jesus: and then see whether, from your inmost soul, you are led, or are desirous of being led, to the same result, in humble acknowledgment of the same truths. Look at the words of instruction which fell from the Saviour’s mouth, for you as well as for her; words which she received in their gradually leading to her full and heart-felt confession of the true Christ.

First, it was assured to her that the simple, and apparently accidental circumstance of her coming to draw water at Jacob’s well, was to be deemed by her in its proper character as
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"the gift of God." It brought her to an opportunity of hearing Christ preached to her. She hears of "living water," of which she at first knew nothing, save only as of some expected worldly good, but which, in her experience, and in the fuller knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you have been taught to know was but an outward symbol of the waters of eternal life. From the knowledge which Christ manifested of one secret sin in past and present life, she perceived that He was at least a prophet, a knowledge so amplified in what you have heard and read from your childhood, that it was but a portion of what you have been taught, and now profess to believe, in holy Peter's confession to the newly-risen Saviour: "Lord, thou knowest all things."* When this woman of Samaria found herself in the way of receiving instruction, she set herself gladly to seek it: and asked of the Lord, not indeed what was her great concern; but still she showed a mind prepared to learn of one who she entirely believed could teach. Of that teacher you have been taught infinitely greater things than those which were, at that moment, uppermost in the Samaritan woman's mind. With your outward ears at least you have long heard "the truth as it is in Jesus;" and in

* John xxi. 17.
many a prayer and many a repeated acknowledgment have exclaimed with convinced Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

This woman, too, in her confessed ignorance, expressed her belief, that of true worship, and every truth necessary for ransomed sinners to know, the expected Saviour would tell her "all things." She looked to the Messias who was promised, and in whom, not knowing that she had seen, she thus manifested her faith. You have had her testimony, together with "the whole counsel of God," put before you; and in outward profession of your Christian creed, have "set to your seal that it is true." When Christ plainly declared that the gift of God was to be made manifest to her; when, in answer to her firm expectation, "that Messias cometh which is called Christ," "Jesus" said "unto her, I am He," she at once received this glorious truth, and instantly sought the peace and consolation of her fellow-sinners' souls, in making known the glad tidings, and inviting them also to come and see the Christ.

It is thus, my brethren, under different providences, but all leading to the same end, the receiving of the knowledge of Christ as the alone Saviour of the world, that each of us, who are now present here, have been brought to Christ, or have had the opportu-
nity of being brought to Christ. Whether we have received, or whether we have rejected the truth as preached by Christ Himself to this woman of Samaria, "I that speak unto thee am He," is not a point for any other, save the inward testimony of our own hearts to determine. All that I, as your minister, can do herein, is boldly and faithfully to declare the fact of your past and present opportunities; to urge you to the deep consideration of all this; to warn you of your future reckoning for all this, and there to leave it. It is the Spirit of Christ alone which must work in and for you that which His instruments, in putting these truths before you, cannot do.

If conscience be alive within, you will hear its voice. If with that inward witness at its work, you can humbly hope that the truth has shone upon your hearts, and that in the light of that truth you are daily endeavouring to walk, then have you received, as this Samaritan woman received, Christ's witness of Himself: "To you which believe He is precious." You value His salvation, and would gladly learn to value it more.

But if conscience be alive, and bear no testimony to any real interest in the Messias which cometh to all who seek their salvation in Him; or if conscience be dead, and you hear these things which haply arrest you for a little
space, and then "pass away like the morning dew," have you no thought of future reckoning, though you feel no weight of present responsibility? You have read in the word of truth how other sinners once rejected the invitation to the gospel feast: "They made light of it." You have also read how this same Jesus mourned over and bitterly complained of those who refused: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." And you have also read the question put for you in the word of eternal truth: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

May the example be profitable to you; may the Saviour's tender complaint move you; and may the solemn question lead you to Him who even now tells you of your gift of the living water in Him, the prophet, the priest, and "bishop of your souls."
THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

St. Matt. xiii. 30.

"Let both grow together until the harvest."

We live in a world full of evil; and our very existence here without the gospel of Jesus Christ would be full of most perplexing difficulties and contradictions. But God has been very merciful to us. He has pitied the weakness of our reason. He has provided for the limited nature of our understanding; "for He knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust."* His blessed word hath revealed so much of what we could not otherwise have known, as to meet many of our most perplexing inquiries, and to satisfy all the most important difficulties.

The text is a portion of the parable of the tares and the wheat. In that parable our blessed Lord has given us the proper answer

* Ps. ciii. 14.
to the difficulty which arises in our minds in regard to that mixed state of good and evil in which we all find ourselves placed.

May Christ's Spirit accompany and bless us while we give our earnest attention to Christ's word.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit; then appeared the tares also."

By "the kingdom of heaven," we may here understand that dispensation of grace and mercy which, as a free gift, was bestowed upon mankind in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The "good seed" is the word of God, which teaches the doctrine, and enforces obedience to the laws of the second covenant in Christ's blood. The "field" is the world.

The instruction conveyed to us in this portion of the parable is, that "every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;"† and that whatsoever God gives, is in itself good, and intended to work good among those to whom it is administered. But, on the other hand, that whatsoever evil exists in the world,

* Ver. 24—26.  † James i. 17.
The Parable of the Tares.

came not originally from Him, but from Satan, His and our enemy. All God's dealings towards the children of men have been intended to illustrate His justice and His mercy; and though in this world the full manifestation of them will not appear, yet there is a time wherein it will be seen by all, that He will be "justified in His saying, and clear when He is judged."*

Ruined as we are in ourselves, we have no warranted hope but in the mercy of God in Christ. The knowledge of this greatest gift ever bestowed upon man is the "good seed:" and the false doctrines which oppose the pure and simple truths of the gospel, and the unholy and worldly ways of those who do not receive those truths, but live their lives in opposition to the spirit of the gospel, these are the "tares."

These tares are sown by Christ's enemy; and it is said, "while men slept." It is our thoughtlessness and unconcern, our natural deadness and indifference to spiritual things which gives our enemy the advantage over us. "The world lieth in wickedness," "dead in trespasses and sins." Our hearts, by nature, are utter strangers to the divine life; and unless awakened from the sleep of death by the calls of Providence and grace, continually put

* Ps. li. 4.
forth to alarm us in our spiritual slumber, we sleep on. We remain powerless under Satan's malice, and willing captives to the law of sin.

Hence the parable warns us of our extreme danger. It is while we sleep on our post that the enemy makes his successful efforts. Those who have little or no thought for their immortal souls, willingly sleep in sin, and will not be roused; and even those who have obeyed the call, and are awakened from their spiritual torpor to some regard for their eternal interests in Christ, are all naturally prone, as were the five wise, as well as the five foolish virgins, to slumber and sleep. It is said, "They all slumbered and slept." Satan is most busy when we are most idle. The Saviour's own words upon another occasion, therefore, are the proper comment upon this part of the parable: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."* To this His holy apostle has added, "by the same Spirit," "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith."†

The distinction between the tares and the wheat, the believer and the unbeliever, is seldom to man otherwise than plain and legible,

* Mark xiii. 37.
† 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.
The Parable of the Tares.

if man seek to know it; and unto Him "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid," that distinction is always manifest. This the parable before us sufficiently intimates: "So the servants of the householder came and said unto Him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence, then, hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this."*

These questions were put by the true servants of their Lord, in their proper care and inquiry after their Lord's interests. But oftentimes will Satan tempt believers to forget the simplicity of their faith, and to be curious in other men's matters, and strive to be wise "above what is written." If we seek to fathom the depths of things spiritual, we shall be bewildered and lost: for the deep things are not open for our sight, but trials for our faith: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."† The neglect of what is plain in the search after what is hidden, is always a hindrance, and oftentimes has proved the destruction of those who have so wrested the scripture truths. To all needless inquiry about the deep and mysterious ways of God,

* Ver. 27, 28. † Deut. xxix. 29.
The Parable of the Tares.

the proper answer Christ hath written down for each of us: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."*

To every suggestion, therefore, of distrustful doubt and needless perplexity, the believer's reply is, "Thus it is written:" "The Lord saith:" and to every temptation to wander from the plain and simple truths of the gospel, the proper resistance will be, under "the helmet of salvation," with "the shield of faith," to wield "the sword of the Spirit," and say, "Get thee hence, Satan." If we would aspire to the view of Christ's crown, we must first be humbled, and bow down before Christ's cross. The way to true knowledge and heaven must be learnt in the school of Christ; and there humility, the prostration of our understanding, is our first lesson: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."†

When the sower of the seed had informed his servants that it was an enemy who had done it, they were anxious at once to destroy the unprofitable tares: "The servants said unto him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up?" This is the true spirit of man; but it is opposite to the will of God. It was this very feeling which actuated the

* John xxi. 22. † Matt. xviii. 3.
two disciples, when the Samaritans refused to receive Christ: "And when His disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" And what was our blessed Lord's instant reply? "But He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."* In another place Christ said, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."† "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."‡ For, as we are told by St. Peter, "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."§

The answer given to the servants in the parable is grounded upon this principle: "But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."||

In real life God permits the evil to remain, and does not, as man would oftentimes have it, destroy the evil at once. He lets both "grow together." Were God to sweep off, at any one given period, all the wicked before

* Luke ix. 54—56. † John iii. 17.
‡ John xii. 47. § 2 Pet. iii. 9. || Ver. 29.
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The great harvest of the world should be ripe, many tender ties would be broken; how many hearts most bitterly wounded in the remembrance of the heavy judgment of hopeless condemnation passed upon those who were snatched away! But it is not so. God does not separate the evil from the good. He leaves them together, that so the good may have influence upon the evil, and cause it to cease to be evil. Those who are awakened from sin to holiness were once, as others are now, "dead in trespasses and sins;" and the Saviour, therefore, looks for the fruit of love from them in regard to those who are still wanderers from His fold. To every one, whose heart the Lord has turned, the first question is, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" and the first command is, "Let your light shine." We are members one of another. One of a family, awakened unto holiness, should strive to be made a blessed instrument of spiritual good to the rest. It is a dangerous thing so to construe those texts of scripture which speak of divisions and heart-burnings as sure to take place, as though we were not condemned in being accessory to them. The Christian rule is to teach wherever we can teach, and to learn wherever we can learn one of another; "that," as the holy apostle enjoins, "there should be no schism in
the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."* It is grievous that in these days, this portion of Christian duty should be so little attended to and so ill understood. The spirit of knowledge should be accompanied with "the spirit of love and of a sound mind."† Any other view of our own attainments, opinions, or advantages, savours not of "the things which are Jesus Christ's;" it partakes of the temper condemned by the apostle in, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."‡

It was this which the Lord Jesus taught in the last portion of the parable before us: "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."§

We have here, as in many other places in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the express revelation of a future judgment, when the great account shall be finally settled between God

* 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26.  † 2 Tim. i. 7.  ‡ Rom. xii. 19.  § Ver. 30.
and man. The interval between Christ’s first coming to save the world, and His second coming to judge the world, is but a point in respect to eternity: “Behold,” saith the Redeemer, “I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”* Such a day was needful, to show before men and angels that God has been ever mindful of the great truth so much pressed upon us now in His holy word: “Let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons.”† And St. Paul, from whose writings man has not feared to deduce a system which looks another way, repeatedly avers this very same truth. To the Romans he saith, “For there is no respect of persons with God.”‡ To the Ephesians, “Your master is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.”§ To the Colossians, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”¶ St. Peter, too, bears the like testimony to the same

* Rev. xxii. 12. † 2 Chron. xix. 7.
‡ Rom. ii. 11. § Eph. vi. 9. ¶ Col. iii. 23—25.
The Parable of the Tares.

truth of "the Father who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work."* In the spirit of such passages as these, our blessed Lord inculcated, in the parable before us, the doctrine of a day of judgment, a state of final retribution for the deeds done in the body; while, in the very face of such passages as these, some have not feared to teach that which shows that God has respect to persons, and at once overthrows the doctrine of a general judgment, because it makes it utterly impossible that there can be fit subjects for it. So errs man, when, in the view of his own construction of the deep mysteries of religion, he wanders from the plain and simple teaching of the unerring wisdom of God.

I would now endeavour to bring the instruction conveyed to us in the parable of the tares, a little closer to our own consciences. For, my brethren, we are among the persons intended. We are represented therein. We are "tares" some of us, and some of us are "wheat." But, in the construction of this, and of almost all the parables of the blessed Jesus, we must remember that the parable, as a whole, is the vehicle of moral and religious instruction; yet that, in some of its parts, it may not apply in that character,

* 1 Pet. i. 17.
The Parable of the Tares.

though necessary to make the parable consistent with itself; like the scaffolding of a house which aids in the building, but constitutes no integral portion of the house. There is this distinction, therefore, between the tares and wheat in nature, and that which the tares and wheat represent in the parable. The natural tares are always tares, the wheat always wheat: each in the parable is left for its necessary end: the tares to be burnt; the wheat to be gathered into the barn. But in the spiritual field, the tares, that is the evil, are left among the wheat, that is the good, that before the great harvest shall come upon them, they may profit spiritually, by the patient forbearance of God; that they also may be found, with hearts changed from their natural state, among the people of the Lord. They who profit by the mercy and long-suffering of the Lord, will, though once far off, be brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ; and those who continue in sin, and resist grace, will finally perish. It is the revealed rule by which the Almighty has ever carried on His moral government over mankind. "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised
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His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy."* While the voice of strict justice from the throne is, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" The voice of the Lamb which stands before the throne is, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."†

To you, my brethren, who have been brought to choose the Lord for your portion, the parable of the tares holds out this especial lesson. While with the servants of their master, you watch your Lord's interests, and strive to promote His kingdom, see that you be free from every tendency towards the spirit which might lead to unchristian zeal: "Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up?"

In your knowledge of the truth of the gospel, you must be guided in your intercourse with all your fellow-creatures, whether they be yet the people of the Lord or not, by the spirit of the gospel. Nothing is more likely to win souls to Christ than right conduct on the part of those who are Christ's, towards those who are evidently not Christ's; con-

duct kind, tender, considerate. "Brethren," saith the apostle Paul, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* And though you are especially enjoined in scripture to draw the line broad and strong between all conformity to the world, you are not so far to go out of the world, as to be forgetful that true believers "are the salt of the earth," and that they must show themselves such; that, with your knowledge and spiritual attainments, gifts and graces, you must "let your light shine." You must show decidedly that you belong to Christ wherever your duty leads you; and as God shall give opportunity of knowing the real errors of your fellow-creatures, exhibit Christian zeal, Christian prudence, and Christian love, in your humble endeavour to reprove and correct them. This was the apostle's command to the church committed to his care: "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."†

Be this your rule every where. Be it most

* Gal. vi. 1, 2.  
† 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15.
especially your rule among your relations and personal friends and acquaintance. Towards them, and for their spiritual good, this is your great and entrusted talent. Let your household and dependents, if you are heads of families; your fellow-members, if you are yourselves under-members of a family, see the spirit of the gospel beaming forth in all you do. Show them continually, that, awakened to a deep sense for caring for your own soul, you are become really anxious that they also should be brought to the same care for their souls. Hereby you may be made blessed instruments in God's hand of strengthening the weak, confirming the wavering, of awakening the thoughtless, while, at the same time, you cheer and encourage the true believer to go on with yourself rejoicing in the Lord. The believer's privileges in Christ, for his own spiritual consolation, are also his entrusted talent for the spiritual edification of others. In the conscientious exercise of this talent, Christ looks that you be found faithful.

You, my brethren, who, as tares growing among the wheat, still separate yourselves by sinful ways, or by carelessness of living, or by wilful ignorance of "the truth as it is in Jesus," from the people of the Lord, you differ from the natural figure in the parable in one point only. The tares, as before observed, are
always tares, and their end, in the course of the parable, is of necessity to be burnt. In opposing "the things which are Jesus Christ's," you assimilate your case; to that which is represented in the baneful effects of the tares growing among the wheat. But it does not follow from the parable that you must always, and of necessity be, as now you are, enemies to Christ, and therefore cruel enemies to your own soul. The parable is written for the very purpose of warning you of what the end shall be of "all the people that forget God." While you wilfully remain in an unconverted state, and, as to any saving purpose, "without God in the world," you must not consider yourselves as belonging to Him. The most noxious weed among the choicest grain is, not more opposite to the wholesome plant near which it grows, than is the state of your soul to that of a true child of God. In the Word of God the two conditions are always stated plainly; so that the contrast in their course, and at their termination, may be clearly discerned: it is light and darkness, wisdom and folly, knowledge and ignorance, faith and unbelief; sin and holiness, heaven and hell. While light beams in upon the believer's soul; while wisdom descends upon him from above; while knowledge shows him the way; while faith brings him to the cross; while ho-
liness is seated in his heart; and while heaven is the constant object of his hope;—upon your soul darkness still broods with all its natural hindrances, and by and bye with all its natural horrors: folly leads you to the world, ignorance makes you satisfied with yourself, unbelief keeps you from Christ, the law of sin condemns you, and hell is open to receive you.

With this contrast from God's Word, not from man's mouth before you, answer to your conscience this one question:—Was the venomous serpent's bite upon the bodies of the Israelites in the wilderness more full of poison, more certain to end in death, than is the sin now upon your soul, deadly in its present effects, fatal in its future consequences? And yet the bitten Israelite lived.

"Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."* A greater than Moses now prays, and has long prayed for you: and with His own gracious words I press the consideration of your present danger; I put before you a

* Numb. xxi 7—9.
sure and certain hope; I leave you to apply the contrast I have drawn: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

* John iii. 14, 15.
LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE GRAVE.

St. John xi. 45, 46.

"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done."

It would have been a natural thought in our minds, that, after such a miracle as that which the Lord Jesus Christ wrought in raising Lazarus from the dead, some of those who saw with their own eyes the corrupted corpse ascend from the grave, would not have told the enemies of Christ what He had done, save only to prevail upon them to be no more His enemies. But this was not so. Those who hate Christ in any of His offices, hate Him in all; and the unbelieving Jew, who despised such a king in their long-expected Messiah as was the humble Jesus of Nazareth, would
not acknowledge the spiritual end of His wonderful works, which, in themselves, they could not deny. May it please our now glorified Redeemer better to influence all our hearts in the review of this stupendous instance of His power, that we may learn more fully, and apply more earnestly, in the resurrection of Lazarus, this awfully solemn pledge of a dying Redeemer's love.

The first intimation of the sickness, from the sisters of dying Lazarus, marks the holy confidence which that pious family had been brought to feel in the tender compassion of their acknowledged Lord: “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick:” and His gracious reply to intelligence which, in its issue, was to make Him weep, conveys not only an assurance of comfort to the then mourning friends of the sick sufferer, but a sacred ground of hope to every future believer in Christ crucified, that his heaviest sorrows are working for his Redeemer’s glory: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”

In the history of this stupendous display of Almighty power, no circumstance is insignificant: “He abode two days still in the same place where He was.” He hastened not, as earthly friends would, in the common dictates of natural feeling, expect, to heal the dying
man. He would do far more than that: waiting till corruption should have made him its prey, and so magnifying His saving power. Could the believer, in times to come, have better trust put before him, that, under the bitterest infictions of soul or body, though Christ be told in prayer and faith that he is sick, and come not yet, He the less hears not, but provides some greater mercy than the mercy asked for? This gracious Saviour may seem to be away; but it is only a two days' absence in preparation for the fuller manifestation of a Saviour's love.

An incident follows in this eventful history which reads a lesson of Christian fortitude, a willing taking up of the cross against all opposition, and in the midst of any danger. "Master," urged His affectionate disciples, anxious for His personal safety, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither," to Judea, the abode of His enemies, "again?" "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" was the merciful and the intended reproof against such distrust in a heavenly Father's love, and such implied advice to leave undone a present duty. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."
This gracious warning to His people against idleness in the expenditure of their precious time, the Lord Jesus mercifully intermingled with His present opportunity of "a word spoken in season;" and then told his disciples, that Lazarus had fallen asleep. They knew not the lesson intended herein; they knew not that when the Saviour tells His people that their death is but sleep, so sure are they to awake, arise, and live for ever in Him, He meant that they should understand how entirely "the bitterness of death is past," "the sting of death" drawn out, and the victory of the grave overcome for all that believe in Him; and therefore, when His disciples understood not this, He "said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe."

It is thus that the Lord Jesus rejoices in His people’s good, though for a little season He may seem to be away: He never forgets to be gracious, though a trembling, or a depressed believer, in the weakness of an early faith, may think that the Lord is not with him, at the very moment when, in present supply of needful help and consolation, the Redeemer’s words are passed, "nevertheless let us go unto him."

It was this gracious resolution of his divine
Master which called forth the exhortation of St. Thomas to his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." He had love sufficient towards the Lord Jesus to resolve it better to go and die with Him; thus determined to incur the danger of the malice of the Jews, though he wanted faith to believe fully in the Saviour's wisdom, without the mournful conclusion that this manifestation of it would necessarily lead the Lord and His disciples to immediate death. His love to Christ, in thus being willing to die with Him, is our glorious example; and the result of our blessed Lord exposing Himself upon this solemn occasion, teaches us a lesson which the holy apostle had not yet learnt, that we must follow Jesus whithersoever He goeth, anxious for present spiritual profit, and not with fear or despondency anticipating any unknown consequence. It is enough for the believer to be as his Lord; and the issue of all duty undertaken in the cause of Christ, he contentedly leaves with Him.

The arrival of this holy band, the master and His disciples, at the scene of woe brought to their ears what, to unbelieving hearts, would have shown the fruitlessness of their journey; "that" the dead body of their common friend "had lain in the grave four days already." It was the first feeling in his sister
Martha's heart to show how bitterly this sure token of mortality had affected her. Her's was a grief, mixed with a trembling faith, which believed much, and seemed fully prepared to believe more. She was favoured, therefore, with the Lord's fullest instruction in some of the first, the most awakening, and the most cheering truths of His blessed gospel. The holy dialogue which passed between them is well deserving our most serious attention.

Martha had left the house "as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, and went and met Him." "Mary," the other sister of Lazarus, retaining her proper character of a holy and contemplative waiting for the Lord in all His dispensations towards her, "sat still in the house."

The first words of Martha show how she believed in the power of Christ to have arrested the progress of the disease, and how acutely she had felt His absence from this house of mourning: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Here was an expression of faith in what Christ could have done. But she was enabled to put forth her further confidence in what He could still do: "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Whether this confident expectation
extended only to her belief of Christ's power to avail in prayer for the present support and consolation of His afflicted friends; or whether it were mixed with some feeble expectation of a greater mercy, we do not, perhaps, fully collect; though, from her subsequent declaration, it would seem that her hope of the actual resurrection of her departed brother did not anticipate the period of "the last day." For though Christ's reply to her "Thy brother shall rise again," included, in His intention, a present and a future resurrection, she does not appear to have seen in it more than an assurance of the final resurrection of all mankind: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

And now was the great truth to be fully and plainly spoken, which was to show to endless generations, that a Saviour was given for man, who, in the sufferings of the cross, and the perfect obedience to the law, had power to subdue for His people their last enemy: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." "On such the second death hath no power."* "Believest thou this? She saith

* Rev. xx. 6.
unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art
the Christ, the Son of God, which should come
into the world."

My brethren, it is the question following
the great truth of the redemption which is in
Christ alone, that Christ now puts to every
one of us: "Believest thou this?" We may
not have a brother corrupted in the grave;
we do not stand weeping at its brink, and ex-
pect the Saviour's voice to call him back to
life: but we have each of us an immortal soul
within, ransomed by the precious blood of
Christ, with Christ preached in His gospel, as
"the resurrection and the life:" and to this
knowledge, revealed by Christ's Spirit for our
learning also, the same question for ever re-
curs: "Believest thou this?" If our heart can
reply in a holy faith given from above, we
shall further imitate this weeping sister of the
dead. And how did she act herein? "She
went her way, and called Mary, her sister, se-
cretly, saying, The master is come, and call-
eth for thee."

The true believer, anxious for others when
awakened in himself, tells of Christ to every
one; calls together his friends and his rela-
tions, begs them also to "see what great
things the Lord hath done for him:" in his
conviction of sin, his hope in Christ, his sanc-
tification in the spirit of Christ, he refers all
his good to Christ, and communicates the report of all his good to every saint and every sinner: he invites all to Christ in example, in precept, in entreaty: with him it ever sounds forth for the honour and glory of his master: "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"*

The conduct of Mary, upon hearing that Christ was come, follows up this sacred lesson, and points out the only way in which the message of Christ's redeeming love must be received: "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him." When the soul of the convinced sinner is once impressed with the certainty of its own ruin, and hears the summons, "The master is come, and calleth for thee," he must not parley with sin, or deliberate about consequences. Father, mother, brethren and sisters, houses and land, whatever keeps the soul from Christ, must be forsaken, or he cannot be Christ's true disciple. He must do as Mary did, so soon as ever he hears of Jesus: "Arise quickly, and go unto Him."

The personal presence of the Lord produced from Mary feeling and attestation similar to that which it had produced in Martha: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother

* John iv. 29.
Lazarus raised from the Grave. 169

had not died.” But Christ’s instruction to Martha was deemed instruction herein sufficient for Mary also; and the compassionate Saviour, ever entering with all the sympathy of His human nature into human suffering, now became full of His own excited sorrows. It was a family of holy persons peculiarly dear to Him. “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” The sorrow, therefore, of this afflicted household became His own: “When Jesus, therefore, saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.”

Yes, my brethren; Christ wept over the dead body of His friend; a body which He knew would speedily revive at His omnipotent word. But what was that weeping, compared with the piercing agony of His woe, when He wept over perishing souls? souls whom He knew that He must Himself one day condemn with, “Depart from me, ye cursed?” If the Lord Jesus could thus feel as a man for an affliction fallen upon a dying creature in time, what did He not feel as the willing Saviour of those unnumbered souls which He knew would not believe in Him, nor accept the free offer of His great salvation for eternity? If we can feel the weeping of Jesus for the dead Lazarus,
let us never forget, as our far more instructive lesson, those tears which He shed, those agonies which He endured for "souls that should not die:" let us never forget the history of His weeping over the sinners of Jerusalem, as the tender expostulation of a Saviour’s mercy held out to every sinner: "He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

The tears of the holy Jesus, amid the mourners of His departed friend, necessarily called forth much notice from the standers by: "Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Our Lord proceeded to show that He could do greater things than this. It was but a doubting faith from a past miracle: whereas we are instructed, from what the Saviour has wrought, firmly to believe, that "all things are possible with Him." To the words, or thoughts expressed to others, (for He knew all that was thought or spoken,) He made no other reply, than an immediate undertaking of His "labour of love." "Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the

* Luke xix. 41, 42.
Lazarus raised from the Grave. 171

grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." It was for the Lord of life to look with power into the mansions of the grave; but it was not yet for doubting man to believe, that the soul, at the Saviour's voice, would return to its corrupted tabernacle. It was not more an unknown thing to the mind of the prophet, that "the dry bones, in the midst of the valley," should "live, and stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army,"* than it was to the surrounding witnesses of the corrupted corpse of Lazarus, that it should even then rise again. In the weakness of faith, in the sure and rapid hastening of a body to corruption under the influence of a burning sun, was it wonderful that the anxious sister of the dead should still remonstrate upon a difficulty which man could not remove? Can we be surprised at the more than doubt of afflicted Martha? "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." The Saviour's merciful and encouraging reply gently reproved her faith, and more severely condemns ours, if we yield not up our souls in unqualified belief in Him: "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

* Ezek. xxxvii, 10.
Christ's command was now obeyed: "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid." And now what a scene presented itself, and to the eye of faith still presents itself as an eternal memorial of the love and power of the Redeemer! The tomb opened its jaws, ready to disgorge its prey. A body, offensive in its corruption, lay in the silence of death its then entire prey. Weeping, doubting, anxious friends of the dead standing around, knowing in past experience, that Jesus did nothing in vain, but here wondering for some event they knew not of.

In this group of afflicted, yet amazed beholders, what was the attitude of the Saviour Himself? It was the attitude of prayer: in a deep and solemn silence the Redeemer was engaged in fervent prayer, that the man Christ Jesus might still wield the power of Deity, and in His works, still show that "He and His Father were one." His silent prayer answered, the mourners around Him were to hear the utterance of His praise: "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stood by I said it, that they may believe that hast sent me."

When Christ prayed to the Father, it was hers, not for Himself: this is intercession
rather than prayer; and His prayer then heard for the conviction of surrounding beholders of His power, teaches us also, that Christ still prays for His people; and that the power granted to Him to raise the dead body, should be the sufficient pledge to every one of us, that He can raise the soul dead in carelessness, trespasses, and sins, and give it a power to apply the divine efficacy of His own command: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."*

And now the Lord put forth that word which at first summoned creation into being, awakened Lazarus from his corruption, and will one day call the countless millions of our race who sleep, from their scattered dust. The Lord had prayed, the Lord had spoke the words of thanksgiving: "And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." All that hear the voice of the Son of God, shall live: they that hear it in this life, speaking to their souls through the divine Spirit, as well as those who "turn a deaf ear to this charmer, charm He never so wisely," and shall awaken from the sleep of death to hear His voice condemning them to everlasting woe. How the history before us verifies this certain truth! No sooner

had "the Lord and giver of life" spoken to the corrupted corpse in the chambers of the grave, than it heard and revived: "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." And this brings us to the important portion of this wonderful history, which renders it practically applicable to ourselves: it is the portion chosen for the text: "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done."

At the recital of these things, and of this issue of the miracle, as it thus differently affected the minds of those who saw it with their own eyes, there is not, perhaps, a single person now present in this congregation, but is ready to exclaim, does exclaim in his own thoughts, How strange an issue to so wonderful a miracle! "Some believed, and some believed not"! Why did not all believe?

Permit me to answer this, and say, that it was for the very same reason which prevents some of you, my brethren, from believing it. Start not at such a hearing; nor accuse me of condemning: no one condemns you but God
and your own heart herein; and there if you look, you will see how it is, and why, that you have not yet really believed in Christ's raising Lazarus from the dead, as Christ intended, and your own eternal interests demand. You have now again heard the history of this wonder of the Lord; you have oftentimes heard it before: and as the history of a fact, say you do not question it. But when Christ raised the corrupted body of Lazarus from the tomb, it was to show you a Saviour's power to raise your soul from the death of sin: when Christ declared Himself "the resurrection and the life," it was to win you over, in unmixed faith, to take Him as your only hope, your endless life. But this you have not practically believed. Your soul still sleeps in sin; and, so far from hearing any voice which is raised to awaken you out of it, "you go your ways to the Pharisees," the enemies of Christ, and tell them your continued enmity to the truth, and to every one who speaks faithfully Christ's truth in your hearing. The Pharisees acknowledged the miracle: "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles:" and you do not deny it. More, therefore, than this, as an invitation for you seriously to weigh, in your own hearts, what this miracle is in itself, and its extended consequences, more than this for you I now add not. May
Christ's blessed Spirit lead you to a better and happier consideration of Christ's almighty power, as your yet sufficient and redeeming God and Saviour.

More, too, than what has been already done, in the recital of a wonder which would exhaust many an address from this place, I need not offer to you, my brethren, who have been brought by the Spirit of truth to receive the truth. Every step in the progress of this amazing instance of Christ's power interests and affects you deeply. But far more are you amazed at those steps in providence and grace, whereby the Holy Spirit hath led you in a joyful, or in a painful experience, to receive "the truth as it is in Jesus." Convinced of sin, you have been raised by the self-same power which raised Lazarus from the tomb; and, bound hand and foot in your own utter helplessness, you have come forth from the nauseous corruption of wilful sin, and the deadness of a spiritual death, you have come forth unto Christ. The reason for the miracle for Lazarus, and the miracle for you, is exactly the same: each lay dead; each was the prey to their respective corruption; each was to hear, rise, and go to Christ. Think, then, never upon the resurrection of Lazarus without an accompanying feeling of holy gratitude for the resurrection which Christ hath
already wrought for you. It is the pledge of what He will still do for you: raised by Him from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness, He will summon you in His day from the literal corruption of your dust, unto a life of endless glory. Let this thought be the foundation of your trust in Him, and let it cheer you in your course of love to God and love to your fellow-creatures, "to spend and be spent" in the service of Christ.
CHRIST’S MERCIFUL EXPOSTULATIONS WITH SINNERS,

ILLUSTRATED BY THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.


"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

The important point intended by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, appears to be fixed in that portion of it which I have now read to you; to convince us that the means of grace are sufficient for the purposes of grace.

If one thing more than any other might seem capable of exciting in our minds a real belief of the spiritual world, and of the close concern which we each have with that unseen world, we should perhaps say that it would be a messenger, a spirit sent expressly to us from the regions beyond the grave, to tell us, with an audible voice, that there is another and an
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eternal life after this, wherein some will be "comforted," and some "tormented." This, perhaps, would be the strongest proof, which our natural reason could desire, to convince us that there really is a heaven and a hell. And yet Christ declares in the parable before us, wherein that very point is brought forward to our view, that we have stronger evidence than this; that "we have Moses and the prophets;" that they write of Christ: we have also the apostles and the evangelists, and they preach Christ. Now, how can we be assured of such transcendant power in the written word, (beyond what even a spirit from the world of spirits could impart,) as testimony to that truth which is to be the object of faith, not of sight? We must see what the Holy Spirit hath spoken of the energy of that word by which we live, and by which we shall be judged, and "which holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"† With such testimony from the

* Heb. iv. 12. 
† Jer. xxiii. 29.

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Spirit of truth to the energy of the divine word, we see why our blessed Lord hath in mercy warned us all, that if we profit not by this, "if" we "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither" shall we "be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

May His gracious Spirit be present with us at this time, while, for my own, as well as for your better profit in the knowledge of "the things which are Jesus Christ's," I bring this awful parable before us: it should be spiritual food for all: for it is well suited to excite the believer to pray, and to receive the object of his prayer, "Lord, increase" my "faith;" and to awaken the unbeliever from his deadly torpor, his strange indifference to his soul's health.

It was in the last year of our blessed Saviour's personal ministry on earth, in which He had most solemnly warned the rich and covetous Pharisees of the exceeding danger of all trust in the perishable things of this present world. He had shown of what only use was "the mammon of unrighteousness;" how only it should be employed in reference to the hoped-for possession of "the true riches" in "everlasting habitations." He had spoken of the sins which, with all their outward endeavour to "justify" themselves "before men," caused them to be had "in abomination in
the sight of God:” and then, that He might exhibit a fearful illustration of what shall follow after death, He instructed us all by the following parable:

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”*

This rich man and this poor man are the prominent subjects of the parable, not to show that every rich man shall perish, and that every poor man shall be saved; but that, in regard to the conduct of rich and poor, “there is a God that judgeth the earth.” The rich man, too, is described as very rich; the poor man as exceedingly poor. But this does not exclude those different degrees of riches and poverty by which we may be severally influenced. Rich and poor are relative terms; and vary much according to the subject to which they are applied, and the circumstances under which they are used. It is not the exceedingly rich only who trust in their creature comforts; nor is it the exceedingly poor who are necessarily and alone disciplined spi-

* Ver. 19—21.
ritually to look to a better treasure than this world can give. Any portion of this world's goods possessed, expected, or hoped for, which keeps our heart from God, identifies our case sufficiently with the "rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day," to make his eternal ruin our most awful warning. His riches had caused him to seek "the friendship of the world," which holy scripture always tells us "is enmity against God:" he evidently lived for his own personal ease and worldly consolations. He is charged with no committed sin; but with much neglected duty. He lived for himself alone, in the indulgence of his body, forgetful of his spiritual and relative duties in the care of his immortal soul. The poor man, too, is praised for no virtue: but, his patient submission to God's will under his extreme and bitter sufferings of body; his humble desire of no more than the mere crumbs of an abounding fellow-creature's daily food; his heavenly consolations after the pains of this mortality were over, all inferred, in the character of the parable, that his soul had been fixed upon better things than any earthly treasure; his resignation entirely manifested to his heavenly Father's will.

Thus were these two opposite in life: opposite also were they at death: "And it came
to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried."* As in life the poor man had been kept far away from the love and gratification of the body, so in death is the body scarcely alluded to: he died; the link which held the imperishable soul to the already-corrupted body, was severed, and its guardian angels, those "ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation," bore it safely to its rest, that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

And of "the rich man" it is said, that he also died:" riches cannot stay back the hand of death: but it is added, "and was buried." His body had been that for which he had lived: his body he had "clothed in purple and fine linen," had fed and pampered it, so that it "fared sumptuously every day." His body, therefore, was buried, doubtless, with all the pomp and show which had accompanied it in its life-time; and so the world decorated it with the world's last honours, and spake his praises even in the tomb.

But if in life these two were opposite, and in death were opposite, how entirely opposite were they after death! While the soul of Lazarus reposed with the faithful, awaiting in

* Ver. 22.
joyful hope a resurrection to eternal life, the opposite condition of the rich man is not kept back from our knowledge: "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."*

How wonderful does it seem, my brethren, that, with this confession before us, and with all the truth of revelation reiterating and confirming it, "fools" should still "make a mock at sin," "set at nought all" God's "counsel, and" will "none of" His "reproof!"† God warns, and His prophets weep and lament; and still sinners wait, till in experience they utter, "I am tormented in this flame," before they believe in the ruin caused by sin, and shown them in most tender pity to their perishing souls: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"‡

This rich man believed in the pains of hell only when he experienced them; and then he sought a remedy, which, when put before him in his day of grace, he had despised. He now sought that remedy in vain: "But Abraham

* Ver. 24.   † Prov. xiv. 9; i. 25.   ‡ Jer. ix. 1.
said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." His spiritual opportunities were past. No more could he hear what once he heard in his day of grace; what now we hear in ours: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" "with joy" to "draw water out of the wells of salvation."*

Beware, ye who are rich, how you construe the meaning of this solemn adjudication: beware, too, ye who are poor. It was not because he was rich, that the rich man was "tormented;" neither was it because he was poor, that the poor man was "comforted." The rich man had looked for his "good things" in the enjoyment of the ease and pleasures of the world; and the poor man, resting after death in Abraham's bosom, had in life been a true son of Abraham. Abraham in his lifetime had "rejoiced to see Christ's day; and he saw it, and was glad:" and every faithful follower of Abraham, who only could inherit the promises with Abraham, had in faith seen the same day. This poor beggar in this world had been rich in the faith of his father Abraham, confessed that he was only a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and so looked for a

* Isai. lv. 1; xii. 3.
country that is a heaven, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Keep, then, the distinction clear and strong: neither do riches condemn, nor does poverty save. Riches may be used to God’s glory; and poverty may know the issue against which holy Agur prayed: “Lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”* Riches will not hurt us, if we be “poor in spirit,” and “rich toward God;” and poverty will not spiritually profit us, unless we abound in “the true riches” which are in Christ Jesus.

Whether in life we trust in our riches, or in life build our hope upon our poverty, as a debt against God, to be paid back to us in the glories of heaven, we must equally hear in the place of torment of that eternal separation which keeps condemned sinners from the lot of the righteous. So was it told by Abraham unto this lost rich man: "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”†

It is Satan’s temptation that man should not only disbelieve the promises, but also the threatenings of God. Scripture tells us plainly, that at our death our doom for eternity

* Prov. xxx. 9.  
† Ver. 26.
is sealed: "The great gulf" which separates the two eternal states "is fixed." Trifle not with the truth of God: leave the deep things of eternity to Him. Eternal punishment is a mystery; but it is a revealed truth: eternal happiness for us sinners is a mystery; but it is a divinely purchased gift. Of both simply believe what is written, and leave the rest with God: "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."*

The rich man, in despair for himself, thought no more of change in his own endless doom: but the sympathies of his nature were not extinguished. It is the unextinguished sympathies which will add some of the bitterest sufferings to the torments of the lost. The remembrance of our varied relationships in this world perverted, past over, and unimproved, shall kindle up a hell within the tormented souls of condemned sinners, which will make the name of husband, wife, parent, child, master or servant, a pang that must be felt before it can be known. If in our relative ties we have forgotten our relative duties, and so have been "partakers of other men's sins," there is a judgment pronounced originally against faithless ministers of religion, but in its measure applicable to all who have influ-

* Eccles. xi. 3.
ence in their several conditions: "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."*

In his life-time, a life passed in the indulgence of self, the rich man knew as little of the power of religion in that proportion of its influence over others for which each individual is made responsible, as of its vital character in regard to his own soul. But in his own torments he was brought to the remembrance of those whom he had left: "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." It is the constant tendency of the unrenewed heart to ask for more evidence for religious truth than what God Himself hath vouchsafed, and hath pronounced sufficient. The Jews around our Lord Himself demanded a sign, though they had seen signs exhibited publicly before them all, in prophecy fulfilling, and in miracles proclaiming, the great scripture promise of the Messiah, then actually accomplished.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 6.
But no sign of the kind they sought after would be given unto them: they had received signs enough already. "If," said Christ, "I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

When the rich man pleaded, on behalf of his five brethren, for what he judged greater evidence than that which they already possessed, he was answered, as Scripture always answers such a complaint as this: "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."† In the whole history of God's dealings with mankind, He hath ever shown it to be His sovereign and gracious will that His creatures, placed in this world as their state of moral probation for eternity, should have a sufficient degree of light and knowledge to enable them to know and serve Him. In the darkest periods there have been glimmerings of "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."‡ Of such very periods the holy apostle St. Paul has declared this for the honour and justice due

* John xv. 22—24. † Ver. 29. ‡ John i. 9.
unto the Lord: "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

* "and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being."† 

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse."‡

It was the same apostle, St. Paul, through whom the Holy Spirit was pleased to make these communications; and they show, as plainly as language can speak unto us, that we shall all be judged according to the light we have each received, and that that light was sufficient: they that have little, will be judged by that little; or, as our blessed Lord declared, "He that is faithful in that which is

* Acts xiv. 17. † Ib. xvii. 26—28. ‡ Rom. i. 20.
least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."* It was in the very spirit of all this that the rich man in torment received his answer: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

But the unrenewed mind is never satisfied with the dispensations of God: on earth they are disregarded; and the rich man in hell reasoned against their sufficiency for others, though eternally silenced in the just judgment upon himself: "And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."† So judges the carnal mind; but God's word at once contradicts it: "And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." This was literally accomplished in the case of many of the Jews, in the manner in which they received Christ's miracle in the resurrection of another Lazarus from the grave. They knew, and among themselves confessed, that he was raised from the dead: "But the chief priests consulted, that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."‡ And here terminated the solemn dialogue: the finally con-

* Luke xvi. 10. † Ver. 30. ‡ John xi. 10, 11.
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denmed had no more to reply either for the mitigation of his own sufferings, or against the dispensation of God towards his five brethren: so true is the great scripture doctrine, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."*

We, my brethren, who hear these things, are by nature already under a sentence of condemnation, through "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."† We were all born in sin: by nature we belonged to Adam, by whose "disobedience many were made sinners."‡ "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."§ This is the state in which, by nature, we all are born, all live, and all must die: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one."|| Thus are we in Adam. But under the covenant of grace in the second Adam there is a way, but the only way to escape: without that covenant we are utterly lost, and the rich man's place would be ours: "in hell lifting up" our "eyes, being in torments." In Christ is our sole deliverance: "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."¶ In Christ alone

is salvation offered to mankind; and, whether we be poor in our life-time with Lazarus, or rich with the lost sinner before us, who had loved and trusted in his riches, it matters not as to the sole cause of our justification. It is Christ alone: His merits, His sufferings, His intercession. A sinner saved hath none other thing to say than this: "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, that by the name of Jesus Christ doth this man stand here before you whole. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

It was to enforce this necessary truth upon our hearts, that our blessed Lord preached the gospel in the solemn parable before us: "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them." It was His own testimony that the gospel of salvation was typified and taught by the law, and foretold by the prophets: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me;"† "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me;"‡ "And," when this glorious Saviour would instruct His people, after His resurrec-

* Acts iv. 9, 10, 12. † John v. 39. ‡ Ver. 46.

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tion, how He should be known, and how He should be preached to the world, "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." If, then, Christ was thus to be read and thus to be preached from the Old Testament to the unawakened Jew, how full, how manifold should be the attestations of the Spirit to the doctrines of His cross to the professing Christian, as well as to the ignorant and unconverted gentile! "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

My brethren, look to yourselves. You have seen in the parable before us the two different issues of the believer and the unbeliever's condition after death. In Lazarus "comforted," in the rich man "tormented," you see the only two states which await us all. The rich man lived as many of you live now; at ease in his possessions, self-indulgent, satisfied with the world. "For many walk, of whom," saith the holy apostle, "I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things." But the rich man had his "good things" in his life-time. You also have yours; and have hitherto shown

* Luke xxiv. 27.  
† Phil. iii. 18, 19.
that neither Christ's offer of better things, nor this rich man's dreadful testimony that there are worse things, have yet brought you to any real belief in that "Saviour which is Christ the Lord." More than such an invitation; worse than such a warning, not man nor angel can put before you. Christ tells you it is sufficient, and that resistance to His plain word is the sure proof that you would still resist, "though one rose from the dead." Could you but be persuaded to look to that blessed Saviour, all that you now value of sin, and worldly cares, and pleasures, would soon cease to be valuable to you. He, by His Spirit, would change your hearts to better purposes than what are now bearing you away to destruction; and soon would you be brought to reap the blessed fruits of the true believer's experience: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless; and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*

* Phil. iii. 7—9.
Compare this, my brethren, with "the wages of sin," and then consider the immense result of your final choice: "comforted" with the poor man in Abraham's bosom, gathered among the faithful in Jesus Christ, or tormented with the rich man "in that flame." May the Spirit of Christ make this thought an awakening one to you, who still live in the world, and for the world; and may the same Spirit make it profitable to those among you who have fled unto your refuge, in that Saviour which is "Christ the Lord."
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St. Mark x. 21.

"One thing thou lackest."

That the soul shall exist eternally, and be eternally happy or eternally miserable, is a truth so awfully momentous to us all, that when the word of God speaks of this truth, it seems to regard it as the only object of our earnest inquiry. We can think of and enjoy real temporal happiness: but to the believer all temporal happiness is swallowed up and lost in the contemplation of an infinity of endless and inconceivable degrees of future glory. We can think of, and we oftentimes suffer much under temporal pain; but the utmost portion of the acutest earthly sorrows, mental or bodily, which ever fell to man's lot to experience, sinks into nothing, when com-
pared with what is told of the eternal punishment of sin, in that "place of torment," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."* No wonder, then, that the Saviour spake unto this rich young ruler, to whom the words of my text were addressed, as showing him that, wanting "one thing," the real evidence of his having chosen heaven, and that he was fleeing from hell, he wanted every thing. It is the language of the same Spirit by which the Lord Jesus spake these words, which we find every where written for us in God's word: "But one thing is needful."† "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."‡ "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"§

It would be difficult to find any portion of the Word of God in which this awfully great and important warning is better illustrated for us, than in that incident of the Redeemer's life, wherein the short, but memorable sentence of the text was spoken.

He had just been manifesting His tender

* Mark ix. 48. † Luke x. 42.
‡ Ps. xxvii. 4. § Mark viii. 36, 37.
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care and affectionate interest for the lambs of His flock: "Little children" had been brought unto Him; He had taken them "up in His arms," had "put His hands upon them, and blessed them."* He was now to instruct others, further advanced in life, in the doctrine and practice of His blessed gospel. He had just said, with those infant children in His sacred presence, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein;"† and in His watchful providence for spiritual opportunities, one that should be operative unto the end of the world, was instantly at hand. "And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"‡

This rich young man evidently gave proof of some very earnest feeling for his soul's salvation: for hearing of Christ as "a teacher sent from God," he came to Him with eagerness, "came running." But he was ignorant of the way. He considered that salvation was to be in himself: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" So the gaoler at Philippi asked of Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"§ And so it ever has

* Ver. 16.  † Ver. 15.  ‡ Ver. 17.  § Acts xvi. 30.
been, and ever will be to the end of the world. Man naturally looks to himself as his own Saviour: the unrenewed heart seeks no other Saviour: until the soul be brought to feel and understand the only scripture answer to questions which pertain to the salvation of the soul, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"* it always looks to itself; it asks no mediator; it stands proudly upon its own strength, as able to do all, or something towards the meritorious act of coming uncondemned before an all-holy and a heart-searching God. Beware, my brethren, of this great delusion; this common temptation from "the father of lies." It always abounds. And in times like these, when an outward religion is thought well of, and some knowledge thereof is possessed by most of us, the danger of this temptation is awfully great. Some, like Herod at the preaching of the Baptist, "do many things." The regular Lord’s days attendance in the house of prayer; the monthly sacrament; much or little alms-giving to the poor; a natural kindness of temper, or other manifestation which costs nothing, are continually made an expected stepping-stone to heaven; and so the soul’s eternal ruin in itself, and its free and unmerited salvation in Christ alone, are banished from the

* Ver. 31.
The rich young Man.

terms of the gospel covenant in His blood. And yet, in outward worship, many who know not Christ, can still, with this rich young ruler before us, kneel before Him, and call Him "good master;" can say in words, "Lord, Lord." But should a question be put to their hearts, as Christ put one on this occasion, and they should be asked, why they call Christ good, could they answer that question? This young man made no reply to the words of Christ, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God:"* and, could either themere formalist, or the self-righteous, at all understand hereby the fulness of unmerited salvation offered freely in the propitiatory sacrifice of a redeeming God? "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself?"

When this rich young man had nothing to say to the question of our Lord, he was reminded of the six commandments of the second table of the law. The four first commandments were scrupulously kept, in outward observance, by all the Jews. The first—they had God only, the one true God. The second—they had, at that time, no idols or images. The third—they dared not even pronounce the sacred name of Jehovah. The

* Ver. 18.
fourth—and their strict observance of the Sabbath day was the rule to the serious believer in the law and the prophets, as well as the substitute for vital holiness, in those who were "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," "loving the praise of men more than the praise of God." It was the six commandments, then, of the second table which Christ named: "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother." *

Much as these commandments were violated at that time by the Jews in general, (for by the testimony of their own historian, they were then exceedingly sinful,) it does not appear that, in their literal and general signification, they had been broken by this young ruler: "And he answered, and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth." Though he gave this answer, he could not have depended upon what he had already done herein as sufficient, or he would not have come running to Christ to ask Him what he should do that he might "inherit eternal life." There was evidently a desire in his soul to know something more than he already knew; and he was an object for the Saviour's immediate interest: for

* Ver. 19.
though he knew not the truth, Christ saw that he was desirous of knowing it: and Christ's word tells us all, that, "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."* "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."†

How did our Lord here do away with all the vain expectation which had lodged in this young man's heart, that he must do something to be saved! Something, indeed, he was to do to show that he was in the way of salvation; but salvation was to be his, only as he followed Christ, "the" sole "author and finisher of our faith."

Satan, my brethren, is still busy among us, and, for purposes of spiritual temptation, oftentimes "transforms himself into an angel of light," and quotes scripture, as he once quoted it to Christ Himself, and thereby leads those who are unstable to wrest scripture to their own destruction. Satan whispers into many an ear, that now, in these days, there is no need of this strictness in the Christian's rule and principle; and that therefore this text,

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.  
† Ver. 21
applied by Christ to the rich young ruler, cannot belong to us. But it is false. The rule may somewhat vary through change of circumstance and time, but the principle is exactly the same. It signifies little what the test is; it is the one only principle which is conveyed by it; and that principle is for ever written, should be for ever taught, and always is expected to be found in the professed believer in the doctrines of the cross. The rich young man, in those days, could not follow Christ, unless he parted with his large earthly riches: but it was not the actual parting with riches, by an immediate sale and gift of them all to the poor, which was the perpetual and unvaried thing: it was the taking up of the cross, and following Christ, which Christ insisted upon as the "one thing" for us all. It signifies not what it is which prevents us from doing this: it must be parted with. Conscience, God's Word, and prayer, must show each their own impediment; but some impediment, until we be fairly enlisted as soldiers of Jesus Christ, we each have. We have a right eye to be plucked out, a right hand to be cut off: something within us, or something without us, makes us to use the gospel as "a stumbling-block," or to count the gospel "foolishness." And then, how do we escape from the application of this very
same test, though it may not be for us to man-
ifest it in the same way? What though it be
pride, or vanity; what if it be false shame,
or the fear of man; what if it be worldly plea-
sure, an endless or a more restricted pursuit
after the fashions and the follies of this gay
and thoughtless world; what if it be an idle
and a useless life; what though it be things
of any kind, in themselves sinful, or in them-
selves innocent; what though it be one or
more of any of these hindrances to following
Christ, which keep us from Christ, what does
it signify? We do not follow Christ: while to
follow Christ is the only test of our having a
saving interest in Christ.

These are truths which nominal believers
will resist; though they are not truths at
which all nominal believers will sigh inwardly,
as did the rich young ruler, when Christ, in
tender mercy, put them for his acceptance:
for we read, "And he was sad at that saying,
and went away grieved; for he had great pos-
sessions."* "That saying," indeed, will often
make the sinner sad, though he also go away
from Christ. He will oftentimes feel, as this
young man felt, an aching void in his soul;
he will know that there is some inward testi-
mony that all is not well with him. Happy
for those whose hearts are more deeply touched

* Ver. 22.
with a still more trembling fear than worked in the heart of him who, like Demas afterward, and like many a Demas since, upon hearing the words, "Take up the cross, and follow Christ," forsook Christ, "having loved this present world."*

When the young ruler had sealed his own doom in forsaking Christ, (for we never hear that he returned; our Lord's solemn reflection upon his case seems to imply that he never would return; and had he ever returned, it is more than probable that so memorable a departure from Christ related, would not have been unaccompanied in God's word by the equally memorable return to Christ;) when, therefore, he was gone back to the world, the thing he loved, Christ uttered the awful confirmation of the experienced truth: "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"† It was a saying fully calculated to draw forth a feeling from those who heard it; and we see it did so: "And the disciples were astonished at His words."‡ Christ knew their thoughts, and, for their instruction, and our learning also, added His own comment upon them: "But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that

* 2 Tim. iv. 10. † Ver. 23. ‡ Ver. 24.
trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God."* And then, that an illustration of that difficulty might be ever before us all, that so it might remain a written memorial of the pressing danger of all worldly trusts, the Lord again enforced the almost impossibility, by a similitude that was altogether so: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!"†

As this illustration follows not only the first assertion of the danger of riches, that is, of any earthly treasure which the heart makes its idol, but the Saviour’s qualifying explanation thereof, it fully manifests as well the danger in the thing itself, as the fearful probability of trust in the thing possessed. This seems to have been the precise matter of extreme anxiety and thought which, at that moment, bore upon the disciples’ minds: for it is said, "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?"‡ Christ allowed the justness of their fear, and immediately resolved the whole impossibility and the danger into the omnipotency of God: "And Jesus looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."§

* Ver. 24. † Ver. 25. ‡ Ver. 26. § Ver. 27.
There are but two ways in which these things can be hearkened to. We either receive them, or we refuse to receive them. And, God be praised, there are those among us, my brethren, who, on hearing these words of Christ, can lift up their hearts unto the Lord, and say, as Peter said upon hearing these very words from Christ Himself, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee:"

and there are, with grief be it spoken, numbers who still refuse to follow Christ, and who "will not have" Him "to rule over them." You, my brethren, who go away sad at these sayings, whether grieved at your still determined choice of the world, or offended at Christ's words, which show you your danger while you love the world, or the things of the world, you still turn away from that which the rich young ruler seemed to seek after, but which, when found, he also refused, as you do.

Let me earnestly exhort you not to be deceived in your view of this portion of God's word. You may or may not be rich, as the world counts riches. It matters not. Whether it be riches, pride, vanity, false shame, the fear of man, worldly pleasure, an endless or a more restricted pursuit after the fashions and the follies of this gay and thoughtless world, an

* Ver. 28.
idle and a useless life, things in themselves sinful, or things in themselves innocent, whatever it be that possesses your affections, and so keeps you from Christ, your case is precisely that which, in the rich young ruler’s case, brought from Christ your awful warning also, that so you might be led to seek in Christ “the true riches;” “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

I would leave this solemn truth upon your memories, and may God’s Spirit impress it upon your hearts, with this solemn appeal to you. In this present period of your life, whether you be high or low, young or old, you reject Christ for something which you value more than Christ. You love some “creature more than God the creator.” Your case is already illustrated in the young man’s case before you; and your danger is shown to be an impossibility for human power to remove. An ancient prophet, too, before Christ came, had been led by the Spirit of Christ to warn all generations of the people that forget God of the same thing. In the sinning Israelite you also were asked, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

* Jer. xiii. 23.

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then, is intense. But still you are not sent to despair, if your heart be yet impressible; nor have you any excuse, if your heart (which God, of his infinite mercy, forbid) be irrecoverably hardened: for it has been repeatedly read into your ears, "The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God."* If there be yet in your soul a desire to come to Christ; if, with the rich young ruler, in his first feeling of the necessity of looking towards the kingdom of heaven, you feel a wish in your heart to learn from Christ the way to heaven, go running in eagerness; kneel before Him: see Him, first, in His humiliation, the manger, the scourge, the thorns, and the cross, and "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Then view Him risen from the tomb, "ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, that He might receive gifts for men, yea, even for His enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them." See thus in Christ the fulfilment of His own words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."† Then, through Christ, go unto the Father in dependence upon the Spirit to enable you to do so: and if the desire to go be in your heart, and you quench not that desire by wilful sin, and continued

The rich young Man.

carelessness of life; it is the Spirit of truth which is leading you to a Saviour, who still mercifully declares, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." This, my brethren, is your covenant privilege in a redeeming God. May the example of the rich young ruler keep you from turning away from it; and may the tender compassion of your Saviour at last, in this your day, lead you to embrace it heartily as a free gift coming from the Lord.

To you, my brethren, whose hearts the Lord hath already turned to seek your salvation daily, and to seek it only in Christ, I would also urge the sacred portion of the word now before us, for your serious consideration also. You have been awakened to run unto Christ. You have knelt before Him, and have done what this rich young ruler would not be taught to do; you have committed your soul unto Christ, as your redeeming God. You have also renounced the utter inefficacy of that upon which, in the ignorance which Christ was seeking to remove from his soul, this rich young man so much depended. You say not as he said of God's commandments, "All these have I observed from my youth:" for you have been instructed in a better school, and have seen in the law
nothing but "a schoolmaster to bring" you unto "Christ." Thus far hath the grace of Christ been magnified toward you; and though no test is before you now to bring you to Christ, there is a test remaining to keep you still with Christ. The enemy varies the character of his temptation when the soul has once really fled to its refuge; but the temptation itself remains, and will remain, so long as you continue in your place of trial. But in the strength of Christ, keep fast hold of the promises of Christ. Your dangers are not removed: they are less indeed, only because you have been brought to see them. But remember, that the mercy of Christ, which gives converting and enabling power at first, is equally needed in the whole progress of the life of faith. Is He not, for this especial purpose of warning and comforting His true disciples, expressly called "The author and the finisher of our faith"? Depending solely upon Him, seek diligently what are your hindrances, your peculiar temptations, your besetting sin. It was not without reference to every degree, however low, of a real desire to come to Christ, that it was written of that rich young ruler, who stood in anxious inquiry before Him, "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him,
The rich young Man.

One thing thou lackest." Study this diligently in reference to every period of your Christian course. *In passive suffering* be at all times ready, in the mortification of self-will, in being evidently separate from the world, in the exercise of a subdued spirit, to glorify Christ. In active doing still seek to glorify Christ: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* Be enabled, in passive suffering, as well as in active doing for Christ's sake, to say with St. Peter, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." And then, of every worldly sacrifice unto which, as your Christian test, you have willingly submitted for Christ and His gospel's sake, Christ Himself hath already, for your great encouragement, declared, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions;" "even

* Philip. iv. 8.
The rich young Man.

unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters,"* "and in the world to come eternal life."† Let this, my brethren, be your cheering consolation, and Christ your constant hope.

* Isai. lvi. 5. † Mark x. 29, 30.
THE SYROPHENICIAN MOTHER.


"But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

Such, my brethren, was an answer, severe in appearance, but intended for purposes of the utmost mercy: it was an answer which it pleased our Lord to give to a very earnest prayer from one who now stands recorded for her faith in the Word of God. It was an answer from "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," on purpose to keep alive, in the view of every one who should read His sacred history, the necessity of a living and a persevering faith in Him. Every thing, indeed, in His holy word, points to the same end; for it is the constant lesson, that "without faith
it is impossible to please God."* Every mercy we hope to receive, every grace we seek to find, every blessing we are justified in expecting, and every curse we would gladly escape, must, in their spiritual blessedness, be the fruit of faith. When Christ worked His miracles for the body, when Christ still, through His Spirit and His providence, works miracles of mercy and love for poor lost perishing souls, it was, and is, and so long as time shall last, will always be, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."† Every mercy in providence and grace which we can ever hope for from God, when time shall be swallowed up in eternity, springs from this only principle of faith in Him: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."‡

Never, perhaps, since the world was, has there existed a more approved example of faith in the power of Christ, as manifested in the most lowly and humbling view of a true believer in that power, than in the record with which Christ hath for ever honoured the faith of the Syrophenician woman. May the example thus left by Christ Himself for us, my brethren, be made a holy incentive to the exercise of our faith in Him, if we have received

* Heb. xi. 6. † Luke vii. 50. ‡ John iii. 16.
"the unspeakable gift;" or if we are still living without a real faith in Him, may it be so blest to our present hearing, that it may bring us also to ask the awakening question, and to enjoy its only answer: "What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."*

The miracle which our blessed Lord was pleased to work in the case of the Syrophcenician woman, may serve to show us, in its spiritual application to ourselves, some of the great fundamental truths of His blessed gospel. The history informs us, that Christ, ever mindful of His gracious "work of labour and love," in "going about doing good," had "departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," where He was met by "a woman of Canaan," at that time in a state of much mental sorrow. Her earnest cry to Him was, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."† Happy will it be for each of us, my brethren, if we have been brought to feel the near resemblance of our natural and unrenewed state to that of the daughter of this weeping mother, "grievously vexed with a devil." For there is a corruption "which gendereth unto bondage," which we each bring with us into the world: and Satan uses all his art and malice

* Acts xvi. 30, 31.  † Ver. 22.
to add to it continually. This, in literal possession of demoniacal power, the supplicating parent knew on behalf of her afflicted daughter. And what was her remedy? She betook herself in prayer to Christ: she addressed Him as the long-expected, because the long-foretold Saviour: "O Lord, thou son of David."

The knowledge which this woman acted upon, of her daughter's being possessed of a devil, brought her to Christ. It is the first step towards Christ, when we also feel the evil of sin, and the power of Satan in our souls, and know that we stand in need of help, more than human, to purify the soul, and drive Satan from his strong hold over us. But until we believe and feel this, Satan, in some way or other, retains his dominion.

When this afflicted woman was led to cry unto the Saviour, she appeared utterly unnoticed by Him. It says, "But He answered her not a word."* And does not the prayer of a weak, or even of a strong faith, such as this woman was blest with, oftentimes seem to be unanswered? It is an intended lesson and a gracious opportunity for increased fervency, and for more entire waiting upon the Lord. Would Jacob have prevailed with the angel of the covenant, had his faith been less

* Ver. 23.
than what gave utterance to the determined purpose of his soul: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me".* Holy Scripture presses upon us the duty of implicitly believing, even against hope, the perfect fulfilment of the promises: "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."† And it is Christ's gracious declaration for the encouragement of perseverance in prayer, that, against all their spiritual enemies, and in all their spiritual sinkings and distresses, "God shall avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them."‡ Thus did He seem to bear long with the cry of the Syrophenician mother. His disciples around Him were moved on her behalf; and, in their intercession for her, elicited a truth from their divine master, which was to give the utmost exercise, and to gain the completest triumph for her persevering faith: "And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away;" i.e. grant her petition, that she may go; "for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."§ That "salvation is of the Jews;"|| that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in" Christ's "name among all

nations, beginning at Jerusalem;"* that to the Israelites "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever;"† is the constant testimony of all the scriptures: and our blessed Lord asserted the same truth here. But it was not to exclude one single believer from among the Gentiles. For when Christ had thus answered His disciples, this believing woman became still more importunate for a mercy, the first offer whereof was designed, in the prophesies of God, for His people Israel: "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me." Her prayer was manifestly the prayer of faith. The prophetic character of this Son of David, as the long-promised Messiah, was evidently known by this woman. It was the second year of His ministry: and His doctrines, His miracles, the wonders of His birth, and the testimonies of His life, were the sufficient proof, to every thinking mind dwelling in that land, that they might ask with a confident security, "Is not this the Christ?"‡ The truth, therefore, had impressed this woman's heart; and she was enabled to add her testimony as a believer.

* Luke xxiv. 47. † Rom. ix. 4, 5. ‡ John iv. 29.
in the power and grace of Christ. But the Lord would give her still further opportunity of showing how entirely her mind had been led to the only right view of what God had promised, and which every believer, whether from among the Jews or Gentiles, should undoubtedly receive. He did not, as in the first instance of her request, "answer her not a word:" her persevering trust and prayer elicited for her believing soul a most gracious argument upon which to build up her entire confidence in Him: confidence in His gift, but leaving the measure of it simply to His sovereign will: "He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."* It was a term of constant reproach to the gentile world for their general apostacy from the one true God, and their filthiness of heart and life. Our Lord adopted the term as familiar to the Jews, and not disallowed by this believing Gentile. She acknowledged the truth of the Saviour's adjudication, and asked not for "the children's bread." She knew that Christ must first "come to His own." It was the fragments only of His bounteous mercy which, in her humility, she dared hope for: "And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."† When

* Ver. 26.  
† Ver. 27.
the believer can thus feel the necessity of his being fed by Christ with the bread of life; when his own consciousness of sin can bring him, in unfeigned humility, before the cross of Christ; and when, with this woman of Canaan, he can ask but for the very refuse of spiritual gifts from the Saviour, he shall receive all that his soul longeth after, and more than his lips dare to utter. He shall not only have what he seeks after of mercy in the cross, but he shall one day hear words of praise from the throne of Christ; for he shall hear from the Lord and giver of eternal life, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

The persevering prayer, the unshaken trust, the unfeigned humility of the Syrophenician woman entirely prevailed: “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”*

The evident design of this whole transaction, in its spiritual application to ourselves, is that it should animate and encourage the true believer, whether his faith be little or great; and at the same time warn the unbeliever of his perilous condition, living as he does without “Christ in” him, “the hope of glory.”

* Ver. 28.
And first, it should animate and encourage you, my brethren, who, whether with high or low degree of true faith, believe in the Lord Jesus, and are earnestly desirous of His great salvation. Those among you who are advanced in grace, and in the knowledge and love of this almighty Saviour, as your own Saviour, will have learnt the mercy, and, in a greater or less degree, the rich consolation of a hope rested upon Christ, "the ground and pillar of your faith." You have gone through somewhat, perhaps, of what was dispensed for the experience of the woman of Canaan. Time has been, in the commencement, or in some portion or other of your advance in the divine life, when Christ has seemed to be far from you, and to have dealt with you also in "answering you not a word." Perhaps argument has been suggested to your mind, from within or from without, that "the children's bread" must not be your portion, and that sinners and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel must not be fed with food consecrated for other uses. Arrived as you now are beyond the influence of such fears and difficulties as these, through the persevering prayer of faith, remember the riches of Christ's grace and mercy towards you, as your constant argument for increasing love and obedience to Him. Of you it is peculi-
arly to be spoken: "Ye are the light of the world:" to you it especially belongs to take diligent heed to "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things." Your Lord and master has written down in His word your peculiar charge in the gift of your great and merciful privileges: "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go, and bring forth fruit; and that your fruit should remain."* "As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."† "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus unto the glory and praise of God."‡

But some of you, my brethren, who do believe, believe not yet with strong faith. You feel and acknowledge how much you need an answer to the prayer you continually put up of, "Lord, increase our faith." To you I would say, look to the issue of the Syrophenician's prayer to the Lord, as your especial encouragement. Had she been discouraged by the apparent neglect of the Saviour; had she been driven back by the argument which the Saviour Himself put for her consideration, as against the very subject of her prayer, would she have heard from that Saviour, "O woman, great is thy faith"? In her discouragements in the very presence of Christ, and

* John xv. 16. † Col. ii. 6. ‡ Phil. i. 11.
in her example, through the grace of Christ, of a determined perseverance in looking only to Christ, read your own best lesson. The weakness of your faith can never do away the promises of God. If you have the heart-felt desire to believe in Christ, you do believe; and though your faith be little, Christ's mercy and power are still as great as ever: He now tries you, as once He tried the humble petitioner before us; and so in His dealings for purposes of mercy to those who in Him alone seek for mercy, remains "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Suffer yourselves to be led by His Spirit, through the course of discipline and Christian experience which He determines for your good. Look to no other help as a resting-place, but Christ. Mix nothing with your present feeble hope in Christ. Do nothing wilfully against the Spirit of Christ. And then, though you be bowed down under the consciousness of sin, the demerit of your best works, the apparent hindrances to your best wishes, your real and earnest prayers, still remember how this woman of Canaan was blest in her persevering cry while here in her day of trial; and how every saint and sinner saved can each for himself proclaim to trembling pilgrims on earth, travelling onward in the weakness of their faith, this holy and gracious encouragement:

FOURTH COURSE.
"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* 

But there are here, it is to be feared, those who have no right faith in the Redeemer of souls; who either evidently live without thought of Christ as the only Saviour of lost sinners; or who, sometimes awakened to painful anxiety for their spiritual condition, crush these risings and convictions in their soul, and so live on in perplexed and miserable anxiety; or, amid worldly cares and pleasures, drown thought in the more dangerous state of deadness and indifference to their souls' eternal interests in Christ. In either case, the example of the Syrophenician woman should be a profitable warning. It was the knowledge which she possessed of her daughter's being "vexed with a devil," and of Christ's power to cast it from her, which brought her to her great deliverer, from whom she received all that her soul longed after. And until knowledge similar in kind, and, in the end, equally operative in degree, take possession of, and act upon your heart, you will never escape from the tyranny which Satan now exercises over you. You may now, perhaps, feel strong in your earthly grounds of confidence; and so may say unto the pleasures of this life, "Be thou our God;" or you may resist con-

* Phil. iv. 19.
victions of sin, and thoughts rising up in your heart, which, fostered and prayed over, would lead you to the happiest results, and so go on in your dangerous ways with too much knowledge to be at peace, and with too much love of the world, or fear of man, really to seek peace: but you know, upon one moment’s reflection, that this state cannot last much longer to either of you. Every day brings you fast onward to the end of all your present hopes; and then, as you have no better hope than what this world gives, or what your love of this world entirely falsifies, you must come to a period in your existence, whether on this or on the other side of the grave, where there is no hope. Surely in reason it is manifestly sad that you should thus trifle with eternity, and in effect brave the tremendous thought of fixed and unalterable despair. And when you consider this point as pressed upon you on the score of religion, your folly and enmity to your own immortal soul must seem the very lesson you should learn from the Saviour’s merciful question on the foolish bargain: “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

If you never think seriously upon the concerns of eternity, then hath Satan entire

power over you; and, unconscious as you are of such a possession, like the daughter of the woman of Canaan, you are, nevertheless, "grievously vexed with a devil." You may not, because you will not, see your danger from your great spiritual enemy working upon the natural corruption of your heart; but it is not only not the less, but infinitely the greater danger, because it is hidden from you; or rather because, with strange perverseness, you harden your heart and blind your eyes against a discovery which you are not willing to contemplate.

But if there be seasons of fear, and inward anticipation of future evil, in which you believe, as the devils do, and tremble; and then crush conviction of sin, and flee from the remedies of the gospel, in betaking yourself to the world; you are then prepared, in part, to feel, and perhaps to confess, that you are "grievously vexed with a devil." O, my brethren, make that confession to Christ as did the mother of this unhappy possessed. Look inward upon your own corruption, and feel your need of His converting grace. "The children's bread" is your bread, if you ask it of Christ, who only gives "the bread of life." You never can be satisfied, however you may, for a little season, be deceived by any of your worldly resources against your inward suffer-
ings. While you continue in thralldom to sin and the world, you know, or will soon in experience know, the bitterness, and, one time or other, will come to the final ruin of your fatal choice. But there is a liberty from bondage, wherewith Christ can make every one free who shall seek deliverance from Him. Go, then, at once to Christ. Stifle your convictions no longer. Every mental pang may be your last opportunity. Be determined in your choice of Christ for your master, and so get loose from the enslaving shackles of sin. Pray, as did the Syrophenician woman, for even the smallest portion of Christ's unspeakable gift, and you shall be "made whole from that very hour."
CHRIST WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.

St. John xiii. 12.

"So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?"

It may well be said that, as pride is natural to us all, so, like other natural and moral evils, it is an enemy to our real happiness. But it is not a concurrent acknowledgment of this general position, nor all our painful experience of its truth, which can destroy pride, or even lead our minds effectually to resist it. We want better and more convincing argument than reason or experience can give, to bring down our natural pride, and to inculcate humility. That argument we discover nowhere but in the doctrines of the cross. We may reason correctly, and wish earnestly, and
Christ washing His Disciples' Feet. 231

strive sincerely, upon any other ground; and it will all be to no purpose. Pride, in some one or other of its multiplied characters, will still have dominion over us. But the gospel, in its revealed truth of our common ruin, of the Redeemer's humiliation to restore us, and of our being dependent for every step we make in the divine life upon the grace of Christ, as much as ever we are dependent for every breath we draw in our natural life upon the power and providence of Christ, the gospel alone administers a cure for pride.

That such a remedy was needed by us, we learn from the whole history of our race, in all those evils which have arisen, and which still arise, among us, whether in public or in private life, from the besetting sin of pride. I need not dwell upon these evils in the way of proof. Look these evils in the face yourselves. See what ill arises from the pride of birth and family connexions; what from rank and office; from riches, worldly honour, the acquirement of science, repute in human accomplishments, strength and beauty of body, the mere animal power of its bone and muscle, or the natural or the artificial adornment of its outward form.

There is pride, too, in the possession of things far better than these; there is pride in things spiritual, perhaps the most dangerous
of all pride; for if knowledge of Christ's gospel, self-annihilating and humbling as in itself it really is, teach not humility to the soul of him who has obtained that knowledge, what other remedy can be found than what is there administered to that man in vain in the doctrines of the cross of "Christ crucified?"

And after all our natural or acquired advantages of any kind over each other, what have any of us to be proud of? In our origin we are dust; and though, in our first creation, the soul came pure immediately from God; for, of our first parent it is said, "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,"* yet disobedience and sin soon ruined that soul, and "the imagination of man's heart is" now "evil from his youth."† We continually confess ourselves, though all have not grace to feel themselves "miserable sinners." In time, we are of short continuance: "In the morning they are like grass, which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withered:"

Thus, in our origin low, in our passage

* Gen. ii 7. † 1b. viii. 21. ‡ Ps. xc. 5. 6.
through time sinful and debased, and in eternity forfeited victims to the wretchedness of unmixed evil, what have we to be proud of? Why should we not feel as well as acknowledge, that "pride was not made for man?"

This, my brethren, we cannot feel till we learn our lesson at the foot of the cross; till we are brought with that teacher who hung there to believe and apply to our own hearts all that arises of instruction and consolation from that sufferer; "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

As a holy and merciful illustration of this tender and condescending consideration for our sinful race, I have selected the well-known instance of Christ's humility, in that portion of the sacred history of His life, from which I have taken the text, Christ washing His disciples' feet. May His Spirit accompany us throughout this solemn lesson, and stamp its strongest impression upon our souls for ever.

Nothing that the Lord Jesus performed in His great office here on earth was done with-

* Philip. ii. 6—8.
out some gracious and significant design. The history of the humiliating deed now before us is introduced by the mention of His holy motive, love towards His disciples: "Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."* This is but the practical comment upon, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." In remembrance of His promises and love to the true believer it hath been ever known, in the experience of every awakened and sanctified soul, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

"And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that, He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherein He was girded."†

In this portion of the history of Christ's humiliating deed, we have a plain intimation of

* Ver. 1. † Ver. 2—5.
a circumstance as strange in its character, as it is in painful experience true: that Satan is oftentimes most busy in his dark deeds for the ruin of immortal souls in the midst of the most sacred duties, the most awful presence: he put into Judas' heart to betray Christ, as he afterward "entered into him," to complete his entire possession of the inner man, while Judas was in close personal intercourse with Christ Himself. And how continually hath Satan followed up his unceasing opposition to this almighty Saviour, in precisely the same mode of temptation, since! How many, who are named followers and disciples of Christ, as Judas was, sit and hear the word of eternal truth, with secret enmity to "the things which are Jesus Christ's, within his very house of prayer, and amid holy and sacred circumstance around them, Satan putting it into their heart! How many, in the outward show of holy worship, suffer their thoughts, unchecked, to wander to the world, its follies, its riches, its employments, its pleasures, Satan putting these things into their heart, and so, with this tempter of every Judas, virtually laying plots to crucify Christ afresh by their sins, and to put Him to an open shame!

But to return to Him who had now literally assumed the form of a servant to the bodies, in His tender love for the souls of His
Christ washing His Disciples' Feet.

disciples: "Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"* How significant is this question, from this ardent disciple, of the first feeling of an awakened sinner. A sinner convinced of sin, and taught that the Redeemer comes to him to wash him and make him whole, is astonished at the wonder and mercy of His Saviour's deed. He scarcely hopes that it can be true that he is taught: he feels as this same holy apostle in another part of his Christian experience felt, when he "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision." †

The first beginnings of the life of faith are oftentimes dark and painful: there is a powerful revulsion in the soul changed from the commission of sin to the desire after holiness; from an undoubted trust in the world, to a trembling hope in Christ. And oftentimes does Satan, availing himself of present weakness of mind, or depression of spirits, or disease of body, put obstacles and difficulties before the newly converted, that he may keep him from Christ, and bring him back to perdition. How tender, then, is the lesson, and how beautiful is the imagery before us, as illustrative of the dealings of Christ with the newly-awakened convert to the faith! Peter

* Ver. 6. † Acts xii. 9.
knew no more of what Christ intended in what He was then graciously pleased to do, than does the new believer, just escaped from the road leading to destruction, know of the peculiar dispensations now working for his good: the Lord's reply was an answer for both: "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."* Let but the believer, in his weakest degree of an early faith, under every discouragement from within or from without, let him but simply confide in this his Redeemer's promise, and he will more and more be permitted to bear his own personal testimony to the Word of God, "that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."† For wise purposes of a holy discipline, he may not have the comfort, however earnestly he may desire to seek his salvation from the doctrines of the cross: but he must honour Christ, whether in spirit he be elevated, or in spirit depressed: at present he may not know what Christ is doing for him; but he shall know hereafter.

It was not the assurance of future knowledge which satisfied the mind of Peter: "Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet."‡ This ardent disciple of his

* Ver. 7. † Ps. xxi. 14. ‡ Ver. 8.
beloved Lord knew not the end, and therefore, in the momentary exercise of his own judgment, he refused the means, the sign of a most gracious thing signified. But his whole soul was touched, when he was further shown that thus it must be if he would be brought near to his Lord: "Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."* When he knew his Lord’s meaning, he would not only have his feet made ready to follow Christ, whithersoever He went; but his hands prepared to execute his divine master's will in all things, and his head, his whole inner man endued with wisdom to discern, and with every holy grace to enable him to devise for, his Lord's glory, in “spending and being spent” in his heavenly master’s service.

So with the newly-converted sinner. He is tempted, by a false humility, to suppose that Christ, the Lord of glory, can never condescend to notice him, and oftentimes thinks that he exalts the Lord in not taking to himself the fulness of his great salvation, in all its humbling accompaniments to Christ Himself from the manger to the cross. But this is oftentimes no other than Satan’s device, or a

*Ver. 8, 9.
too much leaning upon other things than Christ. The Redeemer not only wills salva-
tion to his people, but Himself performs on
their behalf those lowest, as well as those
highest offices, whereby they finally approach
towards His throne, triumphant in Him. To
every Peter at all resisting the ways of Christ
in bringing awakened sinners to Himself, it is
still the same, in gentle reproof and full as-
surance of love and good-will: "Jesus an-
swered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no
part with me." And how should this excite
similar feeling and desire in every awakened
soul at last brought to look to Christ, with
that which produced in the heart of Peter,
"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands,
and my head?"

It was now that our Lord manifested His
entire knowledge of His disciples' hearts.
"He knew what was in man." Of His dis-
ciples generally He could say, as was His
reply to Peter, "Jesus saith unto him, He
that is washed," he who has his soul cleansed
through my Spirit, "needeth not save to wash
his feet," to undergo, as at that present mo-
ment, such external ablution as the character
of their clothing, and the custom of those
countries always required; such a one needs
no other washing, being already spiritually
washed, "but is clean every whit:" when the
soul is cleansed through a living faith in Christ, converted from sin, and come out from the world, it needs no further change; but must only be watchful, and renewed day by day in its advancing state, humbled still under the remaining infirmities of this state of trial, and the deep sense of the contaminating nature of all earthly things: "and ye are clean," added the holy Jesus, "but not all. For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean."*

Yes, my brethren, it is Christ only who, of any collected body of professed disciples, can pronounce with authority who are clean, and who are not clean. The awful, and what ought to be the profitable lesson herein to ourselves is, that as of His disciples around the person of Christ, Christ "knew who should betray Him," so of us who are here assembled professedly in His name, in His house of prayer, He knows who, in their sins unrepented of, in their lives worldly and unsanctified, in their wills and tempers unmortified and unsubdued, even now take part with His first murderers, and so "deny" and betray "the Lord who bought them."

Though this outward action of our Lord in washing His disciples' feet, may thus, in some of its character, be made matter of com-

* Ver. 10, 11.
fort and encouragement to the true believer in the smallness of his real faith, as well as of warning to the sinful liver, and the careless unbeliever in the barreness of their pretended faith, yet the great object of the deed was to inculcate the necessity of an unfeigned Christian humility in reference to mutual love for Christ's sake. And it was in this view that Christ Himself applied it: "So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither He that is sent, greater than He that sent Him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."*

It was thus that the Lord Jesus concluded this portion of His instructions upon the condescending deed which He in person performed, in the presence of His twelve disciples. But still, with this comment from our blessed Redeemer Himself upon the necessity of imitating His example, as well as

* Ver. 12—17.
of hearing His word, and trusting to His cross, how many among professing Christians have there ever been, and still are, who seem as though they would separate that which Christ hath joined together! While some think of the Redeemer only as a Saviour, others regard Him only as an example. Holy Scripture, and every true believer in Holy Scripture, recognize in Christ the sole efficient justifying cause of salvation, and the pure and living exemplar of the Christian's life. It was Christ's distinguishing mark, and that by which His true disciples would be known: "My sheep hear my voice," calling them to faith in His redemption of their souls, "and I know them, and they follow me" in holiness of heart and life.* Their whole walk manifests them Christ's, and all who see them, see in them the stamp which proves them His: their life and conduct identify them with the early disciples of our Lord, and of whom it is testified of their very persecutors, that they could not deny it: "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."†

I would urge this point much for the consideration of all: for the matured Christian, sound in faith, and holy in manner of life; for those who seem desirous of loving the Lord Jesus; for those who care little for that

* John x. 27. † Acts iv. 13.
sacred name, and live in external decency alone, apart from inward sanctification; and for those who neither live, nor wish to live, otherwise than in the gratification of their own will, unrestrained by any outward or inward bond from the Christian rule.

It is quite an impossible thing for any one who really believes in Christ as his Saviour, conscious from what he is saved, to neglect Christ as his example also. Fruit follows not more necessarily as the distinguishing mark of its tree, than do good and holy deeds as the peculiar and unfailing proof of Christ's true disciples. It is a dark, a confused, a mixed, or an unwilling view of Christ, which alone separates these two. How can the believer see his Saviour humbling Himself for services to the body, still more humbling Himself for the eternal redemption of the soul of lost and helpless man, and not feel the force of such an example, and so strive and pray that he may become humble too? If the promises of Christ glorified awaken and cheer his hope, the remembrance of Christ crucified will mortify his members which are upon earth, and keep him low. Pray; then, my brethren, against pride, our first and our last besetting sin: Christ hath taught you how to be humble by His most perfect example; and He has commanded you to be so under the so-
lemn assurance, that, "whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."* Remember Christ, and you give the death-blow to pride: you cannot believe and think upon the instruments of His humiliation, the manger, the thorns, the scourging and the cross, and not feel how emptied man should be of whatever exalts himself: you cannot, with the eye of real faith, view Him who once, for your sake, "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant,"† and remain the willing victim to natural pride. Think often, as your strong incentive herein, of what you were by nature, lost in corruption and sin: think of what in yourself you still are, weak, wavering, and insufficient; and then think of what you owe to Christ alone for your deliverance from your lost state, and your daily upholding in your renewed state; think of this, and you will be brought more and more to the imitation, in deepest self-abasement, of the master whom you love, and whom you should desire fully to serve.

And now, my brethren, one word to you who neither take Christ for your Saviour, nor imitate Christ as your example: You call yourselves Christians, and outwardly you are so. But what does your outward profession

† Phil. ii. 7.
of Christianity avail you? It neither brings you to the knowledge of God, nor to the knowledge of your own hearts. Your life is not directed by it; your hopes are not influenced by it; and your peace is not secured by it. For it requires no other knowledge than what your own experience gives, or your own experience will give, to show you how far removed from substantial peace and happiness such a life as you are leading must of necessity be. You know not the Lord Jesus as your Saviour; you spend your time in pursuits, and under the influence of affections and motives foreign to the truths of His gospel; and though in health, and prosperous enjoyment of the world and its pleasures, you may seem to be at ease in your own mind, sooner or later something, as a messenger from God for mercy or for judgment, will put this question to your inmost soul: "What hast thou to do with peace?" Would it not be well for you to consider this now, while God waits to be gracious, before it shall be the time of judgment? Before your conscience shall become judicially hardened, and you neither hope nor fear in reference to what comes after death? The pride of the unhumbled soul of man hath caused thousands of wretched sinners to perish everlastingly; and it is at this moment hurrying you to the same
miserable end. Listen to the voice that tells you this; ask your own heart whether it is not so; and haply the Redeemer, who may still become your Redeemer, may bless that hearing to your best happiness. You have heard how He once declared to His true disciple, St. Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." It is only through faith in His blood that the guilt and condemnation of your soul can be washed away. Be awake to your danger with this assurance from Christ, and then go to Christ at once. With convinced Peter exclaim, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This will administer a peace which shall never pass away; a blessed exchange of substantial peace for that which heretofore has borne, even in your happiest days, but the mere semblance of peace. Try but, in experience, what Christ can do for those who go to Him, and He will give you His peace: peace now, and peace at the last; a growing faith in life, a holy repose in the hour of death, a glorious resurrection at His coming to judgment.
WHAT IS ENTHUSIASM?

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**Galat. iv. 18.**

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."

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THIS, my brethren, is a position in God's word to which, as it thus stands by itself, the world entirely assents. But then the world, that is, the people of the world, put their own construction upon the very point upon which the whole matter hinges. There is no one here present who will say, that "to be zealously affected always in a good thing," is not "good:" we shall all agree to that general assertion; but we shall very much differ as to what is that "good thing," about which we all allow that zeal should be exercised. Some of us will call one thing good, and some another: and many, who differ in their view of what worldly and temporal good is "the good thing," are all agreed in opposing what this passage of Holy Scripture intends by such an expression. What that is, we shall
now consider: I would only first observe, that it is not the zeal, but the "good thing" about which that zeal is to be put forth, which is quarrelled with by the people of the world.

We cannot better come to the right knowledge of what is here intended, in the way of a short definition, than by considering what Christ Himself spake as to what must be the proper object of our most ardent pursuit. Of all the things belonging to this present world, our blessed Lord had said, "Take no thought," that is, no anxious thought: and then He adds, "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."* Christ therefore hath for ever settled the question as to what this "good thing" is, about which we must "be always zealously affected:" remember that one word, 'FIRST,' and it will be the best resolver of all doubts, the surest guide to all truth. In this view, then, I did not err when I said, that however we may all agree as to the wisdom and expediency of honest zeal, we shall differ much among ourselves as far as the east is from the west, about the subject for which we would each be zealous.

The people of the world never allow zeal in religion to be a right zeal: they will often-times give the zealous Christian credit for his integrity; but call him weak, superstitious, or

* Matt. vi. 33.
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mad: or they will; perhaps, as often question his integrity, and then deem him artful and hypocritical. If one, from among themselves, becomes awakened by the Spirit to discern "the truth as it is in Jesus;" if he follow on to know the Lord; if he transfer all that zeal of feeling and energy of action (which, in his unconverted state, he had put forth in carnal and temporal pursuits) to the care of his soul; if he show that to be now his "one thing needful," those very persons, his dearest friends, his constant companions, will instantly change the name by which they once extolled his zeal in earthly things to the skies. Simply because he has changed the object of his zeal, they will call it enthusiasm, or something worse, if any thing worse they can think of than a heart devoted to the Lord.

All seriousness in religion, all real zeal and earnestness exercised in the cause of true religion, that sacred cause for which the holy apostle was willing "to spend and be spent;" for which the saints of old cheerfully laboured in the Lord, and lived, and in which, with cruel mockings, scourgings, and sundry kinds of tormenting deaths, they were joyfully content to die, all this the world, to be consistent with itself, (and herein it ever is consistent,) hates and condemns.

It may be useful to dwell somewhat upon
this which the world thus condemns and hates, but which Holy Scripture tells us is the "good thing" about which we are all commanded "to be zealously affected."

We find ourselves evidently in a ruined world. Evil, in some shape or other, bodily or mental, every where surrounds us. We are born with a corrupted nature, and "as soon as we are born, we go astray, and speak lies." By nature we delight in evil continually, and set our faces against that which is good. "Carnal and sold under sin," we flee from holiness, and by nature love to have it so. Our best wisdom is no better than learned folly; and our best doings so polluted by the stain of the corrupted nature which we bring with us into the world, that they are nothing worth. Though we suffer under the effects of sin, we see not the ugliness, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and so by nature we live in sin, and experience its sad effects around us wherever we go; within us wherever we are. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." We all take our share in this wreck of things, and numbers of the human race live in pain, poverty, and misery; and to the whole of the human race the termination of this life is marked by death, an infliction which, by nature, we tremble at and shun.
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When this life is over, there is revealed to us another life, eternal in its duration, and unchangeable in the conditions of it; which are but two, infinite happiness, or infinite pain and misery. The word of God teaches us the only way by which we may endure and profit by all the ills in this world; how we may sustain, in perfect safety, the efforts of "the last enemy that shall be destroyed," which "is death;" and how we may escape from everlasting woe, and inherit unmixed and everlasting happiness. These "glad tidings" are plainly put before us all in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is "the way, the truth, and the life:" "No man cometh unto the Father but through Him."

Is it then a little matter to know of these things? Is it little to be urged to follow after, and to be told by God, "who cannot lie," that we may secure this mercy, and escape from these woes? Is it nothing to learn, as "taught of God," that a remedy for sin, commensurate with the wants of sinners, is provided in the sufficient sacrifice of His dear Son? Is it nothing to be told that there is "a new heart and a new spirit" needful for every one born of Adam, and that the Spirit of God freely bestows that gift upon all who seek it? Is it nothing to be snatched "as brands from the" eternal "burning," and "translated into
the kingdom of God's dear Son?" Consider man, every man, first, in his lost estate in this world, and then, under his covenant relationship in Jesus Christ, as the undoubted heir of a glorious immortality in the life to come; and then say whether any zeal which can be manifested in these awfully momentous matters, should not be put forth? Eternity itself is at stake. The real fact is, that the danger consists in our being cold or luke-warm, and not in our being over-zealous in too much regard for a question which involves the condition of the soul for ever, and into which, in all its mysterious bearings upon the great point of the salvation of the soul, the very "angels desire to look."

But, my brethren, is it peculiar to our own day that men should quarrel with zeal in religion? It is not. Human nature has been the same everywhere; the same enmity to things spiritual, the same love of worldly things mark the people of this world in every period of this world's history.

Our Lord was Himself charged with the reproach which, in a greater or less degree, follows all His true disciples. His works and His preaching had drawn: "the multitude together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends," that is, His kinsmen according to the flesh, "heard
of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself."* And yet our blessed Lord declared, in testimony to the necessity of a holy and a persevering zeal, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."† As it was with the Saviour Himself, so would it be with His faithful followers: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household!"‡ Therefore St. Paul, and every true follower of Christ since St. Paul, hath always had a Festus calling out against him "with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."§ So entirely true hath it ever been, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."||

It seems, indeed, from the very nature of true religion, that it must be so. As the worldly mind seeks after and loves the things of the world, so the spiritual mind desires and seeks after the things of the Spirit. The converted soul must be a devoted soul. He

‡ Matt. x. 25. § Acts xxvi. 25. || 1 Cor. ii. 14.
that is with Christ, cannot but show that he is not against Him.

I know, my brethren, that, in answer to all this, it is constantly said, that there is danger of excess. But if we take human life as it really is, it would look as though there were infinitely greater danger of falling short: We do, perhaps, here and there find one whose zeal in religion, through lack of judgment, has been misdirected. But we hear of and see thousands and tens of thousands whose zeal in worldly pleasures, or in heaping up worldly gain, or in carrying into effect worldly purposes, shall be quite equal to any religious zeal, and yet they shall never be spoken against. In this way, "so long as thou dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee."* But shall the feeling be condemned because, in here and there a solitary case, it degenerate into superstition, or be transported into fanaticism? Let the feeling be well directed into its proper channel, and pointed at its proper object, and it cannot exceed, in its estimate, the infinite importance of the object with which it is filled; nor is it then likely to expend more zeal than shall be demanded in the service of so immense an undertaking. The salvation of one single soul would be a theme for an eternal hymn of gratitude and love.

* Ps. xlix. 18.
And now, my brethren, in the practical application of what I have spoken upon the necessity of Christian zeal, as flowing from a true and living faith, I would first address myself to those among you who are too much given to the world to be influenced by the great truths of the gospel.

Zeal in a religion which teaches us to deny ourselves to this world, is what you cannot hear of: for religion is not your "good thing." The inconsistency of which you are guilty, in praising zeal in worldly, but condemning it in spiritual things, I have already put before you. This must appear to yourself, however unwilling you may be to admit the practical inference, whenever you seriously examine what you are, and what you are doing.

Say that, as you evidently do not make the care of your soul your "one thing needful," it is pleasure which you seek after and wish to enjoy. I dare not desecrate the sanctity of this sacred place by speaking minutely of those manifold ways in which you evidence your undoubted zeal in the pursuit after worldly pleasure. Neither would I speak of those names by which you designate the sins and vanity of the world, and so show that, in your zealous desire to varnish over that which, in its right character, you could not avow, you
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fearlessly "call good evil, and evil good." You have a vocabulary herein, stamped with a mark which is peculiarly your own. Were but a small portion of that zeal expended in the care of your soul, which you now exhaust in this world's pleasures, you would pass with your present associates as a mad enthusiast, and would then be the very thing which yourselves now plentifully condemn. But while you exhaust the energies of mind and body in the pursuit after pleasure, as you call it; while you literally toil and labour in your endeavour to enjoy it, you forget how often you have been compelled to heave a sigh in disappointed expectation of that which the pleasures of this world never give. For however you may enjoy them while they are present, you care not much about looking at them when they are past: that retrospect oftentimes gives you pain. Would you but be persuaded to exchange these false pleasures for the gospel promises of mercy and peace, you would experience a joy which no man taketh from you.

But some among you are tempted and overcome by earthly gains: you love "money, the root of all evil," and in your zeal after this your "good thing," are in danger of knowing, from dear-bought experience, the real evil of that unrighteous mammon, "which, while
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some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* Your zeal in coveting and heaping up riches entirely blinds the eyes of your mind from seeing, and steels your heart against the impression of the scripture truth: "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."† Were your zeal herein but directed after the "true riches" which are in Christ Jesus our blessed Redeemer, you would secure a treasure in Him laid up for you "in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal."‡ You would then have a home prepared for you amid eternal treasures, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

But while some do seek these things which are above, your affections are tied down to earth; and by a tie so close withal, that though conversion of heart is continually manifested in respect to other ways of sinning against the Lord, the sin of covetousness, like fire kept up by fuel more and more heaped upon it, goes on in its strength while years advance; and this sinner is constantly hardened against his sin, until, like the rich man

* 1 Tim. vi. 10.  † Ib. 9.  ‡ Matt. vi. 20.
in torment, he see its horror in that place where he thinks, too late, of "Moses and the Prophets."

Thus men spend zeal in pleasure and worldly gain, and the world flatters them in what they do: but what doth it profit them? They must, one day or other, be brought to acknowledge of all their fruitless labours, that they have ended in "vanity and vexation of spirit."

But there are others who appear "to be zealously affected in an" undoubtedly "good thing;" in the outward performance of things connected with religion. This, my brethren, is ground most sacred in itself, and therefore to be especially regarded. Zeal thus manifested by those whose hearts are not devoted to the cause for which their outward actions would seem to be put forth, is not zeal to glorify Christ, but a mere external doing to exalt themselves. In these days of much increasing credit given to the acquirement of religious knowledge, and to certain religious performances, hearing much and doing little, in these days beware of such a zeal as this. It was a feeling which once worked in Jehu, when he boasted in himself in what, of the Lord's work, he was about to perform: "And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord."*

Such, too, was the zeal which, in outward

* 2 Kings, x. 16.
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deeds, the Scribes and Pharisees manifested, and whereby they incurred the judgment of Christ, who knew their hearts: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." "All their works they did to be seen of men." Therefore they had their "reward." And it was the same unsanctified condition of soul which, under much appearance of outward godliness, the holy apostle was commanded to condemn: "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* Your zeal therefore, my brethren, is not to the praise of Christ, but for your own praise: and until you are brought to seek Him as the sole end of all your labour, it will not profit you. When Job saw clearer views of what he himself was, and of what God was, he came to that very conclusion which, if ever you be brought to true zeal in the cause of Christ, must be your's also: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."† This will lead you to the proper

* Rom. x. 2, 3.  † Job xlii. 5, 6.
and peculiar object for your utmost zeal: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."*

Among those various kinds of zeal which I have now enumerated, however they may vary in degree and object, they may all be reduced to two grand distinctions: a zeal which is really for Christ, and the cause of Christ, which the world always despises and condemns; and a zeal in things pertaining to this present life only, which the world esteems and encourages. It is the *object* which distinguishes them: if the object be a worldly object, the world praises zeal; if the object be spiritual and heavenly, the world instantly sets its face against and condemns it.

Some of you, my brethren, have undoubted zeal in the cause of Christ. The eyes of your mind have been enlightened to see; the affections of your heart have been worked upon to feel. You have been brought to the knowledge of your total ruin in yourself, and have fled for refuge to the cross of Christ. Now see that you more and more glorify Christ. Consider how great things He hath done for you. Is it too much that He asks your

* Gal. vi. 14,
most affectionate and earnest zeal to be manifested for Him? Live, then, that gospel in which it is of God's mercy and grace, and your highest privilege, to believe. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation and godliness." So doing, and so being, you must be prepared to find that your zeal will be blamed and despised by the world. But "if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thyself for temptation." Your Saviour was persecuted thus before you; and it is the truth of His word, as well as the experience of every true believer, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must needs suffer persecution." But in the sharpest seasons of persecution "for righteousness' sake," Christ hath commanded you to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad;" and His first faithful followers soon manifested forth that joy: "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."*

But, at the same time, do not needlessly expose yourself to temptation of any kind. Let your zeal always wax warmer and warmer; but let real Christian sobriety accompany the manifestation of it. Never

* Acts v. 41.
cloke your zeal when occasion calls it into exercise; and never, through false shame, or the fear of any earthly thing, shrink from exhibiting your zeal in the cause of Christ. But pray to be directed aright; that, avoiding the temptation of fleeing from a proper opportunity of glorifying Christ through too great regard to what may seem prudence and discretion, you may at once and unquestionably show, in heart, in doctrine, in manner of life, that you are "zealously affected in a good thing." In the care of the soul, and in "the things which are Jesus Christ's," it is your constant duty to attempt great things, and your sure and certain warrant to expect great things.

But there are many of you, my brethren, who, unawakened to the real care of the soul, are zealous, when zealous, only in things pertaining to the world: you are lukewarm, or you are cold and dead in things belonging to the soul. You reject religion altogether; or you take special care, in your real zeal in matters of a temporal nature, not to be too religious: and perhaps Satan quotes and perverts Scripture in your ear, and whispers, "Be not righteous overmuch." Let me ask you this plain question: When some one whom, in life, you have despised for his honest zeal in
the cause of Christ, is gone from this world to his rest in the Lord, have you persevered in thinking that he was too religious, too zealous for the place he is gone to? And when you consider that you yourself must die, do you expect, under whatsoever circumstances you may die, converted or unconverted, that zeal in the cause of Christ shall then be upon your conscience as one of your errors?

Answer this now, while you have time to regard the immense inference which arises from it, as thousands would have wished they had done, before they knew, in bitter experience, how "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God."

The gospel asks no other thing of you than what the world has asked of you, and has obtained. The gospel says, "My son, give me thy heart." That heart the world has also asked for, and you have given it to the world. You have chosen your master; and you serve him freely. You are zealous for his cause; and so long as you reap a present, passing pleasure in his service, you care not to hear, much less to dwell upon the scripture truth, that "the wages of sin is death." If that thought, accompanied by the remembrance that the "death" here spoken of is eternal death, awaken in you one moment's pain, and
you consider yourself, in your present service of sin, the subject of that its sad and fearful consequence, pause, and lift up one real prayer: your day for prayer may not yet be passed by: it may still be your "accepted time," your "day of salvation." Let it not go by. Christ invites you now. Your refusal in time will otherwise be your woe in eternity.
GRACE, NOT IN PROGRESS, NO GRACE.

TIT. II. 10.

"That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

The apostle St. James lays down what may be identified with this same precept; and then shows the reason upon which it is grounded: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."* The precept too which is given by St. Paul in the text, is not unaccompanied by the reasonableness upon which it derives its peculiar force: "For," adds that apostle, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodli-

* James ii. 10, 11.
ness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."*

Now, by comparing these passages of the two apostles together, we see that they both establish the same point; namely, the entirety of the Christian character: to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," as we are urged by St. Paul; and, though we "keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," we are "guilty of all," as we are warned by St. James, evidently lead us to view that single-eyed and unqualified surrender of the whole heart, which the gospel calls for from every one of us: "My son, give me thy heart."

It is this principle of the new life which is continually pressed upon us. "Born in sin, and children of wrath," we must become new born unto righteousness, and children of grace. St. Peter, therefore, upon this ground exhorts: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation; forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb

* Ver. 12, 13.
Grace, not in Progress, no Grace.

without blemish and without spot."* And St. Paul says, in the same spirit, and to the same end, "Put them in mind to be ready to every good work. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."†

We arrive, then, at this conclusion upon the true Christian principle; that not to "adorn the doctrine of God in all things;" "keeping the whole law, and yet offending in one point;" not "being holy in all manner of conversation;" not being "ready to every good work," will subject us to the charge of a relinquishment of our Christian profession, and so make us "guilty of all."

These texts are immediately addressed to believers; not to those whom the world deems such; who can repeat, and perhaps defend, a pure creed of Christian faith with their lips,

* 1 Pet. i. 15, 18, 19. † Tit. iii. 1, 3—6.
and transgress almost every article of that creed in their daily habits of life; but to those whose hearts have at least been brought so to think of sin, and so to believe in the sacrifice paid by the blood of Christ for sin, as to look, with more or less anxiety, after the salvation of their souls. For, unless we have received "the doctrine of God," we could not be exhorted to "adorn" it; unless we had been led to see the necessity of "keeping the whole law," we should not be warned against "offending in one point;" unless we knew somewhat of personal holiness, it would be in vain that we should be exhorted to be "holy in all manner of conversation;" unless we had been led to the knowledge of wholesome doctrine, we should not be able to understand, upon Christian principle, what could be meant by being "ready to every good work:" the soldier stands not ready at his post, until he recognize the authority which orders him to be there.

I will first, then, observe upon the case of those who have been under conviction of sin, and have been led to see, that salvation is in Christ alone; but are in imminent danger of losing all their saving knowledge, because they still retain some one or more of their former practices, and will not, for Christ and
His gospel, and therefore for their own souls' sake, make a full surrender. This class contains a large division. These times of great knowledge, and general attention to something of religious observances, are peculiarly adapted to make this temptation common. Do you, my brethren, whose consciences tell you that you are falling under it, "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."* You receive the knowledge of the truth. You quite feel, with the Psalmist, the full truth contained in what is said by him in regard to every human soul: "No man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him; for it cost more to redeem their souls; so that he must let that alone for ever."† But, on the point of some one or more of your ways and habits of life, you conform to the world in a manner, and with a spirit, which is evidently incompatible with a life of vital holiness. Some things you palliate; you excuse some things; and you justify others. No one who would learn of your example what the Christian life really is, could learn it in its simple and unmixed truth. Your spirit exhibits too much of a worldly character; for you are much more anxious to ascertain just how near you may go to the

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.  
* Ps. xlix. 7, 8.
ways and practices of the world, how closely you may draw the line between what is and what is not conformity to the world, than boldly and at once to show yourself consistent; joyfully glad and eager to get quit of its dangerous and contagious habits altogether. Your construction of the great Christian rule herein is much too narrow: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* See what all this implies, and what all this commands to the professed follower of Jesus Christ; and then ask your own hearts, whether your affections and services are really engaged in this service, so that you do "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." I fear your hearts will tell you that, wilfully offending in one point, your case is the case of those who are "guilty of all;" and that you can have but little to say to a very heart-searching question put to you in God's word, upon the score of real religion: "What do ye more than others?"† If this question perplex you in your answer to it, I would earnestly exhort you to consider well this further admonition as an especial remedy for your case: "We

* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.  
† Matt. v. 47:
then, as workers together with Christ, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

But the text cautions a second set of believers in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, those who have been awakened to a deep sense of their own sinfulness, have fled unto Christ as their only true refuge, but are tempted, in the right and proper valuing of the saving truths of the gospel in its holy doctrines, to be somewhat forgetful of its holy duties.

You, my brethren, are not spoken with as unconverted sinners: but you must be solemnly warned. You forget that Christ's gospel consists of two parts: the doctrines of salvation, and the rules of righteousness. In your earnest desire to depend simply for your salvation upon what those doctrines teach you in regard to the important truth of Christ alone being "the author and finisher of your faith," you do not well understand, and therefore are not diligent in applying the plain rules which His Spirit hath very minutely laid down for the conduct of daily life. This is in the very face of the express words and of the whole spirit of Christianity: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder;" and if you speak and think almost exclusively of Christian doctrine, to

* 2 Cor. vi. 1.  
† Matt. xix. 6.
the neglect of Christian practice, you do not "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" "you offend in one point;" and are therefore "guilty of the whole." You are like the builder of a house who chooses his foundation wisely, and lays it deep and strong; and there he leaves it. There is no superstructure. You are unmindful of the forcible application of this figure by the holy and zealous St. Paul. In his address to the advanced Christians of the church of Ephesus he tells them, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone:" and then immediately adds, "In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."* Upon this principle, too, he exhorts Titus, the first bishop of the church of Crete: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."† And when we read, in the Old Testament, of the law, or doctrine, as it is in the margin of our bible, we meet with precisely the same truth: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the

* Tit. ii. 20, 21.  † Tit. iii. 8.
simple:" and then it is instantly added, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."*

Much might be added on this ground from Holy Scripture, and much might be induced in reference to the character of these times and of every time wherein the knowledge of true scripture doctrine has revived. Upon this great point, therefore, diligently watch your own hearts. You need not fear, as some of you are led to fear, that there will be confusion herein, in the matter of faith and works. Scripture makes none, and why should you? Your salvation is plainly stated to be in Christ alone; and this the doctrines of His gospel unfold, illustrate, and enforce as your sole ground of hope. Your being anxiously alive, after this knowledge has been received into your heart, to keep his commandments, in love for His great mercy, is the only way by which you can really honour His holy name; the only way by which you can show that you really believe in what His Spirit has declared, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." By

* Ps. xix. 7—9, 11.
the converting Spirit of Christ, you must not only be brought to lay the foundation upon Christ, but also to build upon Christ, and so "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." This is the testimony of St. Paul when, in taking his final leave of the church of the Ephesians, he plainly declared, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."* Think upon these things: and do not thus wilfully "offend in one point." To the word of God "add" nothing; from the word of God "take away" nothing: and as you believe in Christ as your only Saviour, so learn to love and obey Christ as your "Lord and your God." It is this which St. Paul so powerfully impresses upon us in that memorable saying of his to his youthful convert Timothy: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."†

To assist you in the right understanding of this important matter, I would name the three great hindrances which are found to prevail more or less in those believers who, in their properly ardent care of the doctrines of the

* Acts xx. 27.       † 1 Tim. i. 5—7.
gospel, do not take sufficient heed "to main-
tain good works." And these are, 1st, temper; 2ndly, self-will; 3rdly, uncharitableness.

From these three may be traced all the evils which surround us outwardly, and beset us inwardly. Consider, first, your temper. It is the business of gospel truth to subdue it. What is an evil temper but a mortified, disappointed desire of some worldly advantage, some personal gratification not met by others, or by others opposed? You seek something wherein one or more of your fellow-creatures must be the instrument, and because you do not obtain what you seek, you are fretted, and angry, and severe. It signifies nothing as to your sin herein, whether what you seek after be ever so good in itself. It is the temper which you manifest in your disappointment, and which in general consists of the veriest trifles of your being in this life, which causes your sin, and your fellow-creatures' pain. Now, go at once to the root of this evil, and through faith in the promises of Christ of a better world, be less anxious about the little personal comforts and conveniences of this. You believe in God's love towards yourself, as the foundation of your hope of salvation in Christ; think upon what this principle ought to produce, and must produce in every true believer, in subduing all those
unkind and angry feelings which, when un-
checked by the principles of the gospel, are
the burthen of the sinner, and the cross of
those who are compelled to suffer from the
manifestation of them. Remember that such
a temper unsubdued, will increase upon you;
and that it evidently classes you among those
who "offend in one point," and are therefore
"guilty of the whole."

The second hindrance in the life of faith, too
often found among those who value the doc-
trines, but slightly regard the precepts of the
gospel, is self-will. By nature all are selfish:
and it is only grace which can effectually
subdue selfishness. Natural benevolence,
early habits of mere human discipline, may
do somewhat herein for a time; but it will
not be more than a temporary diversion of our
natural propensity. When real temptation
to the contrary feeling occurs, in the absence
of true Christian faith, the selfish principle
will soon become most apparent. Unless,
therefore, you suffer Christian principle to
have its proper influence, the selfish principle
will speedily subdue every other. It is of
the very spirit of the gospel to mortify self:
and in this total absence of all selfishness,
you have not less in Christ Jesus a powerful
example, than in Christ Jesus a sufficient
help. "For," saith this holy apostle, here-
unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.”

* Study the Christian character in the example of Him who so denied Himself, that He had not “where to lay His head;” and in your better illustrating the Christian spirit, as opposed to our natural self-will, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

†

The third hindrance to vital godliness in those who, in their exaltation of doctrine, are neglectful of practice, is uncharitableness, that fruitful source of every evil work. To you, my brethren, whose hearts are conscious of such a charge, I could hope that the application of the precept to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,” would

* 1 Pet. ii. 21—23.       † Philip. ii. 5—8.
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* 1 Pet. ii. 21—23.  
† Philip. ii. 5—8.
as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that
descended upon the mountains of Zion; for
there the Lord commanded the blessing, even
life for evermore."* Think on these things,
my brethren, and see that your manner of life
so comport with your love of doctrine, that
"all men may know that ye are Christ’s dis-
ciples;" that all men may say of you and
yours, as the ancient pagans exclaimed of the
primitive believers, "See how these Chris-
tians love one another!"

I have now spoken to three different kinds
of professed believers in the doctrines of the
cross, and have endeavoured to apply the im-
portant command in the text to their several
cases upon the scripture rule of judgment:
"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and
yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
I have endeavoured also, my brethren, to set
before you your proper remedy. Count not
these things of little moment. You believe
in Christ, and upon Christ repose your only
hope. Remember what His beloved disciple
St. John hath left written upon this very
point: "Every man that hath this hope in
Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure."†
This will point out to you the proper use of
the Word of God, and the extreme danger of
so magnifying one portion thereof above an-

* Ps. cxxxiii.  
† 1 John iii. 3.
other, as to show yourself forgetful of what the Spirit hath written in reference to its entire character, and unqualified application of the whole: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."* Remember, my brethren, this certain truth, that a life of grace is a progressive life; and that grace, not in progress, becomes no grace: "for," as we are taught by the word of God, "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."†

May the good Spirit of God keep you from this: may "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ."‡

I have now spoken to those who do take

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.  † 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20.  ‡ Heb. xiii. 20.
some thought for their immortal souls: I would add a few words for those who, in their walk and principle of life, appear to take little or none. You, my brethren, think not much of such texts as bid you "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" for you neither receive the doctrine, nor look to the right foundation, and therefore cannot, upon Christian principles, "maintain good works." And yet you have a law, upon which you act in your outward conduct, but it is a law of your own. Whatever you call it, whether the law of honour, of fashion, of expediency, worldly interest, whatever it be, it is not God's law. Living in a Christian land, you outwardly profess the doctrines of the cross, and the law of the gospel; but you know little, and careless about either. What I have already said of the extreme danger attaching to the case of those who do believe, but through temptation, infirmity, or neglect, err in the faith, may be made applicable to your case, ignorant as you are, and opposed as you profess yourself to be to the true doctrines of grace and vital holiness in Christ; it may be made applicable to you by this simple question from the Word of God: "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if," asks the holy apostle, "it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of
Grace, not in Progress, no Grace. 283

God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* May the Spirit of Christ bring this home to your consciences, while your day lasts, and before the night cometh. Your once crucified Redeemer still complains of you: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."† But you know not how long it may be ere the language of most tender mercy be turned into the sentence of final condemnation. For though "judgment" is God's "strange work," yet will it surely come to pass. Look to that judgment, and contemplate its tremendous and eternal consequences, and you, through grace, may then be led to Him who alone can save you from them. Even for you the Saviour hath been crucified; the sacrifice is made, the expiating blood hath flowed, and a voice of mercy invites—"Come unto me."

* 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. † John v. 40.
THE NARROW ROAD.

ST. LUKE XIII. 23, 24.

"Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

We are nowhere told who it was that put this question to our Lord; but it was not an extraordinary thing that it should be put. The Jews had a strange conceit among themselves, that every Jew would be found at last in the kingdom of God. This some of their doctors utterly denied; and there was much contention in consequence upon the point. It was natural, therefore, that an appeal should have been made to Christ, who, as "a preacher of righteousness," and a worker of miracles among them, must, by many at least, have been deemed competent to set this question at rest.
But how wisely did our blessed Lord reply to this useless question! He checked the spirit of inquiry into the final condition of others, while He made the way quite plain and open to ourselves: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." This is the injunction personally addressed to every one of us. We must each strive, because each may obtain. This is our encouragement. But we must also be warned against carelessness and presumption. Christ therefore added, "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able:" that is, not that any one shall strive in vain whilst his day of grace remains; but, as our blessed Lord Himself explains it, when, by death, inveterate indifference, or evident hardness of heart, with no real desire, no subdued will, no longing after Him as a Saviour God, the day of grace shall be past. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." We have had our gospel privileges; we have read and heard thy word; we have partaken of thy sacraments; we have belonged to the
congregation of thy people: "But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." You lived and died "workers of iniquity;" and that one thing alone: wilful and unrepented sin, hath shut you, as you were constantly warned it would do, from the kingdom of God for ever.

The question, my brethren, thus put and answered, may be made, as it is intended to be made, from the very circumstance of its being written down for us in the Word of God, highly profitable to ourselves. We have all a natural desire to look into futurity; to know, if it were possible, who and how many will be saved, who and how many will be lost. Our Lord has given us His own instruction as to the right way of managing this natural curiosity into the final condition of others, by directing it into a better channel of earnest striving and anxious solicitude for ourselves: and that striving and solicitude, when really felt for the salvation of our own souls, will at once give rise to all that shall be found profitable care and anxiety about the salvation of the souls of our fellow-creatures.

In considering this passage of Holy Scripture now before us, I would direct your view of it to two very opposite constructions put upon it by different readers and hearers of
the word. In contemplating these, both of which appear contrary to scripture truth, we may, if so it please the Spirit of all truth now to guide our minds, be better led to the safe construction, and to the spiritually profitable application of what is now before us.

The two different ways of construing this and similar texts in God's holy word are these: 1st, there are some who would make religion so easy a thing, so much a matter of course, that, with a very little care on our part, heaven may be readily secured; while others, 2dly, would well nigh shut up the kingdom of God, and so would almost seem "neither to go in themselves, neither to suffer them that are entering to go in."* 

In regard to the first error herein, we cannot look rightly into what the soul is in its corruption by original sin, and its merited condemnation through wilful transgression, without acknowledging how great a change must take place from what it is by nature and sin, before it can be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." And, again, when we rightly consider how great the sacrifice has been in the dignity, the perfect nature, the keen and agonizing sufferings of Him, through whom alone redemption of the soul can be obtained, we cannot but con-

fess the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the un-
speakable value of the soul, and the infinite
cost of the sacrifice rendered necessary for its
pardon and justification. Put these two to-
gether, the soul's corruption and ruin, and
Christ's nature and sufferings, and we have
the proper argument against the dangerous
error of those who would teach that the salva-
tion of the soul can be viewed in any other
character by every one of us, than as the "one
thing needful."

We cannot better confirm this truth, or
better show its manifestly practical intention,
than by recollecting how deeply important,
and how painfully trying, those sacrifices must
oftentimes be, which Christ Himself has
pointed out to us, as tests of our faith and of
our obedience to Him: "If thy right eye of-
fend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee:
for it is profitable for thee that one of thy
members should perish, and not that thy
whole body should be cast into hell. And if
thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and
cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee
that one of thy members should perish, and
not that thy whole body should be cast into
hell."* "If any man will come after me, let
him deny himself, and take up his cross, and
follow me."† "Therefore," adds the holy

* Matt. v. 29, 30.
† Ibid. xvi. 24.
The narrow Road.

apostle St. Paul, who well knew what the will of His gracious Lord was, "we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."* And he gives us the fruit of his experience as a lesson for ourselves: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."† These, and a great many similar passages, setting before us all "the broad road" and "the narrow road," the "many called" and the "few chosen," are the Scripture proof of the dangerous position laid down by many, that the salvation of the soul is an easy thing, to be regarded lightly, and postponed continually. By these texts, the history of the fall, and of our redemption in Christ alone, we are better taught the true and profitable inquiry upon this awfully momentous subject: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"‡ After such plain assurances in God's Word, we must be blind not to see how great a matter the salvation of the soul is; and how infinitely momentous it is that we "work out" our "own salvation with fear and trembling:"

always remembering, that "it is God which worketh in" us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure."* We must be blind not to see that this salvation, so wrought by Christ in our behalf, and so to be applied to our souls, cannot be a light and easy matter: it is indeed our life, and requires our most fervent prayer, our constant watchfulness, in will, temper, and manner of life, to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure."

But while many, in sad and grievous error, through love of this present evil world, and natural and unconquered distaste for things spiritual, would make the salvation of the soul matter of light consideration, and most easy to be attained, there are some who are led into the opposite extreme, and would almost appear to shut up the kingdom of God, and so would seem neither to go in themselves, neither to suffer them that are entering, to go in.

This feeling was a good deal manifested in the Christian world during, what are well termed, the dark ages, when, in ignorance of that "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," men imposed upon themselves painful austerities and great personal suffering, excluding themselves from the ties of relative duties, and in self-inflicted misery and torture

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.
thus expected some few, "through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God."

These ages have passed by, and the restricted view of what Holy Scripture puts before us as the fulness of divine Love, in the comprehensive character of the Saviour "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;"* the restricted view of all this has assumed another direction. It is seen rather in the writings of its upholders, and heard more in their public preaching, than openly avowed in private intercourse with their fellow-creatures. They do not care to acknowledge what necessarily involves a consequence at which they profess to tremble.

My brethren, it does appear, that if there be any one single point which we think we see in the Word of God, a word made open to all, "that he who runneth may read," and yet dare not speak upon it at all times, and at all times boldly and gladly acknowledge it with all its consequences, it is an evident testimony against its being there at all. For why should we fear to avow what we believe God has revealed, when we profess to act upon His own sacred declaration, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works?"*

The answer to this fear of acknowledging what some think scripture teaches, rests with those who entertain it. Their opinion, indeed, has produced strange feelings in the minds of some of them, who have been led to speak even with a kind of holy triumph of the sad issue of their restricted view in regard to their fellow-creatures. Our Lord, on the other hand, ever spake of the loss of even one single soul as a matter infinitely more momentous than the gain of the whole world: and tenderly by His prophets remonstrated with His sinful people, "Come, now, let us reason together;" "What could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it?"† and most affectionately, in personal presence, lamented over those who would not be saved: "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."‡ It was thus that the Saviour regarded the case of wilfully perishing sinners; and when angels

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. † Is. v. 4. ‡ Luke xix. 41, 42.
rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, and Christ weeps over the many who shut themselves out from the kingdom of God, man should not seem to put other views before his fellow-man, nor make the covenant in Christ of other character than what His own gospel declares it to be: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* We should remember, too, that when the offer of this gracious Saviour is made from God by the great evangelical prophet, He summons creation itself to hear the glorious sound: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken."†

And when this gracious Saviour was come into our world, it was no less than a chorus of angels rejoicing for human happiness, who pronounced His advent to be, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."‡ And we are assured, moreover, in the prophecy of unerring truth, that when the salvation made by the Lamb for sinning man is the theme of angel praise above, it excites the enraptured song of the whole hierarchy of heaven: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about

* 1 John ii. 1, 2.  † Is. i. 2.  ‡ Luke ii. 14.
the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."*

Thus, my brethren, have I spoken of the two very opposite views which are taken in reference to the question put to our great Redeemer, "the author and finisher of our faith," "Lord, are there few that be saved?"

The inference which I would draw arises from that simple point which Christ Himself pressed upon the inquirer, showing unto each of us, that in respect to the numbers that shall be saved, we have nothing to do: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." In furtherance of this view of the subject, it may be not without its use that we consider why some should make the road to life so easy, and others so hard; why some should suppose so many will easily be saved; and some that so many must necessarily be lost.

On the one part it seems to arise from the want of a due consideration of the person and character of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the dignity of His divine, the bitter and degrading sufferings of His human nature, and

* Rev. v. 11, 12.
the extent and malignity of sin; and on the other, from the want of a scriptural view of the fulness and sufficiency of the Saviour's righteousness and atonement, and unalterable love in reference to the whole race of mankind. Let us but entertain right views of Christ, and a true knowledge of our own hearts, as the best practical lesson to which we, who have Scripture for our guide, can betake ourselves for a right understanding of the general corruption of our race, and we shall be brought through these two extremes in safer construction of the unerring Word of God. Let Christ be the continued subject of our thoughts, our prayers, our meditation; and in reading His holy Word we shall better understand the true nature of His great redemption, both as it is preached to every one of us individually, and as it is intended to operate upon the whole world collectively.

This, in practice, is the only safe and easy conclusion. For salvation is an individual thing; and it is only when we regard it as affecting the souls of our fellow-creatures, that its dark and most mysterious character appears. We find it here a mystery indeed; and as a mystery we must leave it. It is not well, it is opposed to Scripture itself, when we
are led to put human construction upon divine circumstance; and of those deep matters, in which the Scriptures tell us plainly "are some things hard to be understood," and "into which the angels desire to look," to assert positively our human scheme, and so to incur that especial reproof given hereupon in the Word of God: "Thus saith the Lord God, Will ye pollute me among my people, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life."* This adjudication by the Spirit of God of the very errors which we have now contemplated, and which once prevailed under the law, is the sure, and therefore the safe provision against similar errors which have grown up under the gospel; and this, therefore, ought to be the sufficient guide to us, my brethren, if we really seek after the plain and simple truth of "the things which are Jesus Christ's."

You, then, who do seek by ardent prayer and real humility given by the Spirit of

* Ezek. xiii. 18, 19.
Christ, and are thus prepared to find; and you, too, who hear with your outward ears the truth of the word, but in different states of opposition, or of carelessness, engaged in other things, care little or nothing for these things, do each of you look at the character which Christ Himself has given of what His gospel really is. It will be comfort and encouragement to the believer, and at the same time a most solemn warning to the unbeliever. When Christ spake of this gracious gospel of infinite love and mercy, it was thus: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

You who have hearkened to this blessed Saviour, and, through faith in the converting influence of His Spirit, have gone unto Him, you already know, or are in the right way to know, in your own experience, how entirely true every word of this encouraging, cheering invitation and assurance is. The "yoke is easy," and the "burden light" in exact proportion as you really endeavour and wish to bear the yoke, and carry the burden. As the

* Matt. xi. 28—30.
yoke of bondage, whatever it has been, which once kept you from Christ, is broken off; as the burden of sin, in whatsoever manifestation thereof it consisted, is cast away, your proper yoke as willing servants, your necessary burden as faithful followers of the ever-blessed Jesus, the "meek and lowly in heart," will be more and more welcome to you. Nay, though you be subject to human trial which shall in itself be heavy, for the kingdom of God's sake, this will not nullify the Saviour's words, nor make His promise void to you who believe, and to whom "He is precious," that "all things shall work together for your good," though, if need be, "through much tribulation" you "enter into the kingdom of God."

And why, my brethren, should not Christ's yoke thus easy, Christ's burden thus light, be borne by you also, who heretofore have taken little or no thought for your great salvation in Him? Simply because you are under a yoke and a burden, which, whatever you may now think of their pressure under that fatal system of business, or of this world's pleasures, by which you endeavour to believe them light, will one day be felt in their real character. What are you told in the Old Testament? "Be sure your sin will find you out." Of
what are you warned in the New Testament?

"The stone which the builders rejected, the
same is become the head of the corner. Who-
soever shall fall upon that stone, shall be
broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it
will grind him to powder."*

If you can be prevailed upon, in thought
only, to anticipate this foretold and certain
issue, you might then, haply, be led further to
draw a contrast between the burden, the ser-
vice, and the wages of sin; and the joys, and
the promises, and the gift of Christ. Perhaps,
at times, you do look into the future; and at
times acknowledge, or at least feel that there
is a frightful picture for your gaze, which the
vivid expectation of what is to come paints in
characters, from which you would gladly hide
yourself. But why live thus your own tor-
mentor? Or why live at all such, as must, one
day or other, whether you feel it now or not,
realize in experienced suffering, what now
you like not to dwell upon in faintest repre-
sentation? See how the whole "world lieth in
wickedness." See how you are earnestly ex-
horned to leave your love of the world, and to
entertain a better love. See how burden-
some sin is, how severe its exactions, how
eternally dreadful its wages. And then see

The narrow Road.

how gracious the Lord is in even now calling you to "flee from the wrath to come:" to call upon Christ in this your accepted time; and so learn, in application to your own soul, that His is the only yoke which is easy, His the only burden which is light.
ON AN UNSUBDUED TEMPER.

Psalm cvi. 32, 33.

"It went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

One single instance of an angry temper lost Moses the honour of settling the church of God in its long-expected rest. The wanderers in the wilderness were not to be accompanied by this holy servant of the Lord, "because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." And yet, as Holy Scripture bears witness, "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."* So urgent is the command, "Slow to wrath:" so convincing the argument, "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."†

The history of the sin and its punishment should not be unknown to any of you. The peo-

* Numb. xii. 3.  † James i. 19, 20.
ple of Israel murmured in the wilderness, and "gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, because there was no water for the congregation." But Moses and Aaron knew that their help cometh from the Lord: therefore they "went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle; they fell upon their faces; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them." The divine command to them was, "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water." But Moses did more than what God commanded; *his words were words of anger: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" His deed was disobedience: "And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice." Angry in his spirit, and giving more credence to his deed in smiting, than to God's promise of the efficacy of a word, he immediately received his sentence: "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Of the final salvation of Moses Scripture hath left no doubt whatever. His one sin is our warning, not his eternal condemnation. But it is a most powerful illustration of this question in God's word: "If

* Numb. xx.
On an unsubdued Temper.

the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*

The sin of an evil temper may be considered in three very striking views of it: 1st, its frequency; 2ndly, its danger; 3rdly, its remedy. May the good Lord sanctify the whole to the great spiritual improvement of this present hour given to us for the hearing of His word.

Of the frequency of this sin it is not too much to say, that almost all are, or have been under its influence. Few among those who are brought to repent of all sin, have not cause to say of this sin in particular, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."†

Against this it will be said, that there are many who seem naturally kind, gentle, and affectionate: it will be said that many not much moved by religion, without much thought of sin in themselves, and of the only remedy found out for sin, pass through life with apparently little or no movement from temper. Some, perhaps, do so. Worldly prosperity, good health of body, and cheerful spirits arising therefrom, will, as natural and physical causes, do much herein. But in these rare instances, (and that they are rare the language of the world itself allows, when it justifies anger, and oftentimes excess of

* 1 Pet. iv. 18. † Heb. xii. 1.
anger in certain provocations, upon the ground of its being enough to provoke a saint; in these very rare instances, is it quite clear that the character has been thoroughly known? the temper often tried? To some of those who live at ease in their possessions, for whom the stream of life seems to flow on undisturbed, few temptations, comparatively speaking, to this particular sin, occur. And yet, if these be crossed in the tide of their habitual self-indulgence, it is not natural good temper which will make them patient. But still, be this as it may, in regard to some very few exceptions, it will not be denied that an evil, an unkind and an angry temper in a greater or less degree, is a besetting sin: and where it seems otherwise, in cases not under the influence of religion, it were well to consider how much that very circumstance is made an instrument of self-deception. It is dangerous to account absence of temptation a state of safety; or, as with some, a mark of advance in grace. It is like another feeling of the people of this world: “When our sins leave us, we fancy that we have left our sins.”

Secondly, the extreme danger of this sin of an evil temper. It is dangerous because it indicates the absence, certainly while it is in exercise, of Christian love. And St. Paul has written a most fearful declaration as to the
necessity of our having love: without it we do not belong to Christ: "I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal: I am nothing; it profiteth me nothing."* "Let all your things be done with charity."† An evil temper destroys love. The fruits of the Spirit grow not on such a soil. "This," said the Saviour, "is my command, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."‡ "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."§ This can be manifested only where, upon Christian principle, natural bad temper is resisted, and grace become triumphant over in-dwelling sin.

There is another proof of the extreme danger of the sin of anger. If it be unchecked, it will grow into a habit. This, indeed, the world will not quarrel with: for the world has an excuse for its own; and will account it bodily disease, or constitutional temperament; and that it means nothing. Now, though we are all taught of true charity, that it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;"|| yet must we not confuse things. We must not call evil good, any more than we must call good evil. Where, in a particular instance of another, we can find a reason for palliating their failings, Christian love will

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1.  † Ib. xvi. 14.  ‡ John xiv. 12.
§ Ib. xiii. 35.  || 1 Cor. xiii. 6.
cause us to do so. But the rule of the gospel of Jesus Christ will not allow us to palliate our own. If the sin of anger, then, go on unchecked, it will become a habit. The sinner will, perhaps, be himself scarcely aware of the fact that it is so. And how sad and dangerous is that sin which is become habitual to us! How hard and rare is it to escape from its pernicious influence! "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good; that are accustomed to do evil."* "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God."†

Any sin unchecked will increase like the small portion of leaven in the lump, until the whole be leavened. In the instances of sin become a habit, which the sad history of sin affords, take that in the case of the sin now before us, the sin of anger. In early life it was scarcely deemed a sin, seldom perhaps called into action; or disregarded by all, save the all-seeing eye of God. But it grew with the growth: and as years advanced, seemed to increase in strength in exact proportion to the nearness of the period wherein all causes of anger and irritation in this life must cease to be felt. In its false views of

* Jer. xiii. 23. † Ib. ii. 23.
this sin the world does much towards its increase. For if the individual in whom it reigns, for any cause, be esteemed or courted by the world, every mouth will be shut. The aged sinner will sin on unwarned. Worldly friends will have no desire to warn; spiritual friends will watch and pray, and, if it be possible, give that warning which they withhold at all, only lest it should be a cause of greater sin: fuel adding to the flame. And what can this aged victim to the evil temper within do, in the exercise of the solemnly responsible talent of old age? "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."* And the youthful Elihu did not err when he said to the aged counsellors of Job, "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom."† How can this talent be exercised, if there be some thought herein, when friends, servants and dependents are accustomed to little else than the ebulitions of an angry temper? How can advice or reproof have weight, when it comes from the lips of one grown old in undue estimate of personal wants, and personal conveniences, the outward evidence of disobedience to the Saviour's precept: "Take no

* Prov. xvi. 31. † Job xxxii. 6, 7.
thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on?"* Is it possible that such a one can have arrived at, or be any way hastening towards the true believer's crown of glory: "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world?"† No, my brethren, if the sin of an angry temper hath so far prevailed in the inner man, and so much exhibited itself in the outward conduct, that friends dare not speak, that servants and dependents tremble, what useful exercise can there be of the peculiar honour of grey hairs? If little interruptions to habitual indulgence in the things of this life fret and irritate the temper, how can there be any real thought and value for "the things which are Jesus Christ's?" Where, in such a person, can the evidence be of the new man, declared to be essential under the covenant of grace: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new?"‡ Where are the marks of "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price?"§ It is not pos-

‡ 2 Cor. v. 17. § 1 Pet. iii. 4.
sible that two opposite principles should rule in the same bosom: and if the professing Christian live under the evident influence of an evil temper, it will be safe for that person to consider whether he has yet made the first step into the Christian walk. Nothing can be more opposite than the meek and kind and subdued spirit of the true believer, ever setting for his pattern Him who was "meek and lowly in heart," and the melancholy exhibition of a temper not brought under the dominion of grace. It is sinful and dangerous in every case; but if it has been allowed to grow up into a habit until an advanced period of life, it is then indeed most dangerous. It is painful to witness such a result in one so near the termination of the allotted day of trial. When the Word of God speaks of a heart so influenced, it surely marks it as a most grievous sin: "The man Nabal was churlish and evil in his doings: such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him." And in the final history of this very character, there is a heavy judgment recorded against him: "Nabal held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died
within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that the
Lord smote Nabal, that he died."* One sin permitted to reign, engenders more, and shows
a soul becoming ripe for judgment: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet
offend in one point, he is guilty of all."† It is the carnal mind; and therefore it is enmity
against God. By necessary consequence, "sin has dominion over him." In temper, as in
every other part of the inward or outward man, he that is not with Christ, is against Him.
"Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and
he cannot sin," wilfully and habitually sin, "because he is born of God. In this the
children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteous-
ness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."‡

It is not in this way that you will hear sin spoken of in the world; this sin especially.
Not in the spirit of Christian charity, but in its own spirit, the world loves to make allow-
ances, or rather excuses for sin. It is to be expected that the world would do so. Like
a sick man, very much alarmed at sickness, he likes to hear of some symptom of his own

* 1 Sam. xxv. 3, 17, 36—38. † James ii. 10.
‡ 1 John iii. 9, 10.
disease existing in another apparently less sick than himself. Unconverted sinners, who are diseased in soul, and more diseased because they will not feel and confess their malady, are somewhat comforted in any construction put upon sin which will do away some of the sting which they sometimes discover. With the experience of this, we have Scripture testifying to the same point: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."* "He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth."† One expression common in the world, and very common in respect to the sin now before us, is much to be remarked, because it at once and by name puts man’s supposed merits into the place of Christ. The world speaks of redeeming virtues. One man shall be dissipated and sensual: another proud and selfish; another fretful and ill-humoured. But if he be rich, or have some exterior quality of head or heart to recommend him in a worldly view, it will be spoken of, not in the Christian spirit of charity, which “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,” but in the true spirit of the world. He has redeeming virtues: some of his good shall make up for his evil, and he will find the balance in his favour when his final reckoning shall

* 1 John iv. 5.  † John iii. 31.
be told. It may possibly help some one or more to a better view of their own real condition of soul, to consider how much this way of looking upon sin is countenanced by the world; and how much the natural deceitfulness of the heart commits this fatal imposition upon itself.

Having now spoken of the frequency, and the danger of the sin of an angry temper, our third head brings us to the remedy. And every thing in the holy Word of God goes to show that a remedy is provided against this, as well as against other sins: a remedy for past transgression: "Behold the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world." A remedy for human weakness against the power of natural corruption, and Satan's art and malice: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." A remedy against the force of any temptation, present or to come: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation also, make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* It never can be that there is failure in the provisions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The sinner only fails in his search after and application of them:

* 1 Cor. x. 13.
"Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." No one who hath looked unto the Lord but hath had the same experience with the Psalmist: "If the Lord had not helped me, it had not failed, but my soul had been put to silence. But when I said, My foot hath slipped: thy mercy, O Lord, held me up."* To every one that looks upward, the divine language never changes: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."†

This, then, my brethren, is your sufficient remedy against all sin: and this is your especial remedy against the sin of an angry spirit, which has now been the subject of our thoughts. From this, as well as from every other sin, you must be converted, if you would live: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."‡ This will be the evidence, that you seek that life which only is the true life: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Let the desire after that life lead you to Him now: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."§ Show henceforth

* Ps. xciv. 17, 18. † Jer. xxix. 11.
‡ Ps. xxxiv. 12—14. § 1b. 8.
that you trust in Him for pardon for past iniquity in the sin of an unkind, an angry, an easily provoked temper: show this in fervent prayer unto that blessed Saviour who heareth prayer, and unto whom all flesh must come. Mortify the love of this present world in your heart; for it is the strong hold which the world and its concerns have upon your soul, which causes the continuance of an unchristian temper within. Set Christ more frequently before you as the great sacrifice for your sin. Remember that there is a sense in which every giving way to an unholy temper may rank you among those who nailed Him to the cross: "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."*

You, then, my brethren, upon whose souls the grace of God hath given its holy character, and enabled you to subdue, or still faithfully to resist an evil temper, or hath sanctified, and so given a holy motive and a gracious exercise to that which was naturally otherwise, be diligent still in watchfulness and prayer. Your constant duty is, now that you have been "convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," to "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things." In nothing can you more adorn these doctrines of covenant grace, than in your outward demeanour to-

* Heb. vi. 6.
wards others: "Let love be without dissimulation. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."* In your intercourse towards those whose hearts the Lord hath opened to believe "the truth as it is in Jesus," let there be cause for all to say, as even heathens once acknowledged, "Behold how these Christians love one another." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."† And towards "those who are without," who are against you in spiritual things, perhaps also in things which affect your worldly peace and condition, show yourselves the true followers of Christ. His special command herein is this: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."‡

And you, my brethren, who are conscious to yourselves, or who ought to be conscious from a better knowledge of your own hearts, of an angry, unkind temper, think how you add a needless portion to your own misery, even for this present life. And then think

* Rom. xii. 8. † 1 Pet. i. 22. ‡ Matt. v. 44, 45.
of what must be the character of the real disciple of Jesus Christ. He must render "the fruits of the Spirit;" "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;"* for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."† "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."‡ Without this fruit, where is there that meekness spoken of in Scripture as necessary for all who would "be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."§ Take this thought to your hearts. And may the Spirit of Christ make it grow there. You will then learn the blessedness of cultivating here on earth that temper of soul which alone will be found in heaven. Remember, too, that if it be not cultivated, and, through divine grace, made manifest here, it will not be found in you hereafter. We shall all be in the day of Christ's second coming just as we depart out of this place for the exercise of our privileges under the gospel mercy of His first coming: "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."‖ And if we have made ourselves and our fellow-creatures

* Gal. v. 22. † Rom. viii. 9. ‡ Ver. 10. § Col. i. 12. ‖ Eccles. xi. 3.
On an unsubdued Temper.

miserable through an angry temper on earth, we shall not be fit companions for the holy angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect" in heaven. Take this awful thought home with you. "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."*

* Ps. iv. 4.
CORRUPT MANNERS NECESSARILY PRODUCE A CORRUPT SOCIETY.

Ezek. xvi. 49.

"Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her."

It was after the period of the first infliction of God's judgment upon Jerusalem, that the prophet Ezekiel exercised his ministry. He was himself a captive among his people, and with them had been carried to Babylon. The captivity was to be a school of discipline, as well as an instrument of punishment; and this holy prophet was guided by the Spirit to put before the people the true cause of their heavy lot. To make this more palpably striking, he compares them, in sin, to the iniquitous people of Sodom; and says of Jerusalem, that there subsisted a sameness of character between her and that condemned city; and that, in prophetic figure and divine adjudi-
Cran. Manners produce corrupt Society. 319

cation, they were sisters: "Behold, this was
the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, ful-
ness of bread, and abundance of idleness, was
in her and her daughters; neither did she
strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.
And they were haughty, and committed abo-
mination before me: therefore I took them
away as I saw good."* And then, that the
strength of this comparison should not be lost,
the prophet himself makes the application,
"Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters,
bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou
hast committed more abominable than they:
they are more righteous than thou: yea, be
thou confounded also, and bear thy shame,
in that thou hast justified thy sisters."† "For
thus saith the Lord God: I will even deal
with thee as thou hast done, which hast de-
spised the oath in breaking the covenant."‡

Jerusalem, thus accused and thus punished,
is put forth in God's word as a warning to any
people who, guilty of wickedness through
these common causes of national sins, incur
the danger of the wrath and just judgment of
the Lord. To bring this matter, my brethren,
home to ourselves, I would refer you to the
common cry now existing in our land, ac-
knowledged and re-echoed by our rulers, and
audible wherever we turn our ear, that crime

* Ver. 49, 50.    † Ver. 52.    ‡ Ver. 59.
increases among us in frightful calculation; that unless some efficient check be put to its desolating progress, a period must soon occur, already marked and dealt with in the sacred history of the past, when “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

But, in thus adverting to the acknowledged increase of crime, it must not be forgotten, that those who search into the providences of God, also discern the riches of His grace, in that, in our day, there is an increase, too, of better things. Knowledge of the truth more and more abounds, and the light of his gospel manifestly spreads. But still crime and wickedness (as might be expected in just such a point as is the revival of religious knowledge, and a real interest in vital holiness) have frightfully increased. Satan stirs up his powers of darkness against the powers of light, and will not unresistingly be dethroned from his empire over us.

It is curious to observe how precisely opposed to the cause assigned by the prophet for the sin and punishment of Sodom and Jerusalem, are those various ways of accounting for this great evil of sin, now evidently on the increase among ourselves. The prophet goes

* Gen. vi. 5.
produce a corrupt Society.

at once to the very root. He does not measure a people’s sin by rules of human science, statistical calculations, and political ill: but he says boldly to them all, that it is "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness;" that hot-bed of sin, and nursery of all national and individual guiltiness. And can we say, apart, for one moment, from the remembrance of the divine inspiration under which he wrote, can we say, in the lesson of experience, that the prophet erred? What do we learn in every page of history which tells the downfall of nations, but that this which the prophet speaks of, was the signal for their ruin? In the great ruins of nations since the world was, first the universal deluge, which destroyed the earth; then in the fall of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, has it not for ever been the manifest truth, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people?"* And in the increase of our own moral guilt before God, may not that be sounded in our ears, which was formerly sounded by a prophet in the ears of the Israelites, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"† and, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God,"‡ was surely not more justly the truth for sinning Judah, than it now is for us.

* Prov. xiv. 34. † 2 Chron. xxviii. 10. ‡ Is. lix. 2.

FOURTH COURSE.
It is thus that Scripture accounts for the increase of sin through "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."* Whatever be the proximate cause, the Word of God knows of none other as the first and prevailing cause; and consequently teaches, that if the evil is to be met, it can be met only by going at once to the root.

But how opposite to this way of accounting for increased crime, and of administering to its cure, are those reasonings and speculations which are now so frequent among us! I would not say that the causes assigned may not have much appended to them as causes of sin; but they are not the cause. Look at them as they stand before us, assigned and rested upon as the sole cause, according as each man takes his own surmise; and which, it is said, being removed, crime would no more increase among us. It is, for example, as some aver, the necessary consequence of an increasing population. But "increase and multiply" was God's own peculiar blessing upon mankind; and who will say that Balaam's remonstrance was wrong, in its application here: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?"†

Others say that national wickedness springs

* Heb. iii. 12. † Numb. xxiii. 10.
from a revulsion, or from a stagnation of trade; and that a nation's moral character rises or sinks with the sound or silence of her looms, and the great or the little pay of her people's earnings. And yet we also hear, that were our people provident from expenditure, in an evil way, of large earnings, in national prosperity, they would have the wherewithal for need against a rainy day. This at least meets the unqualified assurance of the moral prevalence being found in large national gain: and we know where overmuch thought and care have been causes why men had rather refuse the invitation to the feast of real good things, because they would go their way, "one to his farm, another to his merchandize."

And among other causes for national wickedness which time permits not, nor occasion renders necessary, now to be enumerated, some say that people sin because, of late years, they are taught in childhood, out of God's word, not to sin; and that because little children, as far as collective teaching extends, are "trained up in the way they should go," by a strange inversion of scripture truth, it puts them into the very way in which they should not go. Whether reason or religion is more called into question by the assigning of such a cause for the increase of crime as this, must be left to those who make it a cause. But, as
we do not always find that the children of the rich abstain from evil, because they are instructed in their childhood collectively at least, this same argument, which fights against the teaching of the poor, must, on that ground, be applied against the teaching of the rich; and so, contrary to God's word, there must be teaching no more for any.

But to have done with these insufficient speculations. They are little more than subterfuges to escape from the real and operative cause. We are perpetually striving to get rid of all personal charge, and so find out something as the cause of an ill which may not criminate ourselves. The Scripture, on the other hand, tells us plainly, that the great cause of our increasing sinfulness is "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." This, indeed, ill comports with the language which the world uses upon these subjects. We call ourselves a Christian nation. But when our legislators consult over our national crimes, are their voices raised, and do their hearts seem warm in the question, as one, in its great moving impulse and consequences, evidently of a Christian and spiritual character? If the language were read which our legislators speak when they think they are meeting these evils of sin; or if those words were noted and read which our deputed guardians, armed with
magisterial power to enforce the laws, use in the ears and to the face of our numerous transgressors of law, and he who read knew not of what religion we were, could he certainly know, from the language of our legislators, and the manner and admonitions of our magistrates, that we were, by profession, Christians? If language be the criterion of inward thought and desire, and that language be barren almost entirely of any thing even slightly bearing upon things spiritual, how can laws, and consultations, and magisterial agency be said to savour of Christianity, which, in its real and proper character, is altogether spiritual?

It is not, indeed, that "fulness of bread" so generally abounds among ourselves, as that it must every where be seen, for the proof of what Scripture asserts herein, as its painful and abused consequence. But, though there be some individual and local difficulty through want of bread, there never was, perhaps, any period of this nation's history, in which there was so much fulness of every earthly possession, as at this present time. There is not, indeed, an equalization, but there is an immense accumulation. Riches are our national feature, locked up by a few in their iron chests, or expended on themselves by many in selfish pleasures, and in
selfish employments and pursuits. Hence pride is engendered; or rather brought much into action, as an influential feeling among us; and, in its necessary consequences, too plainly proves, that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."*

And with respect to the "abundance of idleness" which helped to destroy Sodom, have we not the proof of this cause of increasing crime strikingly manifested among us? What, among those higher classes of the community, which give the tone and sentiment to a nation's character, is the common feeling upon the subject of human labour? "My son is well provided for, and need not work," is the very negative opposed by man to the express and general command of God: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground:"† and when we read how Christ hath commented upon this, and told us plainly that to some is given one talent, to others five, and to others ten, and that those who have the largest gift must work the hardest, and that of them shall more be expected at the last, it seems strange that any parent, positively or by plain inference, should teach his child that he need not work

* 1 John ii. 16.  
† Gen. iii. 19.
at all. With this lesson from a parent's mouth, or from a parent's example before them, indeed, it is not wonderful that human life should be caught at by the young in the higher and middle classes of the community, as a sphere of animal enjoyment; that the body should be pampered, pleasure courted, the soul neglected, and the sin of "abundance of idleness" be incurred.

If, then, these causes exist among us, we need seek no other cause of the evil, in our being really alive to the discovery of the proper cure. Where these prevail, they must necessarily paralyze the exertion of those who are under their baneful influence against any anxious care for their own souls, much more any anxious care for the souls of others. When "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," are thus found as manifest and prevailing evils in the higher and middle classes of the community, a nation must be prepared to experience increase of crime among the lower orders. It is but an effect following its cause. The poor will be neglected, or, what possibly may be still worse, they will be enlisted as agents in the idle ways and worldly pleasures of their betters, eye and ear witnesses of all their habits and excesses by day and by night; they will be brought under an influence from example, in
their worldly maintenance! that, "Let us eat and drink," "let us take our fill of pleasure," "for to-morrow we die," is the sufficient argument for a life wasted in sin, and the sure and certain cause of a soul lost in eternity.

But enough of the evil. Where shall we find a remedy? What shall cure sin? Go, my brethren, to the Word of God, and there read, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."* We find no other cure for sin ever put before us than Christ's blood, as we never find any other first cause of sin spoken of in fallen man, than the corruption of his own heart.

In his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul enters regularly and very much at large upon the evil and prevalence of sin. And we do not find him looking to mere secondary causes, which, if met, would spring up again in a thousand different shapes and characters. He looks to the soul itself; and then asks of the boasting Jew what difference there is in inbred corruption and spiritual ruin betwixt Jew and Gentile: "What then," he exclaims, "are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written,

* 1 John i. 7.
produce corrupt Society.

There is none righteous, no, not one."* And as he goes not to secondary causes, but at once to the root of sin, so he proposes no human and insufficient remedies, but that one and the only remedy: "For," he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."† And the very same thing he had before spoken to the church at Corinth: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but, unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."‡

Yes, my brethren, our legislators may go on with their preventives, their restraints, their penal inflictions, by law after law, and remedy after remedy, until our statute-book swell to a ten-fold size beyond even its present gigantic mass; preventive human means may be had recourse to, apart from the remedy of the gospel, until our country become parted out into society after society; but unless the evil be seen in its root, in-dwelling sin in the heart, and the remedy be sought after in its only cure, the truths of revelation in the doctrines of the cross, England will but add a name to names of empires already gone; and future generations will read in England's ruin, a tale

* Rom. iii. 9, 10. † Ch. i. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 18.
that shall confirm the scripture argument of the condemning character of sin.

We must go to a better remedy for the cure, as we must seek in a juster cause for the prevalence of sin, than what human politicians and secular calculations would assign for either. As in private, so in public evil arising from sin, the soul that sins must be converted before ever it will cease from sin. The Christian maxim, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," applies to a community, as well as to each of us individually; and in exact proportion to the manifestation of it will be the aggregate amount of national holiness, as in the neglect thereof will be the prevalence of national sins. It is almost needless to add, that this remedy is the only one at which the world never looks, and which, therefore, the world always treats with ineffable contempt. But inasmuch as it is God's remedy, those who seek the Lord will recognize it as the only and the efficient one, because it is His.

In the view which I have now put before you of the public complaints around us of the increasing sinfulness of our land, I would not have you blind to the acknowledged truth, that the antidote to it is also spreading among the people. But remember, that you are each amenable, in the day in which you live, for your own individual application of it. You
must each work the work of the Lord against the corruption of the times. But no one will do this unless he himself have been convinced of sin in himself, and have sought its only cure out of himself.

You, my brethren, who have fled to your refuge, and have found it in the cross of a dying Saviour, will know how to proclaim your own glad tidings for the spiritual good of others. You know the evil of sin in yourself; and therefore you can mourn over its effects, with Christian sympathy, in your fellow-creatures: you have found the only remedy in "Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith;" and therefore you can, in experience, teach the sufficiency of such a Saviour to careless and unawakened sinners around you. Thus you work the work of God. You apply the only barrier to stem the torrent of inundating national crime, and so prove yourselves the true and only Christian patriots. Other ways of manifesting a love for our country may give the tinsel of a worldly triumph while we live, and hang a trophy over our tombs when we die. But the Christian, the meek, and humble, and zealous disciple of Jesus Christ, who strives and prays against his country's ruin through sin, in upholding his profession under the banner of the cross, that man engages the Lord of Hosts on his side,
and may be blest as one among numbers who, in Christ’s name and with Christ’s power, effectively resist the progress of his country’s sin, the dreadful issue of his country’s final ruin. Go on, then, thus, my brethren, in your large, or in your poor proportion, as God shall give you means and influence, in promoting “the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.” You may not be known much in this world; neither will you care for the praise of this world; but there is a memorial written of what you shall be: “They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”

And to you, my brethren, who add to the aggregate mass of our nation’s moral evils, by living your round of life in listless idleness and selfish pleasures, I would not be backward in bidding you look to your own hearts, if you ever seek for the cause of sin; and to look, more than by a mere outward profession, to Christ, if you ever seek for the cure of sin. As parents, as heads of families, you now exercise a sad and baneful influence. Your children, if taught in the forms of words and outward observances, see nothing in you, and hear nothing from you, which can impress their minds that you really believe yourself a dying

* Dan. xii. 3.
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creature, and that, after death, eternity will be your destiny, passed in the joys of heaven, or condemned to the pains of hell. You rather teach them that earth is your heaven, pleasure your God; and (haply, it may be, in many painful instances of a parent's power exercised against the conscience of his child beginning to be awakened to better things,) that earth must be their heaven, and pleasure their God too. And then, in regard to your servants and poor dependents around you, you may be to them a kind master, a considerate mistress with respect to their worldly circumstances, and the well-doing of their perishable bodies; but an example so constantly before them of what you believe, and of what you do in matters spiritual, can make no other than a dangerous impression in reference to your total neglect of their immortal souls.

But, my brethren, what the angel once proclaimed as a warning to the world, must be accomplished; and in regard to all your present interests, ways, and habits of life, there will a moment arrive in which "there shall be time no longer."* When time is ended, your eternity begins; and though now, like Israel of old, you "forsake God,

* Rev. x. 6.
which made" you, "and lightly esteem the rock of" your "salvation," * yet you think not of what God is continually proclaiming to awaken you from your sleep of death: "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul." †

No one, possibly, more loudly than yourself, speaks of the increase of crime among us. In the investigation of the cause which Scripture gives, and in the certainty of the cure which the cross of Christ offers, I have endeavoured to put both the cause and the cure before you this day. More than this human instrumentality cannot do. To make the truth a ground of faith and the rule of life, is the sole power and office of the Spirit of God. Heretofore "the times of this ignorance God hath winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." ‡ As Christians by profession, your privileges are great: "Ye are the light of the world." § But as real apostates from the faith of Christ crucified, "What do ye more than others?" ¶ Make this sad contrast betwixt what you are, and what you profess to be, the subject of your private thoughts and prayers, and it may lead you

* Deut. xxxii. 15. † Prov. viii. 36.
at last to hear, with profitable application, the tender remonstrance of your compassionate Saviour against your wilful ruin of your immortal soul: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."*

* John v. 40.
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CHRIST'S TENDERNESS TOWARDS PERISHING SINNERS.

St. Luke xix. 41, 42.

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

When a minister meets his congregation on the solemn occasion of the end of the old, and the beginning of the new year, I know not that the whole Bible presents a text from its sacred page more suited to the awful subject, than that which I have now read to you. It brings the Redeemer of mankind before our eyes, weeping over the thoughtlessness and wonderful indifference of sinners perishing in their own perverseness; neglecting their "accepted time," their day of grace. But this was not a single weeping with the merci-
ful and tender Saviour of souls. His life showed Him as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And if we may judge from His own view of His sufferings, bitter as He knew they must be, their poignancy was most felt in His omniscient knowledge of their being endured for so many in vain. "How often would I have gathered thy children together," was the merciful intention of Redeeming Love; and "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," is the mournful record against those whose case justified the fearful contrast between the many and the few, the broad road and the narrow road. With this knowledge before our blessed Lord, He sorrowed bitterly for man: no sorrow on this very ground was ever like His sorrow. His own pains He could forget; His heaviest cross He could cheerfully have borne: but He sunk in compassionate weeping when He contemplated the eternal ruin of so many souls, which, nevertheless, He died to save. His almost last words mark how His anguish received its sharpest infliction from what others, not from what Himself, would endure: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* The portion of Sacred History from which the text is taken, exhibits Christ in His

true character of a tender Saviour. He had "come unto His own; and His own received Him not:"* the period of His being among them, in His personal ministry, was fast drawing towards its close, and He was soon to return to His Father, His great undertaking fulfilled, but not accepted by all. How full of instructive matter is every syllable of this sacred text! "He beheld the city, and wept over it." Was not this an eternal comment upon, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"† And then again, can any thing more show the individuality of salvation; can any better illustration be given of such passages as, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,"‡ than the weeping Redeemer's emphatic wording of, "If thou hadst known, even thou?" In the next words following, "at least in this thy day," how strongly is the solemn thought pressed upon every one, that we each have time and opportunity; a day of grace, "an accepted time," "a day of salvation!" And can we need better proof that mercy and reconciliation are now a purchased gift for us all, than what the Redeemer spake

* John i. 11. † Ezek. xviii. 23. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.
over perishing Jerusalem: "The things which belong unto thy peace;" "the things which are Jesus Christ's?" Where may we find fuller assurance that God will not always hearken, than in Christ's weeping declaration, over his falling people, of their then irrevocable ruin: "But now they are hid from thine eyes?"

Another year ended has closed upon us all with another year's responsibility to be accounted for by each of us at the tribunal of Christ; and our load of sin is added to, or our advance in the life of faith is manifest, since this same truth was brought before us when, on the commencement of the now departed year, we entered upon God's further probation of us for an existence in eternity. To us, who know not the secrets of the heart, and can never penetrate, until with our own eyes we view the things which come after death, to us all lies hidden in what the grave hides from all: and therefore, though there may be cases of departed spirits from this, and from other congregations, thus shortened of their former members, for which Christian hope offers its sufficient consolations, there may be others wherein hope becomes a duty rather than a consolation; and some, perhaps, where the Christian's mouth is silent only upon the
scripture rule conveyed, in "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"

My brethren, with these different constructions put upon the lesson which a departed year reads in the deaths from this, and from every congregation around us since that year opened upon us all, I would urge your deep consideration of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ weeping over perishing Jerusalem, as a warning for the present in the remembrance of the past: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." Their literal application is to the case of those who are lost beyond the possibility of being saved; gone from this place of trial with unrepented sin upon their soul; or remaining still upon earth with seared consciences and hardened hearts, judicially pronounced by God, "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." The literal application of this weeping lamentation of the once-merciful and forbearing Jesus, belongs to them: but its warning voice summons the deepest thought from every one of us, whose trial is yet prolonged, and whose day of grace, we trust, is not yet gone by.

At no period of our lives are we more called upon to ponder these solemn warnings than, as at this present moment, when we feel that
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our years are being numbered, one more added to the past, one more deducted from the few, the very few which still remain. But we must not talk of years remaining to any of us; we who "know not what a day may bring forth." We began the last year, and talked, perhaps, in foolish expectation of years to come, with some who, under the same calculation, also talked of years: but they erred in the expectation; and though we remain, they are gone. Is their error, whatever be now their eternal lot, less a warning to us, because in God's providence we have survived them? Some one or more here present this day, may furnish the same argument in their finished course to such as may remain when this year also comes to an end.

These, my brethren, are what the world calls gloomy thoughts; and to those who live in the world they must be gloomy indeed. We cannot, in nature, bear to think of losing what alone we love, and to have forced upon our thoughts what, above every thing, we hate. But what if we never thought upon these matters? What if all were to be made smooth for us, and we were never to hear the truth until we found it in the tomb, and never to be reminded of these things, until they should break in upon our disembodied spirits too late to profit us?
I would put this case. Suppose that of us who are here to-day, one soul, and but one, was inevitably at present doomed, through sin and unbelief, to perish everlastingly, and that an angel from heaven was to declare the truth, but name not the wretched individual lost; and yet declare that, should this sinner avail himself of the warning, and be converted through grace, he should be saved in His Redeemer's boundless love. Would you then name these thoughts gloomy thoughts, or deem it needless and ill-timed that every thing, whether inviting, alarming, terrible, or kind, were put before this then marked congregation, that so that single sinner might be awakened from his sleep, and by the omnipotent arm of Christ, "snatched as a brand from the burning?" If your answer be evident upon this stated case of one being thus declared in danger of eternally perishing, can you think any endeavour too warm, any thoughts too gloomy, as you term them, any matter too strong, any terms too inviting, when you remember the sad distinctions already made by God in His holy Word for our far more alarming warning: "The many called, the few chosen;" "the broad road and the narrow road?" rather name your own thoughts, and their hapless tendency gloomy, which once brought tears from your weeping Saviour lamenting
over your wilful rain, and now cause man to weep; and, if it were possible, would make even angels weep. If you really believed what the gospel has made known of love to those who accept its gracious offers, and of terror to those who reject them, you would say that that man's heart was cas'd in adamant who felt not and wept not at your sad and blinded choice: the things of the world, and the transient pleasures of time, though followed by the woes and anguish of eternity, preferred and caught at, instead of those "pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore."

Will it aid you, my brethren, and would you be aided in such an inquiry, were I to refer you to your own hearts for a judgment upon these matters? Ask yourselves, in honest conscience, who among you so regard the years as they roll over us, as to consider them apart from what Satan and the world around you would have you take them to be? Open your Bible, and with its plain and simple teaching before you, ask "who are on the Lord's side?" Who live in time as truly believing the realities of eternity? Could you then say and feel that all of you are living your little speck of time in this world, with the real belief, that in endless pain, or in endless glory, you will have your final condition in the next world? Could you so flatter
yourselves as, for one moment, to believe that all of you, in the Scripture sense, are now come out of the world, and are living unto God? Is it not a kinder thing toward you, that I herein be faithful, and tell you plainly and openly, what none can deny in the secret conviction of his own heart, that some are thus come out of the world, and have chosen Christ, take up their cross daily, and follow Him: that some hesitate between Christ and the world; feel that to be on His side is the wise and happy thing; but that present pleasures, worldly ties, worldly cares, “the love of money, the root of all evil,” still hold their affections chained down in cruel thraldom to what they oftentimes condemn; and that some remain content, or strive to appear content with what time offers of its passing enjoyments, regardless of what is to come in the good or the evil of eternity? That this threefold division of the congregation here present is the true and the scriptural way of dividing it, I do not hesitate fearlessly to assert: the individual allotment of it is not for man to make: God, with His all-seeing eye, makes it collectively at the moment passing over our heads; and in the same moment, your own consciences make it individually; and there it is for me to leave it.

The text chosen for our present meditation
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brings Christ before us weeping over His falling people: and had Christ lived now in human character on earth, He would still have wept over sinners wilfully perishing in their own thoughtlessness. Yes, my brethren, once would He have wept over some of you in whose joyful escape from the world and its snares, angels now rejoice. You have received the word, you have obeyed the call; you have counted the cost; and, through the renewing influence of the Spirit of Christ, you have been "made willing in the day of His power" to bear your cross, have gone after Him, and are now among his true disciples. You now feel "that the Lord is gracious," and that He "hath done great things for you already whereof you rejoice."* Some holy warning, some solemn memento of the nothingness of time, and the infinite importance of eternity, hath touched your hearts with a message from God your Saviour, and you are now converted unto holiness, that in the covenant of your Redeemer's blood, you may, in the end, obtain everlasting life. More could I say, and more should I rejoice to say on your case, were not the time short, and did not far more important cases remain, cases still calling forth all the watchful sympathy of Christian pity and urgent warning. One thing I

* Ps. cxxvi. 4.
would not omit. In spiritual thoughtfulness your choice is made: your soul is your chief care, and Christ is now become your only hope. Give then to Christ that which is His: give Him that which the end of one year, and the beginning of another, so powerfully puts before you; give Him your time. Live in Him and for Him manifestly and continually. Because you have chosen Christ, one of your temptations will be, if so it chime in with natural tendency, or former habits, to pass by the importance of time, in your undoubted valuing of the immensity of eternity. But you must value both. Time is your vestibule through which you enter eternity; and it ill becomes the sworn soldier of Jesus Christ to waste or mispend its fleeting hours, when the Lord Himself hath told us of the hours of the day in which men ought to work. It is sad that there should ever be forgetfulness of this in those who have evidently ranged themselves on the Lord's side; it is sad that the blessed truths of Christ's Gospel should not unfrequently become injured upon this very omission of a personal duty in the lives of some, who, nevertheless, would not be found "faithless, but believing." This world is to be as busy a scene of spiritual labour and temporal duties to the disciples of Christ as ever it is made to be a scene of carnal toil to
the lovers of pleasure, and the children of earthly cares and toils. The glory of Christ, "who would have all men come to be saved," your own enjoined advance in the life of faith, and souls perishing through sin and unbelief around you, do not allow of life's being made a season of contemplative abstraction, or of indolent repose. "Up and be doing" is the watchword for the true Christian; and unless he work in Christ's cause for his fellow-travellers, he will soon cease spiritually to work for himself.—Do, my brethren, think upon this; and never ponder the awful nature of eternity without also practically remembering, for Christ's glory, for your own advancement, and for your fellow-creatures' good, the solemn responsibilities of time; short, fleeting, and uncertain time. Keep the words of the Lord Jesus before you: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord."*

But, my brethren, if it be needful, in the case of those who are awakened to the care of their soul, thus, as the holy Apostle hath left it for us, "to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance; that they may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and

of the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour,"* if this be wholesome and needful for them, what shall be put before you who still remain tied down to the world, hesitating sometimes under compunctions of conscience, or fixed and careless in your determined choice of its present pleasures, its harassing, or its attracting cares?

In His weeping over Jerusalem, Christ, in anticipation, wept over you. It grieved His righteous soul, in tenderest consideration of every sinner's ruin, that His pains and agony should be endured, His crown of thorns worn, and His blood shed, and yet that so many would still die in their sins. If you doubt between Christ and the world, why do you not, in better thought, and earnest prayer, meditate more upon such passages as these: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."† "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."‡ There is meaning in these words, and an awful consequence to your hearing them too, which very nearly affect

* 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2. † 1 Kings xviii. 21. ‡ Luke xviii. 29, 30.
your vital interests in time and in eternity; and that, whether you hesitate between Christ and the world, or whether you have decidedly made up your choice for the world, and not for Christ.

A year has past since you were met by your minister here, or by some other minister elsewhere, with the solemn matter which the end of one year, and the beginning of another year, put before all. Still are you as you were then, dead to your soul's best interests, or resisting them. A year, therefore, has not past without making your case more dangerous, and your spiritual recovery less hopeful, under the prolonged responsibilities, unimproved, of another year gone forever from you, loaded with its heavy charges against you for the future reckoning between God and your immortal souls.

I would believe that this statement you will not, in honest truth, be willing to contradict; it seems scarcely possible that you should be. But if it go not beyond this silent recognition of a truth which you cannot resist, what will it profit you? Should God spare you for one year more; should a merciful Intercessor prevail for the postponement of the sentence pronounced against you, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it
down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Should a redeeming Intercessor still be heard on your behalf, with His gracious prayer of "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down;"* should He still prevail, and you still be found in your sins, hath not even the Intercessor already agreed to your being cut off? If your conscience be not judicially hardened, it condemns you now; much more will it condemn you should you be brought, an unjustified sinner, before the tribunal of Christ! "For if your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things."

And now, my brethren, we have respectively fulfilled our outward public duty at the commencement of a new year, another of those little portions which measure our abode upon earth: I, in putting before you, and you in the outward hearing of this ministry of the word pressed upon your regard under the solemn circumstances of one year for ever closed upon us, and a new one begun. But shall we anticipate another meeting here on the opening of a future year? O no, let us shrink from the presumptuous expectation of it. It cannot be. Twelve months cannot

pass over us, so many hundred dying creatures of every age, and not witness the departure of some from among our number. It is a fact in the every experience of the past; and how can we not expect the sure recurrence of the same fact still?—If this thought give any of us pain, and we feel that it must be true, that all who are here this day cannot be here, (for the course of some must be finished,) when a new year shall find an assembled congregation within these walls,—if this give any of us pain, let us welcome that pang, and hail it as a messenger from God. Deem not these thoughts gloomy and needless for me to put before you: deem me not harsh and severe, because, in real regard to your souls, I would interrupt your train of a fatal self-deceiving, and show you, as one solemnly pledged to this, that, if you do not choose Christ you can never have the salvation which Christ hath purchased for you; that, while you live in pleasure, you are "dead while you live;" and that while you are seeking as you name it, to enjoy yourselves, in forgetfulness of time, you are but destroying yourselves in the reckonings of eternity. Have pity upon yourselves, and you will no longer blame my warning voice raised thus on your behalf. Remember how Christ once wept over other sinners.
who, in their day, rejected Him; and reject Him not yourselves. Choose Christ, and you will soon be brought to feel that it is not religion, or any of its truths, which are gloomy and sad; but that they are so only to those who make them so, by not receiving them, or by not seeking to understand them. Neither in the fast dropping away of our years, nor in our own passage into the grave, nor in any thing which follows after, is there any thing gloomy or dreadful to the true disciple of Jesus Christ. His gospel, from the very first, proclaimed "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men;" and it still presents itself as a dispensation of mercy, whose "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace," Receive the gospel in this its genuine character; and your own minds, in a happy experience of its consolations, will soon show you the contrast between what you are, in your ignorance of the gospel, and what you may become through a saving knowledge of it. Thus may the end of one year lead you to ponder; and may the opening of a new year speedily, through God's mercy in Christ, find you at last making your decided choice.
THE TRUE CAUSE OF HUMAN WOES.

FOR LENT.

ISAIAH lix. 1, 2.

"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you."

If words and actions be regarded as a standard by which we must judge of what the Christian world thinks concerning the season of Lent, 'how little seems to be known of its real character and design! Because, on one hand, it is an enjoined observance of many ages, and in the reason of its appointment, and the ends intended to be answered by it, has immediate reference to the soul, some pervert the use and application of it as they pervert other outward means prescribed for spiritual purposes. And because, on the other hand, it has been thus abused, and like other outward ordinances rested in as

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the substitute for holiness, or as a sponge to wipe off, periodically, a long score of sin, some despise, neglect, and show and acknowledge, indeed, that they treat it with purposed indifference, nay, with a feeling very nearly bordering upon contempt.

The reasons for the original institution of the Lent Fast, in a very early period of the Christian church, have been well summed up thus: "First. The apostles' sorrow for the loss of their Master. Secondly. The declension of Christian piety from its first and primitive fervour. Thirdly. That the Catechumens might prepare themselves for baptism, and the penitents for absolution; Easter being one of the settled times of baptizing the Catechumens and absolving the penitents. This solemn season of fasting," continues the same writer, "was universally observed by all Christians, though with a great liberty, and a just allowance for men's infirmities; and this was, in a great measure, left to their own discretion. If men were in health, and able to bear it, the rule and custom was for them to observe it. On the other hand, bodily infirmity and weakness were always admitted as a just apology for their non-observance of it."*

From all that we read and know of ecclesiastical history, this seems a fair and com-

* Broughton's Dictionary.
prehensive summary of the reasons and end of our Lenten Fast. It shows us that these were quite of a spiritual character, and consequently, set on foot, in its prescribed requisitions, for spiritual purposes only. Every portion of time, thus set apart, has manifestly its proper end in furnishing opportunity for bringing the soul to greater thoughtfulness. The sabbath was creation’s rest: the year of jubilee a periodical memorial for a whole nation. Days and seasons set apart have been deemed aids in spiritual matters to collective worshippers; and to: “commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still,”* is the holy servant of God’s rule everywhere, whether under the law or under the gospel, for such personal exercise in anxious watchfulness for the soul, as each should find best suited to his particular wants and condition.

The real end of all outward means being to promote spiritual care and thoughtfulness, we may better understand why the Christian church has appointed times and days to be introduced to the attention of her true sons with more than ordinary sanctity appended to them; and to the notice of nominal professors too, that opportunity by an authority which they outwardly acknowledge, might

* Ps. iv. 4.
not be wanting, to give them also the terrors and the encouragements of the Lord, as an incentive to rouse them from the sleep of sin.

For, though all seasons to the awakened believer in the true doctrines of "Christ crucified," are the constant call upon him for self-denial, watchfulness, holy exercise, and prayer, yet to the thoughtless and unbelieving, the mere formalist and the self-righteous, the periodical setting forth of holy seasons, and outward solemnities, may, in God's forbearing mercy to their souls, bring some one or more of them also, from time to time, to take better thought for their eternal interests in Christ.

The season of Lent, as a preparation for more earnest consideration of the soul's wants, and the Saviour's mercies, so speakingly put before us in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, may serve as a fit opportunity for considering that portion of His Holy Word, which I have this day chosen for the text. This I purpose doing under two heads: First, as showing the real state of human nature in its fallen and sinful character, and therefore demanding such seriousness of thought as this especial season is designed to put before us: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from
you.” Secondly, the encouragement held out in the gospel promises alone for the hope of deliverance from the final woe and penalty of sin; and therefore leading us to seek our only remedy where ancient Israel sought and found their’s: they “did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”* Looking there alone for our hope also, the text will teach us, that “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

There is no point so awfully pressed upon our notice in the Word of God, and none so painfully, because so constantly confirmed by our own experience, as the real state of human nature in its fallen and sinful character. Scripture gives the whole history of the introduction of sin into our world, and then shows us its direful effects, rendering him, of whom it is written—“God made man upright;”† so changed a being, that of the same subject it is also written, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth;”‡ and to which one, who well knew the exceeding sinfulness of sin, bore bitter testimony: “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my

* 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. † Eccl. vii. 29. ‡ Gen. viii. 21.
mother conceive me." * Hence have we the express assurance of our great Redeemer, in His personal instructions on the evil of man's natural and unrenewed heart: "From within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within." † And when the Lord's personal ministry ceased, and power, by His Spirit, was given to His apostles to enforce the same sad argument for the conversion of souls, and the necessity of a Redeemer to save the soul, it was carried on over and over again through texts such as this: "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." ‡

"And then, too, we are not only thus shown what our nature is through sin, but most expressly told that, by nature, we have no

* Ps. li. 5. † Mark vii. 21—23. ‡ Eph. ii. 1—3.
will that we should return from our evil ways and live; that we not only love sin, but "love to have it so:" that our natural language to God is—"Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;"* and that, by nature, we hate and resist all the means which God, in tender mercy, has planned for our restoration: with "God—in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," it hath ever been the mournful expostulation with the wicked, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not:"† "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."‡ And with sinning man, thus tenderly addressed by a pitying and forbearing Saviour, it hath ever been, in answer to all this, "Depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for" us?§ "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?"¶ "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry;"‖ "and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."** The principle of all this is expressly declared to be in our own hearts: "The

* Job. xxi.  † Matt. xxiii. 37. ‡ John v. 40.
§ Job xxii. 17. ¶ 1b. xxi. 15. ‖ Luke xii. 19.
** Isaiah lvi. 12.
The human mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. *

From these Scripture proofs of what man is by nature, turn, my brethren, to the best setting argument of our own experience. See what sin is, in its sad and pernicious effects. And view these effects, not through the false medium of worldly construction; not in that mirror of all deceivableness which the world puts before you when sin is named among you; but as seen and felt, at times felt even by the most thoughtless, among those ranks of civilized society, and in whole nations of uncivilized man, where art and fashion, mutual encouragement and self-deceit, do not varnish over things by false names, nor gild over the experienced evils of sin, with character and outward glare, which, for a little season, hide its real character; nor draw a veil over the motive and end of a sinful course of living, which, for a little season, protects it from that discovery of its real turpitude, which sooner or later, awaits it at the last.

If thus you look at sin, you will feel the argument of experience, though you reject the argument of Scripture; if you contemplate those sights of woe and deep distress, springing from natural corruption, ignorance, and sin.

* Rom. viii. 7.
which haunt our ways, and bring evil unquestioned in its pernicious consequences among us, in poverty so appalling, in disease and suffering among the children of want, in wilful and open crime among those who have no restraint from such laws as rule among the rich and great, the law of social order, the law of honour, and the law of fashion—if there you contemplate undisguised sin, and palpable avowal of open vice; if there you view with your own eyes the immediate consequences of all this upon the sinners themselves, upon those who are necessarily their earthly companions, and witnesses, if not yet partakers of their crimes,—their infant children;—their wives, when man inflicts domestic pain upon those of his own household;—their husbands, when wives and mothers walk the dread road to eternal ruin, and so neglecting the Christian calls upon their own hearts, neglect their conjugal and maternal duties—if there you view the curse of sin in its bitterness, unmixed with palliatives which rank and fashion and riches varnish over its cankering core, you see what might make even angels weep, what brought the Redeemer from the glories of His throne to the pain and ignominy of the cross, and which should go well nigh to break the heart.
of man in the contemplation of such a picture of his fellow-man.

And this, my brethren, is not the worst part of the character of sin. Here you see its open and undisguised ugliness; here, in scenes like these, you see its present and immediate consequences. But is it less sin in its effects upon the soul now, or in its eternal effects upon the soul hereafter, in higher walks of civilized life, because it is disguised in its manifestations, changed in its names; good called evil, and evil good, made to allure by its outward character, "Satan transformed into an angel of light," adopted by great and influential people of the world; is sin less sin because of all this? What did Christ Himself declare to guard the worldly great, the rich and the proud, from so dangerous a construction, but words frightful as these: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?" And what has the Spirit of Eternal Truth said to warn such against Satan's temptation, that man may stand firm upon the hope of all being well, if he be "not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican;" but such a fearful declaration as—"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God!"
With sin thus abounding in the world we live in, with these direful evils following sin here, and overtaking it in deathless souls hereafter with eternal woe, are we not called upon for ourselves, as well as for our fellow-creatures, to take serious thought amid this wreck of our original ruin, our present danger, our endless destiny doomed for each of us according as we shall live our few days here on earth, saved in Christ, or lost through the deceitfulness of sin? Was not the prophet, faithful in his inspired testimony to human kind, when, in the view of our world's ruin through sin, he declared the experienced truth—"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid His face from you?"

But there is a better, because a brighter and a more cheering view put before us in the second part of this momentous subject; and that is the encouragement held out in the gospel promises alone for the hope of deliverance from the final woe and penalty of sin; and leading us to seek our only remedy where ancient Israel sought and found theirs: they "did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." Looking there for our hope only, the text will teach
us; that “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

It is to bring our souls thus to Christ, that all human ordinances have been devised; and all divine doctrine and precept revealed. In any other view than to draw us nigh by the blood of Christ to Christ Himself, as our great and only Deliverer from sin, no fast, no outward ordinance, no public meeting together on solemn days and appointed seasons, will at all profit us, or yield glory to God: Look then to what you are now outwardly doing in obedience to ancient forms and long-established ordinances; and if your heart do not at once show you, that the desire to know and to glorify Christ Jesus the Saviour of souls in what you do, is your great and leading motive, try your way herein by the touchstone of scripture truth.

You abstain, perhaps, from some portion of worldly pleasures; and so you fast. Would that even thus much were done by all as a public memorial of a sacred season. Some do not even this. As though the very utmost that enmity to things spiritual could manifest should be made to manifest itself at this especial season of the Christian year, there are who make it the precise and selected season for their greatest excesses. It would seem
that conscience must be quieted under a generally recognized outward call to greater seriousness; and at the same time that most determined hostility to whatsoever breathes even the language of holy things, and holy words, should vent its utmost rage against "the things which are Jesus Christ's." and to effectuate these two purposes, we have an outward decency spoken of, while worldly excess is permitted to reign around us. This place, wherein we live, is made the scene of pleasures, and preparation for pleasures, which lure to a ruin, they would gladly conceal, and sweeten the bitterness of inward thought, which, at times, will make itself painfully evident to the careless, as well as to the determined sinner's soul.

But still society at large, perhaps, from some portion of their ordinary worldly pleasures, for these forty days abstain: our house of prayer itself assumes the mourner's garb; and these dark and sable decorations of our bodily presence would bespeak the intention that all must seem to mourn.

In thought, my brethren, go back to the period of another outward fast spoken of and reproved by the prophet of God. The people said then: that they fasted, as you say now. They even complained against the Lord that He appeared not to regard their fast. "Where-
Therefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge? And what was the Lord's answer thereto? "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours," or as it is rendered in the margin of our Bible, "things wherein ye grieve others." "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness—to make your voice to be heard on high: Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" *

But God, by His prophet, did not condemn a pretended fast, without putting before His people what only was a true fast. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house?—When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" † This was the fast for the Jew, and this too is the only Christian fast. And

* Isaiah lvi. 3-5. † Ver. 6, 7.
how better shall we understand our own duty herein, than by giving to the character of the fast, prescribed under the law of Moses, its best and holiest application in the spirituality of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The fast intended for the Jews, and chosen by the Lord, was “to loose the bands of wickedness;” for us, the professed followers of the Lord Jesus, to bow down before His cross, humbled, penitent, and abased; to know in the great matter of the hope of pardon, “nothing but Christ, and Him crucified.”—The Jew must “undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke;” the disciple of Christ must exercise that spirit of love towards all his fellow-creatures in promoting their deliverance from the bonds of sin, the sufferings of the body, and the pains and sorrows of the soul, as shall mark Him the true disciple of Him, whose gospel’s test to the professors thereof is—“Hereby we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.”—The fast for the Jew was, that he take heed “to deal his bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are cast out to his house; when he saw the naked, to cover him; and that he hide not himself from his own flesh.” And such too is the privilege of the Christian’s fast: to mortify his own indulgences at all times, to
deny many of his own pleasures and worldly consolations, that he may have larger means of administering bread to the hungry, a home to the outcast wanderer, protection to the deserted, the Bread of Life to the famished in spiritual things, clothing to the naked body of the poor, instruction in the ways of the Lord, as Christ's righteousness for the clothing of the uncovered soul; and a close and most tender feeling for those especially among mankind, his own flesh, who, in the nearer bonds of relationship, dependence, intercourse and personal knowledge and influence are, or should be, dear to him as his own soul.

Is your fast, my brethren, this fast? Your answer is already in your own heart, and for better or for worse, is now recorded for or against you in those works before the throne in which are written the memorials of your final judgment at the great day of the Lord. To you, my brethren, who do thus fast, who earnestly seek thus to fast, I would simply say, in the Saviour's words, as your solemn remembrancer: "Ye are the light of the world;"* and in the holy apostle's own experience, as your greatest comfort and encouragement, and constant example; "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus

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judge, that if one died for all, then were all
dead.  And that He died for all, that they
which live should not henceforth live unto
themselves, but unto Him which died for
them, and rose again." * "For none of us
liveth to himself, and no man dieth to him-
self. For whether we live, we live unto the
Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the
Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we
are the Lord's." †

To you, my brethren, who do not fast thus,
and care little or nothing for any fast more
than perhaps some outward observance alone,
I would also add one word of warning, and
one of encouragement: of warning, this—
"If any man will come after me, let him
deny himself, and take up his cross, and
follow me.—For what is a man profited, if
he shall gain the whole world and lose his
own soul? or what shall a man give in ex-
change for his soul?" ‡ Of great encourage-
ment this, even for you: "Jesus was made a
Surety of a better testament:" — Wherefore
He is able also to save them to the utter-
most that come unto God by Him, seeing He
ever liveth to make intercession for them." §
Whether you will take the warning, and profit
by the encouragement; it is not mine, nor an

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.  † Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

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angel's from heaven to give. My duty is pledged and performed in thus putting each before you, and in "praying you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*

* 2 Cor. v. 20, 21.
FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

Lamentations i. 12.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of His fierce anger."

Well is this book named "The Lamentations of Jeremiah;" the prophet of God weeping for himself and his people under the woes of Jerusalem; through her sins "smitten of God and afflicted;" her sufferings more bitter in her woe from the remembrance of what she was in her prosperity. Hence the strongest imagery is employed to tell the calamity of the nation; and the ruined city is brought before us lamenting her own ruin: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!"

* Ver. 1.
And the figure is worked up to its strongest representation in the total indifference of every passer by to the depth and poignancy of her suffering.

How readily must our minds anticipate the accommodation of this scene of woe to heavier sorrow than this! How much must the mere reading of this mournful lamentation bring before us what this day we more especially mark in the solemnities of our outward and public ordinances! If Jerusalem, the mother of Israel, mourns and weeps figuratively over her own and her children’s ruin, the sacred history, in its literal truth, brings “a Man of sorrows.” One “acquainted with grief,” before us; and in the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, and in the sufficiency of redeeming love, bids us hearken to a voice from the cross, speaking the real and agonizing sufferings of a Saviour also passed by and despised: “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me; wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of His fierce anger!”

Once more, my brethren, and to some of us, in the ordinary certainties of our common mortality, only once more, do we meet in the house of prayer on this most sacred day; a day which brings with it such a memorial of
the redemption by the cross, as is intended to
give a sacredunction to every day. And
how shall I introduce this subject to your
attention? Introduce, did I say? Did I
seem to forget that I now speak to those who
acknowledge, in frequent confession of their
lips, "the whole counsel of God" herein, the
peculiar doctrines of "Christ crucified?" I
cannot repeat any thing from the sacred his-
tory of His life in reference to its termina-
on the cross, which you have not frequently
heard; and again, too, heard on this very
day. It is the matter upon which I enea-
vour to ground the whole of what, at any
time, you hear from this place; and, in the
entire adoption whereof, as the only right
foundation for us all, would ever press upon
you, as the holy apostle hath left it for us to
preach, and for all to receive: "I am not
ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the
power of God unto salvation to every one that
believeth."*

Matter so generally professed may, perhaps,
be more profitably applied, not so much as
any new doctrine, as in that despised and
neglected character thereof in which the text
puts it before us: "Is it nothing to you, all
ye that pass by?"

Let us, then, in remembrance of the his-

* Rom. i. 16.
tory that is ever before us in God's word, bring the crucified Jesus present, as it were, before our eyes: and then, looking upon Him, as we all profess to do, as the Lamb slain for the sins of the whole world, hanging, bleeding, dying for our sake, so place ourselves as those that pass by. The question asked in the text suggests only two answers, one or other of which, from the very nature of the awful scene, we must each give. Some of us, to that question, shall answer, "It is nothing to us;" and some will exclaim, "It is every thing to us." And, first,

It "is nothing to you," my brethren, who live in wilful sin. For, though Christ tells you plainly in His word, that, for your sake, "no sorrow was ever like unto His sorrow," yet you persevere in the commission of wilful sin which brought Him to the cross, and from the punishment of which those sorrows alone can save you. And what does God's word say upon this point of a wilful sinner living under the light, and with the outward profession of Christianity?" What, but that "He crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts Him to an open shame?"* Say that you had lived, as now you live, in wilful sin, at the very period in which this Lord of life took upon Him our nature, and preached

* Heb. vi. 6.
For Good Friday.

salvation only in Himself. You profess to believe that this He did; and yet you forsake not your sins, for which He died, nor desire to live unto Him who so died for you. What, therefore, would have prevented you from being among those who opposed Him then? When you saw a miracle, Lazarus, for instance, raised from the dead, you would "have gone your ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done."* Had you been present at His mock trial, you would have assented to the deed of him who "struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?"† And when the appeal was made by His judge, to the people, that this innocent Man might be let go, you would have raised your voice also, and cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."‡ When crucified, you also would have passed by, reviling Him, wagging your heads, and saying, "Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself; and if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save:" "and many other things blasphemously" would you have spoken against Him.

Perhaps against this conclusion you are ready to reply, as others who lived in sin

* John xi. 46. † John xviii. 22. ‡ Luke xxiii. 24.
once answered under circumstances somewhat similar; "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." * One consideration only, in answer to this, would I here put before you: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."† Beware of the near approach of your case to that of the five brethren left in the rich man's house.

Christ's sorrows are nothing to you, also, my brethren, who are constantly looking to all your creature-comforts; who are rich in this world, or who are desirous of being rich in this world, but are "not rich toward God;" who live in pleasure, and have your love of the body, its outward adornment, its personal ease and gratification, your "one thing needful;" or who live in a selfish and unprofitable enjoyment of mental pleasures and pursuits, and care not that a talent intrusted brings with it the duty of present use for the Saviour's glory, and your own future responsibility. You live under dangerous self-deceit; for though your outward ways assume the generalizing character of a Christian life, you are not yet brought to understand and feel what is implied in—"My son, give me thy heart."

But you also have a specific warning in Christ's sorrows being thus "nothing to you." There is a history of one, of whom Christ Himself seems to have believed, that, in reference to the moral law of the second table, he did not err, when he said, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." But what test was put before him? The very test which Christ now, in spirit, puts before you; the test as to the where and the what were his affections? "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying; and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."* My brethren, how does his case, in its spiritual adaptation, differ from yours? And of you, therefore, may not Christ, with merciful warning and tender complaint of your deadness and indifference to His sorrows, ask, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

But there is a third description of professing Christians, to whom it is nothing that Christ's sorrows should have been such as no sorrow, before or since, hath ever been. It is you, my brethren, who resist the pure doctrines of the gospel, the humbling view it gives of

* Mark x. 20—22.
our lost and corrupted state by nature; the necessity it holds out of an entire change of heart; of the renewing influence of the Spirit to enable us to bring forth fruit unto holiness, that so we may make manifest our entire faith in the free and unmerited mercy of God, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Other ways than these ways are what you seek after, and upon which you depend. Though you outwardly acknowledge, you virtually oppose the great foundation-truth—"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."* In mixing other things with Christ, as an atoning Saviour, the respectability of your lives, your alms' deeds, your sometimes receiving the public ordinances of religion, and some adherence to other forms of occasional devotion, in mixing, meritoriously, your own ways with what Scripture tells you of the only way, you deny the pure doctrine of salvation through grace alone. Had you lived in the days of Christ during His living in the flesh, would He not have included your case among those, to whom He spake His tender reproof—"Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life?"† Do not that holy prophet's words, from whose Lamentations I have taken

the text, apply entirely to you also—"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water?" *

Thus, my brethren, whether you live in open sin; in avowed self-indulgence and pursuit after the pleasures of life, as they are named; or in virtual opposition to the doctrines of grace, by your mixing other things with Christ in the great matter of your soul's salvation in Him alone; in each case, your heart and life show, that Christ's sorrows are "nothing to you;" that you "pass by," and, to any saving purpose, regard them not.

But why thus live in opposition to the vital interests of your soul? Know you not that "it is your life," your eternal life, to regard the sufferings and perfect righteousness of Christ as your only hope of justification? Or, while this world lasts to you, as your place of trial, do you not tremble thus to show that His sorrows are "nothing to you," when you know that this "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," will one day "sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations:" and that then, each of those to whom His gospel was preached can show a title to heaven no other way than

* Jer. ii. 13.
simply through their having received the whole "truth as it is in Jesus?" Before that certain day arrive, receive Christ as your suffering Redeemer, and pray that. His Spirit may impress deeply upon your heart the solemn and most important consequences, in your being able rightly to learn, and thankfully to apply all that flows from His own tender expostulation with you now: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger!"

But while so many professed disciples of the meek and suffering Jesus thus openly, or by plain inference, declare, His sorrow is nothing to them, there are some among you who, through the grace given unto you, can and do, from your deepest conviction of the truth, exclaim—His sorrow is every thing unto us.

To you, my brethren, who are thus brought, in matured faith, or in different degrees of a growing faith, to rest your only hope upon "Christ crucified," and, of the great mystery of redemption in Him, can believe that "it is the power of God unto salvation," and that there is salvation in none other; to you I would hold out the sufferings of Christ on this day terminated on your behalf, as the
strongest, and the great and most awakening call for hope and encouragement in your spiritual warfare. While you remain in this short state of your being, you will be subject to temptations peculiar to the condition of every true believer. Sometimes you will be elevated in spirit; and, in the remembrance of God's mercy towards you, in your own spiritual advantages, will be tempted to "think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think." Sometimes you will be depressed in spirit; and then you will be tempted to ask, with the psalmist, mourning over his spiritual sorrow, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

As your only safe remedy in either of these conditions of soul, look to the Redeemer, as on this day nailed to the cross, your great Propitiation. In the remembrance of what He there endured, pray that you be not "exalted above measure" under any of God's dispensations towards you; and, in the belief of the sufficiency of His redemption, pray that you be not cast down in the conviction of your own sinfulness. Against pride of

* Ps. lxvii. 7—9.
spirit, look upon Christ humbled to endure the death of the cross for your sake; and remember that your salvation is so wrapt up in Him, that it must be, to your own view, as though you were the great cause of His sufferings at all. Against depression of spirit, still look to Christ humbled to endure the death of the cross, that in His triumph you might be enabled to exclaim, "If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?"

Whether, therefore, you be raised in spirit or depressed in spirit, keep Christ suffering on the cross continually before the eyes of your mind. Dwell much in thought upon what sin must be to have required such a Sacrifice, and upon what Christ's love must be, so willingly, for your soul's sake, to have paid it. This, under God, will keep you humble and save you from presumption; this, under God, will cheer your spirit, and save you from despair.

Thus have I spoken separately to you, my brethren, according as you show that it is "nothing to you" that Christ should have passed through the fiery furnace of His Father's wrath; or that it is every thing to you

* Rom viii. 31, 32.
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to have the privilege of such a Saviour. I
would conclude with a few observations to
you collectively.

God's providence hath once more brought
us together to join in prayer and praise before
Him, whom we profess to believe now ex-
alted on the throne of glory, from those pains
and penalties which He endured on the cross
of His humiliation. But we must not all ex-
ppect again to meet together on the next me-
morial of this most sacred day: and when, in
the course of God's providence, a few more
Good Fridays shall have passed over us, none
who are here to-day shall be here any more:
we shall each be numbered among those who
have gone before us, and with them shall
await, in the joys of Paradise, or in the place
separated from Paradise by the "great gulph
fixed," which cannot be passed, the return of
that Saviour in glory whom now we profess
to receive as having already appeared in His
humiliation. Bear this in mind, my brethren,
and then consider, not how Christ appears
now amid the weakness of faith, the depres-
sions and sinkings of heart in the true be-
liever, or in the little impression which
Christ's cross and sufferings make upon the
mind of the mere nominal believer, but how
he will appear then. It is a sad delusion
which Satan works upon the minds of men
whose hearts are not wholly given to the Lord, that they should deem this day, and other days more immediately set apart for sacred purposes, as sufficiently answering the end of their appointment, if they bring together an assembly of outward worshippers; and, setting before them a prescribed form of prayer, a selected portion of the word, cause them to be addressed from the pulpit in a sermon adapted to the day. If the keeping of such a day go no further than this, what doth it profit? How strong is the affirmative duty put before us all in the negative question—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" And how impossible is it that our hearts can be touched by any real belief of Christ's sorrows unless we can feel, in the outward memorial of their having taken place, that they were endured for us?

If these considerations have heretofore been blest, in the great matter of individual usefulness, as pertaining to the comfort of the believer, and shall now be blest as a solemn warning to the unbeliever, then will their spiritual fruit be more and more made manifest. You, who through grace shall be made partakers of a benefit freely offered and fully intended for all, you will then find your interest in Christ and His promises strengthen more and more: even against hope, kept
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down by infirmity of the flesh or the spirit, or damp’d by Satan’s art, you will learn more and more to hope in the Lord; and it will become more and more your earnest desire, if not your daily experience, to feel, as the apostle felt in the very matter of this sacred day; “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”* As the foundation of your trust in Christ, you will then better understand, in its strictest application to your own soul, that which the same holy apostle immediately adds as the believer’s test: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;” † and then, as your promised fruit in this faith wherein ye stand, you will be made partakers of the blessing which is instantly subjoined: “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”‡

If, therefore, my brethren, whether God hath wrought this desire in your heart, or you have heretofore resisted His Holy Spirit, if you would think profitably upon the stupendous mercy of this sacred day, let it give its proper influence to every day. Forget the interval of these one thousand eight hundred years, and

* Col. vi. 14. † Ver. 15. ‡ Gal. vi. 16.

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stand among the multitudes, now lying in their dust, who once stood beholding these things, some near, and some afar off. View the spectacle of the crucified Jesus, all prophecy fulfilled and fulfilling in Him; hear His dying words, His last prayer; consider the appalling tokens of nature around Him, the Lord of nature, and then ask whether you do not see your very salvation dependent upon believing that the centurion spake right: "Truly this was the Son of God." No more stand an unconcerned spectator of this scene of woe. No more crucify afresh this holy Victim, once crucified for you. No more resist His gracious interest on your behalf, His merciful entreaty that you will not force Him to withdraw His mercy from you. No sorrow, He Himself tells you, was ever like His sorrow: the manger, the agony, the scourging, the thorns, and the cross: it was done unto Him for your sake; the Lord afflicted Him in the day of His fierce anger against you. Let it not be said now, lest it be written in the judgment of eternity against you, that "all this is nothing to you."
FOR EASTER SUNDAY.

CHRIST "THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."

John xi. 25, 26.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

This, my brethren, is the third day, and the Lord is risen indeed: Save only in the ascription of His sufferings for purposes of redeeming mercy, He is no longer, in the sacred chain of His eventful history, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Satan, when vanquished once, "left Him for a season," and returned, in hellish malice, with impotent rage against his Almighty Conqueror. But when the last great deed was accomplished by which all was "finished," Satan had no more power over Him. The stillness of the tomb was the rest of a short c c 2
interval; and, in the completion of the Father's promise—"For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,"* the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, took unto Himself His great power, and reigns for ever, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

The resurrection of the once crucified Jesus, according to His own sure prophecy of the fact,—"I lay down my life, that I might take it again: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,"†—was a point of so much magnitude in the great work of our redemption, that every thing has been done by the Spirit of God to make its evidence clear, positive, and demonstrative to those on whose unshaken testimony, even unto death, the proof is so completely substantiated. A point, upon which was to rest our justification, was not likely to have been slightly left for future generations. On the contrary, this fact is so firmly established, as well from the concession of enemies, as from the living and the dying testimony of friends to the truth, that it may be safely adduced as the surest among the sure bulwarks of the outward evidences of Christianity.

* Ps. xvi. 10.      † John x. 17, 18.
But I will not now dwell upon a point which has been, or ought to have been matter of research to every one professing, as we all profess, to believe in the truth of our own frequent confession here: "He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures."* Matter more profitable I trust to professed believers, shall, at this time, be made the subject of our thoughts, and, may the Spirit of Christ grant, of our mutual edification. For we meet this day, if we are prepared to profit by the joyful tidings of this day, to join in our firm belief that Christ "is not here," in the darkness of the tomb, "but is risen," and thus to express triumphant shouts of praise at our great Emmanuel's glory.

* The first consideration which the text puts before us is the great gospel truth that it was Christ who "brought life and immortality to light;" "Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life." But it was not for the weeping sister of dead Lazarus alone that the Lord of life thus revealed Himself. It was a truth commensurate with the wants of the whole world; it was a truth which unenlightened nature could never discern, and which the wisest among the heathens had scarcely dared hope to be true, even in the

* Nicene Creed.
most limited view of it in the immortality of the soul. It was for the Redeemer of soul and body alone to make fully known, that the soul should never die, and that the body should rise again to an endless life.

To all that mere reason might advance upon this truth, in which we are each so nearly interested, our natural fears would present, for the most part, overpowering difficulties. And even when reason has been convinced through the clearness of revelation, that there is a future state, and that soul and body shall dwell for ever in one or other of its only two divisions, we cannot even then take comfort in the conviction of there being those two, unless we understand and feel what Christ intended when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." For this Lord of life was not only to reveal the truth of an eternal existence beyond the grave, but to show how alone that existence could be desirable to any who, like ourselves, had been barred from the hope of an eternity of happiness. Eternity, upon the other result, would be a bitter thing indeed. The consciousness of sin, unless He who revealed eternal life had also shown how we could escape from sin, its dominion here, its curse hereafter, would have made this life, as it is even still continually to the wicked, but the
foretaste of a hell to come. But when Christ tells us plainly, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," sinners as we are, we may then stand sure upon the Redeemer's word, and so "hope towards God—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead."* We may then know how it is that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God;"† because "This is the promise that He" the Saviour of souls "hath promised us, even eternal life."‡ In any other view of the resurrection of the body and its eternal reunion with the soul, we could not bear to contemplate it. Death has terrors; the grave cannot save us from those terrors; and what lies beyond the grave has infinitely greater terrors. None but the great Conqueror of sin and death and hell could bid the sinner have hope in his death, because none but He could have disarmed death of its sting, the grave of its victory, and hell of its penal exactions. In Jesus alone, our triumphant Saviour, there is a resurrection to everlasting glory.

The second consideration shows how this great truth must be applied to its blessed purposes; "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Our Lord here limits, not the fact of the

* Acts xxiv. 15. † Heb. iv. 9. ‡ 1 John ii. 25.
resurrection, but the blessedness of it to believers. This, therefore, of necessity, excludes all who do not believe; that is, all those to whom the gospel is preached, and who do not accept the gospel in the way, and with the fruits thereof, which that gospel declares to be necessary unto salvation. To us then, to whom Christ thus revealing Himself as "the Resurrection and the Life," to us He must be exactly what His holy apostle hath so plainly declared of the gospel covenant in Him: "For," saith St. Paul to his Corinthian converts, "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."*

Thus do we stand, each of us before God, infinitely the better, or infinitely the worse for the great truth openly declared unto us of Christ's being "the Resurrection and the Life." If we consider the words themselves, "though he were dead," we shall see their immediate application to every one of us. By nature we are all dead spiritually, and nothing but the Spirit of Christ can awaken us from our natural sleep of sin and entire deadness of soul to all spiritual things. In the course of nature too, we must all die the

* 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.
common death of mortality: and yet of such vital energy is the Spirit of Christ, that each death shall be exchanged to the believer for an endless life, a most glorious hope full of immortality. However dead our souls may be in matters spiritual,—however by nature alienated, as by nature we all are alienated, from "the things which are Jesus Christ's," yet if we hearken to the calls of God's Spirit, "at sundry times and in divers manners," speaking "in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," but "in these last days" speaking "unto us by His Son;"* if we, to these merciful calls, turn a willing ear, we shall live. And then, though these bodies be doomed to pass through corruption to their original dust, yet cannot the grave keep back: let us but be found among those who, in life shall have believed in Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life," we shall hear His voice; and when "the trumpet shall sound" we "dead shall be raised incorruptible."

There are two ways, therefore, in which the believer receives "joy and peace in believing" Christ to be "the Resurrection and the Life." He is first raised from his natural death of sin and indifference to things spiritual by that Almighty Spirit which Christ

* Heb. i. 1, 2.
Himself declared should "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." From his natural death of sin, he has been "born again," "a new creature," "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:"* For it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost: which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."†

Thus prepared in Christ, the believer in Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life," is justified in looking forward to that other sense in which "he shall live" again, with sure and certain hope. "As he has borne the image of the earthy, he shall also bear the image of the heavenly;"‡ and as his heart has been led to receive Christ as His only hope, he may take unto himself, and from his inmost soul join in the believer's hymn of praise: "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."§

After our blessed Lord had declared Him-

* John i. 13. † Tit. iii. 5—7. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 49. § Ver. 57.
self to be "the Resurrection and the Life," and had assured the weeping sister of dead Lazarus, that living or dead, every one who believed in Him should not die eternally, He added this question, "Believest thou this?" Hence arises the last, and most awfully important consideration from the passage before us.

This simple question is the very vital point of Christianity, and at this very moment it is as much, and as closely put to every one of us, as ever it was put to the sister of Lazarus. And how must it be answered? We stand, indeed, a collected congregation of professed believers. But Christ, who put this question to Martha, and now puts it to us, sees the division which lies open to His all-seeing eye in the answer which, individually, we give. The general position may be stated in the language of holy Scripture: "Some believe, and some believe not:" the personal and particular reply must be made by ourselves to our own hearts; but let us remember that the Witness to the answer is God.

You, my brethren, who have been brought through the Spirit of Christ really to believe the words of Christ; now once more put before you, be not too much elevated, if you are advanced in the life of faith; nor too much cast down if, through infirmity of the
flesh, or other cause not of your own wilful retaining, your faith be small. To each of you the promises of Christ "are yea and amen:" He is "the Resurrection and the Life;" and He is therefore your Resurrection and Life; for you neither believe nor wish to believe in any other. But as are your privileges, so is your bounden duty and your responsibility. Awakened from sin, think often of the state of spiritual darkness from which you have been raised; and in outward demeanour, as well as in inward desire, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."* Redeemed from the curse, the endless curse of sin, remember what your redemption cost: "Ye are bought with a price," † by "that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant;" ‡ "therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."§ 'Be examples to the flock of Christ. You profess to be risen with Christ; see, then, that ye "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."|| You profess to love Christ, "'set," therefore, "your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."¶ You know, that if you are Christ's you are no more of the world: "For ye are dead" to it.
vanities, "and your life," your endless life of immortal hope and glory, "is hid with Christ in God."* With these your Christian privileges, under these your Christian responsibilities, can you hear a better admonition than what was once so warmly and so affectionately addressed by St. Paul to his beloved Ephesians? "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called;"† "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."‡

These are the brief practical results from the real belief in the resurrection of our Lord. The true believer at once, and cordially, receives them.

But I am asked, Are not all true believers in the resurrection of Christ from the dead? Do we not all assemble here every Sabbath-day, repeat the Creeds, and so confess our general assent to this great truth? We can only judge of the true state of our souls, in the matter of evidence for religious truth of any kind by the effects which it produces. This is continually being put before us in Holy Scripture. We all say Lord, Lord; and yet Christ hath declared, that "Not

* Col. iii. 3. † Eph. iv. 1. ‡ Ver. 13.
every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* There are many now, and many will there be at the judgment-day, who will plead their Christian privileges: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?”† “We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets.”‡ These instances seem, in human judgment, to be fair proofs of real belief: and yet our blessed Lord has plainly told us, that the door will be shut against many such as these.

Hence, my brethren, though of this very congregation here present, I know not but that it would be a just scandal to say, that any did not believe the bare fact of Christ’s resurrection from the grave, yet in the sense in which our Lord put forth the cases above-mentioned to you, there must be many who believe not. True faith is always an active principle; and if the matter believed produce no fruit, though it be, from its very character, most strictly adapted for that especial purpose, it is, in the sense of Scripture, no belief at all. Holy Scripture makes this point perfectly clear. The address to all of us, as professing to believe the great truths.

of the gospel, and to live under the light of the gospel, is simply this: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* This is the touch-stone of true faith; so that if we profess to be risen with Christ in the faith of His resurrection from the grave, and do not seek those things which are above, and evidently live a spiritual, and not a worldly life, we most certainly have, as yet, no true gospel faith. Judge of the matter by this test, and then say whether there will not be proof enough among us that "some believe and some believe not."

In the truth of this conclusion, and in the earnest desire to adapt my ministry for purposes of my own and others' spiritual good, I would now, therefore, add a few words to those, who are here this day to bow their heads in the repetition of a creed, and yet show, by their lives, that they as yet believe not to any saving purpose.

Remember, my brethren, that it is not with the doctrines of the ever blessed Jesus, as with some worldly matter of interest, which begins with time, has respect only to time, and ends with time. To every one of us our eternity will take its tinge from the complexion of our time. What we love and seek after in this world will so stamp their im-

* Gal. v. 25.
press upon our soul while we live in the body, that when we shall depart from the body, we shall carry all our character along with us. You are diverted from your best happiness, when Satan bids you rest content; if you are not in what the world denominates open and wilful sin. Whereas, Scripture tells you, that there is a new nature to be acquired; an image of the soul lost by Adam, to be restored by the image recovered for us by Christ: a new heart, a new spirit; other desires, other objects of affection and interest than what by nature we seek after. And though, had we done all that was commanded us, we should still be unprofitable servants; yet must we in this life be fitted for heaven by that "meekness for the inheritance of the saints in light," without which heaven would not be heaven at all. If you would reign with Christ in heaven, you must entirely love Christ on earth, and show that you love Him; by seeking of His blessed Spirit to be made pure even as He is pure; and to follow after "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." 

I should but add insult to your understanding to the pain I gladly would excite in your conscience, were I to labour to prove a contrast which subsists between what sacred Scripture thus makes fearfully manifest, and
the opposing testimony of your life to all this. I would only tenderly exhort you to lay these things to heart. As I said to you two days ago, so say I now. Forget, for a moment, the interest of these eighteen hundred years, and go with the trembling disciples of their newly-risen Lord, to the tomb of the crucified Jesus. With the holy women early at the sepulchre, see what the earthquake had done against all the precaution of "sealing the stone and setting a watch;"* now the seal was burst, the stone rolled away, and the soldiers fled. With the ardent Peter go into the sepulchre and see the "linen clothes laid by themselves, and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself;" a plain contradiction to the story of the guard asleep, and the body stolen by a few frightened followers of their Lord. Behold, with Mary, the "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain:" then hear, as Mary heard, the Saviour Himself announce His own resurrection: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."†. Hearken, too, to the angels questioning the holy women: "Why seek ye the Living among the dead?"

* Matt. xxvii. 66. † John xx. 17.
He is not here; but is risen." Do not these things "idle tales;" but join the two disciples on their way to Emmaus; and be not "fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Hear the Lord Himself ask—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" Then turn a willing ear to His gracious teaching, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounding in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

If these "things which are Jesus Christ's" rightly touch your hearts, you will feel with these two disciples what it is intended that we should all feel, at the reading and hearing the words of that gracious and glorious Saviour: if that period ever come in which you are led really to believe, you will say, as they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

One word more, my brethren, and I have done. You have heard with your ears the words of Christ, from which I have addressed you on this triumphant day: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." These words you may

* Luke xxiv. 32.
never hear more. But, whether that be so or not, these are the very words with which that minister, who shall read over your deceased body the service for the burial of the dead, will meet the procession on its entrance at the sacred ground in which your body will be committed to its dust. Your soul hears now, what your body will not hear then: your soul may now seize hold of this merciful text, and your body shall then but sleep in Jesus: or your soul may, in your life-time, despise this sacred text, and then your body lies until the judgment "a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction." "Believest thou this?"
ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

Daniel vii. 13, 14.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In the true spirit of a mother in Israel, watching for the spiritual edification of her children, the church has put before us the beginning and the ending of Christ's personal ministry upon earth. Within the last few months, in annual memorial of God's mercies in man's redemption, we have been called upon to hear the sacred history of prophecy fulfilled, from the miraculous birth, unto the glorious resurrection of Christ the Saviour of our souls.
On the Ascension of Christ.

It was in the prophecies of old: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son;"* and in the history of the event it has been put before us; "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."†—In the same prophecies were foretold His heavy sufferings for man; "All we like sheep have gone astray;—and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."‡ The history, which we have read, shows us our great High Priest wounded, bruised, insulted, crucified; Himself connecting ancient prophecy with Himself, and declaring from amid the agonies of the cross of man's full redemption in Him, "It is finished." But it was also a prophecy of old, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption;" and the history has shown this prophecy verified: "'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen,'§ were the gracious words of angels sent of God to assure the Holy women at the sepulchre of their Lord, that the Lord of life was risen from the dead.

Christ unto the highest heavens, the gracious fulfilment of holy David's inspired anticipation of this last glorious act of an interceding Saviour: "Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."*

Thus exalted in the highest heaven, Christ is become what the prophet Daniel, in the words chosen for this day's text, in prophetic vision, saw Him to be: "One like the Son of man," to whom "was given—dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." It is this triumphant Saviour of whom all the prophets spake from the foundation of the world, and whose glorious ascension into the highest heavens is more especially suited to the spiritual ends intended by the text before us. I would urge the consideration of this text; in the interest which, conscious to ourselves or not, we each have in the Redeemer's glory, to the two opposite classes of the outward hearers of the word, who are now before me: to those, first, whose souls have been awakened to the truths of Christianity as really their own individual concern; and, secondly, to those who would not be without the forms, though

* Ps. lxviii. 18.
thoughtless of the spirit, and unacquainted with the power of vital godliness.

Do you, my brethren, who are alive to your soul's eternal interests in Christ, and whether with weaker or with stronger faith love, and follow Christ, or earnestly, and from the bottom of your heart desire to love and follow Christ, see how Daniel the prophet, the man "greatly beloved," was inspired to write matter for your comfort and great encouragement. In his night visions he beheld "One like the Son of man," enthroned with the majesty of heaven. When Christ, your Redeemer was upon earth, "The Son of man" was the very title which He Himself assumed. You in faith behold Him in His proper name, born into the world to ransom you; "in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."*—"He came to the Ancient of Days:" in interceding prayer Christ pleads your cause before the throne of "His Father and your Father." Do your sins past hang heavy upon your soul, and is the image of divine wrath before you? This great Intercessor, Himself declares from the sanctuary of His mercy-seat, that as your Mediator and

* Heb. ii. 17.
Advocate: "He is able to save them to the uttermost who go unto God through Him." Let this be your unshaken confidence: In spiritual sorrow and in spiritual joy, let this be the sole foundation of your trust, and your great Intercessor's prayer, on your behalf, put up before "the Ancient of Days," will not be put up for you in vain. Know well in whom you trust. "Be not faithless, but believing." Whether your faith be strong and comforting, or whether it be trembling and weak, still stand upon your Rock; in the bitterest seasons of spiritual distress, remember Christ now risen from the dead, and ascended to His glory; and against all your spiritual enemies, and all your own fears and weaknesses, let your determined confidence consist in—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."*

Are you tempted at any time to doubt His power, or distrust His exercise thereof on your behalf? See how the text puts the extent of His power before you: "Dominion, and glory, and a kingdom—an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." That His kingdom is opened to all believers, and therefore unto you, He hath Himself assured you, when in allusion to this reign of

* Job xiii. 15.
eternal Godhead. He declared: "My kingdom is not of this world," and in reference to the great act of His ascension into His own heavens for the express purpose of confirming the hopes of all His true followers, also added: "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." It is due to the love and honour of this great and glorious Saviour, that you believe all this as intended for your own individual benefit. If He, by His Holy Spirit, have given you much faith, show before Him and all your fellow-creatures, that you go on your way rejoicing in Him. In habitual cheerfulness of heart glorify Christ, and in the joys which, in Him, you are enabled to manifest, demonstrate to an unbelieving world, that apart from all its vain and unhallowed cares and pleasures, you have been led "beside the still waters" of spiritual joy; that you have found a treasure that waxeth not old; that you know, in most blissful experience, how truly it has been spoken of real religion in the heart, that "its ways
are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.

But, on the other hand, should your spiritual state be otherwise than triumphant and rejoicing; and you be bowed down under the weakness of only a newly gifted faith, and troubled, under the weakness of mind or body, that God should write bitter things against you, still remember who is interested on your behalf, loves you in His great redemption of your soul by His own blood; intercedes for you before the throne of grace in the realms of His eternal kingdom, and prepares a place for you in those many mansions, where, when your short day of trial shall be ended, you will reign with Him in cloudless glory. In every sigh of present sorrow which now you heave; in every tear of spiritual woe which now drops from your eyes; in every mental pang which a weak faith does not remove; remaining infirmity does not suffer to cease, or Satanic malice, for the better trial of your love and faith, be permitted to inflict; still forget not who He is who hath solemnly promised, and now in that He hath ascended up on high fulfills it, that all these things shall have an end. Do you ask who and what He is? Hear Him described in the word of eternal truth: "Lift up your heads, O ye
gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory." * Hear, too, in regard to your own interest in believing in Him, and the sure fulfilment of His promise to you, hear what He says of the present sorrows and sufferings of His people: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." †

Let this be your consolation in Christ; and in fervent and frequent prayer for increase of "faith, hope, charity, these three," feel that you owe it to God's glory, your own comfort, and as an inviting example to the unbeliever to cultivate religious cheerfulness, and the practical illustration in your own character and conduct of—"O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands;" ‡ "let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." §

But all do not thus seek religious joy, nor grieve at their knowing it no otherwise than as they hear of it, spoken of as a weakness, something visionary, or something worse. Yes, my brethren, you who are content to consider this world in its strong demands

* Ps. xxiv. † Rev. xxi. 4. ‡ Ps. c. 1.
§ Ps. cv. 3.
upon your time, your passions, your merely animal, or your merely intellectual enjoyments, you know as little as you wish to know of Him whom the prophet hath put before you, "One like the Son of man, coming to the Ancient of Days." You attend, it is true, the worship which professes to be His worship. With your ears you have again heard—"O God, the King of glory, who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven?" Again have you joined in ascribing, with lips and words, honour and glory unto the ascended Saviour. But inasmuch as you live unto this world, where that Saviour declares His kingdom is not, as you are satisfied with your portion's being that which savours of earth, and things that are upon the earth, you virtually disown the Redeemer's service; you wear the livery, and show that you make choice of the service of another master.

I cannot, as did once St. Paul before another unbeliever, reason with you "upon righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and cause you to tremble under my application of the truths of the gospel, with a spirit capable of discerning, as was his spirit. I cannot tell one man that he is a Felix, trembling under some conviction; but loving the world too well to come away from
it...another, that he is an Agrippa: almost a Christian; a third, that he believes and trembles: another, that he neither believes nor trembles: these are offices for Him who sees the heart. But I am commanded, as even I value the salvation of my own soul, to put these things before you; at a long distance from the attainment of the same zeal, we, the ministers of God, are still to use the language of St. Paul: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

In the execution of this great and solemn trust, let me earnestly exhort you to consider the words of the text, as intended for your good also. Christ, as the once crucified Redeemer, and present Intercessor for the world, exalted to His glory, now stands before "the Ancient of Days." In the immediate presence of the Father, His prayer is poured forth for you who think not of him, nor pray, in spirit, for yourselves. His dominion is co-extensive with created being, and, in the plenitude of His omnipotence, might be enlarged in endless creation. You, then, my brethren, who regard Him not, are subjects, unconscious to yourselves, are subjects of His universal empire. But as He rules over all,

* 2 Cor. v. 20.
He exercises His dominion according to the character of His subjects. His power you cannot resist. And should you persevere in refusing Him as One ruling in love, you must know Him as a Sovereign who wields a rod of iron. In this life, He tendered to you the offer of His exceeding love: but when this life shall be over, and you have, unto the end, rejected Christ, and will not have this King of mercy and love to reign over you, you must still be subject to His power.

As an argument for a close application of this thought to your own heart, consider what your feelings must be, when, with enlarged powers of intellect as a spiritual being, you shall know that you are for ever banished from all good: that your eternity shall have commenced its endless revolutions of unnumbered ages, dating its fiercest terrors in the sentence which shall have separated you from Christ, for ever! Had this thought a ten-thousandth part of the force upon your mind now, which it will have then, it would bring you to seek better grounds of happiness than those, which in your present enmity, and your present indifference to the gospel of Christ, you are most dangerously seeking in this world.

And why should you not associate yourself as a real and living member of Christ's king-
On the Ascension of Christ.

dom of grace, that hereafter you may be received by Him into His kingdom of glory? There is nothing in your case, sin only, excepted, which keeps you from being His. Be, for a moment, honest to your own heart. Look your enemies, your spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, look them in the face, and begin to be convinced, with something more than a lip confession, that they are your enemies. Examine them in their effects upon your soul, and then ask your own heart, whether they do not keep you from Christ? In some one or other of their ways of influencing your will and desires, they certainly do. Perhaps you have lived in infancy, youth, or age, with little put before you in the bosom of your own family which shall have taught you "from a child to know the Holy Scriptures," as "able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Or, perhaps you were instructed in the way of the Lord; but having received the seed anywhere, but "in an honest and good heart," you are ashamed of acting upon what knowledge puts before you, and so deny Christ the Lord who bought you. Or, perhaps, instructed or un instructed, the world, with its beguiling pleasures, or its anxious cares, has got dominion over you; and so in temper, habits, and manner of life,
stamps you as its own. In each and every case of spiritual indifference, (that deadness to the care of the soul, which in time or in eternity, you certainly will acknowledge to be the one thing needful,) your spiritual enemies are exercising their cruel dominion over you: the world misleads you; Satan influences you; and your own heart loves to have it so. But still you are not satisfied. Pleasure, for a little space, lulls you into a forgetfulness of its pains; business and worldly care hurry you into the ways which carry you from God; and you are tempted, at times, to disbelieve or to forget that "all this is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Under a condition of soul so fearfully dangerous, standing as you do stand, upon the very brink of eternity, into whose tremendous gulph some incident, as unexpected as it is unforeseen, may at once and for ever plunge you, let me urge you to consider the many merciful calls, which Christ, who now reigns above, puts before you, to save you from the world perishing in its wickedness, and to bring you to Himself. He has bled upon the cross; He has descended into the grave; He has arisen from the dead; He has ascended up to glory for you. His cross has accomplished your pardon; His grave disarmed death of its eternal dominion over you;
His resurrection justifies your hope of rising from the death and punishment of sin; and His ascension to the throne of His glory ensures you an Advocate in heaven whose prayers are put forth on your behalf. Think more upon these plain and simple truths, and they will teach you a lesson which you can never learn elsewhere than in this school of Christ. You are doubly interested in all that it teaches; for it gives you also encouragement to ask of God to understand, to appreciate, and to apply the full and spiritual blessedness of His apostle's triumphant confidence: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

* Rom. i. 16.
FOR WHITSUNDAY:

John xiv. 17.

"Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

It is a most appalling thought that there should be such a separation as the Saviour here makes, when He tells us plainly, that, while some know the Spirit of God in His gracious office in their souls, "the world cannot receive" Him. It is also a very painful thought: for the result from this knowledge, or this ignorance, is not one which shall end with time: the experimental knowledge of the Spirit in this life will ensure the glories, while the continued ignorance of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, will be followed by the pains of eternity.
This separation, nevertheless, of the two different classes of which, as professed believers in Christ, we are made up, is the constant lesson in the Word of God. There we read that the contrast between the renewed and the unrenewed mind will not be otherwise hereafter in eternity, than what shall be the necessary consequence of those respective and opposite states which are manifested here in the flesh. It is spoken of very forcibly by our blessed Lord when He tells us plainly, that "the world," that is, the people of the world, who live for this world's pleasures and pursuits, "cannot receive" "the Spirit of truth:" and His holy apostle St. Paul, taught by His divine Master, shows us at once why this must be so: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

It was a short time only before Christ left His disciples to return unto the Father, that He spake unto them the words of the text. He had told them, that, as He was now about to leave them, "He would pray the Father,

* 1 Cor. ii. 13, 14.
and He should give them another Comforter, that He might abide with them for ever.)* It is the peculiar business of this sacred day to teach us how this gracious promise was fulfilled by the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost; and so to bring to our mind the essential truth, that each Person in the Holy Trinity is equally concerned in the great work of the redemption of the soul. The Father, the Fountain of Deity, "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."† And of the Son it is said, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us;"‡ He Himself having before declared unto His disciples, that "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."§ But that we might equally be led to see redeeming love in the Eternal Spirit, and that without His converting influence the purposes of divine love could not take effect in our souls; we are also taught that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;"‖ and that without Him we could not understand or value our restored relationship to our Heavenly Father: "For as many as are led

* 1 Cor. ii. 16. † John iii. 16. ‡ 1 John iii. 16. § John xv. 13. ‖ Rom. v. 5.
by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." * 

As we are thus shown how we are bound to each Person in the adorable Trinity of Persons, in the unity of the Godhead, for this mercy of redeeming love, I shall endeavour to speak, first, as to the necessity of the special office of the Holy Spirit in the great work of our redemption; and then separately address the two opposite descriptions of persons named by our blessed Lord in the text: those who "cannot receive" the Spirit; and those who know Him, and in whom He dwells.

It is, my brethren, the grand and fundamental doctrine of the gospel which so powerfully teaches us our ruin in ourselves, as well as our salvation in Christ. And this is not confined to the more open revelation of the gospel in the writings of the New Testament alone. Throughout the Word of God we have the same mournful truth of our original fall and corruption as most explicitly stated for us in the Articles of our Church, where the definition of what we all are, by nature exactly meets the Scripture account of the

* Rom viii. 14, 15.
consequences of the first sin: "Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always, contrary to the Spirit."

Now if, as Holy Scripture and our own experience show, this be the condition of the human soul by nature, inheriting the first pollution, and in its own corruption unawakened from the sleep of sin, and without power to raise itself to the life of righteousness, we see the fearful consequence of our having right views with regard to the converting influence of the Spirit. It is His only "to convince the world of sin." Good thoughts, and good desires are His gift; and no one can be made sensible, as to any spiritual profit, of his lost state by nature, save only as he shall be brought to understand and apply the doctrines of grace. When the apostle speaks with ardent gratitude of his own deliverance from natural deadness and indifference to spiritual things, it is in language which at once shows how entirely he felt it to be the especial power of the Lord: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," (by
grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

It is thus that Holy Scripture teaches us that reviving spiritual power comes, in the first instance, from the Holy Spirit; as in the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel under the dispensation of the law and the prophets, it was Omnipotent Power only which caused them to come together, "and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."†

But besides the sinful state of the soul, and the entire weakness of the unrenewed man, as rendering the operation of the Spirit essential to the creation of the new life, there are also the power and malice of the soul's enemies continually working for its ruin, and teaching us, therefore, the same truth. These are "the wiles of the devil," of which the Holy apostle warns us, when he expressly declares of these spiritual foes, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers

* Eph. ii. 4—8. † Ezek. xxxvii. 10.
of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." "If we consider the power of such an enemy thus opposed to our exceeding weakness; and forming a league with our natural propensity to sin against God; to love this world and the things thereof, we shall see that the great work of spiritual victory could not be accomplished by ourselves. It is the constant language of the truly awakened soul to confess that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;" and with regard to what man cannot effect, and to what God alone can accomplish in the soul, the true believer, in humbled experience knows, that "it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." This Scripture doctrine of the power of the Holy Spirit in the great work of beginning and carrying on the conversion of the soul is differently received, according as we are numbered in one or other of the two opposite descriptions of persons named by our blessed Lord in the text: those who "cannot receive" the Spirit; and those who know Him, and in whom He dwells.

I know not whether any of the doctrines taught in God's word are more resisted and

* Eph. vi. 12.  † 2 Cor. iii. 5.  ‡ John vi. 63.
opposed by the world, than the plain and simple truth, so frequently and so unquestionably inculcated, as the great foundation of our faith: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." * You, my brethren, whose hearts and lives too plainly show you to your own conscience, if ever you suffer conscience to do its proper work within, that you are still among those, of whom our Lord first speaks, when He tells of "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive;" you are continually putting a stumbling block in your way against your receiving or understanding this essential truth. Sometimes you "charge God foolishly," † as though in your natural corruption and inability to save yourself, and in the consequent necessity of the work proceeding from God, you were inevitably bound by a law which renders you a mere machine, and exempts you from responsibility as a moral agent. We cannot, indeed, reason upon the deep things of God; nor can we account for the mysteries which every where surround us in natural, as well as in spiritual things. But we may appeal to experience, which will condemn us if we sin; and leave the things which are not revealed, and which, therefore, the very limited powers of the soul

* Phil. ii. † Job i. 2.
prevent us from comprehending; we may safely leave these to God, and believe, from His own word, that, before men and angels, He will at last "be justified in His saying; and clear when He is judged."*

In experience, then, has it ever been known, since the world was, that any man has been compelled, against his own free choice, to commit sin? A man may, indeed, through long and determined resistance to the Holy Spirit, be judicially hardened by God, as Pharaoh was, after he had, in the first instance, hardened his own heart: or, he may so drown all his thoughts and cares in the pleasures and pursuits of the world, as to continue dead and indifferent to things spiritual. But this is not the state into which God necessarily places any one; for it is in spirit everywhere, and in multiplied express passages most frequently declared in His own gracious word, that: "God our Saviour—will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."† How such passages as these, and such a spirit as this, which every where pervades the Word of God, could ever be otherwise interpreted than by Christ's own comment upon them, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," let these be made answerable for, unto whom it appertains.

* Ps. li. 4.  † 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.
taips: language cannot make it plainer than Scripture. Language constantly makes it, that "God willeth not the death of a sinner"; and consequently never can do any thing in the first instance to promote it, either positively by an inevitable necessity; or negatively, by preterition. If you make such doctrine, for it is not, unhappily for the Christian world, an untaught doctrine, if you perversely make it an excuse for sin, you are acting in direct opposition to the plainest words of Scripture, which bid you flee from sin; and which every where tell you, that as God has provided a sufficient sacrifice in His dear Son "for the sins of the whole world," you will stand without excuse if you "neglect so great salvation." The practical matter, and this is the great thing which concerns us, is plain and simple. St. Paul has stated the doctrine and applied the intended meaning of it, as far as we are called upon to understand it, in a few words: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."* This is addressed to us all; and as it comes from the God of truth, it can never have been intended for us to believe any thing which at once contradicts its either in supposing that we can save our-

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.
selves, or that God has ever created a single human creature with a necessary impossibility at his creation of being saved. Give Christ the whole glory of man's salvation; for He hath purchased it with His blood; and deny all ascription of merit to any thing but Christ alone; and then leave the deep truths of the necessity of preventing as well as of saving grace for all who shall be saved, to Him who hath mercifully declared thus in His own most gracious word: "My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

You, my brethren, who as yet think not thus; who live to the world, its vanities, its follies, and its pleasures, and so make this, or other matter an excuse for your sin, are but sinning against your own soul. You do "despite to the Spirit of grace:" you will not hearken to spiritual counsel, nor give heed to spiritual things. In some one or other of its multiplied characters the world still keeps you from Christ. The command is plain to you: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Your disobedience to this command shows that all your profes-

* Isaiah lv. 8, 9.
sion of Christianity is nothing: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." What therefore shall be your state, when the words which immediately follow these, shall be fulfilled: "And the world passeth away?"* Yes, my brethren, this world is your all. You think not of your soul which shall survive this world, nor of Christ who hath redeemed your soul out of the world. The Holy Spirit, who would convert and sanctify your soul, you will not pray for, but continually resist; and to the Father of mercies who, in the person of His dear Son, once wept over sinners perishing in their sins, and now invites you to return unto Him, you still turn an alienated heart, and an unwilling ear. Thus resisting God, let me urge you at least to consider this momentous question: that if, in this your day of grace, you now resist the love of this merciful God your Saviour, how shall you be able at the day of judgment to stand before this same God your Judge?

You, my brethren, who through grace have been led to know the Spirit, and in whose hearts He dwells, and in whose lives His holy

* 1 John ii. 15—17.
work is manifest, never lose sight of that
great work which He began, which He alone
can carry on and perfect in your soul. In
your heart-felt love towards Christ, show
your single-eyed dependence upon His gra-
cious promise: "I will pray the Father, and
He shall give you another Comforter, that He
may abide with you for ever."

Remember that there is fulfilled for the true believer the
entire truth of the ancient prophecy, that
Christ should ascend unto His "glory which
He had with the Father before the world be-
gan," and that through Him, the Holy Ghost
should descend into and dwell in every be-
liever's heart: "Thou art gone up on high;
Thou hast led captivity captive, and received
gifts for men; yea, even for thine enemies,
that the Lord God might dwell among them."

As you have been brought to understand
and value these things, pray that you may
abound more and more. Your comfort in the
possession of your privileges is the precept
for the performance of your duties: "If we
live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spi-
rit;" for: "manifestation of the Spirit is
given to every man to profit withal." Let
this be your constant test. In itself it can
never deceive you. You may be tried and

*John xiv. 16.  † Ps. lxviii. 18.  † Gal. v. 25.
§ 1 Cor. xii. 7.
sifted under doubts and difficulties; you may be assailed and perplexed under fears and troubles, as you go on in your earthly pilgrimage, this eventful scene of your short sojourn in these tabernacles of clay: but, if you be "led by the Spirit," you will come out from every furnace, like the gold purified in the fire, and fitted for the master's use. If, through the Spirit, you resist whatever draws you from the Saviour in His three-fold character of Prophet instructing you, of Priest redeeming you, of King reigning over you, the promise on your behalf must be as certainly fulfilled, as Christ's own words have declared it shall be; "My words" saith He "shall not pass away."*

This is the covenant-promise on the part of Christ. It is yours to receive and to act upon it: through the Spirit you have received it, and through the Spirit alone can you act upon it unto the end. Till your end come, "be strong in the Lord; quit yourselves like men." Let your outward walk show to whom you belong. Let humble saints for their encouragement, and impenitent sinners for their invitation and warning, be enabled to see in you that which is written as the evident mark of your being Christ's: let all be permitted to see in you what was once con-

* Matt. xxiv. 35.
fessed as the effect of looking upon the true disciples of the Lord: their very enemies, it is said, “took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”* Let this be visible in you also; and so “through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”†

Let the return of the annual memorial of the Spiritual Wonder of this sacred day revive in your hearts more fervent prayer for the Spirit’s gracious gifts to your own soul. And then, in your own consciousness of saving mercy, pray fervently that there may be an outpouring of the Spirit among all people. The thousands of souls perishing in ignorance and sin around you ask this Christian duty of every true believer. And, for your encouragement herein, remember that letting your light shine, and putting up your prayer to the Throne of Grace, may minister cause to some poor sinner now in danger of perishing in ignorance, impatience, and sin, of rejoicing in the triumph, and in the words of the zealous apostle: “This shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”‡

* Acts iv. 13. † Gal. v. 5. ‡ Phil. i. 19.
FOR TRINITY SUNDAY.

Prov. ii. 10, 11.

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

This, my brethren, is God's solemn promise. Why then do so many, who seem to search after the knowledge of divine truth, that they may have something whereon to repose, and be enabled to say that they have found what they sought after—why do they go on under such constant disappointment herein?

It shall be my endeavour to consider this question as naturally arising from the holy text which I have this day read unto you from the Word of God: and may the Spirit of Truth guide and sanctify us in the use and application of this sacred and important subject.

Fourth Course.
There are two very common errors which are connected with the especial subject of this day's public service. It is a day, in our church, made peculiarly sacred to the Holy Trinity, because on this day the Scripture doctrine of a Triune distinction of Persons in the Godhead is more immediately, only because more avowedly brought before us. One of these errors is that into which so many, who profess to believe Christianity in general, continually fall, in their supposing that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is peculiar to the services of this day, and to a few other days in the Christian year, wherein our church sets forth the Scripture grounds of our common faith. The other error is also a very frequent one, and pertains to those who think that mysteries and difficulties beyond the stretch of human understanding, are peculiar to religion; and who lose, therefore, the usefulness of an argument taken from analogy, and which would convincingly show that we ourselves, and all things around us, are full of mystery, and in abstract consideration, abound with overwhelming difficulty.

To each of these errors I would, at this time, merely oppose the result of our own experience. With regard to the first, not one of us can read over our church services without seeing, that the essential doctrine of
the Holy Trinity is an integral and the fundamental portion of our public duty in the house of God: and that, in strict union with her own articles of faith, our church ever intends that it shall be so. This will experience, in our fairly looking into this matter, plainly teach us.

Experience, too, will gainsay the other error. And if any man holds, that mystery is confined to religion, let him look into the matter of every day's occurrence in the union of soul and body, in the passive character of body, in the active principle of the soul; let him look into things far lower than these, and examine the grosser particles around him everywhere, and consider them as now in existence, when once they were not in existence; as in themselves finite, and yet, for any thing that the human mind can answer, in their divisibility infinite; let him but consider these facts and the unnumbered and mysterious results necessarily incident to such a state of things, in all their wonderful combinations and effects, and then let him honestly declare whether he really thinks that mystery is confined to religion.

On this sacred day one of the mysteries of our faith in God's word is more especially brought before us. I say, our faith in God's word; because unless we so far believe as to
take the word with all that is therein spoken, we are not likely to be aided by any consideration taken upon other grounds. In God's Holy Word, then, we find so much of His incomprehensible nature revealed, as shall exactly meet the difficulty we should otherwise feel, of knowing how, as sinners, we could be related to God at all. The Christian mercy of redemption is grounded upon the mystery of the Trinity. "Without controversy," saith the inspired apostle, "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." * And the same apostle again declares "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." † The baptismal privileges are commanded to be conveyed in the joint name of the Eternal Three; and the farewell benediction of the inspired apostle to his Christian converts conveys an equal ascription of redeeming mercy to each: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." ‡ It is the union of power, the equality of love, but the distinction of office, which have rendered necessary the revelation of some portion of the divine nature, together

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. † 2 Cor. v. 19. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
with the revelation of the promised redemption and future happiness of mankind. Had that been withholden; we could not have seen how the Scripture assertion had been made good, which declares, that "through Him," that is, Christ Jesus, "we both," Jew and Gentile, "have access by one Spirit unto the Father."*

This, therefore, becomes an essential article of the Christian faith; and I press it the more, because unless it be received entirely as Scripture has revealed, not explained it, it is quite impossible that we can have any clear and right views of redeeming mercy; the great matter urged upon us in every portion of the Word of God; and showing, as our blessed Lord Himself declared of the Scriptures then given, that "they are they which testify of" Christ.

It is not my intention to enter upon this doctrine in the way of argumentative discussion and critical research. A more useful consideration, I hope, suggests itself to my mind; the practical view of those obstacles and hindrances to its proper reception into the heart; rather than much thought upon the course of argument which should establish it as a truth for the head. For this latter I would merely observe, that the doctrine of

* Eph. ii. 18.
For Trinity Sunday:

the Holy Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, as fully revealed as an article of faith in God's Word, has met with the entire credence of the best, and the wisest, and the most capable of appreciating the construction of language and the force of evidence, among all denominations of Christians. If example were needed, we have it in such an assemblage of learning and piety as can be collected for no other subject since the world was: and what is well deserving our most especial notice, we have the full and unquestionable testimony of the whole church of Christ in the first and purest times of its history. Apostles and apostolical men never doubted of it. In their writings it is named as a matter deemed obvious to every believer in the written word; and not until the pride of understanding, the seeking to be "wise above what was written," opposed human sophistry to Scripture truth, was the sacred doctrine opposed.

There appear two principal causes, and into which all lesser ones may be resolved, of men's resistance to the Scripture doctrine of the Holy Trinity. These are, first, the want of an humble and teachable spirit of mind; secondly, the holiness of heart and devotedness of life which the gospel of Jesus Christ, grounded upon this doctrine, so unequivocally maintains, and so constantly asserts as essen-
tial, in every one of them, the Gospel is preached, as an bond and secret revelation. There are many express passages in the Word of God, and there is the whole spirit of His Word as exemplified in the lives of holy persons named therein, which at once show, that, unless we be humble-minded, we cannot learn to any saving purpose the truths of revealed religion. Solomon, the inspired King of Israel, and recorded in Scripture truth, as himself the wisest of men, says plainly; "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* And a greater than Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, declared, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."†

Now, if we analyze the general character of that feeling in the human mind which leads it to resist religious truth, and especially that portion thereof which exceeds the limits of its natural powers, we shall easily perceive why the Word of God lays so great a stress upon the necessity of a docile, and an humble spirit. Our souls, by nature, are exceedingly proud. The image of pride is stamped upon, much, of what we see in the outward character of mankind, everywhere;

* Prov. i. 7. † Matt. xviii. 3.
and a large portion of what is called wrong now with temper; and habit of life amongst us; may evidently be traced up to the besetting sin of pride. It is not strange, therefore, that this feeling should at once resist the teaching of those deep mysteries in revealed religion, which baffle all human conception, and lay man's proudest efforts in the dust. But it would be strange, and it would be a handle for infidels to have caught at, had revealed truth, which at all touched upon the nature and moral government of the great and Infinite Author of our being, the Eternal First Cause, been made level to the apprehension of a finite mind.

But, my brethren, perhaps the strangest thing is, that man should be proud at all; when so much, apart from the deep truths of religion, is calculated to humble and keep him low. And yet, in truth, the powers of our mind, considered intellectually, are exceedingly narrow; and the moral character of the mind is debased, and most corrupt: and without at all depreciating the proper cultivation of the mind, it has consistently been seen, that men who have been the most exalted in pride for what of superior power and attainment they might possess, have at times been the most abject and degraded for the grossest dereliction of moral duty. The
word of God, we are taught, is always that man's natural powers cannot arrive at true wisdom. Religious truth is a revealed thing; and experience, as well as Scripture, show, that the pride of the human mind is a preventive to the reception of religious truth. "For all that is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputant of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." The subject matter of religious truth is not more foreign to the natural taste, than it is higher than the very limited powers of the human understanding.

The natural corruption, too, of the heart, and the selfish and sensual tendencies of the unregenerated nature of man, must necessarily impede the reception of revealed truths, which always inculcate universal holiness, and teach the humbling lesson that we must seek salvation, if we seek it, out of ourselves. If the sacred doctrine of redeeming love in each Person of the Eternal Three be received, it at once condemns a useless and immoral
life; and that being the life which we generally seek to lead, these pure doctrines find a bitter enemy at once enthroned in the heart against them. For if we believe in what this mystery in man's redemption teaches, we must either give up our sins, and resist the love of the world, and come out of it; or we must be content to go on against conviction of sin, through the revealed knowledge of what has been done and suffered in divine love, that "God might be just, and the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus," and so "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

These considerations will naturally bring me to address myself to the two different classes of outward hearers of which every congregation is made up.

And first, some of you, my brethren, accept the deep doctrines of Christianity. You professedly disbelieve them; or you virtually disbelieve them in resisting the influence which they are intended to produce upon your hearts and lives. In either case you are regarded in the eye of God, as rejecting His Word; and perhaps a real, and honest, looking into your motive for thus rejecting, it will show you to yourself in one or other of the two classes who resist the truth; one through pride of understanding, the other through an
unwillingness to receive and act upon a truth which at once condemns that course of life which you now think well to follow after. Your presence in the house of God shows that you wish, for some reason or other, to keep up the form of religious worship; that is, you would not deem it right, even in the eye of the world whose frowns you fear, or whose ways and habits and pleasures you seek after, to be absolutely without some appearance of religion. But if there be a God, and that God hath revealed His will, and so much of His divine and incomprehensible nature as shall be necessary to show to His creatures their relationship to Him in this otherwise most perplexing state of their being, as surrounded with moral and physical ill, how can you justify it to your own mind, either to reject His revelation, because it is a mystery; or to live in the neglect of its practical influence over you, because it would oblige you to live and act otherwise than as now you desire to do? You lean to your own understanding, and are soon brought to the obstacles in your reason which will show you equal, if not greater difficulties than those which in religion you resist. You spend your days after the fashion of the world, and, with much painful interruption in your pursuit after what you would gladly consider your sufficient happiness, are
o festimes brought to feel already that much of what you do enjoy is but "vanity and vexations of spirit," and one day or other, for better or for worse, must you learn this truth in its unqualified application to everything human. If you at once reject the mysterious doctrines of Christianity, you do it through the pride of reason. You fearlessly bring the understanding of a finite mind to judge, not of the fact of a revelation or no revelation, but of the suitableness of what is revealed of an Infinite God to the puny conceptions of the lowest of His rational creatures. But if you profess to believe in the doctrines, and your life be opposed to the purity and holiness which they necessarily lay upon you as a sinner redeemed through the mercy of divine love, you mar your own happiness and peace; and knowledge now but adds, or certainly will add, its heaviest reproaches to your self-proclaimed wretchedness.

And yet, my brethren, there is merciful provision for your unhappy case. Look to the text which I have this day put before you. There you behold God Himself pledged to a great and merciful promise on your behalf. He tells you that wisdom is not in man, but urges you not to oppose the admission of that wisdom which He offers, and will give, that you also may enjoy its spiritual blessedness.
When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is, as it will then become, pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: for every portion of the divine word, which alone teaches the way of salvation, expressly declares of true religion: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.—Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." Seek this wisdom of "God only wise." Let your reason bow and your heart melt before the cross of Him who was: "Emmanuel, God with us," sit, as Mary sat at the feet of Jesus; and learn of Him. You will then hear words, as she heard, which shall tell you of the good part, which you shall have chosen; and which shall not be taken away from you. Your reason will become sanctified to see that God's wisdom must be best; and grace will soon bring you to feel that it is best.

"Of you, my brethren, who have been led to submit your will to God's will, and are made content to bow to the real revelation of "the whole counsel of God," its comforts, its promises, and its mysterious doctrines, of you some are blest with stronger, some have weaker..."
faith; but, nevertheless, if you believe, it is God who hath given you the measure of your faith. To you I would say, look with real confidence to the promises, that the knowledge of your covenant relationship to a redeeming God, through the mysterious revelation of His deep truths, shall be not only profitable, but "pleasant unto your soul." You may, perhaps, and some of you certainly will be tempted, probably are already tempted upon this very point of the smallness of your faith, and the magnitude of the subjects upon which faith must operate. Your remedy is prayer; your rule is not to oppose the Spirit in His holy guidance and instruction. All failure in the real believer in the moral as well as in the intellectual management of his soul, is to be traced up to the want of faith; and that want arises from neglect of prayer; or resistance to the ways and leadings of God's providence over us, His tender dealings in nature as in grace. What was the Saviour's merciful declaration to the broken-hearted parent supplicating for his child? "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."* And what was that parent's reception of this holy truth? "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help Thou

* Mark ix. 23.
mine unbelief." And how was his prayer answered? "Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour."

Let this, my brethren, be your lesson, your warning, as well as your consolation. The mysteries of your faith are the deep and 'secret things' which "belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed," the plain and simple truths which teach salvation only through "God — in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," belong "unto us, and to our children for ever." Of yourself you neither believe the doctrines nor do the will of God, in submissively receiving it: but your prayer will ensure power from above to enable you to do both. It was for the encouragement of every one who desires to believe, that Christ's gifts to His first disciples is written down in the Word of God: "Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." As no man can believe unless Christ thus open his heart and give him the will, so no one who asks this gracious exercise of Christ's Spirit upon the soul, shall ever ask in vain. It is His peculiar gift; and it is His especial pleasure to bestow it.

Persevere then in prayer, and exercise yourself in godliness of life. Your faith will be confirmed if now it be strong; your faith will be added to if now it be weak. "Shall not God," it is Christ's own question, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily."* Your willingness to believe already shows that "Wisdom entereth into thine heart:" it is the forerunner of the further truth that "knowledge" shall be "pleasant unto thy soul." God's promise remains that the whole shall be accomplished: "Discretion shall preserve thee; understanding shall keep thee." You shall be brought to discern what God's will is, and shall be enabled, through the power of His saving laws in your heart, more and more to realise all its happiest fruits. It was the experience of the apostle, and may it be altogether yours: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."†

THE LIGHT IS COME.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

Isaiah ix. 1.

"Arise, shine; for Thy Light is come."

The gospel of everlasting salvation in the great Deliverer of man, was never intended exclusively for the Jew. A whole world had sinned, and the remedy planned and perfected by a reconciled God incarnate, would be commensurate with the abounding evil. This, whom the church of Christ hath recognized as her evangelical Prophet, constantly teaches the elsewhere frequently taught truth, that the Jews were but depositaries of the revelations of God. When the Spirit first speaks through the holy man, it is in language intended to create a universal interest: it was not, as in more confined dealings for temporary purposes, "Hear, O' my people;" but
"Hear O heavens; and give ear O earth." The whole world is summoned to hearken when the prophet begins a prophecy predicting the truth of Christ's redemption, that "the Gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising:" "A little one" was to "become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation:" and Omnipotent Power and Infinite Love would accomplish it; "I the Lord will hasten it in his time." That time arrived, and Divine Love, which at first declared that man should find a Saviour, announced Him, a new-born babe, charged with glad tidings of great joy, which should be to all nations, bringing "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace; good-will towards men."

May that gracious Spirit who first inspired His prophets to preach for the Gentiles, now impart such a measure of His grace to us Gentiles, that we may not only hear with our ears, but understand and feel with our inmost souls that our "Light is come."

The short passage from this awakening prophet implies, first, a most imperative duty; "Arise, shine;" and secondly, it exhibits the only, and most efficient motive; "for thy Light is come." Let us consider each.

This figurative language, "Arise, shine," is addressed to those who are spiritually asleep, or dead. It is like the summons of
other holy men of God also addressing the spiritual slumberer: "It is high time to awake out of sleep;"* "Awake to righteousness and sin not:"† "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead."‡ This language proceeds from God, and is addressed to us all. By nature we are all dead in trespasses and sins. The whole economy of our salvation, in a sufficient Saviour, is grounded upon this most humiliating truth. However mysterious, and therefore utterly inexplicable to us it may be, experience proves as well the existence, as the extent of our natural corruption. It is what Scripture everywhere teaches; what, in consequence, our church at once and entirely adopts as her first and constant lesson to her children; what the whole history of mankind, sacred and profane, hath always proved, and our own individual experience painfully, but demonstratively confirms. We should not be called upon to awake, unless we slept; nor to arise, and live, and walk, unless we were prostrate, dead, and motionless. Our ears must hear, and our heart understand, with hearing and understanding which God withholds from none, before we can recover the overpowering effect which original sin and personal guiltiness have wrought upon our souls. This, we

* Rom. xiii. 11. † 1Cor. xv. 34. ‡ Eph. v. 14.
know the human heart, in its natural pride, resists; but God deals with us as He finds us; and in the language of mercy, in His dealings of providence, and in His dispensations of grace, bids us all, from our natural state of a spiritual death, "Arise."

But when awakened from our sleep by the call of the Spirit of God; (first imparted to us at our baptism "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and unless quenched by after sinfulness more and more imparted,) when by Him awakened and arisen, more is enjoined. The imagery of Scripture language bids us look to the sun in the firmament; whose rising at the dawn, and shining in progressive splendour until he come to his meridian brightness, is to be the emblem of the Christian's path, "the path of the just," which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Our natural sun's rising, unless it shine, will not disperse our night; nor will the Christian's light be manifest after he is awakened and risen from his spiritual death, unless he also "shine." All that is gloomy in the history of creation and the progress of sin, is spoken of under terms which naturally engender horror: "the blackness of darkness:" and "light" is the Scripture image descriptive of its restoration. "We have also," saith the Apostle St. Peter, "a
more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”* And a greater than St. Peter, addressing His then little flock of true believers, representing the thousands and tens of thousands thereafter to be added to His fold, commanded them thus: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” When God imparts light, we are called upon to do, speak, and think nothing which shall cause that light to be extinguished. When God gives knowledge to the soul, He expects that we give it utterance in a single-eyed endeavour to promote His glory thereby, and, in the strength of His Spirit, to “add to our faith, virtue.” It is dangerous teaching which the enemy of souls only suggests, that man may live spiritually by faith—one word only; we have great authority for proving that man must live spiritually “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”... Dead by nature, we are commanded, and have strength given us, to “arise;” dark by nature, we are commanded, and have light given us, to “shine.” What God hath joined together

* 2 Pet. i. 19.
no man must part asunder: we take, then, the whole counsel of God—"Arise, shine."

We come, my brethren; to our motives, the great foundation of this gracious precept: We are to arise and shine, because our "Light is come."

In God's gracious dealings towards His creatures, there is an entire consistency running through them all. He calls us to "arise" because He gives us strength; He calls upon us to "shine" because He gives us Light: and once more are we summoned to the congregation of the Lord to hear and join in an outward service commemorative of this best gift of God. The whole world of Gentiles and Jews before the light of the gospel, in respect to the understanding, were the exact type of what we all are, before we receive the truth individually, in respect to the heart. Our Gentile ignorance is, indeed, removed by knowledge: but our natural indifference and hatred towards the things of God remain still. The Spirit of God would not have assigned a holy argument shews to "arise" and "shine," "for thy Light is come," unless there had been some cause before, in the darkness which concealed the truth. A motive, therefore, is added to the precept, which should make it entirely operative. This gracious assurance from God teaches us that impossible
things are not expected of us. He doth not call upon us to "arise," without having by the same Spirit declared, that, "His strength is perfected in our weakness," neither doth He command us to "shine," without having by the same Spirit assured us, that our "Light is come." This knowledge justifies God, and comforts man. God creates immortal souls now subject, in their probation, to the consequences of their first created parents' fall; but God remedies the evil out of the stores of His infinite love, and unsearchable riches in Christ; "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Man redeemed now stands upon vantage ground against his enemy. Man, by nature in himself lost, through mercy and grace in Christ is entirely found. It is this knowledge which Sacred Scripture points out to us as "the one thing needful:" which shows us how it is, that notwithstanding our fall, "mercy and truth" may still "meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other," how "God can be just, and yet the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus." Again, my brethren, with outward observance have we here met together on this the

* John iii. 16.
The Light is come.

Nativity of our Lord, again announced in faithful history from God, than a sufficient Surety hath been found for man's deliverance, and that we may now, "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Again hath the page of Sacred Writ carried us back to the glorious period of our world, whereas angels from heaven spake God's message to earth, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." On other years, in this or in other congregations, we have assembled to hear the same things. Some minister of Christ hath annually announced these truths; and in the name of Christ in his great and responsible office of an ambassador of Christ, bids us "Arise, and shine." Let us for a moment pause, therefore, and consider the present state of our souls, in reference to this frequently repeated message from Christ our great federal Head; Have we arisen, and do we shine? Should I, not err, my brethren, were I to address you all, as having all obeyed?” Or shall we, rank ourselves, in fairer truth, as were once ranked other outward hearers of the word, of whom, in the strength of Scripture truth, it was said, “Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not?” You, who have believed, know, (for God beareth witness in your heart,) how gracious...
an admission of the command to "be wise, and shined in with" you. You were once in darkness, but are now in light in the Lord; you once had not, nor bare now for; have you Him only; "which is Christ the Lord;" in Him you have been brought to know, that "your Light is come." Let the command and the motive be still before you: for though it speak not to you the commencement of the life of faith, it still bids you remember what you were: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole whence ye are digged."* Do your first works; that is, remember what first you believed, and resolved, and persevered unto the end. Be consistent in word and manner of life; so that, in your life and conversation, Christ may be glorified, and your good so done, in godly wisdom, love, and charity, that it be not evil spoken of. Then will your light shine outward unto the end, until you are brought where all is light, and where there is no darkness at all: where there shall be no outward temple; "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it:" whose city hath no need of the sun, "neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God" shall "lighten it, and the Lamb" shall be "the Light thereof."* * Isaiah vi. 1. * Rev. xxi. 23, 24.
But while some thus have arisen and “shine,” there are others who are still amid light, and yet walk in darkness; to whom in their ignorance “Christ crucified” is still “a stumbling block;” or to whom in their natural pride, “Christ crucified” is still “foolishness:” who entertain, or make objections to the plain simple truths of the gospel, because the purity of the gospel condemns their lives, or because the “foolishness” of the gospel opposes their natural pride.

Permit me, my brethren, also to address you. Another yearly public assembling in the house of God, on the nativity of Christ, finds you also among the congregation of the Lord; and you outwardly celebrate the return of Christmas Day; but your life, still opposed to the awful truths of religion, which bid you prepare for another world while, for your bounded period, you remain here, witnesses against you. This day hath heretofore summoned you all, and hath often summoned many of you now fast hastening to the end of your course, to “arise” and “shine;” hath offered for your entire acceptance, the unnumbered privileges and mercies of a Redeemer’s love. But it hath summoned you in vain; and you have rejected its spiritual blessedness against yourselves. The great truths of its “glad tidings” seem to you, in their practical
character, "as idle tales;" and the voice of the church, the entreaties of her ministers, and the warnings uttered by both, are not much otherwise received; than as the unimportant, or the obstinate words of those who mock.

What, then, does this gracious period of a merciful Saviour's first advent in the flesh bring with it no delights? Are you, my brethren, who take little thought for things connected by a link, which shall soon be broken, with your immortal souls and the world of spirits, alone without rejoicing at this period of the Christian year? Were judgment to be pronounced herein by the energy and expressions of an outward rejoicing, you would be declared, of all who bear the name of Christ, most to rejoice. This period of your Saviour's birth comes literally loaded with your own peculiar joys. Your very language, descriptive of it before it comes, and hailing it when it is come, marks the eager interest you take in all the associated feelings which early, long, and continued tides of pleasures and enjoyments which you do seek after and most highly prize, have impressed upon your minds. But see, for a moment, what is the nature, and what are the effects of your outward demonstrations. Be offended with none but with yourself; when I ask you whether the very nature of your joys at this season, do not
detach from the impulse which its real joys are intended to impart? Is your rejoicing intended by yourself, and put forth before the Christian world, as the real manifestation of your joy that the memorial of your Redeemer’s birth is come? Can you look back upon this period of the Christian year, and say, when it is past, I prepared for the nativity of my once incarnate God and Saviour, with spiritual rejoicing in what He hath done for my soul? I lived nearer, in sweet communion with Him; I became more detached from earth, and better realized a hope of heaven, in the assurance that my “Light is come,” and have, therefore, arisen, and shine? I have kept the festival of my Saviour’s birth, in grateful and spiritual remembrance of a Saviour’s love? I have, simply through love to Him, visited His sick, clothed His naked, fed His hungry, comforted His afflicted, knowing that, doing this to one of the least of those His brethren, I did it, and meant to do it, unto Him? Can you look back upon former nativities of your Lord now in the records of past responsibilities, and did you anticipate the return of that which is now present, and of each speak truth in the spirit of Scripture truth—“Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given:” “therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and
wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth?"* To these questions let your own consciousness respond. It is not man who condemns you; for every man must bear his own burden; but it is your own heart which condemns you, if condemned, by painful remembrance of these things, while "God," as a Witness herein, "is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things."

But, my brethren, though you have neglected Christ, Christ hath not forgotten you: God hath not cast you off. By His word and His ministers He still joins the gracious precepts together of "arise" and "shine," still does He assure you that, in the "glad tidings" once chanted from heaven by angel hosts for men, and still in heaven the high subject for the song of the Lamb, Your "Light is come."—But there is a period in the counsels of God, when these words must be disjoined. Christ came, the first advent, to bid the world "arise" and "shine;" He will come the second advent to bid it only "arise." From your graves your dust must "arise," and hear His voice. Should you here on earth have walked by His light, and shone thereby, then at the resurrection of the just, will you "shine like the stars in the firmament for ever and ever." But if you shall

* 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.
then be found to have refused the Light, then will no more light be vouchsafed unto you for ever, save only from those flames which render darkness visible, and give the frightful reality of what on earth you never practically believed. If a Saviour's love move you not to think upon His love, let "the terrors of the Lord," revealed for a spiritual end, at least be pondered as the truth of God. You have prayed with your lips that you may have "grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put upon you the armour of light:" by the ministry of His word, and the assurance of His love, Christ urges you still to do so. He freely offers you His redemption: He still assures you that He, your "Light, is come:" He still bids you welcome Him with Christian, not with mere carnal rejoicing; and reminds you of His first, and warns you of His second advent, when He bids you now, in His strength, to "arise," in His light, to "shine."
ON THE NEW YEAR.


"This year thou shalt die."

THE uncertainty which hangs over that event of which these words speak, renders them exceedingly solemn. We cannot but feel convinced that, when these words are spoken to a whole congregation at the commencement of a new year, they will be made good in the case of some of us. We must be "fools and blind" not to believe that before this year is gone, some of us shall prove to those who may meet again another year, that the notice was true: "This year thou shalt die." Look back upon the past. Ask yourselves. Are all "in the land of the living" who assembled here when your minister last warned you of the infant year? Will not the record upon the tomb testify of some absent dead, "I am
a stranger, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were?"* And is not a frequent confession in life now realized to them in death,—"When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return?"† No congregation, large or small, but must be prepared to expect that to some one or more the salutation of a new year is truly made: "This year thou shalt die." We each hold our life by a tenure so frail, so precarious, that it forbids the hope of its extension beyond—a year?—beyond this present moment.

This seems the proper thought with which we should all meet an opening year. I press this thought upon you the more, because it is the way of the world to get rid of every such thought, and to consider the new year not as a time of warning to the soul, but as a season for mirth and revelling for the body. A season of joy it may, indeed, be made; but it is so made to few: to those alone who are preparing for the spiritual rejoicing which the Saviour of souls can give to him who profitably remembers "There is but a step between me and death."‡

I will bring, therefore, death before your thoughts: yes, my brethren, it shall be death, that fearful, hated, avoided subject, death. The Spirit of the Lord, indeed, can divest it of

* Ps xxxix. 12. † Job xvi. 22. † 1 Sam. xx. 3.
these its natural appendages; and the world, too, has palliatives, and remedies herein which, for a little season, are available. But, as none of you will deny that death must come to each of us in personal experience of what it is, however unwillingly many hear of it at any time, I feel, that this is a fit season for our more especial contemplation of it. It should be profitable to every one. But it should be most awfully impressive upon the minds of those among us to whom, in the ordinary issues of a whole year, God in His eternal decree hath already spoken—"Thy year thou shalt die." And who are those? Is it you, or you, or you, or myself? It may be either, and will undoubtedly be some: "The lot is cast; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."*

To have a right knowledge of this very serious subject, we must learn of our covenant God and Saviour Jesus Christ; He "hath tasted death for every man:"† and "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."‡ In His Holy Word, then, we find death spoken of under two characters; first, temporal death; secondly, eternal death. I will speak of these two separately, first premising that in their cause they are entirely agreed: Sin is the sole cause

* Prov. xvi. 33. † Heb. ii. 9. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

FOURTH COURSE.
of both: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" *
"The wages of sin is death."†

The first, or temporal death, is what we must all pass through: it is a condition "common to man:" that point in our existence at which the soul is separated from the body.

Now, as this is the curse consequent to sin, it is in itself most terrible: to cease to live in the body, and to begin to live out of the body, not only from its being a new state would it be strange and solemn; but, from the very condition of its whole character, it is revolting to flesh and blood, and most fearful to the thinking spirit within. In itself it is an evil, a sore and dreadful evil: and so was it intended to be when first threatened in Paradise as a warning against sin: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" ‡ or, as it is more nearly expressed in the margin of our Bibles, "dying thou shalt die;" be made the subject of disease, death, and corruption.

This death puts a stop to all our bodily functions and enjoyments; snaps asunder the cords which hold us to our earthly pleasures; separates us from all things that we value here, from all friends whom we love here, and con-

* Rom. v. 12. † Ver. 23. ‡ Gen. iii. 17.
On the New Year.

signs us to another condition. It is the precise moment of which, in our present short continuance in the body, and as our constant warning, God's word thus speaks: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."* So regarding death, we are taught to join in one and the same conclusion with respect to the real character of earth: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."†

There is a peculiar anomaly in the consideration of death found in the divine word, and appended, in one or other of its opposite characters, to all. We are all alive, and we shall all die; and yet Holy Scripture in one sense speaks of some who never die, of others who are always dead. But this is a life and death which have reference only to the soul. By nature we are all spiritually dead. Upon this point there is no way of denying such plain texts as these: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."‡ "Children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others:"

* Eccles. xii. 7. † Ver. 8. ‡ Ps. li. 5.
§ Eph. ii. 2, 3.
To be awakened from this sleep of sin, to be raised from this spiritual death, is in the gospel sense to live: "Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* And the Scripture lesson from the sacred truth is this: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."†

To continue in this state of natural deadness is spiritual death; for "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."‡

If the soul by nature subject to this spiritual death kindle into life, it is then in the condition spoken of the dry bones in the significant vision of the prophet Ezekiel: "So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."§ But if it continue thus, and all the means used, while it is in the body, to quicken it into life, fail, it will pass into the terrific state of "the second death."|| And this was to be the next view which we were to take of death.

"The second death," as revealed in the Word of God, is eternal death. Death is the.

most fearful thing, naturally, which can happen to any of us in this life; and therefore it is the image made use of to describe the future condition of the finally lost: always dying but never dead. In the Book of Revelations, where man’s final condition is spoken of, the state of the condemned is thus plainly foretold: "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."* This state Christ had before spoken of as that "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."† "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men:"‡ for "Who among us" can "dwell with everlasting burnings?".§

Beware, my brethren, how you measure, as many are tempted to measure, divine truths by human reasoning. Man may think, while he is in the body, of the force of imagery, shadowing only a lesser truth; of disproportioned punishment for mortal transgression. But so it is written. Wait until the vail be removed, when higher powers, perhaps altogether new modes of perception, shall to the conviction of every saint in heaven, and every

* Rev. xxi. 8. † Mark ix. 44. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 11. § Isaiah xxxiii. 14.
sinner in hell, fully justify God. An humble and teachable spirit best becomes us in all the deep things of God, and which, let us remember, is the only temper of mind by which we can be fitted for eternal things: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

Thus, my brethren, I meet you as your minister at the opening of a new year with the watchword—Death. It speaks to us all. Every thing around us and within us is full of death. Its sepulchral tone vibrates in our ears as we meet "man going to his long home, and the mourners going about the streets."† We see it with our eyes, we hear it with our ears. And, as the impressive lesson of this passing hour, we read it in God's word as, under all human expectation, already spoken to some who are here: "This year thou shalt die."

As an application of the subject thus solemnly calling for our individual attention, consider some of those very different views which are entertained of death. Those among you who habitually prepare for your latter end, already know how to regard this "the last enemy that shall be destroyed."‡ To some of you, under that knowledge, the

* Matt. xviii. 3. † Eccles. xii. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 26.
natural fear of dying is well nigh fully overcome. You are blest with that degree of faith made manifest in holy living, as to encourage you to a blessed hope of a happy and holy dying. You know that the only "sting of death is sin:" and you are enabled to put your sole trust in Christ your Saviour. In the strength of Christ you are enabled to feel that now, in the triumph of the cross, death has no sting, and the grave no victory. Your heart-felt acknowledgment is—"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Thus already strong in the faith of Christ crucified, I would only repeat to you the Christian's caution, the Christian's consolation: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."†

And you also, who through faith are "one with Christ, and Christ with you," though you have not yet attained, perhaps may never in this world attain unto the triumph of the more advanced believer, be not cast down. It is our common call in Christ to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" but it is not for all to be comforted as they might and ought to be by the promise in the

* 1 Cor. xv. 57.  † Ver. 58.
Redeemer's covenant in His blood, that 'it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure,' His kindness and mercy towards us.*

This is your cross. You must take it up and follow Christ. Though you may not in this life enjoy the believer's triumph, you must not let go the believer's confidence in Christ alone: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."† Look, then, with devotedness of your best affections to Christ while you live, and you have the Scripture promise that all needful consolation shall be given you when you die. "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted;"‡ "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."§ "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;"∥ let your soul be devoted to Christ in holy obedience and love; and then, whether you can receive it as balm for your wounded:

* Phil. ii. 12, 13. † Heb. ii. 14, 15. ‡ Ver. 18.
§ Heb. vii. 25. ∥ 1 Jn. xii. 12.
spirit or not, the ground of your consolation should be this: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."*

And for you, my brethren, who prepare not to meet your God, what better warning can I put before you at this commencement of another year, than in urging you to consider the shortness and uncertainty of your sojourning here, and that perhaps "This year thou shalt die?" It is a subject you would not dwell upon: and many of your resources in your health, your pleasures, your worldly pursuits and occupations, are successfully contrived to keep it from you. But why will you thus? You cannot put off the hour of your death; for it is fixed in the counsels of eternity. You may for a little season drive away the thought and fear of it by your own devices; but "these all do fade as a leaf." Every hour brings it nearer to you; and soon will you in experience know the truth of the angel's message, "that there should be time no longer."† Why then defer till to-morrow that which should be done to-day? "You know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little

* Ps. xxiii. 1—4.  † Rev. x. 6.
time, and then vanisheth away."* This has been oftentimes demonstrated to you in the case of others; and your own case will soon be another warning for those whom you must leave behind you. "Your fathers, where are they?"† Your children and younger friends many of them are gone before you, and though dead yet speak unto you from their dust, "Prepare to meet thy God." It is the universal cry of every thing around you: the forbearing, waiting mercy of the Lord, the living, the dying, and the dead; the transitory nature of your own pleasures, the painful remembrance of the past, the unsatisfying character of the present, the fearful uncertainty of every thing future, save the certainty of death and judgment, all join in summoning you to think seriously, that this year you may die. If your heart be roused amid the ruin of sin, to take this warning to yourself, to see and to feel the wounds which sin has inflicted upon your soul, then go and be healed: "Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."‡ It is the Saviour's voice which calls you, the Saviour's mercy inviting you to Himself. "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim

* James iv. 14. † Zech. i. 5. ‡ Is. lx. 1.
On the New Year.

liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."* May this year, this day, my brethren, in the converting power of the same Spirit, be your accepted time, your day of salvation! Then "will Christ be magnified in your body, whether it be by life, or by death:" and the confidence in Him, your Hope of glory, will then be only this: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."†

* Is. lx. 1, 2. † Phil. i. 20, 21.

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