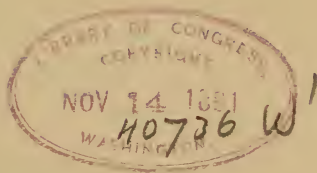


SERMONS

BY

HOWARD CROSBY.

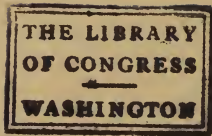
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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE Sermons in this volume were selected from those preached by Dr. CROSBY in the course of his regular ministrations at the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York. They are printed from the rapidly-written original manuscripts, and required neither verbal correction nor revision to adapt them for publication.

OCTOBER, 1891.

CHRIST PRAYING FOR US.

Luke xxii. 32 : " I HAVE PRAYED FOR THEE, THAT THY FAITH FAIL NOT."

PETER means "Rock," and it was the name the Lord gave to Simon, the fisherman. But he was anything but a rock. His impetuosity was the cause of his being as unstable as water. Jesus called him Satan for daring to disapprove of the great sacrifice for sin and attempting to correct the Master. On the mount of transfiguration, where he wist not what to say, he talked nonsense. He endeavored to find a numerical standard for forgiveness. He grandly paraded his confidence by leaping out of the boat to walk on the water, and then began to cry out that he was sinking. He boasted of his readiness to die for Jesus, and then in his dastardly fear denied Him three times. He taught that Gentiles were on a level with Jews in the church, and when he came to Antioch, ate with them, but when some Jews from Jerusalem arrived, he through fear of them separated himself from the Gentiles.

Surely there was very little of the rock in this vacillating Peter. Then why did our Lord give him the name? I think it was to mark not what he was,

but what divine grace would make him to be. The name was given to the most unstable and erratic of all the apostles to show that it is not man's disposition, but the divine indwelling, which is to be noted as the chief factor in the new life. The grace of God can change the character,—the lion can become a lamb, the shaking reed can become a rock. When Peter wrote his epistles, we see only the firm, bold, permanent qualities of the rock, strong yet modest, undisturbed by buffetings and yet free from self-assertion.

While he was under our Lord's personal training, he was constantly asserting himself. His boldness was self-confidence. He felt strong enough to do anything he proposed. He was like many men we see nowadays, who feel like omnipotence in miniature. They don't mind trifles, and everything is a trifle that does not concern *them*. They are ready to direct anything that comes in their way, whether a church, a dry-goods store, or the general government. They'll give advice gratis to an expert, and hasten to teach a veteran. They will cover up their failures by making a dash at something else, and keeping a serene brow of assurance, as if nothing had happened. These men need a great deal of "snubbing." Slight hints are of no avail. Strong blows, very strong blows, are all that can do them any good. Christian men of this self-poised, impetuous sort little think or know that this habit of theirs is antagonistic to a true faith. It is *self*-assertion and not Christ-assertion. There is good material in them, but they are using it in a very wrong way. They need to be

“converted,” not in the sense that we ordinarily use the word, but in the sense in which Jesus uses it in our context. He says to Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren.” Peter was certainly a converted man, in our ordinary sense of that word. He loved his Saviour. He saw in Him the Messiah of Israel. He was honest and sincere in his faith. But with all that, he was very destitute of humility, and hence he was a very weak Christian, though a very demonstrative one. Oh, how many good Peters there are in the Church that need to be converted! They are ships that carry a great cloud of canvas, but have no rudder. They are always dashing forward, but the direction is not of much consequence.

Now it was just such a Peter that Jesus was going to make into a firm, calm, wise, judicious apostle, to whom the name of Rock would be appropriate. I have said that impetuosity and self-assertion hinder faith, and hence our Lord prayed that Peter’s faith should not fail. There was his danger. Faith grows in the soil of humility. The less of humility, the weaker the faith. Peter was losing his faith. He showed that by his threefold denial. But Christ’s prayer saved him. Christ’s prayer can never be in vain. He prayed for Peter’s faith, and Peter’s faith was saved, but oh, through what bitter experiences! When we allow ourselves to go astray, the coming back, so necessary, must be through the fire.

I have noted this incident in our Lord’s life and Peter’s experience, however, not for the purpose of

dwelling on the character of Peter, but of marking the inspiring truth that our Saviour prays for us. It is a strange, a wonderful thought, that the Eternal Word, with God and God, prays for us poor, weak creatures. Do we realize this? Do we receive the comfort that comes from this truth? Have we ever pondered on what is implied by this fact? Ah! it is one of "the deep things of God" that we so often neglect to our own injury and loss.

Let us *now* consider it, and may God reveal its power in us.

1. *God has in Jesus Christ identified Himself with our race.* He is not a God afar off. He is Immanuel, God *with* us. We have nothing to do with the philosophers' objection that God is too great to regard the little mites on this little earth. We do not measure God by material spaces and sizes. God is a Spirit and He pervades the spiritual world, and that spiritual world has no connection whatever with material measurements. A human heart within a human body that is materially an imperceptible speck in the material universe, is of more consequence in the spiritual world than ten thousand solar systems. When unenclosed in the flesh and having its spiritual body the soul of man will not be thought of as a mite upon this little earth. Man is but a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor, as he appears to God's eye, when he is renewed in spirit and redeemed from sin. God identified Himself with our race in order that this glorious consummation might be reached. The dreams, the longings, the adapta-

tions of the soul have their fulfilment in this. Man is out and away from his normal destiny when in sin. The race lieth in wickedness, and is blind to its potential glory and would extinguish it. It is the Gospel that would open man's blind eyes and show him how glorious manhood is as God would have it and as He will make it in Christ, if only man consent. The grand token of this is in God's coming into our race. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Jesus Christ, God blessed forever, became the son of Mary, and He calls us brethren. Let us rise to the meaning of all this. Let us not treat it as an abstraction, as a dry proposition in Euclid. It is a great fact, full of vitality, and belongs to your heart and mine. God is with us ; God dwells among us. "God is nigh unto all that call on Him." "I will fear no evil, for God is with me." "God is at my right hand. I shall not be moved." These are expressions of a glowing, living truth. Jesus Christ came to make this truth more palpable. What does John say? "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life—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" (1 John i. 1, 3). Let us, then, have no more a God afar off, but know Him as Immanuel, God with us, at every step of our earthly journey, at every moment of our earthly life. But now :

2. *This identification of God with our race has been*

so perfect that God as man prays for us. How is this? God pray to God? What confusion of thought is this? It is just the confusion that belongs to all connections between the finite and infinite—the confusion that appertains to the mystery of the Divine working in and with the human soul. But the confusion and mystery in no way alter the fact or diminish the comfort of the truth. The manhood of Jesus Christ was as real as His Godhood. It was no appearance merely, nor was it a half-manhood. It was a manhood entire, nothing less and nothing more, in the day of His humiliation. That manhood, when the day of humiliation was over, did not perish. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. In the fulness of His Godhood that manhood still exists and in it He is our brother overflowing with love and sympathy for us. And one of the spontaneous functions of that love and sympathy is prayer in our behalf. We know how the incense of the golden altar was offered *with* the prayers of the saints. That incense betokened Christ's prayer which made the prayers of the saints efficacious. Wherever the soul rests on Him, He stands by it and prays with it. He identifies Himself with the praying saint, and it is for that reason, and that reason only, that prayer is efficacious. And as Jesus prays with the saint, He prays *for* the saint. The same love and sympathy are back of one as of the other. He has obtained the salvation. He will carry it to perfection. In the mysterious Trinity of God prayer has part, and the Son of God is ever praying for His

own redeemed ones, until they are like Himself. We see another instance of the same mysterious truth, when the Holy Spirit is described (Rom. viii. 27) as making intercession for the saints according to God. There is a movement of love in the Trinity of God in behalf of every believer, and one element of that movement is prayer. Our humanity is thus represented in God and by God, and the whole efficiency of our earthly aspirations and efforts is in this heavenly activity that accompanies them. Herein is the vast difference between the believer and the unbeliever. The believer's life is hid with Christ in God. His citizenship is in heaven. This means far more than the fact that he thinks of Christ and heaven, or that he has faith in Christ and expects to go to heaven. It means that *now* his life is going on in heaven, as upborne by Christ, his brother and representative, a life all hidden from the world's eye or ken, but as real as his life on earth. There in that life above is his soul being perfected, as Christ prays for him that his faith fail not. For this:

3. Is *the object of our Lord's prayer for us that our faith may not fail*, and herein is the assurance that no saint of God shall perish. No one shall pluck His sheep out of His hand. We call this the perseverance of the saints. It is really the perseverance of Christ. Peter was not an exceptional case. Jesus does not show partiality in His relations to His own. He prayed that Peter's faith should not fail, and so He prays for you and me that *our* faith shall not fail, and His prayer is a prophecy. He may let our faith

be tempted and tried; He may let our faith waver and tremble; but He will never let it fail. The tempting and trying, the wavering and trembling, may be necessary for our discipline and growth, but the failing would be the obstruction of His own work, the failure of the atoning blood and quickening Spirit. Be sure, my Christian brother, my Christian sister, your faith shall never fail, because Christ is praying for you. But let not this unduly exalt you or put you off your guard, for this assurance was given to Peter and his faith was secure; but see through what a depth of wretched experience he dragged his faith after these words of encouragement were given him. Christ's praying for you secures your ultimate triumph, but it does not secure you from fearful falls and painful bruises, because for the avoidance of these Christ does not pray, as they may be necessary to you under the circumstances of your soul. These words of Christ, that He is praying for us, ought to make us the more watchful that we seem not to resist such prayer. Our joy at being thus cared for in the inner pavilion of the Most High should exalt our affections, and so lift us above the follies that tempt the lower life. And it will have that effect, if we really take in the great truth to our hearts. No true contemplation of Christ's interest in us will put us off our guard, but will have the directly opposite effect of keeping us jealous for His glory and for our own response of love for love. Is Jesus praying for me? Oh, what love that is! and love, too, in heaven! and love in the very dwelling-place of God!—and for me!

Surely my whole heart must be His now and forever!

Our Lord followed His declaration to Peter by the injunction, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Peter's conversion, as here intended, was when he understood what the Lord meant by His praying for him. It was after the bitter weeping. He was then to strengthen the brethren. When the soul is sensible of its full union with Christ, and so walks daily with Him, it has a power that is divine. That power is to be exercised upon those that still abide on the lower plane, where so much of legalism and its fears and tears are found. These brethren are to be strengthened. They are now weak, because they do not appreciate Christ as they ought. They love Him and serve Him, but they know only a little of His preciousness. Hence they do not receive all His gifts. They have gone to Him for a few things and have gotten them, but they have not gone to Him for *all* things. They have very little idea what a divine Saviour praying for them is. So they often walk in thick darkness, while He is Light. They hesitate and are in doubt, while He is the Way and the Truth. They grow cold and half-dead, while He is the Life. These brethren need strengthening, for they are very weak. And the agent to strengthen them that the Lord appoints is the soul that has been converted from this very state into the appreciation of Christ's fulness. The converted Peter is to strengthen the brethren. And it will be his delight to do so. He will want

others to see what a Saviour we have—and to reach those blissful experiences which a close union with Jesus implies. What a grand ministry this is! For one of us, exalted by the divine grace to this beatific view of our dear Lord, to lead others to the heights of the delectable mountains, that they may rejoice with us in the enchantment of the holy station!

Brethren, we have every encouragement to seek this situation, where we can exercise this ministry. We have the unsatisfactory condition of a halting faith to make us ashamed of it and disgusted with it, and we have the blessings of the triumphant faith to allure us upward, and above all we have Jesus himself praying for us that our faith fail not. Be sure that if He prays for the final triumph of our faith, He will gladly help our efforts to gain new heights of faith now. If we neglect effort, He may see it best to let us stumble and harm ourselves as did Peter; but if we put forth effort, He surely will make our effort successful, and give us a great deal of heaven here.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST.

2 Timothy ii. 13: "IF WE BELIEVE NOT, YET HE ABIDETH FAITHFUL."

THIS is probably part of an early church-hymn beginning at ver. 11: "This is a faithful saying"—(a saying used in the church as a formula of faith).—"For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will deny us; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful." It describes the relation of the Christian to Christ, dead and living, suffering and reigning with Him, and denied by Him in His faithfulness. The former part of the hymn touches the very root of salvation. We die with Christ to sin and live with Him to righteousness; that is, we are so identified with Christ in His expiation for sin, that our sin is removed by that expiation, and we are so identified with Christ in His eternal life that we live in Him by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So we can bear whatever of suffering we are called upon to bear here in our short earthly lifetime, because a seat with Christ upon His eternal throne is awaiting us. Such is the former part of the hymn, touching (as I said) the very root of our salvation. The rest of the hymn is a contrast to that. It exhibits our inconsistencies here and

the treatment we have to receive because of these inconsistencies. Though heirs of the incorruptible crown, we often forget our position and yield to the adverse influence of our earthly surroundings. This would seem to cancel all that we had hoped for in Christ, and so it would, if salvation were of man and not of God. But the divine work is not to be baffled, and grace will triumph over sin in the heart of God's child, even though it be by bitter conflict and fearful pangs.

Let us note, in considering this text and subject :

1. *The believer believes not.* When a child of God is wandering, it is because of unbelief. The believer believes not. He is a *believer*, for he has placed his confidence in his Lord. Yet he *believes not*, for he has now left his Lord in order to engage in some folly. He has let go the guiding hand, and turned his thought to some fancy that has lured him into a by-path. Is Christ no longer his Saviour? Is the covenant mercy clean gone? Certainly not. It is the believer's conduct we are considering, not Christ's. It is the believer that has wandered and soiled his garments in the world's dust and mire. An ordinary judge would say, "Then he is no longer a Christian." If such a judge had heard Peter, on the night before the crucifixion, three times deny his Lord, once with the strong oath of asseveration, he certainly would have written him down an enemy to the truth and a lost soul. Would his judgment have been correct? Was it not the same Peter whom Jesus had placed at the very head of the apostolic college? Was it

not the same Peter of whose inspired and heartfelt utterance of homage our Lord had said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"? And yet here he was, vigorously denying the Lord who had thus blessed him. Can a man be a Christian one day and no Christian the next day? Is the Christ-life in a soul so slight and evanescent? Can it come and go, or go and come like a breeze or a phantom? We learn differently from the Word of God. We learn there that the work in the heart of the believer is a divine work, that the Spirit is its author and that He who has begun a good work in the earth will perfect it. We learn there that salvation is not a contract or bargain, in which God says, "If you keep your part, I'll keep mine." That was the style of the law-covenant, which man could not keep. But the style of the Gospel-covenant is widely different. It is thus portrayed by Jeremiah, "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." Eze-kiel puts it this way, "I will put a new spirit within you. I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them a heart of flesh." And it is of this difference between the law-covenant and the Gospel-covenant that the apostle speaks when he says (Gal. iii.), that the law was added for the sake of transgressions (that is to show clearly how sinful man was), and that it had a mediator (*i. e.*, Moses) to stand between God and man, the two parties,—but the Gospel required no such mediator, for God, as *one*, was Law-giver, Mediator, and all, in giving the blessed promise to faith.

We cannot too strongly impress this great fundamental truth that our salvation is entirely God's work and not ours, for nearly all the heresies in the Church arise from some departure from this truth. Christians think of doing their part toward salvation, (to use a plain phrase) of holding up their end, and from this notion come the penances, the self-imposed self-denials, the perfunctory works, the expiatory almsgivings, the conventional fasts, as if all these put together and all the good deeds that could be done had the slightest value as to salvation. None of these things have any value, except as *results* of salvation. If they are honest, and not perfunctory, then they are the *fruits* of salvation, but never, never are they the *roots*. The root of salvation is God's sovereign grace, which our simple faith accepts humbly and gratefully. That is the whole of it. Anything else added is false. Now when that grace is once accepted, think you that it is going to depend on our works for its maintenance? Did it depend on our works to come and save us? Why, then, should it depend on our works to continue its gracious purpose? But do you say, "Oh, then, let us go on sinning—God will save us, anyhow"? The apostle met just that objection in his Epistle to the Romans, and he showed that the soul which had received Christ by faith had died to sin with Christ and was no longer under condemnation, its sins being expiated by the Christ-death in which it had a share, and that it had thus risen with Christ and had a new life which (however much sin still clung to it as barnacles to a ship) was a life

that was Christly in its essential elements. The apostle also said in answer to the objection, that the converted heart was no longer a slave to sin, but a slave to Christ and righteousness, and could find its appropriate work only in serving Him. It is the worldly heart only that could say, "Let us go on sinning." Such a proposition would prove that it had not died and risen with Christ. Peter denied Christ, but Peter would never have said, "Let us go on sinning." No! this antinomian objection is of the carnal heart and not of the renewed heart. The doctrine of God's sole work in salvation does not lead to any antinomian thought or act in the believer.

So we come back to our position—the child of God is always a child of God. And yet it can be said of him, "The believer believes not." How is this? It is in the temporary eclipse of his faith. His strength fails; he totters; he falls; he is bruised; he is bemired; he is dishonored; he is disgraced; but he is not lost. He has become a denying Peter. It is a sad sight—a fearfully sad sight. Angels would weep over it, if angels *could* weep. To see a child of God feeding the swine and eating *their* food far from his Father's house sickens the heart. What a dismal clouding of the spiritual intelligence is here! What a strange forgetfulness of God's grace! But is that grace cancelled by the child's folly? Is God's purpose thwarted by the silly heart? No, a thousand times no! "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful." If we, the children of God, allow our faithfulness to waver and sink down, the faithfulness of our

Saviour will not fail. He cannot desert His own work. If He did, no one could be saved. For the weakness of the believer is very great, and if it were not for a divine Saviour to raise him up, he would fall to rise no more. No, it is our rejoicing that our Lord and Saviour abideth faithful.

2. This is our second point—*The abiding faithfulness of Christ*. His words are, “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand” (John x. 28). Satan may tempt and successfully tempt the believer. He may succeed so far as to lead him far astray, but the good shepherd is sure to go after that which has wandered, and to find it and lay it on his shoulders rejoicing. Christ is stronger than Satan, and Christ has pledged Himself to hold fast to His own under all circumstances. Where the heart has accepted the divine pledge, that pledge can never fail, because it is divine, and not human. The confidence of the soul is not misplaced, even though that confidence itself decay. The intervention of the Lord, made good by that confidence, will not decay. It may adopt different phases, changing in these according to the changes in the confidence, but the saving interposition of the Most High remains through all changes and will at length accomplish its purpose. But these changes, alas! these open up a subject full of sadness—it is nothing less than the history of the Christian’s errors and chastisements, and in this the same faithfulness of our Saviour is manifest. It is because He is faithful, that He will not leave His own to spiritual suicide. He will use the severities of discipline to bring him

back to health of soul. He will use the rod, not as penal, but as corrective, until, it may be amid many wounds and tears, the wanderer returns in penitence to his Father's house. It is this phase of discipline that is depicted in the parallel verse to our text—"if we deny Him, He will deny us." It is not of revenge ; it is not to be equal with us ; but it is because His denial of us is necessary to our betterment. That denial is a denial before the Father in heaven, according to our Saviour's own words, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Our holy Lord cannot advocate our unholiness. He cannot justify it before his Father and our Father. He cannot appear as sustaining us in our folly. Even though He be our all-prevailing Advocate with the Father, that advocacy must receive exceptional elements when we turn away from Him to the follies of the world. He cannot countenance us in these. He can pardon, and He *does* pardon. The redeemed soul *is* pardoned. But its sins cannot be justified—its sins cannot be passed over and neglected, even though the condemnation is removed. The soul is out of prison, but it is in the family. It is not among God's enemies, but it is under the Father's severe correction, and, as that Father is holy and loving, that severe correction will be administered. The Lord Jesus in His wonderful work for us has not eliminated that correction from our experience. Outside of condemnation, but inside the family, He denies us before the Father when we deny Him ; and the rod is heavy, although divine

love be behind it. Here is the secret of all absence of peace from the Christian heart. *Perfect peace* is the normal Christian state, and a constant abiding in Christ would realize this. All departures from this perfect peace are proportioned to the departures from Christ. There may be *outward* trouble while the *inward* peace is perfect. The Christian abiding in Christ is not guaranteed against earthly oppositions and disappointments, but he *is* guaranteed against all *inward trouble and disaster*. Peace—peace is pledged to every soul that is stayed on the Lord. But when a child of God neglects, for example, His holy Word, and puts it aside as distasteful, preferring the world's literature, he is abandoning God and preparing for himself spiritual disaster. He deceives himself, but he does not deceive his Saviour. He is making his religion a cloak to put on and off, and not a life to live. He has fallen from grace not into un-grace (if I may coin a word), but into *disgrace*. He has forgotten gratitude, his portion of the system of grace, and adopted an outward system of legality. He has not studied God's Word a single hour in the whole week, but he has spent two or three hours on the Sunday newspaper, and then he comes to church as if all were right. So he deceives himself, but he does not deceive his Saviour. He has denied Christ, and Christ will deny him. The faithfulness of his Saviour will beat him with stripes, perhaps with *many* stripes. How they may come we cannot tell. It may be by sickness; it may be by the death of his dearest ones; it may be by the carrying away of all his

worldly property ; it may be by none of these, but by fearful experiences of the soul unseen by others ; but in some way, be sure, the Lord's love for His own will not allow Him to leave him uncorrected, and the correction will be proportioned in its heaviness to the need in each case. The Lord does not do this with the castaways, the open rebels against Him. *Them* he often leaves to enjoy this life as Dives did. There are no bands in their death. They go singing along the pathway of life, and laugh at the poor fools who serve God. *Their* calamities are in the other world. There is the wailing and gnashing of teeth. There is the fierce fire, whose agonies no Lazarus can abate. Blessed be God ! His own dear ones are not there. They are disciplined here.—As we have said, there may be an outward adversity while all is peaceful within, and therefore we are not to say when an outward adversity comes upon a Christian, “The Lord is chastising him.” It may be the very reverse. The Lord may be emphasizing that believer's peace by the outward disturbance. He may be offering a grand vision of Himself, saying, “It is I—be not afraid,” and filling the soul with unutterable comfort. And so, conversely, we cannot say when we see a Christian free from all outward adversities, “See how faithful that soul must be,” for there may be volcanoes and earthquakes in that believer's heart by reason of his *unbelief*. So we are not to judge one another in any instance. We are only to judge ourselves, and see the Lord's movements toward ourselves. What we may be sure of is, that if we deny

Christ, Christ will deny us ; that if we, who are Christ's, believe not, that is, loosen our hold on our Lord, He abideth the same faithful Saviour, and will therefore correct us at any cost.

Brethren in the Lord ! why should we not all dwell in the secret place of the Most High together ? Why should we make the use of our Lord's rod necessary ? It is no part of *His desire* toward us. It is all *our perverseness*. Have we ever found anything in the world equal to Christ ? Is not all grace and beauty divinely magnified in Him ? Isn't it a shame that we should go elsewhere than to Him for our comfort and peace ?—And if we do, shall we find it ?—We know well that we cannot. We shall only dwarf our graces and bring confusion on our souls. The way of Christ is the way of pleasantness and peace. All other ways are deceitful. If we are with Christ, we are with peace. Even if we suffer with Christ, the *peace* is not disturbed—the suffering is only in the outward state—the mind is serene and triumphant. Brethren, let us be faithful to Him, who is so faithful to us. Let us not be practically unbelieving believers, but let us enjoy all of the heaven that there is in Christ even on this earth.

CHRIST'S CLAIM.

Matthew xxvi. 63, 64: "AND THE HIGH-PRIEST ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, I ADJURE THEE BY THE LIVING GOD THAT THOU TELL US WHETHER THOU BE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD. JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, THOU HAST SAID: NEVERTHELESS, I SAY UNTO YOU, HENCEFORTH SHALL YE SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER AND COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

THIS was one of the epochal scenes of the world's history. The grand council of the Jewish nation was assembled; the high-priest, the highest dignitary of the ancient Church of God, presided, and before this august body stood the humble Galilæan, whose fame had rung through the land for three years. The question asked by the council through the high-priest as representative of the Church on earth, is one of vital importance to the Church and to the world, and the answer must be a stupendous truth or a stupendous lie. The question is put with an awful solemnity, so that the answer will have the character of a sworn statement. The Jewish nation and church had been long expecting the Messiah. When He should come the nation and church were to be obedient to Him. He would be God's own Son, as described in the second

Psalm, and would gather all His faithful ones to Himself. From Him and His day a new light was to shine upon the Church and a new glory visit the world. The high-priest's question, put with such awful solemnity to Jesus, was the great question whether He was the Messiah or Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God promised in the prophets. No sooner was it asked than it was answered. There is no hesitation and there is no subterfuge. The answer is clear and categorical. Nay more, it adds a startling statement of the power and glory of the humble Nazarene. "Thou hast said," replies Jesus (*that* is an emphatic "yes"), and then He adds, "hereafter" (or rather, "henceforth") "shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Back of this clear answer was the history of three years of continuous miracles, well known to all that assembly, and not denied by them, but ascribed to Satanic power, and three years of a teaching and a life that astonished all by its spotless perfection. This clear answer was either true or false. If true, it was a most momentous truth, demanding the instant faith and homage of the whole Church; demanding a grateful, joyful welcome to the Messiah of God on the part of those who represented Israel. If false, it was the most base and blasphemous falsehood ever uttered. Who could hesitate a moment in deciding which it was? Those miracles, that teaching, that life, should have settled the matter at once. It could only be the truth. To suppose falsehood here was to

suppose a spotless, God-evidenced life could utter an atrocious lie. God had, so to speak, crowded the life of Jesus with the most potent evidences of His divine mission, so that he who rejected Him would reject truth in its plainest form. To deny such an One was to deny the sun at noonday, to call white black, to shut the convictions against all reality. And yet this is exactly what that Sanhedrin and that high-priest did. They accused the Holy One of blasphemy. And why? Because they had hardened their hearts in their pride, determined to resist all that did not comport with their selfish desires of personal and national glory in the low and earthly sense. They had degraded religion; they had eliminated the spirit from the Scriptures; they had debauched their own lives; and so their souls were deadened to the spiritual beauty of Jesus. They were perfectly honest in crying out "blasphemy" at Jesus' utterance, for they had lost sight of truth, and so believed their own lie. Honest reprobates they were, if by honesty we mean sincerity. Millions of honest and sincere souls go down to eternal destruction, because *they have made themselves deaf and blind* to the truth by their wilful opposition to it, until they know nothing but darkness and ignorance in which their honesty and sincerity cannot help them. It is as if a man, who has deliberately made himself drunk, could plead his honesty and sincerity in doing his best to walk straight as a plea why he should not fall into the ditch. These Jewish magnates represented the Church of God, and, as such, should have walked humbly and faithfully

with God, should have been examples of piety, should have been full of the spirit and power of God's Word, and should have welcomed Jesus with devout and sympathetic hearts. Instead of that, they were worldly men, striving for earthly power and guilty of sinful excesses. They had nothing in common with the Holy Jesus, and hence they crucified the Lord of glory.

Brethren, that same Jesus stands to-day before the world and asks its judgment on His claims. He says clearly that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and He tells us of His advancing kingdom. The great world practically side with the Sanhedrin and cry, "Crucify Him!" Yes, multitudes who call themselves of the Church of God join in the Satanic verdict. They deny the Lord that bought them. They crucify the Son of God afresh. They rob Him of His glory, and strip Him of His holy and divine functions of redemption, as far as they are able to do this. Their sordid and perverted minds understand nothing of His pure and perfect character, nothing of His divine love and condescension, nothing of His atoning sacrifice for sin, nothing of His paramount claims upon their faith and affections. They have no sympathy with Him, and only relieve their minds when they say, "Away with Him!"

But by and by there will be another scene! There is a day coming when that lowly Nazarene shall be seen on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth

shall wail because of Him. The despised One shall conquer the world, and His enemies shall vainly cry to the mountains to fall on them and to the hills to cover them, to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Human pride, which refused to bow before the tenderness and love of God in Jesus, shall be ashamed and confounded before the justice and glory of the exalted Saviour.

While the full day of this prophecy is in future, its beginnings were at the day of Pentecost. Even then the Nazarene no longer appeared as a humble peasant before a human tribunal, but as a mighty power by His Spirit subduing the hearts of men. Even then, in a mysterious way, as in the clouds of heaven, He came to the earth where He had suffered for man. The word "hereafter" is rightly translated "henceforth" in the Revised Version,—"*Henceforth* shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." The great change was to begin from that eventful period. So our Lord had before (chap. xxiv. 30) told His disciples, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," and He had declared that that generation should not pass till all this should be fulfilled (ver. 34). The spread of the Gospel over the earth directly against all the tastes and passions of man, was a marvel, the like of which had never occurred. That generation saw it, and the enemies of truth were grieved by it. The Jews gnashed their teeth in rage,

and the Gentiles vented their wrath against the conquering Gospel; but, in spite of all, the Son of Man sat at the right hand of power and came in the clouds of heaven. The divine power and the divine mystery were alike apparent. There was the conquest and there were the clouds. Then began that double view of Jesus which shall have its consummation in a future day—the adoring view of Jesus as the soul's Saviour, and the hostile view of those who resist their convictions, and hate Him, and cry to their own vain philosophies or selfish schemes to hide them from His heavenly face. This double action, here and now, is but a rehearsal of the final judgment. Men now behold Jesus on the right hand of power and coming in the heavenly clouds converting millions, and yet they reject Him and take refuge in their own vain imaginations. They see it all, yet do not perceive it. It appears before them without impressing them. The lowly Nazarene is performing His wonderful miracles of conversion all over the world, and these miracles are open to the observation of all, but the minds of men, rendered stupid by sin, are callous toward all these stupendous facts and treat them as if they did not exist.

And yet, here is the great question for every human soul to consider. All things else are of trifling importance in comparison. Before each soul stands the humble peasant of Galilee as on trial, waiting for that soul's verdict. That lowly Jesus declares solemnly to that soul that He is the Messiah of God, the One great deliverer from sin predicted by Moses and the prophets, the

Son of God, the Eternal Word, the Almighty Saviour of man. There He stands, so humble in appearance and so exalted in His declaration. He points to the Scriptures that testify of Him, and He points to His own life and teachings, and miracles, and death as the evidences of His truth. He also points to the millions who have found rest and peace in Him. He presses all this on the soul. He also predicts the advancement of His power and glory. And now it is for the soul to give its verdict. What shall it be? Shall it be that of the Jewish Sanhedrin? Shall it affect horror at the blasphemy and condemn the soul's deliverer as an impostor? Shall it cry, "Away with Him—crucify Him"? It must be either that or a hearty and grateful submission to His wonderful grace and power. There is no middle ground. Every soul that refuses this submission, utters its verdict of condemnation against Christ. It crucifies the Son of God afresh.

I speak to any one here to-day who has refused submission to the Lord of Salvation. You have taken sides with the high-priest and the Sanhedrin. You have said, "Away with Him." Are you prepared to abide by that verdict? Are you ready to go into eternity with this as your chosen position toward the divine Saviour? Are you willing to go before God's bar and say, "Jesus came before me and declared to me that He was the Son of God. He showed me His life and teachings, His miracles and death, and His victories over the human heart. He showed me the peace He gave to those who received Him. He showed me His own purity and

love. He showed me His sufferings for me, and His heart of sympathy to save me from my sins through those sufferings. He promised me the Holy Spirit and eternal life. And I, in face of all this, rejected Him and would have none of Him. I treated Him as an impostor. I set the seal of my life against all His claims and demands, and virtually signed the sentence of His crucifixion. That's what I did, and that's what I hold to." Are you ready to say that at God's judgment bar?

Carry that thought into your secret heart, and see if any superficial talk about all religions being equally good, or earthly desires being made to be gratified, or many different opinions existing among men, will satisfy your mind and conscience before the pungent evidences of God's eternal truth in Jesus. Be honest with yourself. Do not ruin your soul by obeying a desperate impulse, to which Satan is always tempting you. Bow humbly before God. Surely *that* is reasonable. Abandon self and look only to God. In this light of God behold Jesus as He stands before your soul. Let pride be cast down and everything given up for truth—God's truth, saving truth. This may be the last time that Jesus may stand before you for a verdict. Your decision now may be your final decision, which you will have to meet at God's judgment. The reversal of your verdict there would be your everlasting condemnation. Oh, be sure to give the verdict to-day that will cause you joy, and not grief, on that great day of assize.

And now, dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, I ad-

dress you who know the preciousness of the Son of God, who see in His humility His divine majesty, who with your spiritual eyes behold Him to-day sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven, and who rejoice as you see His growing kingdom on our sinful earth. I speak to you, and put the question, "How should we appear in view of our relation to Him?" To use the words of the apostle, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

We are those who resist the world's condemnation of Christ. We are those who exclaim against the Satanic cry, "Away with Him — crucify Him." Are we doing this faithfully? Does the world's great sanhedrin of wickedness know us as denouncing them and upholding our Lord's cause? Is our position so well defined, so pronounced, that every member of the world's sanhedrin sees at once that we are with Jesus and against His accusers? No other position becomes us. Anything less is a pain to our Lord's heart. It is grieving the Spirit. It is for us in our daily walk and work to be known as Christ's, with His name written both on our hearts and on our foreheads. To hide that name is to deny our Lord. Our clerks, our employés, our business friends, our social acquaintances, should all know by our lives that we are solidly, steadfastly, and strictly, in and for Christ. There should never be the lowering of His flag for an instant. If men will not associate with us on this ground, if they will withdraw custom or oppose our plans because we will not dodge or compro-

mise where Christ is concerned, then let them do what they please; we shall carry a peaceful conscience and a happy heart. Our blessed Lord stands before us, not as He appeared to the blind and wicked prejudices of the Sanhedrin, but as He then proclaimed Himself—the Christ, the Son of God. We see Him sitting on the right hand of power; we behold Him coming in the clouds of heaven. We claim Him as *our* Lord, *our* Saviour. We accept His precious promises. We trust His divine grace. We see in Him the surety of our salvation, the pledge of our glory. Our entire future is established on His love. We have given a far different verdict from that of the Sanhedrin. We have bowed gratefully before the humble Nazarene and said, “My Lord and my God.” Oh, what a life for us this implies! A life of devotion, a life of zeal, a life of faith, a life of love! It is as we look upon Him that our lives will be made purer and holier. And we should be *always* looking upon Him. What other light in the universe is to be compared with Him? What infinite variety of beauty there is in Him! We can never fathom the depths of His perfections. The eternal God shines through the man Christ Jesus. The beholding Christ takes away fear, lightens every burden, cheers away sorrow, and instills new strength to our weak hearts. The more we look at Him, the more we love Him, till we say, “None but Jesus,” “None but Jesus.” “He is my All in all.”

Brethren, it is this practical response to His declaration to us that He is the Son of God that we ought

all to make. For us to live should be Christ. All our conduct should spring from Him as its source. His Spirit should fill our lives. Remember that He meets all our advances toward Him with a stronger affection than we have. Remember that His love for us is to be measured by Gethsemane and Calvary. Remember that His heart rejoices as we give ourselves entirely to Him. He seeks our full and hearty embrace. He wishes His warm love to be met by ours equally as warm. Isn't this a most reasonable wish? Shall we deny it? Shall we divide our hearts between Him and the world? Surely not. If we love Him *because* He first loved us, shall we not love Him *as* He has loved us?

It will not be long before His sitting at the right hand of power and His coming in the clouds of heaven shall be consummated. The whole universe will acknowledge Him, when the two words, "Come" and "Depart," shall be used by Him as the Holy and Righteous Judge. What an ineffable joy to hear on that day addressed to us, who love Him here, those divine words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"!

CHRIST THE RAINBOW.

Revelation iv. 3: "THERE WAS A RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE, IN SIGHT LIKE UNTO AN EMERALD."

WE need not understand all the details of this book of Revelation in order rightly to understand the passage in which occurs the text. It may be to us a very mysterious and perplexing book, and yet this opening of the apostle's second vision explains itself. It is a view of God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Every sight of God, then, is a sight of the Son, and this in the Revelation can be no exception. If it is objected to this that the Lamb, who appears between the throne and the twenty-four elders, is the Son, I reply that the Lamb is the Son of Man, and He upon the throne is the Son of God. In other words, the throne holds the Mighty God and Everlasting Father as seen in the person of Jesus Christ, and the "Lamb as it had been slain" represents the perfect humanity, that suffered and died as a substitute for us sinners, as seen also in the person of Jesus Christ.

Seven centuries before John saw this vision of the Lord, Ezekiel had witnessed a like manifestation. Hear

his description : “ Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone.” By exactly following the Hebrew here, we find that it is not the throne, but the firmament under the throne that is like sapphire. And so in the view of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, who saw the God of Israel, there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. To recur then to Ezekiel’s description : “ Above the firmament that was over their heads as the appearance of a sapphire stone, there was the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber” (lit., “ polished brass”), “ as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upwards, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness (that is, radiant splendor) round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.”

Now note the view before John’s eye at Patmos : “ A throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was in sight like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald.” From these collated views we behold the broad blue firmament as the foundation of the throne in the vision. In the throne sits a human form. This form glows as a flame

of fire, having the color of polished brass, with a brilliancy that mingles the clearness of the jasper or diamond, and the glow of the yellow sardine stone. Out beyond this effulgent person of the king upon the throne, and encircling the throne in its perfect scope, is a halo of glory that appears as a heavenly rainbow. It is the radiant splendor of the king himself. It is to the contemplation of this feature of the view I invite you this morning.

We need not be told that all this is figurative language, and yet perhaps there is something besides figure. That the heavenly world is not a world of spirit only, we know from the fact that "there is a spiritual *body*," from the fact that Jesus and Enoch and Elijah possess new bodies in the spiritual world, and from the fact that *our* bodies are to be raised from their sleep in the grave. There is something in that world which is not only analogous, but is *similar* to the enjoyment of our physical senses here. There will be and there is, in some mode, a visible, external manifestation of God's glory. These descriptions, therefore, of Ezekiel, Daniel, and John are not only figurative—they are also proximate descriptions of sensible objects. That they betoken great spiritual facts there can be no question. The pattern shown Moses in the Mount of God must have been addressed to his senses, and was exactly copied in the tabernacle and its furniture, but who supposes that the meaning of these details ended here? Who does not see that those heavenly forms were signs and symbols of the grand truths which cluster around Redemption? So

now, while we have no doubt that there are externals in heaven corresponding to these views of the prophet and apostle, it is our purpose to endeavor to trace the spiritual fact that is betokened by this emerald iris encircling the heavenly throne.

In order to this, let us *first* recall the words of God to Noah immediately after the fearful scenes of the deluge, in which words the attention of the human race is called to the rainbow and a meaning attached to the beautiful phenomenon by its Maker. God then made a solemn promise to man, an everlasting covenant, never to cut off man or beast from the earth by a flood again, adding these words, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant, between me and the earth, and it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." There is something here beyond what is usually found. It is not simply that God takes the frequently occurring phenomenon of the rainbow, which the antediluvians must have witnessed a myriad of times, and from this time appoints it as a seal or pledge of His covenant with the race. It is more than that. It has a retrospective reference too. God has no second thoughts. What He did in Noah's time, He intended to do from the beginning. When He fashioned what we feebly call the laws of nature, His covenant with Noah was just as present with Him as it was when He disclosed

it to Noah. When He set His bow in the cloud, it had all the meaning it ever had. When it became a declared seal of a special promise of security from future floods to Noah, it became, it is true, of peculiar application; but the great meaning of the rainbow, which made it appropriate for this special application, lay behind. God does not, like man, look around for an expedient, a makeshift, in cases of emergency. He has no emergency, and hence what He takes as a sign and seal is not a rude analogy discovered by acuteness under pressure of circumstances, but a perfect analogy formed by the Maker of all on purpose to be the sign and seal. We are therefore to see in the rainbow a divine fitness for its Noachic use, a grand typical meaning, of which the Noachic use is only an application to one special end, a development of the typical meaning.

Let us, then, in the *second* place, note some of the physical facts connected with the rainbow. Of course, that a physical causation lies behind every rainbow is nothing against its divine meaning except in the mind of low physicists, who are unable to rise beyond the material creation. The God and Father of our spirits is the Maker of the material creation and all its sequences, which we call laws, and has made all this material creation in perfect harmony with the spiritual world. The One Infinite God has put His spirit into all things, and directs all things by one consistent will. Matter and spirit are detached from one another only to our finite eyes. They belong equally to God's one universe, and God's analogies between

them are real connections, though we may fail to reach the point of union. The great fact that every movement of nature is an act of God does not militate against the concatenation of material cause and effect, any more than the power of the engineer over his engine militates against the sequences of motion in the complicated structure. And yet this simile shows us only part of the truth, for the engineer has to do with laws which are not his own, but God has to deal with laws of His own make, and fitted exactly to accomplish all the purposes, however minute, He designed to execute. The great error of unbelieving naturalists has arisen just here, that they have found in gravitation, or some other universal law, a resting-place of contemplation, thus ignoring the personal God with mind and heart, after whose likeness their own minds and hearts were created.

Let us now look at the physical law of the rainbow, remembering that God made that law and the rainbow, and in the making figured forth a profound spiritual truth. The rainbow has only been understood in its physical structure since the day of Sir Isaac Newton. That successful explorer of nature, by his researches in optics, enabled us to perceive that the rainbow was not simply a reflection of sunlight against a storm-cloud, but a refraction and decomposition of the sunlight prior to reflection, that the white solar beam was turned from its direct route by the watery drops of the cloud's front, and in this deflection or refraction the colors of the solar beam were separated by their different powers of deflection. These colors begin

with red and end with blue. In the centre is green. Between these are endless shades of approach and departure. This gorgeous scene is apparent only on a cloud *opposite* the sun. Often the ends of the bow appear to dip between the hills and our eyes, and the rich green of the fertile fields adds a new lustre to the glories of the iris.

Let us now, *thirdly*, see how the God of grace and salvation has stamped His great purpose of love upon the face of nature. Let us be prepared hereafter to look upon the graceful and brilliant arch of heaven as a presentation, in God's magnificent symbols, of the Lord Jesus Christ. For (1). As the rainbow is the sun's light, so the Lord Jesus is the shining forth of God's glory. The divinity of Christ is the foundation of redemption. Salvation through Christ is a divine rescue of man's lost soul. There can be no rescue but a divine. The light of Jesus is the essential light of God. (2). The rainbow lies upon the dark, forbidding storm-cloud. So Jesus is God transferred to the side of sin. The fearful sin of man was ready to destroy us as with a flood, of which the historic deluge was a type, when God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. He made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. God was manifest in the flesh. He became man. We can look at the rainbow. We cannot look at the sun. It is too dazzling for our weak eyes. So no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. We can look on Jesus and see God with com-

fort and satisfaction. There on the sin-side, on the man-side, we can behold God and live. It is to this view of God the Gospel invites us. "The bow shall be in the cloud." (3). The rainbow is brilliant in its colors, made so to us by refraction and decomposition of light. So the glory of Jesus is in the analysis of His perfections, which we can only analyze, as He is *man*. As exhibited in His humanity, we can understand His love, His sympathy, His forgiveness, His forbearance, His patience, His watchfulness, and His care, as we could not at all understand them in the abstract God. They are all in the essential Deity, but they are there in ineffable union and brilliancy, to which no finite eye can penetrate. But in Jesus, the manifested God, God projected and impressed upon humanity, these beauties of character and activity, these attributes of life are revealed in their united variety. There has been the refraction of humiliation and suffering to bring about this result. The solar beam has been turned from its course by the condition of the cloud. Man's sin has bent the justice of God into its revelation of mercy and pardon. The consistency of God is no more destroyed in this than is the consistency of nature in the refraction of the sun-beam. God, in becoming man, received the curse of man's sin upon Him, and in this stoop of divine love for sinners shone out the brilliant colors of pardoning grace. It is the bend of justice into mercy which puts Jesus before our eyes so "altogether lovely." The light of the rainbow is the same as that of the sun, and yet how different to our eyes! God's truth

never changes, and yet how differently it appears in Jesus the Saviour from what it appears in the Supreme Judge, or rather in the notion of Abstract Justice!

There are two facts regarding our Lord Jesus brought out conspicuously in this emblem of the rainbow as seen by the apostle John. The one is the *permanence* of His grace. The rainbow was round about the heavenly throne. So to speak, it is part of the permanent furniture of heaven. It is no evanescent phenomenon. The grace that speaks so gently to us and bids our poor tossed souls to find rest in God's arms of love is a grace that knows no limit to its power. "The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, He'll never, no, never, desert to its foes." The prospect is perfectly clear. No deluge can ever be outpoured upon the trusting soul. The rainbow is God's seal of a promise, and a promise of God is an eternal law. The rainbow is as enduring as the throne of God. God the Saviour is as ever visible as God the King. Redemption is as much a part of the eternal purpose as government. The protection of His trusting people is the conspicuous glory of the God of heaven. It is not that we are saved *here* by God's grace, our sins pardoned and the germ of holiness implanted, and that *there* in the other world we are started upon a new career of self-reliance with liability to fall again into ruin. No! the grace that comes to us through Christ's cross is an *eternal* grace. It upholds us forever. The rainbow is even more beautiful than ever when we see it in its primal archetype

above. It is the object on which the happy gaze of the redeemed in glory is fixed with ever fresh delight. The loving hand of Him who rescued us from sin and hell will hold us safe forever. This is the story of the heavenly bow.

Another fact in the vision of John regards the *prevailing color* of the rainbow. All the prismatic colors glow together there, but the soft green, the central color, equally removed from the extremes of red and blue, is the dominant hue. It was "in sight like unto an emerald." The green, with which Nature arrays the fields and the trees, is the mildest color to the human eye, while it is the color of richest growth. The red and blue rays are absorbed to develop the fair and cheerful green. So Christ's solitariness and suffering, His long humiliation and bloody death were given to enrich our souls and spread over them a comfort commensurate with His love. The central hue of the rainbow is the central thought of redemption—our happiness and spiritual growth. For this was all the woe a spotless Saviour suffered; for this are Church and Bible and the living voice of Christian heralds to the end of time.

With such a Saviour revealed,—such a perpetual appeal of the God of glory to our sin-ruined souls,—the great multitude, rich and poor, refined and vulgar, cultured and illiterate, pass on heedless, so they may gain their little ephemeral pleasure, only to lose it all. The stupid boor cares not for the rainbow. He must look after his cattle. And so the men of science and the men of learning, as well as the men of

pleasure and the men of power, have *their* cattle to look after, while God's grand rainbow of mercy, the manifested glory of God in Jesus Christ, is all unnoticed or treated with a scorn. The Scandinavians called the rainbow the bridge of God. Even so, dear brethren, those of us who reach heaven will reach it only by that divine bridge.

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

1 John ii. 12: "FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE."

It is not without reason that the divine instinct in the Church of Christ has led the prayers of Christians to end with the phrase, "for Christ's sake." Such a termination is not commanded, nor is any such model given us in Scripture. The Lord's prayer ends with a doxology. The prayer of the disciples in Jerusalem, after the first arrest of the apostles, ended with a petition. How is it that the Church has made it a universal custom to close all petitions to God with the words, "For Christ's sake"? There must be a reason for it, and there must be a good reason, too, where there has been such unanimity on the part of godly men.

Let us first inquire the meaning of the phrase. What is meant by "for Christ's sake"? "Sake" is an old word for "cause." "Do this for my sake," is "Do this for my cause." "Receive this for my sake," is "Receive this for my cause." You see at once that in these instances I may be the *cause* in either of two ways. I may be the cause as the one *for* whom the benefit is wrought, or I may be the cause as the one *by* whom the benefit is wrought. For example, I say, "Give my friend a dollar for my sake." I mean,

“Give him a dollar, and it will be a benefit *to me*.” But I may say, “The Governor will let you out of prison for my sake,” when I mean, “The Governor will let you out of prison as a benefit *to you*, because of my intervention.” Now, in which of these ways does the phrase belong to our prayers? When we say, “for Christ’s sake,” do we mean, “in order to confer a benefit on Christ,” or do we mean, “confer the benefit on us through the intervention or merits of Christ”?

I think a careful study of the Scriptures will show us that both meanings enter into the phrase; that we look upon Jesus as both the source and the object of our benefit. It is *through* Him the blessing flows, and it is *to* Him the blessing redounds.

The passage which we have taken as our text will illustrate this.

The apostle John, in his old age, is affectionately addressing the believers, and he is holding up the Lord Jesus Christ as their advocate and propitiation. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.” He shows that the heart-knowledge of Jesus is the essence of the godly life, because in Christ are forgiveness and light; *forgiveness*, which brings the soul into relation with God; and *light*, which from God illuminates the soul and fills it with the knowledge of divine things. The old apostle tells the believers that he writes to them because they occupy this high position. They can understand the lofty themes of divine love and its connections. They can accept and ap-

preciate the apostolic injunctions: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." These are his words. He calls believers his little children, because he was a very old man and a very old apostle of the Lord, who, seventy years before, had received his commission and learned his lessons of truth directly from Jesus himself. He tells them that their sins are forgiven for that very Jesus' sake, or, more exactly, for His name's sake. The name of Jesus is all that makes Jesus known. This use of the word "name" is a common Hebraism. The "name" of God is constantly spoken of in the Old Testament, where the manifested works of God are meant, every thing by which we know God. Let me illustrate this by a few examples. Of the temple or tabernacle, it is said, "The Lord your God shall choose to put His *name* there" (Deut. xii. 5). "How excellent is Thy *name* in all the earth" (Ps. viii. 1). "I will declare Thy *name* to my brethren" (Ps. xxii. 22). "For that Thy *name* is near Thy works declare" (Ps. lxxv. 1). "Thou art great and Thy *name* is great in might" (Jer. x. 6). "The man of wisdom shall see Thy *name*" (Mic. vi. 9). These quotations from Scripture show that God's *name* is that which makes Him known, His words and acts of every kind, whether natural or supernatural. So *Christ's name* is all that Christ is manifested by to us who believe. It is His condescending and loving work of expiation for sin, His whole sacrificial career as the Lamb of God, for *that* was the distinguishing mark of His whole work, as the Baptist

showed, when he first pointed Him out, "Behold, the Lamb of God; who taketh away the sin of the world!" Hence the phrase, "for His *name's* sake," is equivalent to this, "for *His* sake, as He has been manifested." Well, here we are told that our forgiveness comes from this source. This certainly is a benefit *to us*. *We* are the recipients of the blessing. The load of sin which was sinking us to perdition is removed. The condemnation so fearful no longer exists. We are at peace with God. Nothing hinders the love of God to us and our love to Him. We are no longer slaves, but God's own freemen. And this is said to be "for Christ's name's sake." Surely we cannot have any doubt that Christ is the cause of our forgiveness. He is not merely the *occasion* of it, as those teach who say He was only our example, but He is the efficient and meritorious *cause*. *We* did not deserve forgiveness. The idea of *deserving forgiveness* is a contradiction. If we deserve it, we do not need it. Christ died for our sins. He was made an offering for sin for us. He redeemed us by His blood. All these and many other such expressions in the Scriptures show that Christ took our place and suffered in our stead, and, therefore, because of this expiatory work of Christ, God can be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus. When the apostle says, therefore, that our "sins are forgiven for His name's sake," he means that *because* of Christ's wonderful manifestation as the sacrificial Lamb of God, becoming the curse and dying for us, God forgives us.

How very different this is from the false doctrine, so

prevalent in some quarters, that Christ came merely to show us how a man ought to be willing to suffer or how a man ought to live in holiness. In such a teaching the words "expiation," "propitiation," "ransom," and "blood" have no meaning, and the whole sacrificial system of the old Church is equally meaningless. The Bible is robbed of the very heart of its revelation. Indeed, by such teaching there was no necessity for Christ to come at all. His coming adds no new factor to the problem of salvation. He is only God coming into visibility and showing how good it is to be good. He is God telling in the flesh how He loves us, which before He had told through prophets. He does no *work* for us. He accomplishes no integral part of our salvation. He is not a *Saviour*. He does not *save*. He only tells us that we ought to *save ourselves*. This is the wretched gospel of what is called the "New Theology," which, however, is as old as the second century, when men desired to unite pagan philosophy to Christianity and make them all one. It is the effort to make Christianity *natural* instead of supernatural, and to reconcile it to man's own reasonings, to fill up the chasm between Christianity and the world, to make reason the true guide to man, and to take the Scriptures as a secondary help. Christ is thus put alongside of Buddha and Zoroaster and Marcus Aurelius, as a manifestation of divine goodness on the earth, and the whole distinctiveness of the Gospel is gone—evaporated into generalities.

All counter to this is the clear teaching of God's

revealed Word, that the Son of God came to die for us, came to be our ransom from sin, came to carry our sins on Himself to the cross as the altar of sacrifice, came to remove the obstacle in the way of the divine forgiveness, came thus to perform an absolutely necessary work—a necessary link in the chain of salvation; nay, the main link, without which no sinner could escape from the prison-house of sin. No human reason ever could have conceived of such a Saviour. God's revelation only could have made Him known. And any effort of human reason to evolve out of itself a way of salvation or a way of eternal life is simply an effort of human pride and ignorance. Man's reason, as well as his heart, is corrupted by sin. It is defective in its material of knowledge and it is defective in its appreciation of known facts. Man, by himself, has no idea of the heinousness of sin, and hence has no idea of the need of a Saviour or of the absolute necessity of a hell. Hence he tries to do away with all these teachings of Scripture. The phrase, "for Jesus' sake," can have no meaning to one who thus does away with all that is distinctive in the Gospel. But to the humble believer, what a depth of meaning there is in these words! "For Jesus' sake" means that Jesus stands in my place, that He answers for me when Satan, the great accuser, would accuse me; that He makes my prayers acceptable through His own merits; that when I pray with all my weakness and sinfulness, Jesus, in His spotless holiness, prays. This is what was symbolized by the incense from the golden altar.

It was the praying of Christ going up with the prayer of the saints, and thus making them a sweet savor before God. You remember the passage in the Revelation, "And there was given unto Him much incense that He should add it to the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." What holy boldness this thought gives us in approaching an infinitely holy God, who cannot look upon iniquity! We know that sin is mixed with all we do, that it is mixed with our holiest exercises, that it intrudes itself into our prayers. What a comfort, then, to know that Jesus, in His perfect holiness, stands by us and makes our prayers His own! that He makes them fit to approach the infinitely holy God. He is the divine passport to the divine throne.

But we said that Jesus was not only the source of the benefit, and that therefore we say "for Jesus' sake," but that He is also the object of the benefit. Herein is really a mystery. But yet it is true. The Lord of glory has, in His wonderful condescension and grace, so identified Himself with every believer that He makes his cause His own. And so He prayed (in the seventeenth of John) to the Father for us as for Himself: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine, and all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine, and *I am glorified in them.*" Look at that declaration of our blessed Lord: "I AM GLORIFIED IN THEM." Consequently, when we seek our spiritual increase, we are seeking Christ's glory, and we can use the phrase, "for Jesus' sake,"

not only as meaning that *Jesus has merited for us*, but as also meaning that *Jesus may be glorified in us*.

That wonderful identification of the soul with Jesus is too little appreciated by believers. Paul says, "I live—yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." So the phrases, "being in Christ," and "Christ in us," tell the same story. Eating Christ's body and drinking His blood are ways of expressing the same mysterious truth. When we rise to the appreciation of this great fact, we are at once placed on a high vantage-ground over sin and sorrow; we are more completely under the control of the Holy Spirit; we are purer, holier, happier. Our prayers then are more simple, more heavenly, more powerful, because they lay hold of this great argument, "for Jesus' sake," as their prompting and their pledge. We appear before the throne in the name of Jesus; we, by a right which is not presumptuously assumed, but which is given us by our Lord, use His name as our own. It is written on our hearts as well as on our foreheads. What a glory this is! And what a grand thing prayer is in this light! It is no weak tentative of a doubting soul. It is no form of words. It is no experiment of the reason. It is communion with God. It is more, even. It is the communion of the Eternal Son with the Father, in which communion we are, in the Son, made one with Him according to His own prayer, "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." It is this exalted character of prayer we behold in the use of the words, "for Je-

sus' sake." Yes, it is, "Lord, do it for him, for He is one with us; do it for him, for He wishes it; do it for him, for He is glorified in us."

Now, of these two meanings of the words, "for Jesus' sake," the first is more readily apprehended than the second. The second implies a higher Christian life than the average. The first, that Jesus has borne our sins and thus removed the obstacle between us and God's throne, *giving us the benefit*—this can be understood and acted on by every converted soul. It is the foundation of peace and hope. It is the corner-stone of our faith. Blessed are they who can say "for Jesus' sake" in this sense. They know they have an Advocate with God who has a right to plead for them. They know that God's abounding love reaches out to them through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They pray acceptably to God in the name of this Advocate. Each prayer arises with the incense of Jesus' merits and power.

But the second meaning of the words "for Jesus' sake," namely, that *Jesus himself will receive a benefit*, that He will be glorified in us,—this can be apprehended only by the soul that lives in close contact with the Redeemer. Used by a worldly Christian, it is simply blasphemy—presumption in holy things. But the Christian who lives close to Christ knows how Christ is with him, and wishes with him his advancement as Christ's own glory. In the depth of a true humility, he uses "for Christ's sake" in this lofty meaning. He feels his oneness with Jesus in a manner that cannot be described, nor does he wish to

talk about it; for it is one of the holy secrets of his heart, and to speak of it is to defile it. To him prayer is not only a comfort, but an ecstasy. Not only peace, but joy also, forms a large element of his experience in prayer. "For Jesus' sake" has a meaning not only regarding his earthly state, but one regarding his heavenly state. It not only proclaims Jesus as his Saviour, but also as his Indweller—his Eternal Portion—his very Life!

Dear brethren, is not this the true position for each one of us? Shall we let anything keep us from this rich foretaste of heaven? Shall not our prayers be sweeter far than ever to us, as we feel the double power of that divine phrase, "for His name's sake"—"for Jesus' sake"?

SITTING AT JESUS' FEET.

Luke x. 39 : " AND SHE HAD A SISTER CALLED MARY, WHICH ALSO SAT AT JESUS' FEET AND HEARD HIS WORD."

THE Mount of Olives separated two widely-differing scenes in our Saviour's life. On the west was Jerusalem, the restless city, where in the midst of privileges, pride resisted and scorned the Truth, and prepared a cross for its divine exponent. On the east was the quiet village, Bethany, associated in every Christian's mind with thoughts of simple piety and precious communion with Jesus.

The family group which is identified with this rural spot possessed marks of unusual interest. They had all perceived and hailed the Messiahship of Jesus. His works and words had wrought their rightful influence on their hearts. They showed by their acceptance of the Master what all Israel might have been, if prejudice and selfishness had yielded to the truth, in which case the ancient people of God would have continued even through the ages to this day, to minister the Word of God to all nations. One of this family group, the brother, had gone down to the tomb, and, at the word of Jesus, had burst its bars and returned to the companionship of his sisters. Whether he had entered the world of light and, like

Paul, had seen things impossible to utter, or whether he had been held in extraordinary stupor or sleep of soul (if this be possible) in view of his speedy recall, we cannot tell. Whatever the process may have been, Lazarus was one brought back from the dead, a living proof and trophy of Christ's power over death. What a deep, clear tone of reality this must have given to the spiritual teachings of our Lord in that faithful and favored household! If we are to consider Simon, the leper, as a member of this family, either another brother, or the husband of Martha, then one recovered from the living death of leprosy, doubtless by the same hand of Jesus, was found in this remarkable group.

Here Jesus found a cherished home while waiting for His hour to arrive, when He should become the Paschal Lamb for the sin of the world. Here, amid the piety of this family, He could anticipate the triumphs of His work and word, and see proleptically the character and condition of the Christian Church. Here was foretokened the sweet calm—the heavenly peace—that the fierce struggles of Gethsemane and Golgotha were to purchase. Just such a peaceful scene was appropriate for the Master after the day's weary conflict with the unbelieving scoffers of the temple, who stood as a wall against the reception of the truth by the people of Jerusalem; and hence we find Him every evening taking His way over the Mount of Olives to the retirement of Bethany. Of the two sisters in this village home, Martha was the more active spirit, but over-anxious in her activity,

too ready to find fault, impatient of the tastes and habits of others. Mary, to whom our text refers, was of a more even disposition, a gentler tone, a more thoughtful mind. Her piety received the special commendation of Jesus, and her spiritual discernment far transcended that of the apostles themselves. Her anointing of Jesus with the costly ointment was an act of keen-eyed faith. She foresaw the sufferings of her Lord. She had laid up His words in her heart, while others let them slip or were puzzled by them. She had understood the meaning of His repeated declaration concerning His own death, and now looked sadly, and yet hopefully, upon Him as one soon to die a cruel death; *hopefully*, I say, for in His prophecy of His death was included a token of His resurrection. It was because of this clear faith that she anointed the Master for His burial, while all the apostles could do was to murmur at the waste of the precious ointment. The few touches that the Gospels furnish are enough to reveal in Mary of Bethany, the purest, brightest character in the evangelic story. She will ever remain a model of all that is fair in the self-forgetfulness of a true piety, and her name be ever, by His own will and prophecy, joined indissolubly with the name of Jesus. "Verily I say unto you (are His words), wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Glorious distinction!—blessed fame! before which the trophies of kings and conquerors are baubles.

What was the secret spring of this character? What were the processes by which that heart was wrought into so heavenly a shape? Was it only Mary of Bethany who could grow so like her Lord, or may others find the way? These are queries that start at once in every thoughtful mind. Especially will they excite the meditation of those who long for holiness, and are earnestly looking hither and thither to find its hidden path. Our text conveys the welcome truth that Mary's piety can be gained by all, as it shows the simple method of her own soul.

"She sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." Oh, that the weary truth-seekers might all behold this picture!—those who drag out their lives in works of asceticism and penance; those who scourge their souls into the painful observance of ritual and ceremony; those who wear as a garment the melancholy of despair. Here is the Gospel in an outline sketch, the lines so few, and yet the grand lesson so complete. "She sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word."

A *perfect* picture attains its perfection in the sphere into which it leads the beholder. The perfection is not on the canvas. The artist's power is shown in making his canvas the portal by which the mind inevitably enters into a garden of truth and beauty, that lies beyond the lines and colors of the painting. The presentations of Scripture are these perfect pictures. The uncultured heart will perhaps admire the sketch and forget it, while those who are instructed in spiritual art will sit down before it, as an appreciating *connoisseur* would sit before the San Sisto Ma-

donna, and study with appetite and enthusiasm the deep thoughts that lie beneath the suggestions of the surface. It is not an ingenious invention and accommodation, but a holy instinct, in one sense an *inspiration*, that traces these windings of divine truth, and that thus makes the Bible all aglow with a celestial light. Hence come the joy and the comfort of the Scriptures, which have been the meat and drink of so many souls as they made pilgrimage through this wilderness of vicissitude. Strengthened from this source, their grateful and joyful cry has been, "Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." "I will never forget Thy precepts, for with them Thou hast quickened me." "How sweet are Thy words to my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

It isn't, then, simply Mary of Bethany sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His word that is set before us this evening. It is the person, character, and work of our Lord—the relation of Jesus to the human soul—the privileges and opportunities of believers; in short, it is the *divine life*, potential to every one of us, which may be seen in this picture by the discerning eye. So contemplate the scene at Bethany. Put yourself in Mary's place. Consider the relations thus established between Jesus and yourself. Find sin cancelled by the Divine love. See confidence take the place of remorse and fear in your heart. Listen to the teachings of Him, who is the Truth and Life, as well as the Way. In short, take Mary's method and enjoy Mary's sublime experience. The features

of that scene at Bethany may be repeated wherever there is a human heart, whose weakness needs the Divine strength and whose sin needs the Divine forgiveness. May all our souls accept the thought and imitate the example. "She sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." In analyzing this thought, let us first consider what the word of Jesus is, and then what is implied in the hearing of that word.

1. *What is the word of Jesus?* Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His appearance upon earth for thirty-three years and His ministry of teaching and healing for three years are not circumscribed within those temporal limits. The garden and the cross are for all time—so are *all* the scenes and facts of that divine life. As a standard is lifted up on high in the midst of an extended camp, so that every eye from the uttermost border can equally behold it, so the life of Jesus is lifted up in the midst of the ages, belonging equally to all. The lowly peasant in this nineteenth century appropriates the words of Christ, and knows there is no irregularity in the act. What Jesus said to Peter or to Mary was intended for that peasant as much as it was for Peter or for Mary. The word of Jesus is, therefore, in the first place, His actual speech to His disciples and others in the days of His flesh, intended by Him who is present with His every disciple to the end of the world, to be the spiritual food of every loving heart. But the phrase has a broader signification. The dispensation of grace has Jesus as its sole author. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Prophets and

apostles were inspired by Him. "No man hath seen God at any time—the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." All that has ever been shown or declared of God to man has been shown or declared by Jesus. He is the Jehovah of Israel, the Immanuel of the Church, the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body. The entire life of the Church is from Him. He not only opened the *way* of life, but He gave the life itself. The Holy Scriptures, in all their fulness and completeness, are His word. As the expression of divine truth, they are nothing else but the word of Christ. These Scriptures and His personal life upon earth are issues of the same love and the same purpose. To see prophets and apostles as other than the mouth-pieces of Jesus is not to see prophets and apostles at all. Sin is one and grace is one; revelation is one and its author is one. From Moses to John but one heavenly voice has been heard over the waste places of sin, whether it spake from a burning mountain or a bloody cross. The angel who at Mamre talked with Abraham, and whom he addressed as Jehovah, was the same who spake to the Pharisees in the temple as a Nazarene. The unity of Scripture is because of the one Christ whom it exposes and expounds, and from whom it all flows forth as from a celestial fountain. The soul that is in harmony with God is thrilled by this Christfulness of the Bible. It is this which gives to Scripture its exquisite aroma. It cannot be described in the language of the world. Poetry fails—art spends its efforts on a lower plane.

It is not the mind—it is the *spirit* which appreciates this divine content of the Sacred Word. The experience of disciples knows what argument would fail to prove. Can you prove the taste of a peach to others by language? Can logic and oratory combined acquaint an audience with the flavor of an orange? “*Taste and see*” is the only reasonable demand. It is *tasting* which alone can fill you with a sense of the wonderful power of Scripture to reveal Jesus to the soul. All men are skeptics till they believe. There’s no middle road.

But the phrase, “word of Jesus,” goes farther than even the whole of Scripture. The new life which follows the new birth is the Christ-life. It is *Christ in us*. Christ is formed in us. He is our life. The outward expression of a Christian life is therefore a showing forth of Jesus. To observe and consider the goings of a consistent Christian is to listen to the word of Jesus. He is the Living Word, and as such, He lives in His own disciples. Their lives are His speech. By those lives He teaches His church and the world. The power of a Christian life is in the Christ-presence of that life. It is not the *man* which commands the attention and the respect of even the ungodly, but it is the *God* who has entered that life, nay, who *is* that life.

So we see that the “word of Jesus” is the actual teaching of the man Christ Jesus; and secondly, the whole of Scripture; and lastly, the real Christian life. Now how is this word to be heard? There is a difference here. Some hear and scoff; some hear and

forget ; some hear and die. There is a hearing which renews and glorifies the soul. "*Mary sat at Jesus' feet* and heard His word." It is this position which qualifies the hearing.

1. Sitting at Jesus' feet implies *a decided and voluntary action*. Nobody ever stumbles into truth. No one ever gets to heaven by haphazard. The condition of us all being untruthful and unheavenly, it must be a new departure, a positive act of our will, that brings us into right relations with God. And yet what a common mistake is here touched ! The mass of men busy themselves with interests of time, and seem to suppose that the spiritual life will take care of itself without nursing and even without acceptance. This is to suppose that the spiritual and divine life is something to be put on, on the outside, like a coat or cloak, and to forget that it is indeed a *life*, demanding the affections and will. The heart that is trained through a course of long years to be absorbed in worldly gain or ephemeral pleasures, becomes so stiffened and hardened in these habits as to make a life hid with Christ in God a moral impossibility. A man who has wilfully bent himself double for years cannot stand straight if he would. Further than that, as a man's will is part of the man bent by worldly absorption, he will not *wish* to stand straight. The spiritually-crooked man does not realize that he *is* crooked, and does not wish or seek to be straightened. And yet the position of peace—sitting at Jesus' feet—is one gained only by a decision of the will.

2. Sitting at Jesus' feet implies *an appreciation of*

Jesus as the ultimate authority. Many will listen to Jesus and say, "How beautiful!" and then volunteer some correction to His divine teaching. They assume a higher knowledge than the Master. They talk grandiloquently of Nature's teachings which they may interpret in more ways than a Delphic oracle, and then winnow the words of Jesus, selecting some as quite good, equal to those of Confucius and Plato, and setting aside the rest as mistaken. They approve of Jesus; they patronize Jesus; they use His name admiringly. These wise eclectics forget that Jesus must be all, or is nothing. They forget that Jesus proclaims Himself the Universal Lord and Judge, that He asserts His own and only ability to give rest for the soul, and that He demands for Himself the highest glory and homage. To call Jesus good and then to deny all these positions which He assumes is simple self-stultification. These eclectics do *not* sit at Jesus' feet.

3. Sitting at Jesus' feet implies *the use of time for listening and learning.* God has appointed one-seventh of our time for rest from usual worldly avocations for the main purpose of our thinking directly and earnestly of Him and our relations to Him. We know enough of the nature of our minds to be aware that unless we have a set time for any study, no study is done. The study of God and of divine truth is no exception. We have already noticed that it will not come from without as if by magic. No one else can acquire it for us. We have a day especially given. We have a Book especially given.

The right use of day and book is the sitting at the feet of Jesus. Shall any Martha interfere to keep us from this position? The daily study of God's Word made such a happy saint as David. The Christian life is weak that does not daily refresh itself at this fountain. Gaining money or finding temporal pleasure must be a very poor substitute for drinking in heavenly truth from the fulness of God. Dear friends, how can we resist giving time to this glorious work, even though we should omit everything else? Take a view of all these things from the future world, and judge and act accordingly. I presume one reason, yes, the great reason, why we do not sit at Jesus' feet to hear His word, is because we cannot believe it is so pleasant a place. If we were sure in our hearts that it would be so very happy a spot for us, happier than any place of honor or riches or worldly pleasure, why, then, we should certainly go and take the position. Aye, there's the trouble. Well, let us *try* the position. It is worth trying. So many, like Mary, have been there, and wouldn't leave it for worlds. Jesus himself invites us so tenderly. It seems so reasonable. My dear friends, liable to loss and disappointment and sorrow—needing the strong hand of God,—with a future where money and time-affairs do not reach,—I don't think we shall make a mistake if we try the position at Jesus' feet, and see for ourselves if it be not the gate of heaven.

BIBLE MEDITATION.

Psalm i. 2: "IN HIS LAW DOTH HE MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT."

WERE the unseen world of bliss and woe opened to our gaze, we should think of nothing else. The most important of our present earthly cares would shrink into insignificance and earthly aspirations would immediately wither. God has wisely put us, while in our probation, out of the sight of the eternal world, so that we may attend faithfully to the duties which devolve upon us as probationers in a moral career, who must grow in moral virtues and gain knowledge by an inward working and experience. Earthly cares and earthly aspirations are means of discipline, and God uses these as the tools of His grace whereby He fashions us into spiritual forms of life, and it would not do for us to be rid of these. And yet we are to be guarded against the extreme of earthly absorption. While receiving all the discipline that earthly duties convey, we should get what familiarity we can with the unseen and eternal. God's Word is given us to promote this high knowledge. We are to balance one world against the other. We are not to deny our earthly surroundings and become recluses or ecstasies, nor are we to forget our heavenly

connections and the presence of God and be a worldly people. Now the latter danger is far greater than the former. With our fallen natures asserting themselves, and with every form of attractive earth-life around us, it is very easy for us to be absorbed in worldly interests. The spirit-world is hidden from our eyes, not that we should ignore or forget it, but that we should use the visible world as our training-school. That very object will be frustrated if we wholly disregard the eternal world, for the connection of that world with this is the basis of all true instruction and all true growth.

It being important, therefore, that all of us should contemplate the great unseen and eternal realities, so far as God in His wisdom has seen fit to reveal them, and that revelation being only in His Word, it follows that the study of God's Word is the duty of every one. For this Word is really the window, the only window, out of which we can look and see the vast world beyond our senses. There are, it is true, chinks and crannies given us in conscience and consciousness, through which we get vague glimpses of incoherent truths, but the Bible furnishes the only broad, open window, out from which we can see in right proportion the realities that lie beyond the sense-world and are most intimately concerned with our own life and happiness. Conscience can feel, and consciousness can guess, but the feeling of the one is vague and the guesses of the other are soon confused and inconsistent with each other, so that all human philosophies, arising from these sources,

are most unsatisfactory to the soul that longs for positive knowledge. We must be told by another regarding these unseen truths; we must depend upon a higher teaching as little children depend upon a parent's word, not endeavoring to evolve the truth from ourselves, or even to criticise and modify it as we receive it from the higher source. The Word of God is thus eminently and uniquely the lamp unto our feet. That Word, just as David had it, is in the Pentateuch. That Word, just as Christ had it, is in the Old Testament from Moses to Malachi. That Word as we have it is the same exactly as that which David and Christ had, with the addition of what inspired apostles and their companions wrote, according to the fulness of the Spirit promised them. The Bible is one whole. Its parts are all integral parts. The unbelief that assails a single book or a single chapter of the Bible assails all the Bible. God has given it to the Church as a whole, and has marvellously preserved it as a whole, a whole of infinite variety, and yet perfectly harmonious in all its parts. Men, hating its humiliating truth, have assaulted it with every weapon ingenuity could invent for eighteen hundred years, and yet have not left a single scar upon it. It stands to-day, every word vindicated, every sentence solid, every truth brilliant. It carries its own witness in its perfect endurance and continuous triumphs, as well as in its precious truths that meet the pressing needs of every human heart.

This Word of God, as given by Him for our guidance, is styled God's law. From beginning to

end it has to do with the methods of divine love in saving man from his sins. Redemption and its history form the subject of the sacred volume. It is thus a law in the highest sense, a chart of life, a portrayal of means to life's noblest ends. Human law deals only with outward actions, but God's holy law touches the region of thought and affection, where the roots of the man are found. It lays bare the heart and reveals its diseases, and prescribes the only remedy for its desperate condition. That law lays open to our eyes all of the unseen world that we need for our guidance here, but not so much as to paralyze our activity or check our discipline in this world of training and probation. We need therefore to use this law of God with great diligence, that its full power may be felt in our souls. We need to use it to the utmost as a balance against the carnal and earthly things that are apt to absorb all our attention. The greatest saints took this position. Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, all the prophets and apostles, emphasized the Word, the revealed and written Word—in other words, the Law; and their own lives, with such as those of Apollos and Timothy, were illustrations of the power of the Word to uphold and maintain the integrity of the godly life against the attractions of sin and sense.

It is *meditation* on this holy Word that characterizes the exemplary child of God. So he is represented by the Psalmist, as not only avoiding the companionship of ungodly men, but also making positive and perpetual explorations in the Scriptures.

“In His law doth he meditate day and night.” I know not any one thing which so defines the difference between the Christian and the world as the relation of each to the Bible. The Bible is a very dry and uninteresting book to the worldly heart. With quite a proud emotion it styles it utter stupidity. To spend any length of time over it would be insufferable, and the idea of meditating on it day and night is incomprehensible. Yet that same Word thus honestly despised by the worldly heart is the precious treasure of the godly heart. The warm-hearted believer finds there his daily refreshing and strength. He could no more bear the thought of being without his Bible than could a traveller in the desert bear the thought of being without his jar of water. He is never driven to the Word by conscience. He never reluctantly takes it up as a dead weight. He never sighs over Bible-reading as an imposed task. He flies to the Word as his refuge. He goes to it as to an old haunt of love and peace, where he has been accustomed to meet his Lord and enjoy His grace.

I say again, that I know no one thing which so defines the difference between the Christian and the world as the relation of each to the Bible. Happy is the man who has this testimony to his divine sonship, that he loves the Word of God. He is described in our text as meditating on that Word day and night, that is, it is his constant companion and counsellor. He does not abandon the many duties of life, nor does he refuse the needed

hours of sleep in order to devote himself to its study—that is not intended—but he is so fond of it, and so full of it, that his memory refreshes him with it even in those waking hours when he is not actually engaged in its formal study. At his business tasks, in his daily walks, in his loneliness upon his bed, and even when in the enjoyments of social intercourse, the Word of God mingles with all his thoughts, and gives a heavenly flavor to all his experience. The word translated “meditate” has as its original signification the idea of muttering to oneself, as we do when we are studying or revolving a subject in our minds. We talk *with* the subject (as it were)—not talk of it. We thus become intimate with it, and can then wisely talk of it. Many persons talk *of* the Bible who are not at all intimate with it, who never talked *with* it, talking *to* it and letting it talk to *them*. Such persons never meditated on God’s Word. Then again there are others who are only intimate with the letter—they have meditated on the letter; but the letter is not the Word of God. The letter is only the *vehicle* of the Word of God. The Word of God is the spiritual truth that touches the heart. Meditating on God’s law is an exercise that only regards the letter as it reveals the spirit beneath. Bible history, Bible geography, Bible archæology, Bible linguistics are all exceedingly useful and important, but no amount of knowledge of these makes meditation on God’s law. We sadly misuse all these departments of learning unless we make them the means of finding the mind of the Spirit, as speaking

to our inmost souls. With these thoughts we can add—

1. That meditation, though not itself study, *implies* study. There must be the preliminary close application, the careful examination, the comparison of Scripture with Scripture. This requires time specially set apart, and it requires solitude so far as we can get it. There are very few who cannot get some minutes alone every day for this holy exercise. Most persons can readily get an hour each day, if only they set their minds to it. Most persons have no difficulty in getting an hour for some personal indulgence. If their hearts were right on the subject of their relation to God and His truth, they would find and eagerly seize the time for this heavenly exercise. Does any one ask, "How shall I study the Bible?" let me answer, that with a good Bible Dictionary, a Concordance, and Marginal References you are fully prepared for the work. Read the Scripture in regular course, dwell upon its utterances, keep clear its connections, and be your own interpreter and commentator. This will be doing what Christ enjoins. It will be "*searching* the Scriptures."

2. Meditation upon God's Word implies a thoughtful *pondering upon our own lives*. The meditation on God's Word is not a meaningless reverie—it's a *thinking*, it's the application of that Word to ourselves, and this, of course, involves a view of ourselves,—not a self-dissection, not an examination into motive and feeling, which we are utterly incompetent

to make,—but a general view of our deficiencies and failures, and a special view of God's constant and abounding mercies. The Christian heart is both astonished and melted when it begins to recount the loving-kindness of the Lord, and this recounting is but the reflection of its meditation on the Word.

3. Meditation on God's Word is *a form of walking with God*. In the Psalm of our text, the blessed man, instead of walking, standing, and sitting with the wicked, meditates on God's law. This is the walking, standing, and sitting with all that is good, with God himself, in complete contrast to the former picture. It accustoms the mind to holy thoughts, it fills it with righteous arguments, it strengthens it against earthly adversities, it forms around the man an atmosphere of heavenly peace with which he lives in the midst of the world's troubles. The soul that meditates on God's Word is in the closest intimacy with God, for our spiritual washing is by the Word—the discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart is that Word. We were born again by the Word, and our Saviour says to the Father as the mark of His nearness to His disciples, "I have given them Thy Word." Thus that Word is connected with all our highest and holiest experiences before God.

4. Meditation on God's Word is our security against *spiritual coldness and worldliness*. When Satan tempted our Saviour, His refuge was the Word of God, the Bible. Thence drew He the arms with which to defeat and drive off the adversary of souls. It is the same for us as for Him. When we are

saturated with Scripture we are impervious to the seductions of sin. Temptations surprise careless Christians. They find them off their guard. The truth that should be serviceable for the occasion is not at hand, and hence, in place of this, there is a parleying, a compromising, a yielding, which degrades the soul in spiritual rank and shrinks it in spiritual capacity. The low-ranked, weak-faithed, limping, stumbling Christians would present a far different aspect, if they had been faithful to God's Word. Having voluntarily cut themselves off from the supply of health and vigor, they only know a sickly and feeble Christianity. They are stained with worldly folly, and they fail of heavenly enjoyments.

Brethren, in view of our subject, have we not new resolutions to make to-day? Is the Bible to be any longer neglected? Are we to be satisfied with getting here and there a verse, something snatched up at random, while we lay out our main strength and regard to earthly things? Is this the way that God's revelation should be treated by His children? Was it for this that it was given?

Infidels call us Bibliolaters, or worshippers of a book. We do not worship a book, but we worship a God, who has given us a book, and told us to use it constantly as the only interpreter of His holy will. And we know that our worship of that God is a defective and doubtful worship, if we do not thus use the book He has so solemnly given us. We know that meditation on that Word will keep us

from errors and difficulties, and is the only real safeguard against the deceitfulness of our own hearts and the thousand false theories that a mere human philosophy suggests. We know, moreover, that meditation on that Word reveals more clearly the countenance of Jesus our Lord and Saviour, and in this way the entrance of the Word giveth light—the light of knowledge, of peace, and of joy. Are we not willing to be the people of the Book, when the Book is the very representative of the thoughts of the Most High to us-ward?—See the inspired description: “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” This God says of the man who meditates day and night on God’s holy Word.

THE LIFE OF PRAYER.

Ephesians vi. 18 : " PRAYING ALWAYS WITH ALL PRAYER."

IF prayer have the definition which it has in most men's minds, and if men of the average character hear this injunction of the apostle, the words would suggest a dreary prospect. A life of prayer would seem to them a life of penance. Only sadness and gloom would be associated with the idea. Praying might be tolerated at certain emergencies, as a bitter medicine might be swallowed in a critical disease ; but praying *always*, and that too with *all* prayer, leaves no margin for comfort or happiness. And yet this melancholy view of the prayerful life is all of a piece with the ordinary view men take of religion and everything that pertains to their just relations toward God. The natural heart is enmity with God, and hence all forms of communion with God are repulsive. With this fact constantly existing, they will nevertheless deny that they are enemies to God, and consider such an allegation as a slander upon their character. Most men actually think they are on good terms with the Almighty, while they sedulously avoid all that would distinctively bring them near to Him. They fail to see in their blindness that this alienation of theirs is the very essence of hostility. Their assumed

independence of God is the waging war against God, the overthrow of all His government, as far as they are able to effect this; the disturbance of all the relations which He has established as their all-wise and all-merciful Creator and Preserver. A man has not to commit murder to be a rebel against even human authority; neither has a man to be a gross offender in palpable vice to be an enemy to God. Disobedience here is rebellion, and a life founded on a system of disobedience is a rebellious life. Where you find a man who (as the Scripture phrases it) has not God in all his thoughts, there you find an open enemy of the Most High, and his beautiful traits of character and admired position in society cannot save him from the hands of infinite justice and a rebel's doom. The matter of prayer is one of many tests of such a condition. The prayerless man is in the hostile camp. If he were the friend of God, he would draw near Him and speak to Him. Nay, he would search for Him, if he could not find Him. Much rather would he run to Him, when he saw His arms outstretched to receive him in the Gospel of His Son. Not to pray is to despise that Gospel,—to prefer nature, and that a depraved nature, too. Marvellous is the stupidity of man, that, after a life thus spent in avoiding God, he will complacently suppose it will all be well with him at last,—that his confirmed course of godlessness will become by the change of death a course of godfulness, if I may use the expression. What magic has death to change his character? Is death a gospel? Or, is heaven a place for God's enemies?

But, leaving this strange case of the mass of men, let us talk with Christians of that which is their highest joy—communion with God. Let us divide our subject according to the apostle's phraseology.

I. "*Praying.*" What is it? 1. It is a heart-exercise. Words play only a subordinate part. Groanings that cannot be uttered may be prayer. I say "may be," for the Scripture does not mean that *all* groaning is prayer. There may be the groan of pain, the groan of discontent, the groan of selfishness, and surely there is no prayer in such. The Scriptures refer to the Spirit's movement in the soul of man, where an intelligent and yet undefinable longing Godwards is found. And yet, while words may not be necessary in prayer, the rational man is so constituted that words are most helpful to a praying heart, and it will use them when it can. It is only a sort of spiritual indolence that would wilfully dispense with words in prayer. There may be true spiritual emotions that defy utterance, but the most of a believer's contemplations and petitions find natural illustration and expression in language. But the language should ever wait upon the heart. Detached from the heart's feeling, it is but mockery. The Lord takes no pleasure in our mere words, but He *does* take pleasure in the movements of our *hearts* toward Him. It is this thought that should make us watchful against the formality of routine, the meaningless use of set phrases, which is a mechanical travesty of prayer. Every word should have the heart's stamp upon it, and so it will be acceptable to God.

2. Prayer is a *duty*. We are not left to choose whether we should pray or not. Prayer is part of the economy of grace. The first mark of a Christian is "Behold, he prayeth." The obedience of the soul to God is shown in this position. All God's grace to man comes by the asking, and the asking is but expressed faith. God's primal command to the sinner, "Come," is answered by prayer. And the same principle which begins the Christian life continues to sustain and develop it. The heart comes to God for all. But while prayer is thus enjoined by God, we never hear God telling us to pray a given number of times a day, or to pray for such or such a length of time. All that kind of injunction belongs to man-made religions like Mohammedanism and Popery. God commands us to pray, but He leaves the modes of prayer to the guidance of that blessed Spirit who is given to every believer. There is a Christian liberty here as elsewhere, which we are to use, while we are careful not to make it an occasion to the flesh. Prayer is a duty, but to a Christian, duty involves no idea of compulsion; for

3. Prayer is a *privilege*. It is by no natural right that we go to God. Our natural condition banishes us from Him altogether. The approach to God by the soul is the result of God's miracle of grace. All the wonders of Bethlehem and Calvary were wrought to bring it about. It is a blood-bought privilege. It is the opening of the King's palace to aliens who are made children. It is a gift whose dimensions no created mind can calculate. The sense of the privilege

will be proportioned to our view of our sinfulness. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" is the natural cry of one who recognizes the contrast between himself and a holy God. When grace meets that natural cry with the exhibition of a loving covenant between the sinner and his Saviour, then the delighted heart exclaims, "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." Unless God's grace is recognized there can be no true prayer. To speak to God on any other basis is fearful presumption. For an unrepentant sinner to speak to God is an act of gross hostility, for he endeavors to thrust his sin-covered soul into the holy presence of the Majesty of Heaven. It is a high privilege, the highest of all privileges, that he is usurping, and one which is only accorded to the penitent heart.

4. Prayer is the *confident action of communion with God*. It is not a tentative, or test, or experiment. It is not a groping in the dark. It is true that little faith may reduce it to these proportions, but just so far the prayer is defective. In its normal character, prayer is a complete leaning on God. It reposes upon promises that can never fail and a divine love that cannot be measured. The child nestles not more securely in the mother's arms than the soul commits itself with assurance to the Lord in prayer.

It has to go through no process of reasoning, but the Spirit beareth witness with it that it is dealing with a tender and yet Almighty *Father*. The wavering soul does not pray. We are to "ask in faith (says the Scripture), nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." It is this confidence of prayer which gives it its crowning charm.

II. *Praying always*, says the apostle. Here surely a *condition* rather than *action* is designated. An action terminates, but this prayer is to continue. Or, if we call it an action, it is an action that includes the whole life. It indicates a constant need and a constant supply. We are ever to be found waiting on the Lord. The outward form of prayer may be intermittent, but the essential prayer is to be perpetual. To use the distinction made just now, the prayerful condition may at times be crystallized into formal action, which we specially call prayer, but the life of the soul in communion with God is essentially a life of prayer. It is constantly in an asking and receiving attitude. It would not have this bond of union with the Saviour sundered for a moment, for all its help comes from Him. Without Him it can do nothing. Praying always is enjoying always the fulness of the Redeemer's bounties. To have this communication choked between heaven and the soul would be to feel want and weakness. Montgomery but expresses the truth as felt by every earnest believer, "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air."

The continuity of prayer is but another name for the continuity of spiritual life. This continuity is interrupted most sadly by the wilful permission given by the Christian to let the world come into his heart and exercise a motive power there. The Christian who is spending his time and energy to amass the world's wealth is not praying. The Christian who is fluttering like a moth around the candles of fashion is not praying. The Christian who is full of schemes for this life, and puts the things of God aside, is not praying. The rich rewards of the Christian life are enjoyed by few, because few are praying always. Now, it is very often the case that those who pray occasionally do not pray at all. The one who prays without ceasing offers a spiritual service, but the pray-er on occasion is apt to be a formalist. When a Christian can say, "I have set the Lord *always* before me," then he can add, "because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Instead of such continual praying being dreary, it is the very source of refreshing and joy. It is the very cause of the Christian's cheerful spirit and happy life. He is drawn to the mercy-seat as a bee to the flower. The instincts of the divine life move him thither. God does not wish in us a forced and artificial life. There is neither religion nor salvation in such a life. He wishes us to wear an *easy* yoke and lift a *light* burden, while the godless world wears the hard yoke and heavy burden. And so He gives us a new nature, and, according to this new nature, this *praying always* is most natural. But many who are gifted with the

new nature strangle it by their indulgence of the old. They do not use the liberty of the children of God, and hence their service is servile and not filial. The Christian who prays always is the Christian who feels his heavenly citizenship, whose life is not to be measured by outward appearances, because his life is hid with Christ entirely out of the world's sight. The man who is conversing through the cable with his friend in London cannot be understood or described in his action, by the unlettered boor at his side. What a complete misconception the peasant would have of the man's thoughts and employment, as he sat fingering the electric machine! And this is but a feeble image of the utter inconceivableness of the *always praying* life to the ordinary worldly mind. But

III. *Praying always* WITH ALL PRAYER. This is a Grecism for "all manner of prayer," or "every kind of prayer." Prayer, then, may be of different kinds. The difference is not, of course, in its essential character, for all prayer must be at the core *communion with God*, but in its modes of exercise. We have seen how the prayerful life will at times crystallize itself into seasons of withdrawal from all else but God, when, face to face with Him, it "orders its cause" before Him, and arranges thoughts of praise and gratitude, of penitence and confession, of need and petition, of joy and thanksgiving. To these seasons we are accustomed to circumscribe the appellation of prayer. But when the apostle speaks of praying *always* and with *all* prayer, he is leading us

into a wider field of observation, and showing us how in much else than the bowed knee and earnest words the spirit of prayer may be resident. Cornelius, the centurion, was told that his *alms* had come up as a memorial before God. We are also told by the inspired Word "to do good, and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The Scripture is full of like passages, showing that the acts of kindness performed by us as to God are direct acts of communion with Him. There is no gaining heaven by works in this. Such a doctrine is an absurdity. Our salvation is *all* of grace. But there *is* in this a *gracious effect*. There is in true alms-giving (the real helpfulness of Christian activity) an enlargement of the spiritual life, a spreading of its branches and leaves by the action of its thrifty tendrils. It is a movement *to* and *with* God. It is in this high sense that it is rightly said, "Giving is worship." When Christ says, "Ye did it unto me," He is describing one form of approaching Him, one action of the renewing Spirit, one of the many kinds of prayer. Now this sort of prayer is certainly no substitute for the other; but again, neither is the other a substitute for this. Both motions of the soul Godward are needed and demanded by the new life which Christ gives. The Philippian Christians were behind none in the prayer of words, but Paul praises them for their readiness to send far away to Rome for his help and comfort when a prisoner. He says, "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a

sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." These good works were equally a communion with God as were their verbal prayers, for they were both done under the Spirit's prompting, and were the action of their godly walk. This was one of their acceptable sacrifices; the calves of their lips were another. All effort under the recognized providence of God is prayer. It is prayer put into action. If I long to help a brother, I pray with my whole being and not only with my lips. Every activity put forth in the direction of any godly aim is justly prayer.

Now, if in the light of these considerations, we read the apostle's injunction, "Praying always with all manner of prayer," we see there depicted a life so spent in communion with God, that all its exercises are done to God, presented to Him as offerings of faith. Let me not for a moment be supposed by any to uphold the sentimental statement of vapory religionists that working is praying—that is, that any act of kindness toward another is a prayer to God, and therefore all direct petition is unnecessary. It is only the working that is done in the spirit of faith and obedience to God's holy will that is prayer, and this never as a *substitute for*, but as a *result from*, the prayer of direct petition.

Now, my fellow-believers, just as our lives come short of this picture submitted to us by the apostle, just so far we are marring Christ's work in our regeneration, and just so far as we do this, we are interfering with our peace and our power. Living unto God (Rom. vi. 11) and living with Christ (1 Thess.

v. 10) are Scripture expressions denoting the true Christian life. The formula, which each of us ought to be able to adopt, is this—"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."

What is preventing this declaration on the part of any one of us? Whatever does, is making us restrain prayer. What is it? Is it hard to tell? I think not. One answer will do for us all. It is a *divided heart*. Our Lord has not His full place in our affections, and hence the Spirit has not full sway in our lives. Surely it is not strange that the lives of Christians should be so poor a recommendation of Christ to the world. The Christian life is sustained only by prayer. The praying should, therefore, be constant. Now, if the praying be intermittent, what may we expect of the life? The world will not look on the moments of fervor and faith, and judge of the Christian from those, but will look at the periods of worldliness, when the connection with Jesus is cut off, and draw its inferences of Christ and His disciples from these.—But apart from the effect on the world, why should we deny ourselves the unspeakably rich enjoyments of a life drawing every moment its fresh strength from our God and Saviour? Why should we let the illusions of a false world rob us of our divine inheritance in Christ? Let us dig the ditch deep and broad between us and the world, so that there shall be no crossing nor thought of crossing; let us be jealous for Christ against any interference with our union with Him, and let us have the full of comfort in the Lord's grace by praying always with all prayer.

GIVING.

Proverbs xi. 25: "THE LIBERAL SOUL SHALL BE MADE FAT."

THE Proverbs of Solomon are just as truly God's inspired word as are the books of Moses. They are part of the same blessed Bible. It was left for the marvellous sages of modern times to pick the Old Testament to pieces, and tell us that there were all degrees of inspiration in its books, and in many of them none at all. The apostles and our Lord knew nothing about this, but quoted all the books alike and referred Christians to them as constituting one solid and immaculate authority; but Ewald and his followers have, under the higher inspiration of their own consciousness, found how thoroughly mistaken our Lord was. These modern sages talk as if they lived themselves personally all down the ages from Moses onward, and had been present when every line of Scripture was written. They have a glib language about an Elohist and a Jehovist, a Deuteronomist, the five narrators of the Pentateuch, the pseudo-Isaiah, the book of Origins, the book of Covenants, all of which they take to be very learned, while our talk about the books of Moses and Joshua is very childish and absurd, and shows that we are not fit to approach their Olympus of wisdom. These mighty men will

take Genesis, for example, and put their finger on what A wrote, and B wrote, and C wrote, and D wrote, and E wrote. They'll tell you that chap. xxxiv. 1-4 is by A, but ver. 5 is not. A, however, again writes from ver. 6 to ver. 8. Then you don't see him again till ver. 16, when he appears as the writer once more as far as ver. 23. In this way with their marvellous penetration they make Genesis and every other book a confused mass of patch-work clumsily sewed together, and about as valuable as a looking-glass broken into a thousand pieces.

It is a good thing, brethren, that these men have made such arrant fools of themselves that but a few are likely to be led astray by them. The same processes of argumentation that they use would prove that the Declaration of Independence was written by twenty different persons in different ages, nay, they would prove that the letter you wrote to your friend yesterday was a conglomerate from a dozen different authors. It is refreshing to turn from these muddled brains and hear the words of our Lord Jesus, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me"; and again, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me"; and still again to hear Him thwart Satan by quoting this very Deuteronomy (that these Ewalds sneer at as the work of some late and lying Deuteronomist) with the solemn formula, "It is written." This appeal to Scripture was final.

Now we have the Old Testament books precisely as our Lord had them, no less, no more. All of these rationalists have to agree to that. "Proverbs" with us is just what "Proverbs" was with the apostle when he quoted it in this manner: "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.'" The apostle had no doubt of the Scripture he quoted, which has been a comfort to millions ever since. So I would have you note that our text, "The liberal soul shall be made fat," is a part of the Word of God, as much as anything else in the Bible, and that it is one of the precious promises of the many exceeding great and precious promises which are given to us for our guidance and our joy.

Let us with this understanding seek to obtain its instruction.

God is speaking to His people. He sees their varied characters and conditions. He knows the perplexities and trials of all. He, like a kind father, seeks not only their ultimate good, but their present welfare. He has not only provided for them the pardon of sin and eternal life in His Son, but He has ordered all things to minister to their good, even the angels of heaven. He furnishes us not only with a salvation, but with a philosophy of life. He shows us how we may avoid difficulties and distresses by a godly prudence. He would have us study the details

of living and fix upon certain principles of conduct with regard to all the special conditions of human intercourse. And it is that Christian who most strictly adheres to these divine principles whose life is the serenest and whose influence is most blessed. Our text is one of these utterances of divine wisdom, very different in its character from the dicta of worldly philosophers or the views of most men. The ordinary teaching among men runs this way: "Hoarding will make a big pile." "Take care of Number One." "I'll not do anything for posterity; posterity never did anything for me." And the quality of mind that follows these maxims is known generally in the world with commendation as acuteness, shrewdness, and financial wisdom. Now the Bible does not condemn a just regard for personal interests. It does not approve of carelessness of self and family, or of lavish expenditure. It recognizes the fact that the workman is worthy of his hire, and therefore commends his taking care of himself. It teaches frugality, industry, and proper provision for those dependent upon us. But any one will see that all this is very far from the worldly principle of amassing with a single eye to self. With all its teachings of financial prudence, the Bible adds such important maxims as that of our text, "The liberal soul shall be made fat." Akin to it is that which immediately precedes, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."

The *being made fat* is a thoroughly Oriental ex-

pression for personal ease and comfort, the real (and not apparent) prosperity of the life on earth. It does not necessarily refer to riches, for very often riches are by no means a blessing, but it certainly *does* refer to temporal well-being. It is a mistake to suppose that God has not promised earthly blessings to His children. The Bible is full of promises of this sort, and the reason they are not more often enjoyed is because their conditions are not fulfilled. We are told that if we seek *first* the kingdom of God all these earthly benefits will be added to us. We are promised our food and clothing. We are promised long life upon the earth. We are promised protection amid dangers. And it is a false exegesis that takes all the meaning out of these promises, and makes them no more than human guesses, as likely to be wrong as right. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come, and this enjoyment of the life which now is cannot concern simply our subjective state, but must involve those objective realities on which our subjective state partly depends. If we could see a perfect Christian life, we should see a life crowned with earthly blessings, not, as I said before, with riches or worldly honors, but with the more solid elements of a healthy comfort. Not that trials would be excluded, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and even a perfect Christian life on earth would need chastening, but the life as a whole would be a life of peace and prosperity.

The "being made fat" has reference, doubtless, to

pecuniary ease. The same thing which is scattered increases. There is the operation of a *lex talionis* in the matter. As we deal with others, so will we be dealt with. With what measure we mete, it will be measured to us again.

Now, who is the *liberal soul*? It is not the man who faithfully and honorably pays his debts and performs his contracts, but one who goes beyond all that law and strict right demand, with an overflow to the account of love and sympathy. So also there is a comparison with a man's whole estate which forms an element in our definition of the word *liberal*. He must not only give more than the law requires, but he must give according to his ability. It is no liberality in a man who has an income of a hundred thousand dollars a year to give ten thousand dollars a year in charities. A man with a hundred thousand a year who gives away only ten thousand, while he lays up sixty thousand or eighty thousand, is a mean man. He has not the first idea of liberality in his heart. The man who has only a thousand a year and gives ten dollars in charity is much nearer the definition of liberal than the rich man alluded to. The latter only gives a trifling portion of his superfluity. The former gives from his restricted means of support. The liberal soul, therefore, is not merely the one that gives, but the one that gives liberally on the scale of his resources. Liberality is to be reckoned comparatively and not absolutely. Another error we must avoid on the other side, although the caution here is not so necessary as in the direction alluded to. It is not

liberality to run into debt in one's giving, for then you're giving away what does not belong to you, and liberality is the giving away of one's own. For the same reason it is not liberality to make promises to give, when you have no reasonable expectation of ever paying the money, for in this case you must either borrow in order to pay, or else break your word.

But the question may arise, "Can a man be too liberal?" The answer is, "In spirit, no; but in practice, yes." That is, the soul can never be too liberal, for liberality, in the last analysis, is love. But a liberal soul may act unwisely in bestowing pecuniary blessings on others. He may not sufficiently regard the condition of the recipient. He may be encouraging idleness, or confirming some pernicious habit in the person he helps. Or, on the other hand, he may not sufficiently regard the claims of his own household, or the demands rightfully made upon his purse by other considerations besides those of love for individual men or causes. It is not often, however, that we find this excess of liberality. The trouble all lies in the other direction. The Church of Christ has millions upon millions that it ought to spend in benefiting the physically and spiritually needy every year, which its members now hoard up in order to amass large fortunes, or spend on unworthy objects. The worldly-minded do this, and the children of God follow suit. Now let the representatives of this class give their thousands as a conscience-fee to some good cause, and that will not put them among the liberal. The liberal soul does not seek to be rich, but to be a

blessing to others. This is the very opposite principle from that of seeking to be rich. The two are exclusive of one another. You cannot possibly have both. Are you trying to be rich? Then you never can be liberal. You may try to lay by something for family support and still be liberal, but the moment you lay by in order to be rich the tap-root of liberality is cut, and all your giving after that will be on some low human system or want of system. People may merely look at the sums you give and call you a great giver, but nevertheless you are not liberal, and the promise of the text does not belong to you. Moreover, the liberal soul is never pecuniarily exacting. He does not demand the pound of flesh, however legal it may be. Sometimes the law allows very unrighteous deeds. The rich landlord who exacts the rent from a poor widow by the sale of her chattels is acting in accordance with law and justifies himself on that ground, but he is none the less an unrighteous oppressor of the poor, whom the Lord has promised to avenge. Who made the adage, "Business is business," and under its cover drove out love and mercy from all pecuniary transactions? Surely not the Lord Jesus, under whose guidance we walk. It is one thing to resist imposition, the preying upon your bounty by a false plea, but it is another thing to have a genuine case of unexpected inability to pay you rent. The latter is a direct appeal of Providence to you for kindness and liberality. Do you ask why *you* should thus virtually pay her rent any more than others? Simply because in the providence of God

she happens to be *your* tenant and is thus brought into a special relation of dependence upon you. The principle of never gleaning the corners of the field is that of God's liberal-souled servant. He makes due allowance for the poor both in all his payments and in all his receipts. But the object of the liberal soul being the good of others, this good does not end with temporal blessings. The godly heart sees that all real and permanent good is in godliness. Hence the desire to bring the Gospel of salvation to men everywhere. The liberal soul responds to every call to assist man's eternal welfare, according to its ability. It never waits to be pressed and urged. It is always ready on the first notification of need. It has its store to give away, and only desires to find the best objects on which to bestow it. It takes delight in giving, and so appreciates the Master's testimony, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It does not count giving a self-denial, nor does it make a merit of it. It gives because it loves to give—it belongs to its nature to give—it takes pleasure in sowing seed for happy harvests.

Now, from this description of the liberal soul, we can readily see that liberal souls are not plenty. Men, Christian men, generally give stingily, grudgingly, and when they give a very little, feel that they have done some great thing. To such there is no promise that they shall be made fat. A genuine comfort in the external life they are not promised. Nor do they get it. Their narrowness is always wounding themselves. Their souls become withered and dry. The very

money which, if freely given, would have fattened them, by keeping back, has made them lean. Law-suits and losses lie in wait for the mean. If you refrain from giving in a godly way, the Lord will make holes in your money-bags, and the money will go in a far less noble and satisfactory way.

And now, a few hints as to the way in which Christians should give, so as to encourage their souls to liberality.

1. Give *regularly*. All virtues should be systematic. But by that we do not mean mechanical. The actions have no virtue in them if they have no feeling. But system can consist with true feeling. We should set aside a certain amount for our gifts as regularly as for our food and clothes. The apostle prescribed for the churches of Corinth and Galatia a weekly laying-by of amounts for gifts, and gives as a reason his objection to a spasmodic effort when he should arrive. The gifts thus bestowed come both larger and from a deeper principle of liberality. Such a system, moreover, makes the bestowal a more hearty affair, free from all drawbacks of selfishness.

2. Give *a fixed percentage of income*. But note two things in this—first, that the percentage should not be the same with every income. Ten per cent. may be a very fair proportion with some incomes, but with other incomes fifty per cent. is very small. The size of one's family for whom he is to provide and the claims upon him from other sources are important elements in the calculation—and, secondly, that no one should limit himself by any percentage,

but always allow a margin for extraordinary calls. A true liberality is not going to imprison itself behind artificial barriers.

3. Give *discriminatingly*. But do not discriminate so fastidiously as to withhold giving. Wisely examine where you can do the most good with your money. Aid both in private and public charities, both in the care of bodies and of souls, both in home and foreign missions, and choose those channels in each where you think the great end will be best served.

4. And lastly, give *prayerfully*, remembering that giving is an act of divine worship. Pray over every gift, that God would speed it to the desired object and make it fruitful. Your prayer is the spiritual power that will make your material gift effective, while earnest prayer will be both a prompter and an index of a liberal soul.

Now, brethren, if we thus possess our souls in liberality, the Lord will make them fat. We'll avoid a thousand evils that otherwise would distress us. Our lives will be the happier, while we scatter happiness all around us, and we shall be imitators of Him who went about doing good. The close and niggardly Christian is a reproach to Him whose name he bears.

We are now beginning a new year. Let it be a liberal year, as we remember all that our Lord has done for us in His great salvation, and as we also remember the privilege He gives us of being co-workers with Him in blessing our fellow-men, as well as His promise that the liberal soul shall be made fat.

SABBATH-KEEPING.

EXODUS XX. 8: "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY."

I PURPOSE this morning to offer a few practical thoughts on the proper observance of the Sabbath by the Christian.

And my first remark is that the Sabbath is for us a divine institution or it is not. If it is not, then any kind of Sabbath observance is uncalled for. It is a merely human device, of no more consequence than are human institutions, and therefore of very questionable advantage. If the Sabbath was meant for Jews and not for the Church of all ages, then the less we keep Sabbath the better. Keeping it would be as out of place as keeping the feast of tabernacles. Keeping it would only lead us back into the twilight of types. The Sabbath must be a divine institution, not only for the old Jews, but for us, if we are to keep it at all. We cannot bind it on the Church or the world, if it be but a human expediency.

Now, if it be a divine institution for us, then we must go to the divine Word for instruction as to its meaning and as to the proper mode of observing it. The alternative is either no Sabbath at all or the Sabbath as God makes it for us. We cannot strike an average

between these alternatives, and, taking God's Sabbath, shape it as we will. To divide it, and say we will use the first half as God's Sabbath and the last half as our own play-time, which is the theory largely on the Continent of Europe, is illogical and absurd. God certainly did not set apart a half-day. If there is any Sabbath, it is a *whole* day and not a half-day. If play is the appropriate exercise of the Sabbath, then it should be play all day, and not play only for the last half. If something else than play is the appropriate exercise of the Sabbath, then it should be this something else than play all day, and not only for the first half. The day is evidently to be of the same sort all through. There is not a hint in Scripture of two great principles in the day, one for the fore-part and the other for the after-part.

With these preliminary thoughts, let us now first answer the question, "Does the Sabbath belong to the Christian Church?" And then, on finding an answer in the affirmative, see how God would have us spend the day.

I. *Does the Sabbath belong to the Christian Church?* The common declaration of superficial opponents of the Sabbath is, that it was a local Jewish affair. They class it with the sacrifices and the annual feasts, all of which were done away in Christ. But these objectors fail to see the difference between the ordinance of the Sabbath and the special details of its Jewish observance. The two things are wholly apart from one another. The Sabbath came to the Jews from the ages before, and at Sinai special forms of its observ-

ance were given to Israel in its typical capacity. These forms have all expired with the ritual, but the Sabbath remains as it was before the Jews existed. And this fundamental law of the Sabbath is imbedded in the Decalogue, which was wholly separated from the ritual or civil law by being written by the finger of God on tables of stone and placed by themselves in the ark in the Holy of Holies. The Sabbath, as such, is both a divine institution and a divine institution for all. The Jews observed it before they reached Sinai, and other nations also preserved its maintenance. The week was not a natural division of time. New moon and full moon could naturally mark epochs, but the quarters of the moon are no more natural than the thirds or the fifths of the moon. The week's observance is itself a testimony to the divine origin of the Sabbath. The French felt this when they did away with the week and made a decade of days as the division of time, in order to be rid of the Sabbath. The story of Jacob and Laban shows us that three centuries before the law was given at Sinai, the week's division of time was known and used in Syria. The Babylonian records show the same a thousand years earlier. The fact that the Babylonians counted the weeks from the first of each month does not alter the testimony that they recognized the week, and their laws expressly ordered rest from labor on the Sabbath or seventh day. The reason for the seventh day after six being established is given in the Decalogue as found in the periods of creation, and hence the Sabbath dates not from Sinai, but from the beginning of man's occu-

pancy of the earth. That it is not binding upon the Christian Church would be of a piece with a declaration that none of the laws of God which had special details of punishment given them at Sinai, are binding on us to-day—such as laws against murder and stealing.

But again, objection is made that laws against murder and stealing are in consonance with our inner consciousness of right and wrong, but Sabbath-keeping has no inner witness at all. It is an *ab extra* law, an outside statute, and finds no natural response in the human mind or heart. The answer to this is, that God has seen fit to make an outside statute for all mankind, just, as before man fell, He made an outside statute that man should not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Why should God not give law to man independent of the inner consciousness, as well as such laws as find their echo in the conscience? Nay, is not one grand external statute like this of the Sabbath a constant witness for God through all generations, a reminder to every one that we are not under the government of conscience merely, but under the government of God, above and beyond conscience?

I trust I have shown that the Sabbath is no Jewish institution, but an institution of God for the race, and as binding in the Christian dispensation as before. That there has been a change from the seventh to the first day of the week is true, but that change does not alter the fact that the seventh day after six others is our Sabbath. As the Church left its narrow precincts in Palestine, where exactly the same hours could be kept as Sabbath, and extended over the world where

that is impossible, the exact hours became of no value. The principle of one day after six others was all that could be maintained, for any particular seventh day in New York would be the first day in Japan. There was also a necessity for the change in the Eastern countries, because the Jewish way of keeping the Sabbath had become both human and burdensome, and if the same day were maintained in the Christian Church it would be hampered with all the follies that the Scribes and Pharisees had piled upon it. A change of the day was thus necessary to free the Sabbath from its abuses, and not only so, but also to free it from those Jewish methods of keeping it which were according to the old Mosaic law, but which belonged to the ritual church and were to be done away in Christ. Our Sunday is thus rightly called "the Christian Sabbath," and we must go back to the Decalogue to see how it is to be observed.

II. Now let us see *how God would have us spend the holy day*. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." We may remark in passing, that the use of the word "remember" shows that God was laying down no new law for Israel. He was only telling them to remember an old law, as old as mankind. The Sabbath was to be kept holy, to be hallowed, to be sanctified, for such are the varied renderings of the Hebrew verb, "*Qadesh*." There is a superficial interpretation which says that all this hallowing or sanctifying refers to an outward ceremony or external rites, and that hence to sanctify the Sabbath meant only to set it apart from other days by a distinct ceremonial. And as

proof of this interpretation those passages are quoted (like Exod. xxix. 21) where garments and other material things are sanctified or hallowed. Now it is not denied that the word is often used of an outward rite, but this is always as significant of an inward holiness. The clean garments of the priesthood, anointed and sprinkled, were emblematic of a pure manhood, consecrated to God. The word, therefore, is never to be confined to the outward rite, but always looks to something beyond. The priest, for example, was consecrated, hallowed, sanctified, made holy by a certain ceremonial (Exod. xxviii. 41), but that typical holiness only shadowed a real spiritual holiness which the priest ought to possess. It is precisely so with the Sabbath. We are to keep it holy. Well, that may imply a number of external duties, which serve externally to separate the day from other days, but the meaning of the word is not exhausted there. It means that beneath all external things there shall be a genuine spiritual use of the day as holy time. We cannot get rid of the spiritual meaning of that word, "keep holy." To do so would be to make all religion a formalism. We have, therefore, God's command regarding the Sabbath—a command demanding the use of the whole day as holy time, time to be used in holy ways, to the special worship of God and to our own growth in holiness. There is no possible escape from this plain meaning of the command.

Now, then, if the Sabbath is God's day, appointed by Him to foster our holiness, to contribute to our sanctification, we see at once that the mere abstinence

from our ordinary avocations does not meet the requirement. The rest from work, by the words of the command, is to be a *holy* rest, not a secular rest. To stop the meaning of the Sabbath with the mere idea of cessation from labor is both against the letter and spirit of all God's commands, which seek action in the *heart*.

The Sabbath day is, therefore, to be kept holy in the full sense of that word. What, then, is our proper observance of the day? First, certainly, to meet in *holy convocation to worship God*. This was Israel's plan; it was also the plan of the Christian Church from the beginning. The solidarity of the Church was to be seen on that day, when all Christians, as brethren in Christ, should assemble before God. A Sabbath without attendance upon the public worship of God, where it is possible, is an abused Sabbath. It lacks the church element which every Christian should sustain. The notion that we can just as well worship God at home is but an excuse for spiritual torpor. No earnest Christian ever entertained such a notion.

The *special study of God's Word* is another necessary mark of a true Sabbath. That Word is our one light in this dark world of sin. We should be ever walking in that light. And yet how lamentably ignorant of the Scriptures many Christians are! How few bend over the Word as the God-given fountain of refreshing to the soul! And yet that should be the position of every one of us. We need all the help we can get in this study, and the teachings of the pulpit, if faithful, are among the best helps to this end. But

these teachings will be of small value unless we follow them up in our retirement with careful searching of the Scripture as did the Bereans, who received the divine commendation for so doing. The Sabbath, as a day of leisure from our ordinary work, is the day specially adapted for this careful, private Scripture study. Its hours should be full of this spiritual research, with prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

And this brings up another element of the true Sabbath. It should be eminently *a day of prayer and meditation*. We should, with hearts of gratitude, rehearse to ourselves the Lord's gracious dealings, and strengthen our souls by the retrospect, in which exercise prayer and praise will always have a large part. Prayer need not always have a set form, either in words or attitude. We may lift up our souls to God in prayer and praise as we sit, as we read, as we walk, and so our lives may be steeped in prayer.

Now, it is very evident that a Christian who spends the Sabbath in this way that God designed it to be spent, would no more think of sitting down to read a Sunday newspaper than he would think of going to his place of business and conducting it as on the other days. The Christian who takes a Sunday newspaper is very far from knowing what the Sabbath is, and very far from prizing his religious opportunities. If indeed a Christian, his love to the Master is very weak, for the Master has said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

A Christian who strolls about on the Sabbath, apparently not knowing what to do with himself, is alto-

gether out of harmony with divine things and God's ways, and is very like the godless world that counts the Sabbath a weary burden and would like to be free from it. The Christian who would be holy, as God is holy, will love the Sabbath as one of the most blessed means of grace, and will find its hours all too short for his happy exercises of spiritual application. He will cherish it as a precious privilege and thank God for the holy day which does so much for his soul. My heart is pained when I see Christians, so-called, whiling away the Sunday with walks and visits and the reading of secular literature, and so wholly diverting the blessed day from its divine purpose. God does not want us to keep the Sabbath as slaves, whipped to a certain course of conduct, but He wants us to *love* the Sabbath and to use it in love, and because we love *Him*. Ah! is not the trouble that we do not wish to become holy? We love folly so much that we would postpone the growth in holiness to the next world. Oh, my dear hearers, if any of you are in that case, be sure that you are not deceiving yourselves in thinking that you are Christians. Be sure that you are not wearing a name that does not belong to you. If you are not seeking holiness here, how can you expect to dwell in God's holy heaven hereafter? Christ's saved ones are *saints*, that is, "*holy ones*." If holiness finds no desire in your heart, how can you be Christ's? If you are Christ's and love and seek holiness, you will remember the Sabbath day to keep *it* holy.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE IN A WICKED CITY.

Acts xvii. 16: "NOW WHILE PAUL WAITED FOR THEM AT ATHENS, HIS SPIRIT WAS STIRRED IN HIM, WHEN HE SAW THE CITY WHOLLY GIVEN TO IDOLATRY. THEREFORE DISPUTED HE IN THE SYNAGOGUE WITH THE JEWS AND WITH THE DEVOUT PERSONS, AND IN THE MARKET DAILY WITH THEM THAT MET HIM."

THE agora of Athens was the centre of the world's refinement, science, and philosophy. When the Tarsus Jew entered that illustrious square six centuries had filled it with fame. On the east arose the cliff of the Acropolis, crowned by the Propylæa and Parthenon, the master works of Phidias. On the south was the high hill of the Museum, on which stood the proud monument of the royal Syrian, who coveted the honor of becoming an Athenian citizen. On the west was the lower rock of the Puyx, from whose bema Solon, Aristides, Themistocles, Pericles, and Demosthenes had addressed the Attic assemblies; and on the north, steps cut in the stone led to the summit of the Areopagus, where the highest council of the State preserved their sacred dignity. Nearer than these rocky heights were the three Stoaæ or porches (from one of which a celebrated school of philosophy had derived its name), the statues of the patriots Harmo-

ding and Aristogeiton, and of many a mythic hero, the Senate-house and rows of tasteful and elaborate temples, and the little hill Colonus Agoræus, where Meton the astronomer had lived, and where he had erected his "heliotrope" to measure the length of the solar year. Every spot in that precinct was connected with some event in the achievements of art and letters, or with the deeds of patriotic heroism and statesmanship, and the names which appertained to that little spot of ground, and its history had become the cherished synonym of glory to the whole civilized world.

Into this centre of refined memories walked a Jew of middle years, who, by his education, could well appreciate the charms of the spot. Of warm sympathies, of vigorous intellect, of cultivated taste, his fervent spirit was well adapted to view the scene with rapture. The past generations would stand before him in their classic outline. His imagination would greet the poets of the theatre, the philosophers of the porch, the orators of the Puyx, and the councillors of the Areopagus. He would feel the potency of the influences that radiated from this agora upon the whole world, although political power had long fled from Greece, and the fourth imperial Cæsar sat on the Latin throne. Had he come to bathe his spirit in these associations and to gather from these Attic flowers the fragrant honey of æsthetic thought? Had he sought Athens, like Longinus, to identify himself with its academic atmosphere, or, like Atticus, to find the elegant refinements that suit the cul-

tured mind? How crazed you would have been counted, my hearer, if you had told one of those Athenian sages, as he lounged in the Stoa Poikilé, that yon small, dark-haired Jew had come *to teach Athens!* that he brought with him a knowledge and wisdom as far above Plato as heaven is above the earth! And what an Arabian romance it would have been to the ears of that white-robed councillor, if you had told him that the Oriental who was then crossing the square would turn the religion and philosophy of Athens upside down, that he the councillor would in a few days join the Jew in his wonderful work—nay more, that in three centuries from that day, when the shrines of Minerva, Jupiter, and Mars should lie in ruins, a stately temple should stand on that very hill of Mars and commemorate this fact by bearing the councillor's own name, as the church of Dionysius the Areopagite.

In view of these things (now the great facts of history), what a memorable day was that when Paul first stood under the shadow of the Acropolis! It was nothing less than the Divine Word meeting Human Wisdom; the power of the Truth brought into death-grapple with the fascinations of speculation, aided by the charms of literature and art. This Word, this Truth was borne in an earthen vessel—a single and insignificant man. *Luke* had been left at Philippi, *Timothy* at Thessalonica, *Silas* at Berea, and *Paul* had entered Athens alone. But all that Solon, Pisistratus, Themistocles, Pericles, and Alexander had done in the Grecian world was nothing to

what should ensue from the overflowings of the large heart of this single, unnoticed Paul. *Their* work was done in the outer circles of life, in the taste, the fancy, or the material condition,—but *his* work was to be wrought in the very citadel of being, in the conscience and affections. *Their* work was to last a lifetime, *his* an eternity. *Their* work was to exalt the Greek above all others, *his* was to destroy all difference between Jew and Greek. *Their* work was to deify the human, *his* to fill the human with the divine. And now that eighteen centuries have rolled away, we read of Greece's heroes as we look upon the distant stars, but Paul's great work is daily felt the more in every pulsation of the life of Christendom.

We have introduced this picture of Paul at Athens for the special purpose of studying the true posture of a Christian soul in the midst of a great and wicked city, that we may apply the lesson to ourselves as God's responsible agents and representatives in this metropolis of wealth, enterprise, learning, and influence. And may the God who sustained Paul vouchsafe unto us the upholding of his free spirit that we may boldly do our duty as the unflinching hero of Tarsus did his!

There are two aspects in which the apostle appears at Athens. The former is revealed in the sixteenth verse, "Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." "*His spirit was stirred within him.*" There was an agitation in that capacious soul like the upheavings of the ocean's waves

in the tempest. It is from the Greek word used here we have our English "paroxysm." It denotes an intense emotion, absorbing the attention and faculties, but does not determine the cause or object. Any passion in a good or bad service might use this word for the expression of its intensity. We are therefore to look to the context to discover the character of this tumultuous excitement of the apostle's spirit. Who was this Paul? What had been his antecedents? Into what position had his heart been brought? A right answer to these questions will be a key to our knowledge of the nature of his agitation, as he passed among the triumphs of Athenian art.

Saul of Tarsus had been born in the strictness of Judaism and trained in the rabbinical schools. His zealous and untiring nature had made him a leader in his very youth, and against the nascent Christianity, which he saw rising out of Judaism like a pestilent heresy, he had flung the weight of his influence and impetuosity, and had proudly stood forward as the responsible party, when, under his supervision, the fierce mob of Jerusalem stoned the angelic Stephen into heaven. Gaining new impulse from this tragic scene, he had cut a broad swath of suffering through the Christian ranks in Jerusalem, and had started thence with ferocious zeal to destroy the name of Christ in the old city of Damascus, when, near the gates of that metropolis, in which the Christians had awaited in trembling the onset of this young persecutor, a light from heaven cast the lion to the ground and he arose a lamb. Three years of retirement in the

wilderness of Arabia prepared the converted Benjamite for his new career. His impetuous disposition, enlightened and sanctified, started forth on a life-course of love. He bore no harsh and cruel edict of legal conformity, but the proclamation of God's pardon through the blood of Jesus, and his enlarged heart sought the whole world for its ministrations of love. More than a score of years had elapsed since Christ's foe had become His champion, and during these years the varied experiences of trial had refined his soul. Shipwreck, robbery, scourging, slander, contumely, bodily weakness, and absorbing cares had been parts of his discipline, under which the truth as it is in Jesus had been rooted into his whole being, even as storms more firmly root the oak or sycamore; and now, at fifty years of age, he was already a veteran in the service of his Divine Master, ever glorying in Him and ever remembering himself as a miracle of grace. The world to him was Satan's usurped domain that was to be won to Jesus, its rightful monarch, and himself was a first-fruit and specimen of that conquest.

What to such a soul were the highest guesses of the Academy, the Lyceum, or the Porch, when the Holy Spirit had, with the illumination of his understanding, put him beyond either the need or the desire of speculation? What to him were the mementoes of Marathon and Salamis, when the contests of Gethsemane and Calvary demanded their trophies at Athens as at Jerusalem? What to him were the works of Phidias and Praxiteles, of Zeuxis and

Apelles, when God had revealed to him the beauties of holiness wrought by the plastic power of the Gospel? The stirring of Paul's apostolic soul was not that of awe before the imposing monuments of Attic glory, or of admiration before the works of Attic genius, or of romantic sadness in memory of Attic history. The occasion of his inward commotion is expressly stated in the sacred narrative. "His spirit was stirred in him *when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.*" On every corner he beheld the shrine of a new divinity. In front of the private dwellings as well as in the public streets and squares the marble assumed the graceful forms of Aphrodite or Athéné, of Apollo or Meleager. There were more gods in Athens than there were people. The temples were thronged with worshippers and the avenues were traversed continually by the festal and sacred processions. Art and luxury were the baits of the sensuous and sensual religion. God seems to have permitted Greece to have reached the acme of literary and artistic excellence, to show the world how utterly impotent are intellectual culture, æsthetic attainment, and human civilization to repress sin and vice, and to give love and purity to the soul of man. In this Athenian centre of the highest æsthetic civilization the world ever saw or has ever seen, the very sanctities of religion were thrown over the most debasing forms of vice, and divine arguments were the supporting pillars of selfishness and lust.

It was on this—the fact and features of Attic idolatry—on which the apostle's gaze was riveted. It was this gilded depravity which stirred his spirit. This was

the *occasion* and the love of Christ was the *cause*. He felt that Satan had erected one of his strongholds here—a masterpiece of cleverness—and that just here the power of the truth must be disclosed and human faith project the divine power against the walls and buttresses of the Satanic fortress. Keenly alive himself to the influences of the beautiful and the romantic, he knew what a fatal fascination they must prove when made the allies and promoters of sin, and so, in his mighty soul, he rose above the beautiful, in which Athens abounded, to the good and the true, of which she knew nothing. He did not say within himself (as he might easily have done, so far as we regard his intellectual status), “This is Athens—the cynosure of the human race, the home of the Muses, the fountain of wisdom—here I may open my soul and learn the mysteries of art; here I may drink my fill at the refreshing springs of poesy and philosophy, finding sweet contemplation in the groves of Academus or by the twin-hills of Colonus, listening to the plaintive air of the nightingale, and tasting the honey of the Attic bee.” How different was the determination of the apostolic hero! He trod those pavements with the consciousness of power. He came to give, not to receive. Greek genius was only a target for the Gospel arrow. Christ had made him a giant by His grace, and he would honor Christ by acting the giant and stalking into the midst of Athens with a bolder tread and a mightier force than Theseus used, when he had left Procrustes dead upon the banks of the Cephissus. His soul was fired with holy indignation at the sin of

earth's noblest city, and with holy ambition to strike at and strike down that sin with the flashing sword of the Spirit.

This, then, is the first aspect in which Paul appears at Athens. The second is revealed in the seventeenth verse, "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons (*i. e.*, proselytes), and in the market daily with them that met with him." Here we are removed from the interior to the exterior view. The intense commotion is not a mere subjective phenomenon. The movement of these springs affect the outer life. The discussions in the synagogue and market were the outbursts of the inward excitement. Our word "dispute" conveys too much the idea of quarrelling to be fully adapted to this place. The word refers to discussion, reasoning, earnest argument. This discussion had two fields of operation—the synagogue and the market. In the synagogue Paul met the Jewish residents and proselytes, and naturally and properly first declared the Messiah to these. Here he found the believers in the Old Testament Scriptures, and to them he would argue from prophecy regarding the glorious kingdom which was to fill the whole earth. He would show them how Moses and David and Isaiah all sent the rays of their prophetic light converging on the cross of Calvary,—how types were all absorbed and annulled in the mighty antitype,—how the sceptre had departed from Judah because Shiloh had come,—how the witness of the Holy Ghost in thirty years of miracles had been sent from heaven to announce the Messiah and His

cause,—and how already many hundred thousands had felt the influence of the wonderful truth, and had been transformed in heart and life to acknowledge the divine power and grace.

In the market or market-place (the agora, or place of public concourse) the zealous truth-bearer found another class to deal with, the genuine Athenians, curious in questions and quick-witted in repartee, polytheists in profession and atheists in practice, who, in vain attempts to define truth, utterly lost sight of truth, and, in praising virtue, degraded virtue; skeptical in all that was good, and conservative in vice; boasting of their free thought while enslaved to their conceit, and ignoring all revelation beyond the enigmas of the oracles and the extravagances of the poets. Paul was ready for these. He was going to yield the way to none of them. The Gospel that was good for Jew was good for Greek. Men in Athens did not differ from men in Jerusalem, so far as sin and salvation went. Nay, the vastness of the abomination which Satan had set up on this hill of Hellenic pride only invited the heartiest blows of the Christian Hercules. These Phidian gods and goddesses must be dragged in the dust behind the chariot of the Redeemer. These fanes of enshrined sin must be purified by the truth of Jesus. These glittering speculative systems must be sent together down to a philosophical hades. And the simplicity of the Gospel must signalize its triumph over the complications of dialectics and mythology. Paul's faith anticipated all this. He told the Greek converts of Corinth not

long after that the kingdom of God was “not in word, but in *power*”; that the foolish things of the world should confound the wise, and the weak things of the world should confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, God had chosen to bring to naught things that are. It was the strength of this faith which gave him a lion’s boldness before the lounging throng of disciplined minds in the agora of Athens. This Athens must be, *shall* be Christ’s. This was his prevailing, overwhelming thought. God’s honor demands it, Christ’s love demands it, the gratitude of the saved Saul of Tarsus demands it, the eternal welfare of Greek souls demands it. His soul half in heaven all the while, rose above earthly considerations and calculations, and right in the face of Grecian poetry, and architecture, and statuary, and painting, and music, and science, and luxury (oh! what a position for such a determination!), he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Where in man’s history is a scene of moral grandeur like this! It is this heroism in the sphere of thought, motive and choice, amid contending desires which dwarfs the mere heroism of the battle-field to insignificance.

It was with this spirit, sublime and divine, that the accomplished pupil of Gamaliel daily joined the philosophers and cultivated men of Athens and skilfully pushed the Gospel upon their attention and their consciences. More than that, as we are told that he conversed with all who happened to be in his way, our

picture is not complete until we see him, in earnest expostulation, entreaty, and instruction, talking with the humbler representatives of Athenian life, the soldier off duty, the mechanic passing to his place of work, the rustic bringing in his fresh vegetables to the market, and the slave either on his master's errand or using his holiday in the enjoyment of the liveliness of the agora. There was no weariness in the apostolic work, as there was no dimness in the glorious outlines of the future. It was that view, and not present success, which sustained and invigorated him. He knew his blows on sin were effective without a Dionysius and a Damaris to prove it. The promise of God was a stronger motive than the actual conversion of the whole Areopagus. In that promise he revelled. It was his meat and drink—his harp and song—his breath and life. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me," was his exulting shout of conscious power. And so we read he did this work "*daily*." It was no drudgery to such a soul. It was the use of readiest means to attain a darling end. The Spirit of God had given him a spiritual eyesight, which, as the microscope reveals the exquisite tracery of the insect's wing, studded this dull work with diamond beauties and made its yield far richer to the soul than all the glories of Athenian art and luxury. Ah! never had Athens witnessed such a sight as this. It had seen Miltiades enter amid the plaudits of a grateful people, when Datis and Artaphernes and the old tyrant Hippias had been thrust off from Greece by the emphatic valor of Marathon. It had seen the Persian

monarch and his million followers with their purple and gold cover the Attic soil with Asiatic magnificence. It had seen Lysander destroying the walls and fortresses of its pride to the sound of Dorian flutes. It had seen Demosthenes hold the people spellbound by his patriotic eloquence, and Plato teach his admiring disciples the witchery of his half-poetic mathesis, but, with such scenes a thousand times repeated, the Parthenon had never looked down on so eventful a day in Athens as that in which the Jew of Tarsus stood beneath the Areopagus. The arms of patriots or of Persian foes, Spartan jealousy, the graces of oratory, the instructions of philosophy, all combined, compared with the Jesus-truth which escaped Paul's mouth, were as the childhood's play to the earthquake. And this we say, if we only regard earthly results, the upheavings which were to shake and shatter the very basis of society and bring the old heathenish order to chaos. But if we go further and regard the spiritual truth which Paul carried and imparted—if we analyze the spark of heaven which this true Prometheus bore, the comparison becomes still more wide, and Athens lays her thousand glories at the feet of Paul.

With this view of Paul at Athens, let us address ourselves to gather our own appropriate lesson. He stands before us as the model of a Christian in a city full of sin. We have divided the view into two parts; we shall divide the application in the same way.

The first regards *our state of mind* as dwellers in a city abounding in vice. It becomes us *to have our spirits stirred within us*. We are not only saved

souls in the midst of the lost, but enlightened souls in the midst of those who are deliberately engaged in darkening their understandings every day. There are some Christians so stolid or so selfish that this fact does not ripple the surface of their feelings. They are like the nine lepers, who, when healed of their leprosy, sank into quiescence. They could be excited enough when they cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on *us*," but when the mercy had come, there was no excitement for others—no practical returning to give glory to God. It is not that these Christians are opposed to excitement—they have enough and to spare in business and pleasure, but it is *religious* excitement they shun. They dislike the words "revival" and "awakening," little thinking that their readiness to apply the word "cant" is but a token of their own remissness and a desire to excuse their selfish lives. They have made themselves unsympathizing, and in the work which Jesus commissions every disciple to do, they are, therefore, of no use whatever. There is nothing elastic or responsive in their religious natures. What they get they keep—it is never *reflected* from them, and it never *grows up and out* from them so as to benefit others. They are religious sponges, made no better by what they absorb and contributing nothing to those around. They need God's mercy to squeeze them by severe calamity that they may learn to be communicative and fraternal. It becomes a Christian to anticipate such providential processes. His views should be so lofty and his love to Christ so ardent that his influences for the Saviour

would flow forth in an overflowing stream continually. His whole soul should be shaken—every faculty brought into vigorous use and every emotion in strong accord—with the emergency of the scene before him.

And what should be the character of this grand excitement? We learn from Paul. It should be: (1). An excitement of *indignation*. Why are these idols on every street and in every house? Why is my God, the living and true God, thus insulted by His creatures? Why, when His glory should fill the thoughts and desires of all, are the hearts of men affianced to the tinsel that will tarnish in a day? Men are watching, pushing, leaping, springing, running, dodging, forcing their energies, driving their brains, draining their nerves, blanching their skin and hair, and digging their graves in order to win an ephemeral name for wealth and distinction, with God abandoned, His word neglected, His calls despised, and His witness, conscience, trampled into silence. How can I see all this and my heart not burn with jealousy for the Lord God of my salvation? On every side is sin in Protean colors—*here* is *refined* vice, pollution gilded with a master skill for the use of the educated, the delicate, and the fashionable, mixed with music and art and tintured with religion so as to appear highly respectable; and *there* is *vulgar* vice, open and broad in the streets and groggeries and brothels—and all this, too, not in hell, but upon earth, where the holy Jesus is stretching out His hands to save sinners. Can I see this and keep calm?

(2). It should be an excitement of *compassion*. Jesus came not to condemn. Let us beware, lest in our indignation we lose His example and curse where we ought to bless. My poor soul would have been as far gone, as low laid, as God-forsaken as any of these about me but for grace, *free grace*. I see my own history in every child of iniquity. And shall I not pity them? *Christ's pity* for them brought Him to the very ultimate of suffering for them. Is not *that* an argument for pity? Yes, I will weep for them and remember, too, that, when I weep for them, I am confessing my own birthright of sin.

(3). It should be an excitement of *desire*. If Paul had only had *pity* for Athens, Dionysius would never have given up his chair on Areopagus for a seat in heaven. His pity enkindled his *desires*. He longed to see the dead live. He yearned to tear away the Nessus robe of sin that was wrapping this gifted city in its fiery embrace. He would glorify God and rejoice his own heart in showing God's love to these godless Athenians and in opening the doors of their prison, where Satan held them as unconscious captives for his grand day of slaughter.

(4). It was an excitement of *hope*. Christianity neither demands nor prompts anything desperate. The work proposed is not a chimera. It is plain and feasible. It is not man's work, or it would be both desperate and foolish; but it is *God's work through man*. There is the guarantee of its success. It was this divine hope or expectation which gave Paul's desires their full plumage and led them forth from their nest in

his bosom. It was this which nerved him into heroism and sent his name down to us as the synonym of a glorious Christian and of Christian glory. When we look upon the masses of *this* city lying in wickedness, let the excitement of our souls be confirmed by this stout hope which gets its stoutness from the promises of God in Christ. It will open our mouths and quicken our feet and give the work of the Gospel a relish, as if we were eating the figs and pomegranates of Paradise.

The second part of the application of the text refers to our *outward conduct*. After what has been considered regarding the Christian's proper *state of mind* in the midst of a city like ours, it is very easy to define the outward conduct. Paul's religion was no sentimentalism. It did not go and sigh æsthetically on the summit of Hymettus or write sweet poetry in the gardens of the Muses. It burst out into active effort to save men from sin and hell. He did not care whether it was Greece or Scythia,—souls were dying and must be rescued. Something higher than art and deeper than philosophy must be taught in Athens. An oracle more potent than Delphi must be opened there, and a song sweeter than that of Simonides or Sophocles must be sung along the banks of the Ilissus, and Paul has courage enough and faith enough to inaugurate the revolution. His whispers to those poor beggars—his answers to those curious news-seekers—his discussions with those dignified sages—his respectful representations to those venerable councillors are the first notes of that magic spell that is to overthrow the

temples and the idols of Hellas and erect the cross as the symbol of the nation's faith. It is the heart stirred by the sight of surrounding sin that sets the life in healthy action for the Lord's great cause. Alas for work where it has not this internal spring! What a heavy chain the poor conscience-Christian drags, when he is *whipped* into work, and what *poor work* he does! The impulse must come from *within*—all that indignation, compassion, desire, and hope must be there of which we have spoken, and then the life bounds to its Christ-work as the hawk speeds to its quarry. The inward excitement feeds the life and guarantees the progress.

We have used the words "impulse" and "excitement." Let none confound them with "fanaticism." Fanaticism is a *human* impulse—we speak of a *divine* impulse. That Divine Spirit who brought order out of chaos has sanctified the soul by His truth and He gives *wisdom* with energy to the renewed man. We are to carry the Gospel, and, because it *is* the Gospel, the most precious treasure we can bear, we are to carry it with prudence as well as zeal. We are not to rush in the face of every prejudice and defy the rules of courtesy. We are to study occasion and opportunity, character and position. Paul had one style for the jailer at Philippi and another for the dignitaries of Athens,—he had compliment as well as rebuke,—he was affable as well as faithful,—he was all things to all men that by all means he might save some.

The activity that is thus generated and thus ordered will be continuous and not spasmodic. It takes hold

of work with the warm grasp of love, not the feverish clutch of passion. It does not grow weary of work for the Master any more than one grows weary of his daily food. It continues *daily*, as Paul did, because it is a regular and principal, not a collateral, occupation. The Pauline spirit never says, "I'll work hard this week for my own outward prosperity, devoting my chief energies and my best time to this end, and then, if any little hiatus occurs—any temporary lull in the whirl of trade—I'll take a turn or two for Christ." It scorns such a mockery of piety as that in the name of the Master, and carries as its watchword, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." So, it cannot be satisfied with a *proxy* interest in Jesus' work. It cannot say to another, "You do the work and I'll furnish the money." It will not try to make a bundle of greenbacks take the place of the personal Christian arguing, urging, teaching, sympathizing, and helping. You might as well imagine Paul establishing a grand tent manufactory at Tarsus and representing himself at Athens by a fair subscription. Christian *work* for souls is the product of Christian *excitement* for souls, and hence Christian work for souls requires not only the *purse* but the *person*.

Brethren and friends, we have seen what Christianity in New York ought to be from a glance at Paul in Athens. How can *we* stand the comparison? Are we not rebuked? Is there any less need for us to be devoted to the Master's cause than Paul? Has this wonderful nineteenth century, of which we've heard

so much, improved on Pauline Christianity and found out a way by which Christ can be served without hurting the feelings of Mammon? Ah! dear brethren in the Lord Jesus, don't we wish to prepare the eternal kingdom in which we are to dwell? Ought not the love of Christ, the love of souls, and a sanctified love of self, all co-operate to render us faithful to our holy charge? What grander work is revealed to angelic eyes than this of saving souls? What higher triumph can the universe exhibit than the triumph of Him who has rescued an immortal saint from the deep damnation of eternal sin? When our earth-sight, with all its refractions and bedimmings, is exchanged for heaven's clear and true vision, then we shall be dazzled with the glory of this work, when the rest of earth's mementoes are a heap of ashes. Oh! then, in the name of God the Saviour, in the view of eternal light, by the worth of Christ's own work, and by the value of your own salvation, I beseech you, as you look around upon this city so full of idols, let your every pulse beat with pity, purpose, and power for the poor idolaters.

DESIRE FOR DEATH.

Philippians i. 23: "HAVING A DESIRE TO DEPART AND TO BE WITH CHRIST, WHICH IS FAR BETTER."

Is there one before me of whose personal experience this is a correct statement? Is there one here ready to leave this world at once, with affairs of home and business just as they are, with so much unfinished, so much in plan, and so many hopes budding? Nay, more than that, is there one here who, more than *ready*, is *desirous* of quitting this earth with all that is so dear upon it for the heavenly home? The question searches very deeply. Who can use these apostolic words? And yet just as far as we are removed from this aspiration, so far we are removed from completeness in Christ. The matter is one not only of apostolic example, but of logical consistency. If we are so faint-hearted and earthly as to relinquish all efforts toward an apostolic model, we are still held bound by the logical laws of our new life in Jesus. We found salvation in Christ. With salvation we found holiness. We also found these by means of a purchase, where the blood of Jesus was the price, and whereby we became the property of our Deliverer. It was not the purchase of a slave, but a purchase into freedom, and the ownership was not of muscles and sinews, but of

the heart's affections. He gave us a new life; He began in us a new creation; that life grows out of Him as its source; that creation revolves around Him as its regulator. All that is *in* us or *by* us or *with* us of good is the efficient action of Jesus, who is ever with His own people. Christ is the spring of all godliness, for our salvation is the existence of Christ in us. That is our hope of glory. That is why God, looking on the face of His Anointed, is God regarding us with love. Christ is formed in us, and we are identified with Him. Is this too lofty a description of the Christian? It is the *Bible's* description. It is well for us to read it over again and again, for there is a tendency, born of pride and worldliness, to bring down our religious life to a legal standard, and in certain actions or omissions to hide from ourselves the life itself which should be the only prompter of action or omission. This, then, being the very essence of the Christian's true life, Christ in him, that life will be most complete when Christ is most realized and enjoyed. This is the logical consistency which I said lies in the text, as well as does the apostolic example, for our adoption as the saved of the Lord.

In endeavoring to come near to the high platform of Paul to-day, let us consider:

1. *Why people dread death*; and
2. *Why Christians ought to desire it.*

1. *Why do people dread death?* The mass of men mark on their charts a *terra incognita* beyond the grave, and they wish to pay no attention to that region. It is a vague affair in their minds with much

in it that is repulsive, and they would keep their thoughts from it so far as possible. An uncertainty is always unpleasant to dwell upon, and if you put a large element of fearful possibilities into the uncertainty, you make it still more odious. It is this uncertain future with its dim forebodings which makes the mass of men dread death. The uncertainty is the result of the condition of ignorance in which men keep themselves in spite of God's light offered them, and the forebodings are the result of sin recognized by the conscience and suggesting, by the uniform constitution of the soul, the consequent punishment. The only relief the heart can have is in absorbing itself in the present earthly life and so excluding the painful subject from the thoughts. The great majority of men for the great majority of their time succeed by this device, and even gain such a worldly impetus as to be able to carry themselves over those periods of special divine call, when the death of friends and kindred would arrest them, with scarce a momentary shudder. But if you can bring death before them, it is a monster. They have settled it to be such, and as such they have nearly shut it out of their thoughts. No age or nation can produce an exception to this position of hostility between man and death. The Bible only states a fact when it calls death man's enemy. "Bitter as death," "sad as death," "fearful as death," are the common words of the race that show the universal opinion. The quietness and freedom from horror with which men do actually die in no wise militates against this position. It is seldom

that any one finds terrors in the very embrace of death. The soul to whom death is a frightful idea is not affrighted by death itself. The reason of this strange phenomenon is chiefly that the powers of the body are so weakened that the mind is prevented, by the body's decay, from the ordinary activity of thought. And, besides, we are so generally deceived by disease, that the dying man fails to realize the fact that he is in death's embrace. He persistently looks to the time side and not the eternity side of his crisis. In the case of a criminal brought to the gallows where disease does not deceive and where hope of longer life is entirely cut off, there death assumes its dreadful aspect to the soul, and we find the blanched cheek and trembling limbs or else the knit brow and set teeth of fierce determination, either of which opposite appearances proves that death is seen as a dread enemy and cannot be met open-eyed with calmness. No, the quiet death-bed is no argument against the dreadfulness of death to the natural heart of man. Nor is the fact that many seek death, as suicides, an argument against the proposition. If you analyze the suicide's motives, you find he does not really seek *death*, but an *escape from misery*. The man who is pursued by a tiger may leap from the precipice in his desperate desire to escape the raging beast, but surely it cannot be said of him that he is fond of leaping from a precipice and in his fondness seeks it. The very man who takes the fearful leap would have shuddered, in his unexcited moments, at the thought of the precipice and the plunge. The suicide, then, does not, any more

than the easy death-bed, prove aught against the statement that death is man's universally dreaded enemy. This is why you turn from the unwelcome subject or speak of it in bated breath, why you hang its memories and associations with gloom, and why you are ready to pay down all you have for a ransom from its relentless grasp. The great uncertainty, all bristling with forebodings, terrifies you as your most formidable foe.

There is, besides this, a dread of death in its merely physical character, derived from the notion of a bodily struggle—a suffocation—a death agony, in which form a fear of death is too often found among the children of God. Indeed, I know of no other form in which a fear of death *can* exist for *them*. They dread death much in the same way that they would dread a surgical operation or the rack. A vivid imagination and sensitive nerves anticipate dissolution in exaggerated representation, and in this low and crooked view the soul is disturbed. Perhaps, also, the force of habit, formed when unregenerate, is to be traced in some of these unseemly experiences of the Christian heart. I say “unseemly,” which brings me to my other remark, as to—

2. *Why Christians ought to desire death.*

We, who are saved by the blood of Christ, have our future made certain, and all forebodings removed from it, and in this we differ from the unsaved in the very points which make them dread death. Do some dispute my premise, and say: “We Christians have no such certainty at all, and forebodings of the eternal

future are by no means removed entirely from our thoughts"? Then I reply, "You dishonor your Master, the Infinite God and Saviour; you fail to recognize the fulness of His free grace, which He asserts is sufficient for you, and of which He declares 'by grace are ye saved.' You are still holding on to some self-righteous idea of fitness for heaven and of preparing *yourself* for its holiness and bliss. Of course, this being the case, you not only cannot desire death, but you actually dread it. You exhibit the anomaly of one freely and entirely saved from the future retribution dreading that retribution, and making your life restless and unhappy through fear of a slain enemy. You are like Israel in the desert under the mighty tokens of their Deliverer's presence and power, yet stupidly and shamefully whining out their fears of calamity. The Lord, forsooth, had led them out in so marvellous a way only that they should be devoured." What an idea of God and His salvation was that! It must seem strange, indeed, to such Christians to be urged to *desire* death. They have yet the preliminary lesson to learn, *not to dread* death. My dear Christian hearers, do you not know that "the sting of death is sin," and that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and that these are the two Gospel blows that settle death forever for us and leave us no enemy at the grave?

But I wish to lead you to a higher plane of thought and motive than this negative freedom from the fear of death. I wish you to look forward to death with a genuine aspiration after it, so that Paul's sublime

language in the text will exactly express the temper and tendency of your mind. I cannot stop to talk with you about your fear of death's physical character. You are much mistaken in putting such a character as you do upon death physically considered, but even if you were right, you ought to remember that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and that when God's help is wanted it will be given to His own, and not before. To embitter your life and damage your usefulness because of a fear of physical suffering is a cowardly procedure not at all in harmony with high Christian devotion. Look beyond the physical crisis. It is to that glory which lies beyond that I would urge your attention. It was that which evoked the lofty wish of the apostle. Fellow-Christian, we are to love death as we love the gate of Paradise or the messenger from our Heavenly Father's house bringing His dearest message. When Jesus forgave our sins He cleansed our souls with His blood, He renewed us; but our bodies were not renewed, and their contact even mars the renewal of our souls. These bodies must be removed before Christ's work *in* us and *for* us can be realized *by* us. With *them* we'll be rid of sin and infirmity. If we see aright this fact, we shall be as glad to lay aside the whole body as we are to have cut off and buried out of sight a gangrened arm or leg; yea, as far more ready as sin is worse than disease. The desire to be rid of sin, as it finds an approach to us through the body, is a legitimate desire, and one to be entertained and cherished by the soul that has received an unction from the Holy One. This is not the sui-

cide's idea of being rid of trouble and misery. The two are too often confounded. David's cry, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest," was anything but a noble utterance; and the first stanza of Dr. Muhlenberg's beautiful hymn is unworthy the rest:

"I would not live alway—I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er my way,
Where the few lurid mornings that dawn on us here
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer."

The second stanza rises grandly out of this cowardly complaint:

"I would not live alway, thus fettered by sin,
Temptation without and corruption within."

To fly from discomfort and pain may be very natural and in some cases very proper, but it contains no element of sublimity in it; but to fly from sin, to seek to avoid its defilement, to long after a spotless holiness in the very likeness of God, is both unnatural and sublime.

And yet glorious as is such a motive to the desire for the heavenly home, there is a higher still, and this gave the emphasis to Paul's ardent words. "To be with Christ" is the only argument he uses for his aspiration, "Having a desire to depart"; yes, to have this body dissolve, this breath cease, this blood congeal, these eyes close; why? that *I* may depart. *I* am not breath or blood, or eyes or body. I am imprisoned by all these. I am kept away from Christ by these. They must be set aside before I can escape and depart,

not to be unconscious, not simply to be at rest, but to be with Christ. Jesus has wrought my right to the heavenly kingdom into which this flesh and blood cannot enter. He has given me the earnest or pledge of the right's enjoyment in the Holy Spirit who teaches, assures, and comforts me, and now all I wait for is the dropping away of this flesh and blood, that I may enter into the joy of my Lord. I hear Him say, "I have gone to prepare a place for you; where I am, there ye shall be also." My salvation was my union with Christ, and my glorification will be my *completed* union with Christ.

In the contemplation of Jesus the redeemed soul rises above all other considerations. Poetry, and a perfectly true and inspired poetry, may declare the varied pleasures of the future Paradise; affection may tell of the parent or the child who has gone before; but beyond poetry and affection, and yet not depressing either, but lifting them both with itself, is the Christ-oneness which, in its pure aspirations, is the divine magnetism of the renewed heart. The love of Christ is an absorbing but not an excluding love. So far from it, the love of the brethren is actually commensurate with the love of Jesus. The more we find our comfort and strength in the contemplation of the Saviour, the more we are pleased to discover His likeness and spirit in the persons of His own people, and the more we are drawn toward all men as the potential temples of His beauty. We love our children and our kindred the more ardently and unselfishly, when we love Jesus supremely and unspeakably, and the

heart that is most desirous of reaching heaven because Christ is there, is the heart that views with highest anticipations the reunion in that home of the saved with the dear ones from whom it has been separated here. No fibre of affection has to wither in order that the love of Christ may attain its proper growth, but all affection is purified and sanctified by this pure and sacred devotion. There is a high and heavenly romance in this affection, where romance is not opposed to *truth*, but to the *humdrum* of a grovelling human monotony. Most romantic and truest of all things is this enthusiastic love of Christ.

I wish I could fill the souls of the young who are here with this enthusiasm of love for the Loveliest. God, as man, teaching us at every experience with the tenderest sympathy raised to a divine intensity, and gently persuading us to the open door of pardon through His own suffering, is a theme for the rapture of devotion beside which all ordinary romance is dull. There is so much of the mere technics and philosophy of religion thrust forward in the world; so much of speculative theology and polemical metaphysics, that the exquisite power of the cross of Jesus upon the affections is impeded, and the rich love-side of religion is almost as completely hidden from many as the other side of the moon. Now, all the intellectual orthodoxy in the universe could never produce Paul's glorious aspiration. Paul, with the soundest sense and highest culture, gave himself up to the rapture of the personal love of Christ. It was this which gave him the motive of life, "The love of Christ constraineth me." It was this

which taught his eagle eye to penetrate the heavens, while his lips exclaimed, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." "To be with Christ." Oh! word of transport! under the power of this completed companionship anticipated by the heart that Jesus has taught to love Him, how can we but welcome death and urge its coming as the coming of our Beloved, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Corinthians xi. 24-26 : "THE LORD JESUS CHRIST THE SAME NIGHT HE WAS BETRAYED TOOK BREAD, AND WHEN HE HAD GIVEN THANKS, HE BRAKE IT AND SAID : TAKE, EAT, THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU ; THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. AND AFTER THE SAME MANNER ALSO HE TOOK THE CUP, WHEN HE HAD SUPPED, SAYING : THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD ; THIS DO YE, AS OFT AS YE DRINK IT, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. FOR AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK THIS CUP, YE DO SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME."

THE Lord's Supper is a very simple ordinance, though representing the profoundest mystery to the human mind. It is the eating bread and drinking wine in memory of Christ as the one who died for us, but the death thus memorialized was the atonement for sin, and was the death of the Eternal Word become flesh, and that life and death, with all the precious and comforting things we know of them, must nevertheless be ever an impenetrable mystery to our finite minds. There is no mystery in the Lord's Supper, but a wonderful mystery in that which it memorializes. Regarding the Lord's Supper we may make the following remarks :

1. *It is commanded by our Lord.* "This do in remembrance of me" is the order of our Lord Jesus

himself to all His disciples. A disciple who refuses to go to the Lord's Table, or who neglects it, is directly disobeying the blessed Master. All excuses are vain. One says, "I can have holy thoughts about Jesus and His death without going to the table." But that is not the question. Doubtless you can have holy thoughts without going to the table, but the question is not about having holy thoughts, but about obeying the command of Jesus your Lord. Though you saw no good in the exercise, yet it would be your duty to go, simply because your Saviour commands you. Another says, "But I have been so worldly this past month or two, I cannot go to the Lord's Table." What an excuse! and yet it is one most commonly made. We are so worldly we cannot go near our Lord! Why, it is just the time to go to Him in every way we can, and beg Him to sanctify us. Our need of the Holy Supper is very great, and thither we should hasten. Where is the logic in saying, "Because I have been so worldly, I will now disobey my Lord"? The command is as much to me when wandering off as when walking near. The words do not alter "Do this in remembrance of me." I'm afraid that this view of the matter does not appear to the minds of some Christians who keep away from the Eucharist. They do not think that they are deliberately breaking a divine command. They do not realize that they are also running directly counter to that saying of our Lord's, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." How can any Christian expect to enjoy the benefits of

Christ's love, if he wilfully and systematically set aside one of His commandments to be disregarded? There are doubtless some now present who have habitually slighted this divine command, and yet they would deem it a hard thing to be cut off from our Lord. They count themselves Christians. They pray and they find comfort in God's word. They look upon other Christians as their brethren. Why do they keep away from the table of the Lord? The same Lord who said, "Watch and pray" and "Search the Scriptures," also said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Perhaps false notions regarding the Lord's Supper are floating in their minds. Let me essay to correct them. I remark, then,

2. *The Lord's Supper is not a judgment-seat.* Superstition has fostered the idea that the Lord's Table was like the ancient ark of God, which Uzzah died for touching. The elements have been clothed with a supernatural character and power in themselves, so as even to demand worship, and a false church bows down to worship the consecrated bread as God. All this is the wildness of superstition. The bread is only bread and the wine is only wine. The value of the feast is solely in the faith of the partaker. Just as in prayer my words are worthless unless I have faith, so in the Eucharist my eating and drinking is but an empty form unless I have faith. The great law of holy association demands a reverential demeanor at the Lord's Supper, as it does in prayer, but it is not because there is any divine power or character in the emblems used. All that

notion belongs to a system of priestcraft, by which holiness is supposed to flow through a priest mechanically and so sanctify and even deify the bread and wine. It is simply Paganism introduced into Christianity. It is from such a false notion comes the idea that some judgment will come upon any one who goes to the Lord's Table when guilty of any inconsistency. It is true the Corinthians were punished by disease (in the apostolic day of miraculous intervention) for turning the Lord's Supper into a secular feast full of excess, not because the Lord's Supper was in its elements divine, but because any such travesty of a religious service is an abomination. Certainly, any one who would go thoughtlessly and carelessly to the Lord's Table, just as one who goes thoughtlessly and carelessly to prayer, despises holy things and degrades himself. But this is a very different thing from going, when full of the consciousness of our sinfulness. Our Lord loves to have such come to Him in any of His appointed ways. This leads to a third thought:

3. *Worthiness* in coming to the Lord's Table is *faith in Christ as our Saviour*. Worthiness is not our inherent goodness, but our trust in Christ's goodness. "I'm not good enough" is the frequent answer to the question, "Why do you not come and remember Jesus at His table?" If our goodness were to be the standard, when should we be worthy? Who could ever reckon his own goodness as a passport to his God and Judge? The thought is absurd. The apostle in our text says, "Whosoever shall eat

this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," that is, the unworthy partaker insults the Lord in His great redeeming work. But how does the apostle explain the word unworthily afterward? Hear. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, *not discerning the Lord's body.*" There is the definition of the unworthiness. It is "not discerning the Lord's body," not recognizing our Saviour's death for us, for as He again says, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *show the Lord's death* till He come." The apostle, therefore, warns all thoughtless and careless persons to refrain from coming, but the humble-hearted disciple, however weak and full of doubts and fears, however ignorant, however burdened, is welcomed, according to our blessed Lord's own invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

4. The remembrance of Jesus is the remembrance not simply of His life, but especially of His *death*. "Ye do show the Lord's *death.*" It is not chiefly Christ's example, although that is so conspicuous, but it is His sacrificial work which we are to bear in mind. "He has made sin for us who knew no sin." "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." He is "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." He "died for our sins." "We have redemption through His blood." His church "He hath purchased with His own blood." "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, obtain-

ing eternal redemption for us." "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." These are some of the many declarations of God's Word asserting the central fact of Christ's redemption to be His death. And this death we remember in the Eucharist. His death was our life. He died that we might live. He suffered that we might rejoice. And so—

5. This holy supper is a feast of joy. It is not a place of sighing and mourning. It is solemn, but not sad. It is a place where of all others we are entitled to rejoice and give thanks, because our Lord Jesus has freed us from the curse. It is here ('tis true) we think of His death, but we think of it in the light of His present and eternal life and of our life with Him. It is death we commemorate, but it is a death which conquered death, a death which is the root of endless life. It was not by an accident that the bread and wine which symbolized His broken body and shed blood also symbolized the support and joy of life, and we only then understand the symbols when we exult in the strength given us by our Lord through His death. The supper is rightly called, from the Greek word used in the sacred narrative, the Eucharist—that is, the Thanksgiving. Here we give thanks, as our Lord did when He distributed the bread and wine, and see how good God is to us in delivering us from the only foe that is to be feared, that is, sin. The gloom that has

been hung about the Lord's Supper by some churches is directly contrary to the intention of the institution. It is like the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles all in one, a time of spiritual gladness, and these churches have turned it into a day of atonement, a day of afflicting one's soul. Never was a more complete perversion of a divine institution.

6. *The Lord's Supper is a covenant feast.* But it is not that we make a covenant with God, but that He makes a covenant with us. The only covenant between God and man that is worth anything is where God promises and man gratefully accepts. If man promises, then the covenant is sure to be broken. This cup (says our Lord) is the new covenant in my blood. That is, it is the old covenant of God's grace, which was formerly sealed by the blood of bulls and goats, now made a new covenant by the seal becoming Christ's blood instead. It is God's promise all the same as before, but now in place of the typical blood we have the real blood of the Divine Lamb of God. The feast is a feast where God who promises and we who receive the promise sit down together in an eternal friendship, made so by the blood of the covenant. Hence all notion of our vowing anything at the Lord's Table is utterly foreign to its character. All our hymnology and theological phraseology which employs the word "vow" is altogether erroneous, and only leads to a Romanistic and pagan self-righteousness. We vow nothing at all. We gratefully bow before God's

grace and accept His wonderful love and mercy, and rejoice therein. That is our position. Such a position will necessarily prompt us to a holier life, but we do not *vow* a holier life. Such a vow would be presumption and folly. We *hope* to lead a holier life. We *long* to lead a holier life. We *try* to lead a holier life. But we *vow nothing*. The covenant is all of God's promise and our acceptance by faith. Let me here say in passing that all Old Testament vows were simply promises to give *money* or the *equivalent of money* to the temple or to the service of God. Even such vows belong only to a church in the shadow, to a typical church. They are marks of nonage. But in vain will you look for a vow approved of God (in the Old Testament) to be better, to grow in grace, to live nearer to God. We can pray for these things, but we cannot vow them. Doddridge's hymn (which we find in almost every collection), "Oh happy day that fixed my choice on Thee, my Saviour and my God," is spoiled by the second and fifth verses, one beginning, "Oh happy bond that seals my vows," and the other, "High heaven that hears the solemn vow, that vow renewed shall daily hear." It makes our union with Christ a legalism, instead of the acceptance of grace pure and simple. This is one of the most pernicious errors that have fastened upon the Lord's Supper, and it is found in almost every denomination of Christians. It is the starting-point of terrorism regarding the delightful Supper of our Lord, to which we should go with great joy and alacrity.

With these remarks regarding the character of the Eucharist, I would especially address those before me who are believers in the Lord Jesus, and who yet have never obeyed His command, "Do this in remembrance of me."

You are keeping yourselves from much enjoyment. You are retarding your spiritual life. When the Lord has given you the Holy Supper as a means of grace, and you resolutely refuse it, you cannot grow in grace. That refusal is a complete block in your road. The power and the comfort of the Gospel cannot be felt by you. I have already endeavored to show you the fallacy of your excuses. Our Lord Jesus is a treasury of peace and joy to the believer, but you cannot draw on that treasury, while you steadfastly neglect the conditions. Your Christian experience must necessarily be a very low and unsatisfactory one in such a case. But furthermore, you are setting a pernicious example. You are giving others a false idea of the Lord's Supper. You are teaching them either that it is a matter of small importance, or that it is a recondite mystery to shrink from, and both these teachings are false. You are keeping others from the helpfulness of the Eucharist, and so lessening their spiritual supports. Are you willing to bear that responsibility? To each one of you the Spirit of God virtually says to-day, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

One word to children. So soon as you are able to define your own love to Christ, you are ready to

come to His table. So soon as you can discern the Lord's body—that is, so soon as you can understand that Jesus died for you and be grateful to Him for His salvation—you ought to come to His table to remember Him. I do not expect a grown person's experience in a child. I do not expect a grown person's knowledge in a child. But if anything is true, it is true that a very young child can understandingly love the Lord Jesus. And of such we can appropriately quote our Lord's words and safely apply them to the Memorial Supper, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Let parents take this Scriptural view of the subject and not keep their children from the Lord's Table because they are not aged saints. The memory of our dear Lord's death will be to us all the best guard against earthly evils, and that memory should get its central force in that ordinance which He Himself instituted, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me."

THE CONNECTION OF SIN AND JUDGMENT.

Psalm ix. 16 : "THE LORD IS KNOWN BY THE JUDGMENT WHICH HE EXECUTETH : THE WICKED IS SNARED IN THE WORK OF HIS OWN HANDS."

ALL the false religions of the world begin their error in failing to recognize the character of sin, that it is an evil infecting the whole nature, that it is an alienation from God, and that no human application can cure it. Without this recognition there can be no true humility, no true repentance, no true turning to God for salvation. It is very natural that sinful man, with this ignorance of the character of his sinfulness, should repel the thought of eternal punishment, and should even repel the thought of *all* punishment from God, and scout all such doctrine as being hell-fire and brimstone theology fit for savages. From such a standpoint the Bible, of course, is a barbarous book, for it very clearly teaches these horrid doctrines, and so human philosophy in its ignorant pride loves to ridicule the Scriptures and show its sublime contempt for the teaching of prophets and apostles and of Jesus Christ himself. One of the forms of this ridicule is the picturing of God as a tyrant delighting in cruelty, or as a taskmaster hold-

ing the lash over the innocent soul. Man is an inoffensive creature and God is a persecutor. This (they say) is what our Bible teaches, and then they burst into indignation against *us*, the dupes of such fables. If we suggest to them that perhaps they do not know very much of what the Bible teaches, they fall back on their learning and refinement, and pity our weakness. In vain we endeavor to show them that the God of the Bible is described at Sinai as "merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," and that at Calvary His name is written in living letters as "Love." In vain we endeavor to show them that He calls upon all and urges them to come to Him and be saved, using the tenderest language and promising the richest rewards. In vain we endeavor to show them that the whole meaning and intent of the Bible is mercy and salvation to our lost race, and that its dark colors only set forth its bright ones more forcibly. They will not hear, but they continue their old cant of hatred and malignity against the sacred oracles, the same that Porphyry and Celsus indulged in, the same that the proud heart has used in every age since, in its impatience under the divine rebuke. Let us to-day examine those special features of the holy record which so exasperate the natural man, and find out what are the judgments of the Lord, and what relation they sustain to the Gospel of salvation.

1. First, then, *the judgments of God are a neces-*

sary background of the Gospel. The Gospel is good tidings of salvation, of a rescue from impending evil. Then there *is* an evil to be saved and rescued from. There is a calamity impending, or else we should not need or have a Gospel. As I said before, it is at this initial fact the unbelieving stumble. They do not appreciate the meaning of the dark cloud over them. They believe it to be a delusion. They only need to rub their eyes a little to rub it away. There is no reality in it. They cannot believe that they are lost and ruined souls, especially if they have healthy bodies and full purses. Their relation to God they do not understand. They have no spiritual eyesight by which they can see it. They compare themselves with gross forms of evil and, delighted with the contrast, they are satisfied with their standing. The high standard of infinite holiness they know nothing about. The words from heaven, "Be ye holy as I am holy," have no meaning to them, or if they have a meaning, they must be addressed to the savages of Africa, or to the criminal classes among us. They certainly cannot be addressed to the refined and moral elements of society. Jesus rebuked the young ruler for using the word "good" so glibly, as if goodness was the common possession of men, or, at least, of respectable men. By this rebuke He showed him that his foundation was all sand, that he had no right idea of the thoroughly *bad* condition of the human heart. Man's pride indorses the "newspaper religion" of the day, and reckons any act of benevolence or any lenity

toward sin as *goodness*, and makes no account of the soul's position toward God. But from God's point of view the heart of man is altogether detached from the source of good; it has no connection or affiliation with it; it is selfish in its highest attainments, and, if left to itself, must become eventually absolutely isolated and self-consuming. The virtues that look fair on the exterior and are called by the names of patriotism, benevolence, affability, courtesy, and family affection have no root in God, and hence no real or permanent value. They are like the beauty of the countenance or the grace of bodily movement, very admirable in themselves, but having no spiritual connections. They do not come from a heart sanctified by the Spirit of God, nor do they produce sanctification. Because they are agreeable and commendable, they cannot claim to be godly, and it is only in the godly heart that any godly goodness (and there is no other) can exist. It is for this reason that the Scriptures assure us that the whole world lieth in wickedness. All men, who are not renewed by the Spirit of God, are wandering away from God, and to this wandering and lost race comes the Gospel, calling upon them to turn to God and be saved. The alternative is, and must be, destruction. The judgments of God are therefore the necessary background of the Gospel, and *they* are short-sighted and ignorant souls who deprecate the preaching of these judgments. They would have no watchman give the note of danger when the house is on fire. They would have all say "Peace, peace," when there

is no peace. They would have ministers prophesy smooth things, when they know that eternal woe awaits the unconverted sinner. This is the folly of which human pride and human philosophy are guilty.

Why did Christ come into the world? Why did He suffer and die on the cross? Why did His apostles labor through untold tribulations to martyrdom? Why is the Gospel proclaimed throughout the world? Is it all to tell men to live as they lived? to be what they were? to think as they thought? Were all these sufferings endured in order to show men that they were very good, and that they only had to go on in the same way to reach heaven? Or was it to insist that men must be born again, that they must become new creatures, that they must abandon or expel the old man and put on the new man, that they must have the stony heart removed and the heart of flesh implanted, and that this all must be done by the union by faith with the Son of God, who alone atones for sin and sends His Spirit to sanctify? Here is the distinguishing mark of the Gospel. This is what differentiates it from all human philosophies; and any attempt to square it with human philosophy is to degrade it and destroy it. The Gospel proclaims a heaven indeed, but it also proclaims a hell. Men will accept the former, but they would reject the latter. The Gospel proclaims God's love indeed, but it also proclaims the everlasting punishment of those that reject it. The Gospel proclaims joy and peace unutterable, but it also proclaims weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. They that would

teach the one without the other are false teachers, cruel shepherds misleading their flocks and guiding them to ruin. It is the device of Satan to make men believe that they can go on in their godlessness and self-indulgence here as much as they please, and that the Gospel tells them that all will be made smooth and sweet for them hereafter. It is this false gospel that a so-called *liberal* Christianity preaches, which is no Christianity, but a paganism borrowing a few Christian phrases. And it is this false gospel which many in *our* churches practically uphold, whose lives are far from God, but who wear the name of Christian. The judgments of God form a side of the Gospel which they need to behold and study.

2. But now, secondly, our text shows us that *the judgments of God are the wilful achievements of the sinner himself*. The picture, often set before the mind, of God approaching *ab extra* and scourging the sinner for his sins, a picture very naturally arising from our knowledge of punishment here as inflicted by the parent or the schoolmaster or the officer of the law, is not a correct view of God's dealings with the sinner. God does *not* approach *ab extra*, but He punishes the sinner by the working of a spiritual law, which He has ordained precisely as He has ordained the laws of inanimate nature. If a man put his hand in the fire, his hand is burned. God has punished him for his folly, but the punishment is through the operation of a law, established by infinite wisdom, and under which the most useful

results to society are obtained. If fire did not regularly burn, where would be our iron-foundries, our manufactories of all kinds, our steamers, nay, our houses, our clothing, and our food? It is the very law that does all this good to man which burns my finger when I put it into the flame. To have exceptions to this law whenever I put my finger into the flame would be to destroy the law and put nature under the capricious will of man. I am placed in this world with the mind and its faculties to be used. I learn that fire burns, and I am to have sense enough not to put my finger into the flame. I am a responsible agent, not an automaton, and I am to look where I walk and what I do. No one can but blame me if I run counter to these laws of matter which God has established. Man may wish to be free from them, but he cannot be. They are part of his environment, and he might as well wish to be free from his hands or his head. We are rational beings and, as such, are to adapt ourselves to the facts around us.

Just so in our spiritual life we have the environment of God's laws, established in infinite wisdom for the most useful and glorious results. But just in proportion to the usefulness and glory of these results are, on the other hand, the terrific consequences of breaking these laws. I can burn my *soul* as well as my *finger*. I can defy the laws which God has made for my spiritual being, and so can bring upon my spiritual life the unspeakable agony of spiritual suffering. And this is the secret of all punishment for sin. It is God's punishment, but the sinner wields

the rod with his own hands. In the words of our text, "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." Herein is the wonderful wisdom and justice of God revealed. "The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." You see how it is God's judgment and yet the work of the sinner's own hands. What folly, then, for infidels to talk of a cruel God, that would plunge His creatures into eternal ruin! Is God cruel who burns my finger in the flame into which I myself thrust it? Just as much is God cruel who burns the sinner's soul in the everlasting burnings into which the sinner deliberately casts himself by defying the laws of the spiritual life. The Lord executes the judgment of hell by those wise and righteous laws whereby men can be exalted to a heavenly exaltation, and whereby, by their defiance, the wicked is eternally snared in the work of his own hands.

And now this great principle, which illustrates the action of sin in its finality, adumbrates that final action in this earthly life. The youth who defies the laws of morality and yields to the desires of the flesh breaks down his physical constitution and weakens his mind, and either dies young or loads his life with painful infirmities. The earth is strewn with these wrecks of dissipation. The so-called life of pleasure is only a prelude to a life of pain. Time spent in idle indulgence necessarily is followed by the time of weariness and despondency. The lying and deceitful man is setting snares all along his future

pathway. The passionate and vindictive soul manufactures the assaults which afterward destroy him. No greater fallacy was ever entertained than that which so many young persons entertain, that they can sin now, and, when they grow older, can turn from their sins and have a smooth time. That is an impossibility. It is possible, indeed, for a sinner to repent and be saved by God's grace, but God's grace does not undertake to save the earthly life from the fearful consequences of wilful sin. The deep scars will remain, and many a wound will bleed afresh all through this life, even where the forgiveness of God is received and the hope that maketh not ashamed is gained. Many a saint of God is held down from the higher enjoyments of the life of faith by the bitter memories of a wilful past and the presence of evil thoughts which remain to him from his career of sin. Every lie, every cheating, every act of anger, every work of lust, is a sad discount on the peace of the soul, even where the soul becomes renewed by the Holy Spirit. Much more is it true that every evil action does its corrupting work in the life that is never regenerated. It brings the soul down to a lower level. It makes it more open to the possession of Satan. It renders it less accessible to grace. It is one step more toward the final hell. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Brethren, in view of this eternal principle, so clearly set forth in God's Word, how odious sin becomes to the right mind! How false it is to talk

of little sins! How false it is to make light of sin! What alternative have we but to turn away from all the seductions of the flesh and of the world? And how can we do this, unless the superior attractions of Christ our Saviour, His love, His holiness, His glory, win our souls? All other plans will fail. Human resolution is of no account. We may sign a thousand pledges, and we shall break them all. There's no anchorage for the soul, which will keep it from drifting into the rapids of sin, but the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can hold us fast, when the whirlwinds of passion would carry us away. He alone can give us the divine calmness which speaks with authoritative voice, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Brethren, our consistency in the Christian life is in dwelling in Christ. Dwelling there, we shall despise the vanities of the world and escape those gilded sins which cause so many Christians to fall. We shall there spurn the invitations of the godless to come and join them in their schemes of evil and their gay triflings with time and talents, and we shall be secure, outside of the line of the divine judgments which we have been contemplating.

If there be any here to-day who know nothing of Jesus Christ as the refuge for the soul, I would earnestly beseech them to consider the principle of the divine government enunciated in the text. You are directly in the current of the divine judgments. You are ensnaring yourselves in the work of your own hands. You are sinning against the spiritual laws of your being, and must inevitably meet the

inexorable demands of those laws. You can no more escape your eternal damnation than the man who leaps from a tower can escape the mutilation of his body. And this is no edict of a cruel God—it is your own work entirely. It is God's judgment, only as it is the working of His holy and righteous laws. To flee from the wrath to come is your one duty. Nothing else is to be thought of. And you *can* flee—this very moment you can find a sure, an eternal refuge in Christ.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEMPTATION.

Matthew vi. 13 : "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

THE Greek word which is commonly translated "temptation" in the New Testament, has the old double meaning of that word, which we generally now express by two distinct words, "temptation" and "trial." The Latin word "*tento*" or "*tempto*," whence we derive our word "temptation," also had the double meaning. The root idea is "to try or prove" a thing, to test it so as to show its quality or value, but as such trial is often made in order to expose the faults of a thing, and is also made to show the worth and high value of a thing, the word came to be used with both meanings, according to the object of the one "trying." If Satan tries us, he tries us in order to develop our wickedness; but if God tries us, it is to develop faith in Him. To the former we are now apt to confine our use of the word "temptation," and to the latter we assign the word "trial," but it was not so in King James' day, and hence we read in the translation of Scripture of that day, "God tempted Abraham," where most certainly it is not intended that God endeavored to expose and increase the sin of Abraham. We are to keep these

two applications of the word in mind as we read the sacred volume. We have many examples in English of a word of neutral meaning gradually becoming so commonly used for one application as to lose almost altogether its use in the other. For example, the word "disappoint" is such a neutral word, meaning simply to fail in an appointment or expectation. But it is almost always used for such a failure as brings sorrow, whereas it might be used for such as brings joy. But in this latter case we now put the adverb "agreeably" before it, and say, "I was agreeably disappointed." Without the adverb it would mark a sorrow. So "temptation" may be a trial for our good or a trial for our harm, according to the intention of the one tempting or trying.

Still again, we may readily conceive that the same course of events may be used by Satan to tempt us to evil and by God to strengthen us in faith. The events then become a temptation to us in both senses. God permits Satan to tempt us to evil. In such a case God is tempting us too, but in the sense of *trying* us. Satan's purpose is our ruin. God's purpose is our welfare through renewed experience and strength.

Let us apply these principles to some of the texts of Scripture where the word occurs: "God did tempt Abraham" (Gen. xxii. 1); *i. e.*, God did put Abraham's faith to the test to strengthen it. "Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" (Exod. xvii. 2); *i. e.*, "Wherefore do ye make trial of the Lord's patience as to when it must cease?" So Jesus says, "Why

tempt ye me?" (Matt. xxii. 18); *i. e.*, "Why do ye test my ability by such a question?" "That Satan tempt you not" (1 Cor. vii. 5); *i. e.*, that Satan seduce you not into evil. "They that will be rich fall into temptation" (1 Tim. vi. 9); *i. e.*, into allure-ment to evil. "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation"; *i. e.*, who bears the trial, whether it come directly from God (as Abraham's did) or from Satan, permitted by God. "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." Here it is evident and expressed, that the temptation is to sin, an inducement and allure-ment to commit iniquity.

With this explanation and illustration of the word, we are prepared to examine and understand the sixth petition of the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." The Revision has the better verb in this passage, "*Bring us not into temptation,*" since it is not a leader going before, but simply a power exerted that is denoted. God is besought that His power may not be exerted toward our delivery to temptation. But how is God's power ever so used? We have seen that it is so used in two ways: first, by direct order, as in the case of Abraham, and this would include the divine arrangement of life's circumstances (or, as the modern philosophers call it, our *environment*); and secondly, by permitting Satan to allure us to sin. This latter God may do to strengthen His own people through showing them their weakness, and that only in Him can they be

safe ; or He may do it when He finally gives over the sinner to sin and eternal death. Let us consider each case, and we will regard them in the inverse order.

1. The prayer cannot have relation to the final giving over of the sinner to Satan, for the sinner in such case would not wish to pray at all. The child who says "Our Father" has not a final giving over to Satan to fear. The two parts of the prayer could not be made to agree with such a meaning.

2. The second case is where God permits Satan to tempt the soul to evil. Why does God give such permission? Because (1) we need to know by experience our own weakness. We need to have a realizing sense of the fact that the powers of darkness have such allies in our own hearts that, if left to ourselves, we are completely at their mercy. This is not plaguing or tantalizing us. It is making us know the simple truth, which we ought to know. Unless we know the truth, we cannot walk according to the truth. All forms of human pride in philosophy and conduct arise from ignorance of this great truth of human weakness before sin's allurements. Men fall into sin's snares, and yet think that they have power to resist sin if they wish. They make good resolutions and then fall again. Then, instead of seeing that they must inevitably fall before the stronger power, they think that they made some mistake in their resolution and preparation, and that they will not be snared again, but when the temptation comes, again they fall. It will be always so, until the soul discovers that it has absolutely *no* strength against sin. Now

God suffers Satan to tempt the soul to sin, in order to teach this great lesson of human weakness. He suffers Satan to tempt His own redeemed children for the same purpose, for they too often forget how weak they are, and need the same treatment with the unbeliever. Good Job had to be so taught, and Satan was allowed to tempt him so that Job fell into a wretched condition of proud talking and boasting and complaining, until his own development of folly before God opened his eyes and made him fall down and confess his abhorrence of himself and his sincere repentance. God did not here directly tempt Job to evil, for God cannot do that to any being. That would be collusion with evil. But God allowed Satan, who is always watching to do it, to tempt Job to evil, in order that Job might be led into the good and true path, by no longer relying on himself but only on God. Let no one say that this is the same thing as if God had directly tempted Job to the evil. There's a world-wide difference. Is there no difference between your *urging* your child to meddle with the fire, and your *letting* him in his waywardness meddle with it under your parental oversight? You know the difference at once. The former would make you guilty of seeking his hurt. The latter shows you active in seeking his good. And *that* is just why God allows evil to tempt His children, so that He may be said to *bring* them into temptation, but not to *lead* them into it.

But (2) not only to have us know our own weakness does God do this, but also that, through

knowledge of our weakness, we may go to Him for strength. We have self-reliance so deeply rooted in us, that it takes a great deal of rough experience to root it out. We think (in spite of a correct logic) that we have *some* moral strength; and hence our acceptance of God, though perfectly honest and true so far as it goes, is but partial. We do not take Him for our *All in all*. Hence He wishes us to feel that our flesh and heart fail, that He may be the strength of our heart. The Psalmist's highest strains of devotion use the frequent note, "O Lord, my strength," and hence his joy and courage. "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" To know our weakness and have no refuge, as is so often the case with the practical atheists of the world, is despair; but to know our weakness and to have God as our strength is the very top of joy. It is then the Christian sings the paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is the response to that most gracious word of God, "My strength is *made perfect* in weakness." It is no little hint of security, but it is the *perfection* of strength which is given to the faithful heart. Luther, at Worms, is only a type of *every* Christian who is strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Is not such a consummation well worth the temptation of the devil, to which the Lord exposes us at times? If the road be foul, is not the goal exceeding fair? Would we have it otherwise if we could? The strong Christian is the weak one. The strongest Christian is he who in his heart of hearts knows and feels that he is of himself utterly

powerless before evil powers. So long as he has a grain of trust in himself, his strength is marred and defeat is before him.

3. But the third case of our temptation is where God directly, by our constitution and environment, tries us. Here it is no allurements to sin, which is permitted, but the behests of duty which call for action. Our relations in life to others call for self-denial, self-sacrifice, and positive aggressions in various directions. God has directly placed us in these relations which demand these duties. These duties are His commands. They are trials. They are of a thousand forms. They are given on purpose to cause us to exercise our highest powers as guided by the Holy Spirit. They demand the Divine strength, just as do the temptations of Satan. These trials are of the same nature as Abraham's trial in the command to offer up Isaac. They are calls upon us to give up something very dear, to do that which is directly counter to our natural tastes and desires. The daily little self-denials of life come legitimately under this head. We would like to be rid of these annoyances. But what would we be if we had not been disciplined by them? To what a fearful size our selfishness would have grown if it had not been reduced by these repeated depletions! What are these but mercies in disguise, which yet produce in us so much fretfulness and impatience. Are they not knocking off rough angles and polishing the surface of character? Are they not the strokes of the divine artist forming us more and more into the likeness of Christ? We may

see how in such direct trials from the Almighty, Satan sees his opportunity and presents his special temptation to sin, not now in the way of gross or positive vice, but in the way of a rebellious position toward duty. So the two ideas embraced in the word "temptation," and which we in modern English generally distinguish by the two words "temptation" and "trial," are seen to be closely allied after all. In every case the Christian may see that God is behind all, seeking the soul's welfare; and hence the apostle James' remarkable saying, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

But now, if this be the philosophy of temptation, why should we pray, "Bring us not into temptation"? Should we not rather pray, "Keep us ever *in* temptation"? Have we not found temptation to be such a helper of grace that we cannot do without it, and hence cannot pray against it? Have we not reached a contradiction? Wait a moment. Is a medicine to be *always* taken, as if it were a beverage? Because it has a health-giving power, must it take the place of ordinary food and drink? May we not by prudence in diet and mode of life lessen the necessity of taking medicine? Ah! here is the cue to our petition, "Bring us not into temptation"; not that we do not wish to grow in grace; not that we do not wish to be strong and healthy Christians, but that we desire to be *so* strong and healthy as not to need the trial and temptation. We long to be so full of love to God and man that the severe discipline may be no longer needed. And so this petition

corresponds to all the others in the Lord's prayer. The whole prayer seeks the highest development of the Christian life. It asks for the fulness of God's kingdom upon earth and in our own hearts. The first three petitions, "Hallowed be Thy name," "Thy kingdom come," "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," all look to the perfection of Christ's work in a pure and perfect church. The other four petitions, "Give us this day our daily bread" (not simply food for the body, but the nourishment of our souls), "Forgive us our debts as we forgive *our* debtors," "Lead us not into temptation," and "Deliver us from the Evil One," all look to the perfection of Christ's work in our own hearts, when, fully nourished by God's Word and Spirit, we have all love toward our fellows, and will not need the teachings of trial and temptation to keep us close to God. The petition, then, which we have been considering is not a cowardly cry to escape trial in every case, but a prayer for that higher holiness of heart which will diminish our need of trial. So long as we need trials, let us from a high standpoint of observation "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations," humbly using the lesson of entire dependence on God, which is thus administered in a gracious though afflictive providence; but this does not militate against our prayer to God to bring us not into temptation and trial through our ready heed to former lessons and our closer life with God.

Let us then, dear brethren, keep our ears attentive unto the Lord's words, and seek to do His holy will

in all our daily conduct; let us weigh everything in heavenly balances, let us bring everything to the touchstone of Divine truth, let us purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, let us live here on earth with our eyes fixed on the heavenly habitations, let us be forever done with worldly compromises which disfigure our piety and disgrace us before the higher intelligences, and then we shall be able to offer up the petition of our text and its connected one with a profound meaning in the thought and a happy expectation of the divine answer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

1 Peter i. 19: "THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST."

How fond is Peter of this word "precious" as applied to the things of salvation! He tells us in the chapter where our text occurs "that the trial of our faith is much more precious (timion) than that of gold." In the next chapter he refers to Jesus as a stone chosen and precious, and then quotes from Isaiah, "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone elect, precious" (entimon), and then he adds, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious" (timē). In his second epistle he writes to them who have obtained "like precious (isotimon) faith," and speaks of the "exceeding great and precious (timion) promises." No other writer in the New Testament uses the Greek root, thus translated, in such connection. It is a peculiarity of Peter. It is a mark of the intensity of spirit with which he valued his salvation in Christ. He remembered his impetuous pride and his denial of his Master, and from this standpoint of his gross unworthiness he saw the wonders of his redemption by the blood of Jesus. The word is one applied to most rich and costly gems, and refers to value. In one of its forms it denotes that which

receives honor. Our own word "precious" is our nearest synonym for the Greek, and well conveys the double idea of esteem and affection.

We have seen in our quotations that Peter counted the *promises* about Christ precious, that he reckoned the *faith* of Christ precious, and the *trial* of that faith equally precious. He also calls *Christ himself* precious, and in our text it is the *blood* of Christ that receives the same impressive title. We now have to do with this last. Why does he select the *blood* of Christ? Why not the *life* of Christ? Why not His *teachings*? Were not His life and teachings most conspicuous manifestations of His divine excellence? I suppose Peter would have called them precious, too, but by his emphatic use of the word with the blood of Christ, he seems to put the blood in a very prominent place. Surely no one who wished to show Christ as fulfilling His mission by being our exemplar in a true and holy life would have ever thought of making His blood so conspicuous. It is true we might speak of a martyr's precious blood, where we would refer to the value of the blood in witnessing for the truth of a holy cause, but we cannot speak of Christ's blood as that of a martyr. He was a Jew by nation and religion, and put to death by Jews. Their charge against Him was not that He taught a new religion, but that He used blasphemy. Christ's death, instead of being a witness to the truth, as was the death of martyrs, was a *blow* to the truth. It staggered His own disciples. It appeared to be the downfall of His pretensions and

the ruin of their hopes. It was His *resurrection* which declared Him the Son of God with power. It was His *conquest over* death which gave the song of triumph to His followers, and made the death of martyrs afterward so precious as testimonies to their living Lord.

The death of Jesus is thus intrinsically different from that of the martyrs, and it is not as we say of *martyrs* that we say of *Him*, "His blood is *precious*." There must be some other power in that blood, some other meaning for Peter and for us. How may we reach that meaning better than noting his use of the epithet in the other cases enumerated. In all of these we find the subject directly touching salvation. The promises, the faith and its trial, the person of Christ, these are precious because they are to him personally and to every believer the very apparatus of salvation. There is a direct efficiency in these that there is not in martyr-blood. Christ is the Saviour, the promises invite to Him, and faith lays hold on Him. Now the blood must have a like direct action in our salvation. It is an *efficiency* in some way.—Again, we see that the expression draws our view of Christ himself to His blood as the peculiar centre of interest regarding *Him*. It is not only that the blood must have an efficiency, but it must be the very *kernel* of Christ's efficiency, and hence the hinge of our salvation. How exactly this tallies with John's words, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and with the voices of the glorified saints in heaven, "Thou hast re-

deemed us to God by Thy blood," and with Paul's declaration that we "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus"! What a strange use of the word blood is this, if martyr-blood is all that is intended! How mistaken an emphasis upon the blood of Christ, if it was His example and life which is the efficient cause of our salvation!

But we have a context that explains all, that shows us why the *blood* of Jesus was so precious to the apostle and is so precious to all believers. "The precious blood of Jesus, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*" We are immediately carried back to the significant ritual of God's ancient church, where we find so often repeated the solemn charge that the victim for sacrifice must be without blemish. We see the innocent lamb, marked as symbolically pure by its spotlessness, pouring out its blood upon the altar, and that blood taken as the saving and sanctifying efficiency of the lamb and dashed upon the door-posts or sprinkled upon the man who was to be cleansed. It is a very false view of a bloody sacrifice to suppose it meant a gift to God of the victim. What is called the meat-offering (that is, an offering of flour cooked or uncooked, or of the first-fruits), *was* a gift to God of the thing offered, and, as such, was eaten by God's priests, after a small portion was burnt as showing that it belonged to God. But the bloody sacrifice represented not a gift to God of the lamb, but a gift to God of the *suffering and death*. It was an offering to God of *punishment for sin*. If the lamb had

been given to God, as a gift simply of the lamb itself, like the meat-offering, it would have been given to the priests, and they would have carefully preserved it alive, as cherished and protected by God. They *ate* the *meat-offering*, because there was no life taken away in that. In the case of the lamb, they would as God's representatives merely have preserved it and used its wool, as this should be produced. But to slay the little innocent, to make the blood flow from its ghastly wound,—there was no giving of the lamb to God in that. It was the giving to God of suffering and death, the offering up to Infinite Justice of a punishment for sin.

I dwell upon this because prominent teachers have endeavored to destroy the whole significance of the sacrifices, by asserting they were only gifts of gratitude to God, symbols of thankfulness. If they had been such, what is the meaning of such a passage as this: "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of *sin* every year, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.'" Then, after speaking of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, the Scripture goes on and says, "Now this one, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down on the right hand of God." And then again, in speaking of our gain by this sacrifice, these words follow: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the

blood of Jesus." No man in his right senses can imagine all this has reference to a gift of gratitude to God. The sacrifices prefigure a great sacrifice, that of Christ, and when this great sacrifice is historically offered, the rest cease. If they were tokens of gratitude, they would never cease. It is blood that is emphasized. It is a blood to take away sin, and through this removal of sin man enters into heaven. Bear in mind, then, that the bloody sacrifices are not to be interpreted by any natural notions of offering gifts to God, but by the *unnatural* notion, only obtained by man through revelation, of offering to God a punishment, a suffering, a penal atonement for the offerer's sin. It is this, and this only, which gives point to the Baptist's words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is this which gives a meaning to the otherwise meaningless words, "The blood of the Lamb." It was a blood that does not simply cheer us by its history, or encourage us to faithfulness, or make us despise persecution, as the martyr-blood does, or even kindle our love to the one who suffered in His service of love for us, as does the blood of patriot or philanthropist. But it was a blood that *redeemed* us. "Thou," cry the glorified ones in heaven, "hast *redeemed* us to God by Thy blood," and our own context says, "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." It was a blood that efficiently and directly, by no moral influence persuading men,

but by meeting the holy justice of God, saved the condemned sinner. Hear the apostle Paul, "God hath set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation (that is, an appeasing of justice), through faith *in His blood* . . . that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Hence we see why it is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant, wherewith we are sanctified."

What a converging combination of Scriptures is all this with regard to the penal character of Christ's sufferings as our substitute and representative! Does not such a contemplation of Christ's blood by the believer prompt him to say "the *precious* blood of Christ"? He goes to Calvary, and there bows before the wonderful sacrifice. "That cross (he cries) has made me free—that blood has cleansed my soul—that suffering cancels my sin. It is not poetry and romance that excite me. It is not sentimental sympathy which makes this spot so ineffably holy. It is the action of God's holy truth. This blood is where justice and mercy meet in my ransom and renewal. This is no appearance or spectacle or show or symbol. It is the fulfilment of all symbols. It is my poor lost soul being found, it is my poor dead soul being made alive. It is God entering our race and bearing its sins while bringing it righteousness. That blood is my eternal union with God. Precious blood! precious blood!"

Such being the potency of Christ's blood and its relation to the believer, why is it that so many treat it with unconcern, nay, even with contempt? The

question suggests the answer. It is *unbelief* which makes the vast mass of mankind pay no more regard to the cross than to a heathen idol or a romancer's tale. The seat of this unbelief is always the heart. The affections are fastened upon low objects and fascinated by them, and will not suffer themselves to be drawn off to other and nobler ends. In this degradation of the soul by its wilful prostitution to earthly purposes, the calls to a spiritual life are disagreeable and annoying. The first movements of conscience are resisted, and in the resistance devices are framed for the security of the soul in its carnal tastes and occupation. The main device is the erection of a bulwark of rational unbelief. I mean by rational unbelief an unbelief situated in the rational faculty, as distinguished from the unbelief of the heart and affections. The unbelief of the heart and affections cannot justify itself. It is sheer neglect. It is wilful opposition. So it contrives this rational unbelief as its defense, and behind this barrier it ensconces itself securely. It constructs this barrier by seeking out difficulties in the Gospel which the mind cannot unravel, dark points on which the reason can obtain no light, seeming contradictions in the metaphysical analysis of Scriptural doctrine, and, calling these perplexities, holds them up triumphantly, saying, "How can you expect one to believe such things?" It is fairly with an air of injured innocence it makes this so plausible plea, till it actually persuades itself that it is a genuine rational duty to reject the Gospel, and forgets that the wilful heart made up all this opposition.

Now all these difficulties and metaphysical contradictions lie in every department of thought. They do not belong to the Gospel and God's revelation, but to the finite character of the human mind. There is not a science that does not present insolvable difficulties and direct contradictions, but does any man of common sense reject them because of that? No! the positive evidences overwhelm all the side oppositions of this sort, and just so would it be to every soul with regard to the overwhelming evidences of God's gracious revelation, if it were not for the unreasonable action of the depraved heart, which would never act in this unfair way with any other subject than that of God's revealed truth of redemption. Hence I would never argue with unbelievers on the specific subjects of their rational unbelief. I would simply say, "Do with this subject of religion as you do with every other. Let all difficulties be in abeyance, while you behold the amazing evidences of the Gospel's truth. See this Gospel in its marvellous texture. See this perfect Jesus, and note that He is nothing at all unless He be a Redeemer of sinners by His blood. No man could have invented such a character as Jesus, any more than he could have invented the sun. No man could have written that Holy Word, any more than he could have painted the colors of the rainbow, or have laid the rocks in their strata. Let all this Gospel light shine full upon you, warming you and cheering you, and then, when you see and feel its power, it will be time enough to talk of your dif-

faculties. But now I'll not talk geology or physiology or metaphysics with you. All *that* is a cunning device of the devil, and your own heart in partnership to keep the Gospel off your heart and conscience."

"To us *who believe* He is precious." That blood which has given us a sure hope, which has bought us from the bondage of Satan and secured us a home in heaven, which has made us the dear children of God, and enabled us to say "Father" to Him who made and governs all—that blood is precious indeed.

We worry not because of the profound things which we cannot understand. God has millions of such things both in nature and in grace. But we do rejoice in the grand things which we do understand, and the very centre of these grand things is the blood of Christ. That is the moving power of the whole circle of redeeming grace. It is *to* that blood we bring our sighs and tears and fears, and take *from* it in exchange the joyful courage which is heaven begun. It is that blood sprinkled on us which makes us holy, and enables us to defy the great adversary and all his host. Precious blood! Precious Jesus! we sing now as we shall sing hereafter, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."

GRACE.

Revelation xxii. 21 : "THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL."

GRACE has two meanings in Scripture, the two being closely related. One is the inherent beauty of the divine character, and the other is the loving exercise of that character toward man. God's grace, in the first definition, is the foundation of all His dealings with sinners, and in the second it takes the form of compassion and mercy because we are sinners. The result of that grace and mercy in the soul that accepts them is peace, and hence we have the significant formula, "Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you," that is, "God's divine love exercising itself in mercy to sinners and so bringing peace to the sinful soul, be yours to enjoy."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" is the short form of this same prayer. And here we find this holy prayer as the very last words of the Bible. The Bible begins with creation ; it ends with redemption. The power of God is the first word, and the love of God is the last word. Between this power and love the whole universe is governed. These last words of the Bible are like the loving

arms of God stretched out to all men and bestowing His blessing on all. The whole Gospel is embodied in this benediction. The last apostle closes the book of inspiration with this concentration of the Gospel. It is as much as to say that if any are lost, it is not from God's neglect, much less from God's decree, but from the wilful rejection of a grace universally bestowed. It shows God's face to man as a face of love. We close the sacred volume and exclaim: "There! God's revelation is one of grace. Its latest utterance is love."

I. Note, first, *the universality of this benediction*. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Surely we shall not limit this "all" to the members of the seven churches of Asia. That would be a marvellous anticlimax after these far-reaching words, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." No! we cannot limit this benediction to the seven churches. It belongs to "whosoever." It tells the joyful story that God is the Saviour of all men, though specially of those that believe; that is, that as far as God's love is concerned He saves all men, but since many reject that love and its salvation He is the final Saviour only of those that believe. We have to reiterate it, as against any false construction of the doctrine of predestination, that God desires and seeks the salvation of *all* men. His Word says this over and over again, and the whole invitation of the Gospel is based on this fact. God confronts sinful man and begs him to turn and receive His Spirit. "Turn ye; for why will ye die?"

is God's cry. He is no acceptor of persons. He makes no distinctions. His Gospel or good tidings are expressly declared by the angels to be unto *all people*. Men have accused us Presbyterians as limiting the grace of God on God's side, and as representing God as arbitrarily selecting certain persons to be saved, while He was wholly indifferent concerning the rest, or even hostile toward them. Now it is unfortunately true that *some* Presbyterians have held this most unscriptural and revolting doctrine, and there is a form of Calvinism of which this dreadful reflection upon God is the keystone. But the great mass of Presbyterians hold no such view. They believe that God has foreordained all things that come to pass, but *that* foreordination neither contradicts God's love for the world nor man's independent will. It is a foreordination that is in perfect harmony with man's free choice whether to accept God's love and grace or to reject them.

God's election is expressly declared in the Bible to be *according to His foreknowledge*. God has established in the spiritual, as in the material world, certain wise and just laws under which man lives, and according to which he prospers or suffers according as he observes them, and the law of grace in Christ is one of these. Whoso resists this law of grace must perish, and God's foreordination of that perishing is in accordance with His foreknowledge of it. God's grace is not limited by this. It is simply man's wilfulness that limits the application of the grace. Let no one accuse Presbyterians of teaching

or holding a restricted view of God's grace. They do not. A few theologians may hold this doctrine, and may seek to support it from our Confession of Faith, but they will ere long have the expressions of that Confession which seemed to justify them so changed that they can get no support there any longer. Such theology cannot stand a moment before the free Gospel. God calls to *all* to come and be saved. And God is not trifling with man. He means what He says. Every soul can appropriate the gracious call to itself.

II. Note, secondly, *the closeness of the grace*. The preposition is "with." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be *with* you." It is not *before* you, to look at, nor *behind* you, where you cannot notice it, nor *on* you, for an ornament, but it is *with* you for a cherished companion seen and known and used, walking with you, talking with you, accompanying you wherever you go. And it is God's loving grace that is this companion, the greatest of all gifts, the most delightful of all adjuncts to the soul. The presence of the grace implies the presence of God himself in His love. He is at our side. He is nearer, closer than any earthly friend could be. He has no imperfections as earthly friends have, which may modify our enjoyment of His presence. He is the perfection of blessedness to the soul at all times, and the more we realize His presence and fellowship, the more we partake of that blessedness. But, says some timid soul, is it right so to consider the Infinite God? Have I any right to look upon Him as a friend by

my side? Go to God's Word and see. What means this: "Our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son"? Why was Abraham called "the friend of God"? Did not God come to us in His Son Jesus Christ, that we might feel this very nearness of God to our souls? With all His infinite greatness, He walks as the personal friend of each trusting heart. Hear Him speak: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.*" See how the ineffable greatness of God is perfectly consonant with His warm and close friendship with the humble and trusting soul. It is a marvellous fact, but let us not be slow to receive it. It is the *use* of this fact that will make us strong and lift us above the power of earth or hell to harm us.

There is too much of Christianity that puts God far off, that encourages the idea of the Christian's ever coming before God as a semi-alien with a doubting cry of "Spare us—have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." That is a very proper cry for one coming out from sin to God for pardon, but it is a very *improper* cry for one who has received pardon and been owned a child by God. It was a good cry for the publican before he was justified, but after he was justified, it would not have been good for him to go again to the temple and repeat the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." We are ever to recognize our sinfulness and our needs, and ever to recognize God's wonderful mercy, but we are to have faith

in God, and when He says, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven," we are not to go back with the old cry, as if God's words meant nothing. I think that one reason why Christians use this language of newly-awakened souls toward God is because they stay in that original position and never fully enter into the enjoyment of grace. They live worldly lives, and so, as they cannot appreciate the fellowship of God, they have no higher prayer than "God be merciful to me, a miserable sinner." God continues to them a God afar off. He is a mere conscience-God and not a heart-God. Now what all Christians should do is to realize God's presence and grace, to accept gratefully all that Christ has done for them, and to use the high privileges of peace and joy which His blood has purchased. This is the legitimate life of *faith*. This is what our Lord wants of us, not cold and distant servitors, but warm and close friends. He honors us with this relation. It is a reality. We dishonor Him by refusing it. He, the Lord of Glory, speaks of us as "brother," "sister," "mother." Is all this to be slighted by us, or are we to believe Him and act accordingly?

III. Note, thirdly, that this divine grace with us *is that of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Here is the name that stirs our hearts—the name of all that is holy and blessed to our souls—the name of Him whose love for us cannot be measured by our finite minds, who came on earth to show us in the most wonderful way how much He loved us and to allure us to His saving arms. Yes! the grace of God is the grace of

our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no difference. There is no angry God ready to destroy us and another standing near and begging Him not to do it. That is a heathenish idea that, with many other heathenish ideas, came into Christian theology. No! the Father and the Son are one. He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father. The Son is also the Everlasting Father. There is but one God and His name is Love. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the grace of God. What then? is there no God that destroys? Yes, there *is* a God that destroys. And it is the same God that loves and saves. And how does He destroy? Is it from a heart of hatred and violence, as the heathen represent in their gods? Certainly not. He destroys by giving up the resisting sinner to his sins. Where grace is refused, there sin destroys, and in that awful alternative God, though Love, is said to destroy. But He does not desire this death of the sinner, but that he may turn from his wicked way and live. He desires all men to be saved. Let not, then, the notion exist for a moment in our minds that God the Father is a frowning God, and God the Son a smiling God. What a reflection that is on the word "Father"! God the Father and God the Son are *one* God of love and salvation, the Trinity being a mystery that we cannot penetrate.

The only aspect in which we have a right to view God is as He is manifested in Jesus Christ seeking to save our lost souls. And here what a field of delicious research is opened to us in this phrase,

“grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”! Are we lonely? do we feel isolated? are there no friends in whom we can trust? Here in Jesus we have a friend, a companion, one who was just like one of us (except without sin), one who was tried, tempted, weary, disappointed, opposed, and misunderstood. He listens to our every word with interest. Everything that interests us interests Him, because we have become His own and He has brought us into everlasting union with Himself. No trouble so little in our experience that has not His sympathy. Are anxieties ours? Are lions in our way? Are we looking with forebodings toward the morrow? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for the occasion. That grace can remove every obstacle, overcome every fear, and make our disturbed souls calm. It is no myth—no fancy. It is a reality. It only demands faith for its full enjoyment. The laws of the spiritual world are such that grace acts according to faith. We cannot fathom the mysteries of mind. We cannot tell where faith opens the channel for grace to run. But we know the fact that “Be it unto thee according to thy faith” is the formula that expresses the great truth, and which shows the reason why so many Christians live in gloom. The grace of Christ is there, ready for use, but they fail to use it. They have faith for many other things, but no faith for grace to lift them out of trouble. And they are led to consider the Lord’s promises as defective, when the defectiveness is all with them. Our faith is the receptacle, into which

the blessed Jesus pours His divine grace, but if we have no receptacle, we, of course, enjoy no grace. That, dear brethren, is the secret of so many unhappy Christians. And why haven't they faith? There are many reasons. It may be too little prayer—too little Bible—too little meditation—or too much world—too much flesh—too much self. The plant is not watered and it will not grow, or the plant is trodden on and thus marred. Oh, do not blame Christ's grace, but blame yourselves. That glorious grace never fails. It answers every call. It fills every want. It satisfies every longing. There is no failure nor exception in it. Christ never fails. We cannot form too strong an idea of Christ's love for us and His closeness *to* us. He has told us this in the strongest language. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." Can you find anything closer than that? And now hear how the beloved John translates that: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God (that is, the *heart* confession), God dwelleth in him and he in God." Christ and God are one.

Now, brethren, do we think enough of this wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we use it as a grand reality? Or is it to us merely a proposition like "two and two make four"? Why, it *should* be our *life*. We should feel the presence of Jesus with us and in us at every step. It is this which He wishes of each one of us. This is the walking by faith and not by sight, which the apostle

tells us is the Christian's normal way of walking. Alas! why do we conform to the world's way? Why do we make our calculations and ground our hopes and fears on the world's basis? It is because of this we have all the perturbations and distresses of the world. Let us bear in mind that if we wish to enjoy the *Lord's* grace, we must give up the false dependence on the *world's* grace which is deceptive and disappointing. The Lord Jesus wishes us to receive His grace as furnishing us with motive, purpose, and energy in life, but it is *our* part to receive it. He cannot *force* it upon us. That divine guidance and protection, productive of such inward peace and joy, which are implied in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," cannot be ours, unless we positively and determinately take it and use it by faith. And such taking and using the divine grace is impossible, if we are taking and using the world's ideas and methods instead. Just as we cannot serve both God and mammon, so we cannot have both Christ and the world to guide and guard us. They are antagonistic to one another. We must have one or the other. There can be no compromise. It is compromise that kills our Christianity. When our blessed Lord died for us, it was that we might be *wholly* His. He did not do a work for us and then go away and leave us. He died to save us and gave a new life to us by His Holy Spirit. He wished to be ever with His saved ones—an *ever-present* Saviour. His love would not permit Him to leave us for a moment. Now it is this great truth, my brethren,

which we need to realize more than we do. The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ with His infinite grace is ever with us in things small and great, ready to meet our every emergency, should govern our whole lives, and we should therefore be ever looking unto Jesus. Oh! of how many troubles we should be rid if we did this! We should not try to run a race with the world—we should not envy the world its tinselled crowns—we should be satisfied with what our Lord allots and anticipate the peace of heaven.

Dear brethren, let us use our privileges. Let us hold a close and constant communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us feel daily our high and holy advantages in Him. Let us glory in this heavenly fellowship, as we have a right to, and as we *ought* to, and then, under the operations of His divine grace, we shall triumph over sin and the world and defy the powers of evil. It is as we live in Christ and Christ in us, that we enjoy Christ's glory—the gift of His grace.

MAN'S ORIGINAL SONSHIP.

Luke iii. 38 : " ADAM, WHICH WAS THE SON OF GOD.

A GREAT stir has been made in our day by the supposed discoveries, but real speculations, of Darwin, according to which man is descended from the brutes. Whatever Darwin's own views may have been, there is no doubt that the eager tribe of infidels have seized on these speculations to degrade man, and make him tributary to his animal nature. They would cut him off from all higher law than the passions and proclivities of his nature as akin to the beasts, and so discharge themselves of all responsibility to God. They would have no check to sin beyond that which selfish worldly prudence would dictate. It is true that the Darwinian theory, if correct, would refer only to the origin of man's *body*, and man's body is not man ; but infidels, in their blind anxiety to be rid of God's moral law, do not regard this distinction, and readily make the leap over the impassable gulf between body and soul as seen in man, and reduce the highest virtues to the level of inanimate material, or at least to the level of brute instinct. It is a strange fact that man, in order to escape God, is anxious to make himself a beast. Man's sins thus become no more sins than the

natural actions of tigers and serpents; and conversely, the virtues of a philanthropist, a patriot, or a saint are on the same brute level. It needs not very deep penetration to see what would become of our race, if this theory could once be actually believed by mankind. We would not have to go far to find hell. But man is so constituted that he never could believe such folly. He may try to believe it. He may use the theory as a shield against his own conscience, but it will give him but a flimsy protection. His conscience *will* pierce him. His native sense *will* expose him. He knows, all the while he hides behind it, that his defence is of paper. The most degraded man has that within him which tells him he *is* degraded, and, therefore, that he belongs to a higher plane.

But let us turn to the voice that speaks from heaven, and note how truly our being responds to its story. Let us turn to God's Word, and leave man's weak speculations, and find what this supernal authority says touching the origin of man. If we look at the testimony of Scripture regarding every one who is in Christ and renewed by the Spirit, there is no difficulty in furnishing passage after passage declaring man's sonship to God. We have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. We are taught to say, "Our Father" in the Lord's prayer. The Spirit teaches us to say, "Abba, Father." We are the children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. But at present it is not our object to show that believers are made the children of God, and have both the privilege and duty of approaching God as their Father.

It is our purpose to show that our whole race is sprung from God, not by creation merely, but by a higher process, which we call sonship. That man has fallen from the rights and privileges of such high birth is emphatically true, and hence his restoration to sonship in Christ is as a new creation. It is perfectly true that fallen and unrenewed man has no right to call God "Father," for he has been cast out for his sins, and our Saviour's own words to the rebels against God are, "Ye are the children of the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Hence the glib way in which unrenewed men speak of God as their Father is simply presumption, and their cant phrase of the All-Father can have no other meaning in reality than "Creator of all." The special, tender relation of Father is not there. The home and household idea is not there.

But the fact that man has fallen from his sonship's rights and privileges makes it a truism that he once had them. Man as first found in Paradise is more than a creation. As a creation he has affinity both to animals and to the mountains and rivers, but he is something more. The forming man from the dust of the ground, whether that was instantaneous or took a million of years, was, we grant, a creation as of whales or horses, but the breathing into his nostrils the breath of life means something more than was ever done to beasts. It means the impartation of the life of God, and is analogous to that act of our Lord when He breathed upon His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." In short, it was the giv-

ing of sonship. It was a species of generation. And hence in the genealogy, from which we take our text, we read: "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of *Adam, which was the son of God.*" It is in the light of this grand truth that I invite you to the following reflections:

1. We gain a view of *the awful character of sin.* If we were brutes, or the descendants of brutes, no moral law could bind us, and no sin could be alleged against us. The various forms of vice which now shock the common conscience of the race, would be in no way different from virtues. Right and wrong would give place to shrewd and stupid. Might and cunning would make all the right there could be. But when we trace our origin to God and find that we are partakers of the divine nature, then the moral perfections of God become the standard of our character. The truth, and righteousness, and justice, and holiness, and love of God become the pattern which we are to follow. Feeling, thought, word, and deed, should all be marked by the divine Spirit. Envy, jealousy, malice, fraud, uncleanness, are not to have the slightest connection with our hearts; for we are in the heavenly sphere, where all these are known only as the enemies of God, and belonging to the kingdom of evil. One touch of these is defilement of heavenly purity. Man, as the son of God, was formed for Paradise, and for a perpetual communion with his Heavenly Father. He had an independent will, but that will was to find its delight in the exercise of divine faculties amid holy things, and for holy pur-

poses. To use that will in any other way was to rebel against his high nature, to defy God, and to forfeit his heavenly privileges. Sin in man was thus a total wreck of his grandeur as the son of God. He left his kinship with the Most High to become a slave to his animal nature. He was excluded from Paradise. A holy God could no longer hold communion with him. Death, as the seal of sin, must be put upon him. The divine is lost in the human, and the word comes from the Holy Throne, "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High—but ye shall *die like men*." The children of God have become castaways. There may be differences in *sins*, but there is no difference in *sin*. The children of God have lost their high title, and are now only the children of men, and each one is an alien from his original Father. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good: no, not one." As I said before, there is no difference in *sin*, though there may be difference in *sins*. As looked upon from God, there are no little sins, for every sin is but a mark of the sinful heart alien to God. The difference in sins is only from man's standpoint and a comparison of man with man. It is like the difference between mountains and hills on the earth. To us they are marked and great differences. But to the astronomer who regards the whole globe they are as no differences at all, and if the globe should be repre-

sented by a sphere the size of an orange, a microscope could not detect any departure from the smooth surface. And yet it is this matter of "little sins" with which weak man consoles himself by comparing himself with his neighbor. He forgets that his whole nature is alienated from God, and that God's holiness can regard him only as a sinner.

2. A second reflection from our subject pertains to *the action of God in salvation*. It is a Father striving to save a lost son. It is the movement of the Divine Heart, full of tenderness and affection, and yet by reason of its holiness unable to compromise with sin, or excuse it in the slightest. The holiness compels the sentence, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone," and yet the tender affection brings out from the divine heart the earnest cry, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" It is this wonderful Father-love which accounts for the great condescension and humiliation of Christ, the Eternal Son. The stupendous mystery of the Word becoming flesh, suffering the limitations and afflictions of our humanity, and bearing unspeakable agony as a sacrifice for sin, can be explained only on the ground of the overwhelming love of God. It is all comprised in the general formula, *the Heavenly Father using every endeavor with earnest desire to restore His lost children*. There is no mechanical coldness nor perfunctory hardness in the act of God in salvation. There is no mere machinery of law at work. There is a beating heart of love moving everything—there is a dear and holy Father seeking His wandering ones,

and yet in His holy perfections ready to give them up to their chosen destiny of evil, if they persist in their rebellion. Why do not men see God in this mellow light? Why do they think only of a Final Cause, or perchance of a distant Lawgiver? Why do they deny the very essence and heart of God? Why do they ignore His glorious love? "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Why? Because *love* is gratified. God wishes all men to be saved, says the Scripture. Why? Because He *loves* them as His whilom children. "God so *loved* the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He would identify every castaway child with the only-begotten Son, and so bring him back into sonship. It is the only-begotten Son who sanctifies those that accept Him, and as "both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one," "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." It is Christ who teaches us to say, "*Our* Father, who art in heaven," and so restores to us the exalted privileges of Paradise. It is the heart that is thus restored that can see the Father's heart moving in all the efforts at our salvation.

Salvation is not man's merits earning anything, nor a philosophic machinery evolving anything, but it is God's earnest love recovering His lost ones and folding them to His arms. It is a re-creating of sonship; a *υιοθεσια*, as the Greek word is, which is weakly interpreted "adoption," but which means much more—that is, the *making of sons*: sons that are not such

merely by anything analogous to our "adoption," but analogous the rather to generation. The son, so made, is again partaker of the divine nature, and of the divine holiness. Hence we have those marvellous words of Christ in His prayer for all who receive Him, "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and Thou in me, . . . and that the world may know that Thou . . . hast loved them as Thou hast loved me." See what a height of glory in true sonship is here described. And this, brethren, is salvation.

3. Our third reflection on our subject touches *the dignity of the converted soul*. "Now are we the sons of God," is the triumphant exclamation of the apostle John. And Paul testifies, "We are the children of God: and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." We have seen how awful sin is: that it has destroyed the privileges of sonship to God, and we have seen how marvellous is God's love that seeks to recover us, and now we see the wonderful dignity that belongs to every true believer as again a child of God, receiving his Heavenly Father's kiss and eternal welcome. The difficulty in realizing this is caused by the murky atmosphere of our sinful earth, by the old habits of our fallen nature, and by the stupendous character of the great fact itself. The old nature is still clinging to us notwithstanding our sonship. On every side we see the

luxuriant growth of evil. And with these adjuncts it is hard to realize that the holy God has exalted us to joint-heirship with His Eternal Son. Our faith is staggered by the sight of the corruption without and within us. And if *our* faith is staggered, brethren, we may understand how the unconverted world regards these statements of our exaltation in Christ as utter folly and dream. Nevertheless, it is true—true as God is true. It is God's work, not ours. His love, His wisdom, and His power have combined to rescue us and restore us, and it is for us to repeat after the apostle John, with humility, and yet with triumph, "Now are we the sons of God." It is from this high contemplation that we may reform our lives, and make them what they ought to be as the lives of God's own children. We look forward and know that we shall be like Christ, and, as the apostle expresses it, "he that hath this hope or expectation in Christ purifieth himself, even as He is pure." This is the way to become sanctified—to see our wonderful privileges in Christ, and to look forward to their consummation in glory. No one can have and exercise this hope without growing into Christ's likeness.

What we Christians need, therefore, is the constant contemplation of our Lord, and all that He has done for us, and in order to this we are to make less of our worldly matters, or rather so use them as to make them subsidiary to these higher contemplations. The tendency of our natures is to look upon progress in holiness as a system of work, external work, by which we gain meritoriously the desired end. Legalism of

this sort pervades the Church of Christ, and hence we find two sorts of Christians: one, who are proud of their good deeds, and complacently view them as guarantees of spiritual value; and the other, who are discouraged at their failures, and ready to despair. They have both the same error at the root of their sentiments. They both regard spiritual success as dependent on human works and worth, whereas spiritual success consists in accepting Christ's works and worth with a grateful faith. Human works and worth proceed from this grateful faith which receives Christ's works and worth. That is, holiness produces human works and worth, but human works and worth do not produce holiness. It is that Romish error that clings to so many Christians who are not Romanists. They seem to think that, by putting the merit in Christ and not in themselves, they would become spiritually lazy and careless—there would be no spur to good works. But they forget that love is the only true spur to good works, and that this love is fed by the contemplation of what Christ has wrought for us. And so we come back to our former truth, that it is for us to recognize our dignity as God's children, if we would grow in holiness. It is this that will withdraw us from the world's false ways and false pleasures. It is this that will fill our souls with satisfaction, whatever may be our earthly lot. It is this that will take away doubt and perplexity and fear. Let us then, dear brethren, assert ourselves as God's dear children, restored to the privileges of Paradise, and by our high birthright having

no sympathy with the things of darkness. As redeemed from sin, let us abhor it. As enfranchised and made sons by Christ, the Eternal Son, let us have constant fellowship with Him. It is from the abyss of sin we have been rescued. It is the amazing love of God that has done it. Let us accept the grace in its fulness, and live before God and men as the sons of God.

I need not say that the unrepentant and unrenewed sinner has no part in the dignity and glory of which we have been speaking. He is alien from God. The original sonship has no representation in him, and he has refused to have it restored by Christ. It is not for him to say, "Our Father." It is not for him to exult in the holy fellowship of the Father and the Son. Out of Christ the claim of sonship is blasphemy.

My hearers, which are we—the children of God, or still in our sins, and, if so, the children of the devil?

GOD'S WALK WITH US.

Genesis xviii. 17: "AND THE LORD SAID, SHALL I HIDE FROM ABRAHAM THAT THING WHICH I DO?"

ABRAHAM was called the father of the faithful, not because he was the father according to the flesh of God's ancient chosen people, but because he was the spiritual father of all God's people of every nation under heaven. He stands conspicuous, in an age when the knowledge of God had become dimmed by superstition and when the lusts of men had distorted religion from a pure worship to a degraded idolatry, as a man of pure faith and godly life, and a man whose high position as an independent and wealthy chief made that faith and godliness a lighthouse to the whole world. He walked so closely with God that he rarely stumbled in his earthly course, and when he did, his errors were not the gross and flagrant sins that abounded around him, but the results of an unbecoming timidity which sought other relief than the protection of God. Sins they were, and they show Abraham to have been human, but they do not stamp his character, or remove from his name the honorable and glorious title of "father of the faithful."

We are accustomed to this phrase, "He walked

with God," of such a worthy as Abraham, and we recognize its fitness, but the converse phrase is one we do not so often consider, "God walked with him." It is this form of the great truth that is suggested by our text. Abraham had seen three men approach his tent near Hebron, had gone out to meet them, had invited them to his home, had entertained them, and in the process of entertainment had found he had been entertaining angels unawares. When the angelic messengers arose and took the way eastward toward Sodom, Abraham accompanied them. Two of them passed on ahead, and Abraham was left alone with the third, who proved to be Jehovah himself in human guise, the great Lord manifested, and hence the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, who alone has manifested Him. To Abraham the Lord makes known at this time His purpose of destroying the cities of the plain, and permits Abraham earnestly and persistently to intercede for them. It was a marvellous walking of God with man, illustrating visibly the invisible walk of God with all His faithful ones.

It was before the two angels passed ahead that God is represented as using the language of our text, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" God, as it were, grants us a glimpse of the workings of the Infinite Mind. His counsel and purpose are seen as if in their formation. He uses the style of man, but it is to show a reality, not a dream—something in God analogous to the consideration and resolution of man. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts,

and yet they are thoughts. He looks upon Abraham with affection. He desires to express that love. He stoops to his companionship, not proudly as man would do to an inferior, not mechanically as a God without feeling is supposed to do, not wantonly as a heathen god would be represented, but in the warmth of a true friendship, from which no sense of God's infinite greatness and of Abraham's sinful and finite humanity can detract. It is only a shallow human philosophy that can make God's greatness withdraw Him from man. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" He was about to overwhelm the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with destruction, to bring down upon them the wrath which their persistent iniquity had been heaping up for the day of wrath. In one of those cities was Abraham's pious but wayward nephew, Lot. He had foolishly gone to dwell among those depraved wretches, and had in consequence tainted his family with the corruption. It is a fearful thing for a godly man to choose an ungodly society for his children. God knew that Abraham was tenderly attached to his nephew, whom he had brought with him out of the heathen East to live more independently for God in a new country where no old ties might impede them. Abraham had maintained this independence, dwelling in tents, but Lot had affiliated himself with the worst of the land and dwelt in their cities. Still Abraham's affection and interest in his nephew were great. And now that God is about to destroy the city in which Lot was dwelling, will it not be well for God to tell

Abraham of His design? It will result in urgent petitions for Sodom, but what of that? This will only bring Abraham nearer to God, and God intends to make a way of escape for the loved nephew after all.

Such is the picture brought before our minds by the text, and it suggests to our reflection the different phases of the great truth of God's friendly intimacy with His faithful child, not now so much the Christian's walk with God, but God's walk with him.

1. Our first reflection is, that *the faithful soul receives the confidence of God*. The thought of *our confidence in God* is a familiar one. We are constantly exhorted to it, and our faith is essentially this confidence. But *God's confidence in us* is a thought by no means so familiar. It seems at first glance to imply our egregious self-righteousness, and to be at war with that spirit of humility and self-abnegation which we know should mark the sincere and true believer. How can God's omniscient eye fail to see our weakness, blindness, waywardness, error, all spotting our character and making us unworthy of confidence even by man? How can God then have confidence in us? And yet this question of God's that forms our text shows that God *does* put confidence in His saints. The same truth is uttered by David, when he says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Solomon repeats the same, "His secret is with the righteous." It is in the same strain that our Saviour himself speaks to His disciples: "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto

you." These texts could very readily be multiplied, impressing the truth upon our minds that God admits not only to His love, but to His confidence, the soul that puts its confidence in Him. How, then, are we to explain so strange a matter, which seems to be in conflict with the first principles of religious truth? It is by remembering that the work in our hearts is God's own work, that the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier and Spiritual Helper, and that He is the guarantee of our spiritual life. God sees His own renewed creation in our converted souls, and, as with the material creation, He pronounces it all very good. He looks below all our weakness and folly to the pure and holy life that is implanted in us by His Spirit, and so He trusts Himself to us confidently. It is not a tentative measure to see how we can be trusted, but a sincere and final act of a love that knows no change or repentance. He, so to speak, lays His whole heart out before us. He is not afraid that we shall betray that confidence. Though we may be Peters and deny, we cannot be Judases and betray. This is secured by the Holy Spirit within us. We may be very inconsistent and bring our souls into much difficulty and grief by our inconsistency, but still God has confidence in us, and is ever ready to reveal His secrets to us according to our degree of faith. The sense of this confidence of God in us is the most powerful incentive to our confidence in God. It surprises us into profoundest gratitude and joy, for it shows us the perfection of that love which God has for us. It is that *perfect love* which casteth out our fear. That perfect love

will correct us when we go astray, but it will never distrust us. It knows that below all our errors, as sad as Peter's, there is the inner heart which says: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

2. Our second reflection is, that *God reveals the future to His faithful ones*. Hobbes said, as he was dying, that he was about to take a leap in the dark. And it is a very common saying of worldly men, that we know nothing of the future. By nature we certainly do not. We know not what a day may bring forth. We could not even *guess* concerning the great future beyond the body's death. All that heathen nations have of a future of rewards and punishments in their belief is but the remains of primal revelation. Nature would teach that when a body dies the man is nowhere. His identity has perished. But God's revelation has illuminated the whole subject of immortal life. It has told us of heaven and hell, of eternal righteousness and eternal sin, that subsist in conjunction with eternal bliss and eternal misery, and thus much any one who reads God's Word can know, at least can treat as an object for his intelligence. But the special future of the special man is only known by the Spirit's revelation to the believer. When God takes a soul into His confidence, He tells it of its own happy destination. He does not hide the thing which He will do. He shows the believer the fearful doom of the ungodly, as contrasted with his own inheritance in God's eternal friendship. The Spirit beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and if a

child, then an heir, an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. The believer is thus begotten again unto a living hope, that has as its object the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him as kept by the power of God through faith. This is no mere intellectual perception of an idea, but the heart-knowledge that God bestows by His special revelation to the soul, the direct result of God's walk with the believer. And as this is a divine secret, it cannot be explained to men. The believer is thus a prophet, and in regard to the future as it pertains to him and touches his interests, it may be said of him as Amos uses the words concerning the official prophets: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." While worldly men of science are making their vain and conflicting guesses about the future, and after the most prodigious efforts land in a doubt, the believer is hearing from the Spirit of God the blessed story of his own destination and the sad announcement of Sodom's fall. The believer has not to guess or grope, for he walks in God's light, where the speculations of philosophy lose their value. Everything before the believer is bright. God walks with him and points out to him not only the burning Sodom, but the eternal city of holiness to which his own past leads.

3. The third reflection is, that God in His walk with the believer *makes him a co-operator with Him in His administration of His government.* This is the exaltation given the humblest child of God. "Do

ye not know," says the apostle, "that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" So Daniel says that judgment was given to the saints of the Most High. And John says: "To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations." And David represents God's people as assessors with Him in judging the world, to execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishments upon the people, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment written. This honor (says he) have all His saints. And when our Saviour tells His Church that whatever they shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever they shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, He is not giving an arbitrary power to be wielded by the will of man, but He is stating the great principle of the believer's co-operation with God, the arm and action of which is prayer. God associates His children with Him in the government of the world by giving them a constant access to Himself in bold and earnest prayer. Abraham's prayer to God was part of the causation by which Lot escaped from the doomed city. So all the blessings of God's Church are the answers to prayer. God will be inquired of for all, and He wishes us to understand our high privilege, and use it continually. God would have us always praying, for the whole progress of His Church, nay, the whole progress of events, is but the issue of answered prayer. He has committed this high ministry to us, for our faith to lay hold of the power, and

so achieve what God's love is ready to grant, but in which He has seen fit to use our agency and so exalt us in Jesus Christ to His side. Abraham's title, "friend of God," is told us by the apostle James to have been founded on his faith. He accepted the high privileges God offered. And so that phrase does not merely represent one whom God loved, for *this relation* is best shown in the epithet, "*child* of God," which is also used in the Old as in the New Testament, but the phrase, "friend of God," represents one with whom God takes counsel, as one may with a friend, but does not with a child. It is this consulting with the believer that is thus taught in our text, and the believer's prayer is the mode in which he answers this condescending invitation of the Lord.

Such, then, are the blessed thoughts which are suggested by this question of God, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" that God walks with the believer, taking him into His confidence, revealing to him the otherwise unknown future, and accepting him as a co-worker in the administration of His divine government. Does not the contemplation of this exaltation quicken our zeal and our faith? Does it not lessen our care for mere earthly things? Does it not fill our souls with satisfaction amid the world's evils? Remember that Abraham was a type and example of every believer. All his spiritual exaltation he had by faith—the same faith which you and I have. He was no exceptional case, save as faith made him exceptional. God offers to every believer the same privileges and enjoyments. There is no

reason, out of ourselves, why each one of us should not be styled with equal emphasis "the friend of God." Our God walks daily with us and offers us all the treasures of His confidence. It is only for us to throw away the worldliness that weakens our faith and obscures our view of God.

TRANSFIGURATION.

Matthew xvii. 1-13.

It was shortly after our Lord had foretold to His disciples His own death and their trials that He gave to three of them—Peter, James, and John—the most vivid presentation of His glory. He took these three up into a high mountain for a season of prayer. This purpose is expressly mentioned by Luke. While Jesus was praying, His countenance assumed a dazzling sunlight radiance, such as Moses' countenance had assumed when he came down from communion with God, and the people could not gaze upon it. The garments of Jesus also became brilliant with a material glory. There appeared at the same time two men talking with Jesus concerning the departure from earth which He was about, in a few months, to make at Jerusalem. These two men, standing by Jesus and talking with Him (not elevated in the air, as Raphael has made them in his famous picture), were enveloped in the glory which came from the person of Christ. The three disciples had fallen asleep (for the event doubtless occurred in the night), and awoke to behold this wonderful sight. They were filled with amazement and alarm; but Peter recovered himself

enough to say, "Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tents—one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"; for the disciples recognized, either by some conventional style of dress or by a divine suggestion, that the two men were the great Lawgiver and the great Reformer of Israel. Peter's temperament led him to make some remark, but he did not know what better to say. While Peter was speaking a shining cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came from the cloud, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." It was the same voice and words that came to Jesus at His baptism (Matt. iii. 17), with the addition of "hear Him." The disciples fell on their faces, dazed by the transcendent vision, when Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Arise, and fear not." At His word they arose, and found only Jesus with them in His accustomed way.

This scene of the transfiguration was—

1. *A testimony to the Deity of Jesus.* It is true that Moses' face shone like the sun when he came down from Sinai, and it is true that Elijah went up to heaven in a chariot of material glory, but here we have one to whom Moses and Elijah paid homage. It is very probable that this high mountain apart was itself Sinai, and that there, where Moses and Elijah and Jesus had each fasted forty days, this interview of Moses and Elias and Jesus occurred. Moses and Elijah had been distinguished among men as the exponents of God's will, and had stood aloof from the race in a peculiar manner, giving wonderful dignity

to their mission. But Jesus needed not this separation above the rest. He mingled with men intimately, His own perfect character maintaining His dignity without any accessory of form. To this Jesus came both Moses and Elijah as to their chief, and spoke with Him on the mount of transfiguration regarding the great central fact of man's redemption, the death of Jesus at Jerusalem as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. The heavenly glory now was on Jesus' person, and from Him it enveloped Moses and Elijah, and the voice from the cloud marked Him out as the beloved Son of God, the manifested God to man, to whom all were called to hearken as the source of truth. He who was before the carpenter of Nazareth, and afterward the crucified victim on the cross of a malefactor, is now, between the two epochs, crowned with glory, and witnessed to by heaven, as Lord of all. This divine testimony was echoed (as it were) by the human testimony of Mary of Bethany afterward, when, close by wicked and inimical Jerusalem, she broke the alabaster cruse of precious ointment and poured the contents on her Lord's head, her faith bearing strong witness to the Lord of salvation amid the earthly gloom that surrounded Him.

2. But this scene on the mount of transfiguration was also *an encouragement to the three apostles*. They had before them a long and arduous career, to carry the tidings of a crucified but risen Saviour to the ends of the earth, and to meet at every step Jewish bigotry, Greek contempt, and the carnal heart's ma-

lignity. They were to be scourged and imprisoned, and to end their career (with the exception of John) in martyrdom. They were to endure every form of persecution and to practice every form of self-denial; and, above all, they were to resist the natural weakness of their own hearts in all this life-work for Christ and His truth. Their Lord would fortify them for their great charge. He would impress upon their minds and memories the lesson of their union with the divine glory and the Redeemer's triumph, as betokened by the scene on the mount. We know how this impression served the apostle Peter. He refers to it in his epistle: "We were eye-witnesses of His majesty, for He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." (We may say in passing that this phrase, "holy mount," seems to mark Sinai as the scene of the transfiguration.) We can readily imagine how, in the long years afterward, Peter and John must have been sustained amid hardships and the world's scorn by this memory, which was also a promise of glory. James, the third of the privileged apostles, had not so long a career as the other two. He was the first of the apostles to win the crown of martyrdom, and yet *he* had fifteen years of service in apostolic labors after the ascension of his Lord.

3. But, still again, this scene on the mount of transfiguration was *an encouragement to our Lord him-*

self. We must ever keep in mind that our Lord, in His humiliation, did not rely upon His divine power or knowledge, but so completely emptied Himself and limited Himself with human limitations that His resources were just such as you and I have in our earthly pilgrimage. He had the Word and the Spirit of God for His support. He used prayer and faith as His shield against trial and temptation. His prayers were heard and answered not because of His Godhood, but because of His pious manhood. He often felt the pressure of the evil around Him. He sighed and groaned in spirit, He was straitened in His soul, He wept, He was moved with indignation, He prayed with strong crying and tears, He experienced intense agony of heart, and therefore anything to cheer and comfort Him was as acceptable as it would be to us. The glorious scene on the mount was thus a testimony to Jesus himself of His Father's love and care, an assurance that beyond His dark destiny in bearing the sins of men was the joy unutterable of the heavenly reward. Like the testimony at the baptism, it was both approval and promise, to be a balm to His soul in the midst of the future suffering. Though then a suffering man, suffering as no other man ever suffered, because the weight of a world's sin was upon Him, yet in the midst of that agony He could repeat to Himself those words from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and recall the glory which shone around Him when they were uttered. Perhaps one of the struggles in His agony was to realize this testimony of the past while tempted

with the thought of His God forsaking Him. However this may be, it must have yielded some cheering fruit for the Blessed One, even when on the cross.

4. Still again, the scene on the mount of transfiguration was a *token and symbol of the joy that awaits the disciple*. God does not tantalize. He does not give us a joy in order to take it away from us. He does not show us a glory and then shut us out from it. That would be the part of a hateful and hating being, but God is Love. The glory He gives His disciple is to be His disciple's forever, although he may lose sight of it for a while during this earthly training process. The three disciples were treated to a momentary experience of what would be their eternal portion. As far as flesh could grasp the heavenly idea, they grasped it then. They were with Christ in glory. They were above earthly considerations of every kind. It was but a moment, but it was a moment of marvellous meaning. The two who appeared with Jesus were men who had for long ages enjoyed the glories of heaven. Moses and Elijah had received the "recompense of reward," and knew their Lord in His humiliation, and beheld Him with that mingled awe and affection which His mighty work of condescension evoked. Heaven is not far from earth; Moses and Elijah are close by. And our dear ones who have left us are not far away because we cannot see them. They form part of the cloud of witnesses about us, and take interest in all that concerns our Lord's kingdom and people on the earth, as did Moses and Elijah. They are enjoying the glory of which

that on the mount was a token, and of the nearness of which to us also it was a token. Those three disciples on the mount saw before them, beyond the trials of earth, the complete realization of the glory of which a glimpse was then given them. Like their Master, for the joy set before them they endured their crosses, and they trod their often thorny road in the radiance that shone upon it from the Master's heaven. Such, then, we find to be the meaning of the wonderful scene on the mount. It was a testimony to the Deity of Jesus, an encouragement to the three apostles, an encouragement to our Lord himself, and a token and symbol of the joy of heaven.

Two important thoughts will take up the remainder of our meditation.

I. *The contemplation of heaven in an elevated communion with Christ is a wholesome cheer and comfort to the true disciple.* I do not mean any sentimental dreaming of golden streets and pearly gates, fanciful pictures which any one can paint to the imagination, and in which he would not be in advance of the Indian picturing his happy hunting-grounds. Such material notions are readily entertained by any worldly mind. They do not betoken any heavenly-mindedness at all. They are mere poetry, evanescent and worthless. They have no root in faith and God's Word, but are simply creatures of the imagination.

The only true contemplation of heaven is where Christ is the central figure, as He was to the three disciples on the mount, where the glory comes from Him, and embraces us *because* it is from Him; where,

as His disciples, we enjoy the view and see our part in Him. Paul expressed the true idea of heaven when he said, "absent from the body and *present with the Lord,*" and, again, "to depart and *be with Christ,* which is far better." It is this beholding of Jesus as the source of heaven's glory that is found in every true contemplation of heaven. It is, as we have said, an *elevated* communion with Christ, a going up on the mountain with Him. Without Him there could be none of it. Too often Christians dwell upon heaven in their thoughts as a reunion with their dear ones who have gone before. Undoubtedly it will be such, but it is not *that* contemplation of heaven which strengthens the soul. The strength comes from beholding Christ as the centre of glory. Without that vision, the other is apt to degenerate into mere sentimentality or an earthly longing. It is human affection, and not godliness, which is exercising itself. That the reunion with beloved ones should make part of the picture is true, as Moses and Elijah formed part of the company on the mount, but that should be a subordinate part; while one dearer than all else should be the main attraction of the heavenly scene. Where such a contemplation of heaven is had, the soul, by no earthly processes, and by no process understood by earthly minds or even analyzed by itself, is raised to a position of power over difficulties and trials that likens it to Christ himself. It is able to do and to bear as from an omnipotent impulse. It loses care and perplexity, and finds the path easy and peaceful. It knows with peculiar emphasis the pres-

ence of the Lord, so that it cannot be moved. It is a wonder to itself in this strength, which (it well knows) comes not to it from nature, but is wholly unlike its natural character. It sees its own weakness and the divine strength together, and exclaims in triumph, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

II. The other important thought deduced from our subject is this, that *only some disciples have this cheering view of the glory*. Peter, James, and John were the only ones of the twelve who were led up into the mount of transfiguration. These same three had been selected to behold the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead, and these three alone were permitted to behold our Lord's agony in the garden. There was a reason in this. Our Lord was not arbitrary in His conduct. Peter, with all his errors of impulse, was a devoted disciple. His weaknesses did not vitiate the sincerity of his heart. He was naturally and properly the leader of the apostolic band. John was full of love to Jesus. He seemed to have no other thought in his mind than the interests of his Master, and his Master returned his ardent affection with demonstrative regard. Of James we do not know so much. We know, however, that he was the first of the apostles to lay down his life for the Lord, and we may well believe that he had much of the spirit of his brother John. These three stood easily above all the others in their whole-souled devotion. They dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and so had peculiar spiritual honors conferred upon them. It is so always in Christ's Church. There are some who, because of

their peculiar attachment to their Lord, are favored with remarkable exhibitions of His glory. The rest are blest in their lives; they are true disciples, they find comfort in the truth, but they lack the glory element of experience. They never go up into the mount of transfiguration. They may be, like Matthew and Thomas and Bartholomew, excellent disciples and most useful to the Church and true to their high calling, but they are not, like Peter and James and John, brought into the inner circle of our Lord's society, where the dazzling glory shines. These favored disciples (as we have said) are not favored arbitrarily. They are favored because of their devotion. They do not wish to be ordinary Christians. They do not strike hands with the world. They do not soil their garments in low society. They do not make earthly ends prominent in their minds, whether riches or honors or pleasures. They love the Word, and ponder diligently upon it. They love prayer, and their lives are lives of prayer. They feel the presence of Jesus at every step of their journey. They do not have to make a struggle to do duty for Jesus, for they love such duty, and take to it as their very life. They have no questions of casuistry to settle, such as, "Can't I do this or that, and yet be a Christian?" They live too far away from the border-land to be affected by such questions. They walk with God. They love to ask God's will in every event of life. They take every event as the action of His love. They know that His mercy never forsakes them. Now to such, as to Paul, God shows special

favor in catching them up to the third heaven, to Paradise, and showing them things which it is unlawful and impossible to utter. Such views are not continued; they are not frequent. Continuance or frequency would not suit our present state. They would beget discontent with earth or spiritual pride. And hence, when they are given, it is necessary for some thorn in the flesh to be added, lest the saint be exalted above measure. We are still in the flesh, and hence these rapturous seasons of exalted communion will not do for the most devoted disciples, except occasionally and with a safeguard. But still they *are* given, and they are unspeakable joys, and full of glory to the soul.

Brethren, shall we not try to enjoy them? Shall we not try to be like Peter and James and John as compared with the other apostles, so closely attached to our Lord that He will show us His glory from time to time as our comfort and stimulus in our whole life? Shall we be satisfied with a creeping, crawling piety when we may have a soaring faith? Shall we let the ephemeral things, like money or social position or worldly amusements, keep us from this open door of Paradise? Our *reason* says no. But what says our *heart*? Where is that heart to-day? Is it with Jesus? Or is it with our merchandise, our lots, our stocks, our dresses, our parties, our gossip, our frolics, our fading follies? If we are Christ's, let us be Christ's indeed, with no half-way halting piety that yields a very speckled fruit, but with a devotion that lifts us above the world, and whose fruit is pure and rich, and abundant in peace and holy joy.

RESURRECTION.

Acts xxvi. 23: "THAT HE SHOULD BE THE FIRST THAT SHOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD."

No one wishes to be unclothed upon with a body, as the apostle says in 2 Cor. v. 4. We shrink from being mere spirit. Furthermore, there is an instinctive notion in men that in some way they will have a bodily life hereafter. The Indian pictures a hunting-ground and himself exercising his bodily strength and agility on it. The Mohammedan hopes for physical pleasures. The Greek saw the worthies of his race sitting down to eat and drink with the gods. The Egyptians preserved most carefully the bodies of their dead for revivification when the gods should appoint. It is a mistake to suppose that the resurrection of the body is taught only by revelation, and that, too, of the New Testament. The perpetual duration of man, and that in some bodily form, is a doctrine as instinctive in the race as is the doctrine of the existence of a God. Revelation has eclaircised this truth; has taken away the doubts that clung to it in the human mind—doubts that principally came from the elaborations of philosophy—and has expounded some of its details. Life and immortality are made luminous in

the Gospel. Our instincts are confirmed by revelation and precious promises, and, above all, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as He rose bodily from the tomb, and as He went bodily to heaven, whence He will again come in the body, so all His saints shall rise in the body and dwell with Him in the body.

Two questions readily arise when the Scriptures present this view of the matter to us: First, how are we between our body's dissolution and its resurrection? and, secondly, what is to be the style of the future body? In regard to the former (how are we between our body's dissolution and its resurrection?) we may answer negatively that *we are not to be then unconscious*. The expressions which have led to that notion on the part of many are the expressions in Scripture regarding the *sleep* of death. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," says our Lord, "and I go to wake him out of sleep." So Paul says of the Corinthians who had died, "Many sleep." So Daniel says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake." It is not strange that from this frequent reference to the dead as asleep the notion of their unconsciousness should be adopted, but it is a hasty and unwarranted conclusion. There are other Scriptures which must be heard before we can come to a right conclusion. Our Lord said to the penitent robber, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." So, on the very day when his tortured body was cast away lifeless in some place of disgrace, he, the penitent himself, was rejoicing in the Paradise of God in the company of Christ. Again, we read the

account of Lazarus dying, who immediately upon his death was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom—that is, to the heavenly banquet, to sit there next to Abraham. It is true that this story of Lazarus is a parable, but its doctrine is true, although the persons are imaginary and the language figurative. Lazarus is represented as comforted in the other world in the society of the blessed; not after the future resurrection day, but while the rich man's brothers were still upon the earth. Still again, the inspired page declares that the saints who have departed this life are witnesses of those who are still in the Christian race on earth, which they could not be if they were unconscious. Their presence is an argument for our more careful and consistent course. Moses was seen by Peter, James, and John on the mount of transfiguration, and yet his body was buried fourteen centuries before and its resurrection day has not yet come. Not to multiply proofs, I add but one more, and that is the declaration of Paul that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which certainly cannot be a condition of unconsciousness, to which condition the apostle longed to depart because it was to *be with Christ*. You see that we are to interpret the sleep of death in perfect harmony with these abundant Scriptures which show the continued conscious life of the saint in glory. And the interpretation is not difficult. The sleep is predicated only of the *body*. The body sleeps. The soul cannot sleep. While it is in the body, the body may clog its action and thus produce what we call unconsciousness, but that is a bodily

effect ; when this earthly body with its gross matter and its varied elements of disease is laid aside, there is nothing to clog the soul, nothing to make it unconscious. Its own nature triumphs, and it cannot sleep. As we have known our friends by the bodily form, it is natural, when we follow their bodies to the grave, to think we are following *them*, and that *they* sleep in the grave ; but though this language is natural and quite proper, it is like saying, "the sun rises," and "the sun sets," because it is phenomenally so, but really it is not so at all. *We* do not go down into the grave, although we may use such language with old Jacob, out of regard for our bodies which *will* so go down.

As Scripture clearly shows that we shall not be unconscious between the body's dissolution and its resurrection, so a common-sense philosophy would also argue. *Why* should we be unconscious? Is consciousness situated in the body? Is not consciousness an act or condition of the immaterial life, the spirit of man? If we should support a theory of unconsciousness after death, we should have to invent some new force or substance outside of the spirit which should join it and hinder its activity. Surely there is nothing in spirit to check spirit. Therefore, if we are conscious now, much more shall we be conscious when this gross body is dissolved. Furthermore, to make consciousness dependent upon the body is to degrade man, and is contrary to the analogy of the angels.

A second point we may be sure of regarding our condition between death and the resurrection is this,

that we who are in Christ shall be happy. The cases already referred to, of Lazarus and the penitent robber, sufficiently prove this. To be in the society of Abraham, and with Christ, and in Paradise—surely this must be happiness. If not, where are we to seek it? Any notion of a purgatory, or a limbo of restraint and confinement, a hades jointly occupied by good and bad temporarily, is utterly foreign to the Scriptures. That Paradise, named from the joyful home of man in his innocence, should be a gloomy place, a place of sighs and tears, or a place of mere *waiting* for good, when applied to the other world, is so absurd that it is marvellous how any Christians have for a moment entertained the notion. Besides the accounts of Lazarus and the penitent robber, we may again refer to Paul's desire to depart and *be with Christ*, and his declaration that to be absent from the body was to *be present with the Lord*, as showing the immediate transit of the believing soul to glory. If being with our Lord Christ is not heaven, what is? In Christ we have our spiritual life, and the nearer we come to Him the stronger is that life with its holiness and happiness. When we shall see Him as He is, that happiness shall be consummated, and this is what the apostle saw ready for him at the dissolution of his body. He spoke in the same direction when he said, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He shows that leaving one mode of life is entering the other; that the divine and eternal

building welcomes us as soon as we quit this earthly tent.

2. This brings us to our second question: "What is to be the style of our future body?" The fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians tells us that it will not be like our present body. It will be a spiritual body, while we now have a natural or physical body. It will be as unlike our present body as the stalk of wheat is unlike the grain which was sown, and from which the stalk has grown. It may or may not have our general likeness. We might surmise that it would, from the fact of Moses and Samuel appearing and being recognized after their death in whatever way they may have assumed form without a resurrection-body. We might argue that if they then appeared with a likeness to their earthly bodies, they would certainly have this likeness in the resurrection-body. And yet these cases may be considered doubtful, for some will say that Samuel never appeared, but only a phantom permitted of God to personate Samuel, and that Moses could not have been recognized by James and John and Peter because they had never seen him in the flesh. The simile of the grain, moreover, points the other way. The spiritual body will be connected with the natural body, but it will be a very different thing. Do we shrink from that fact? What! would we not be glad to have a body warranted against disease, pain, and fatigue? And yet such a body must be totally different from our present body. We undergo changes while here upon earth that make us wholly unlike what we were a few years ago. Who can see any

likeness between you and your portrait as it was taken forty, or even twenty, years ago? We know that every atom of our flesh is changed, and if we could follow our atoms of flesh, we should find some of those atoms, which twenty years ago we took such care of as part of our *self*, are now in some other person, and in a tree of the forest, and perhaps in a crawling worm. There is a constant flux, a flowing forth and a flowing in, with regard to our physical structure, and we need not therefore grieve at the idea of parting with these bodies. They do not belong to us any more than the passing wind. They come and go, and are in a state of coming and going every day.

The new body will be free from the antagonisms which our present body offers to the soul. Our present body is a provocative to sin by its diseases and its strange connection with our impulses and desires. The use of the word "body" in connection with sin is very conspicuous in the apostle, who speaks of the redemption of the body as the last great act of Christ's atonement. The spiritual body is to be free then from all this sinful readiness and adaptiveness of the natural body. It will be adjusted to all the pure wants of the enfranchised spirit, just as the natural body is adjusted to all the wants of the natural man. Every pure and holy thought will receive a help from that new body, as now it receives a hindrance from the body of flesh. Instead of antagonisms within ourselves, our whole nature in its new form will be homogeneous and accordant, pure spirit in a spiritual

body. We cannot, of course, imagine a spiritual body, but we can believe it on the strength of God's revelation. No one has seen a spiritual body. Our gross senses could not perceive it, if present. The body our Lord had on earth after His resurrection and before His ascension was a fleshly body, as He Himself told His disciples. Its change into a spiritual body did not occur until He was removed from their sight. Earthly intercourse must be with earthly bodies, heavenly intercourse with heavenly bodies. Our Lord's resurrection was the first-fruits and example of all resurrection not in the style of body raised, but in the triumph of the body over death. When *we* arise from the dead, we arise to be in heaven. When *He* arose from the dead, He arose to be forty days on earth. In this regard, therefore, there is no likeness between Christ and us. Christ in heaven has the same kind of body ("the body of His glory," as Paul calls it) which we shall have when our bodies arise. It is His divine power that shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory (Phil. iii. 21). Now this change does not mar identity, any more than the earthly changes our bodies have undergone have marred our identity. Identity lies not in particles of matter, nor even in form, but in a spiritual principle which may exhibit itself in any of many forms. The great brotherhood of saints in heaven will certainly not be destitute of the identifications which they enjoy here on earth.

Our Lord's resurrection is the pledge to us that in

body as well as soul we shall triumph over death (nay, we have triumphed), and shall forever live in soul and body union. Here, then, comes in a very natural question: If we are to have a united soul and body life hereafter, and our present bodies decay in the grave, and do not rise as spiritual bodies till the resurrection-day, and if, besides, as we have seen, we shall be conscious in heaven while our bodies sleep in the grave, in what sort of a disembodied, exceptional condition shall we be for the interval between the body's death and the resurrection? I think the apostle clearly indicates that we are to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven the moment this earthly tabernacle is dissolved. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. (If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked.) For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. v. 1-4). Surely in this passage he shows that we are not to be left unclothed. The naked soul is not to dwell in heaven waiting in this undesirable condition for the union with the body. But at once the new body in its germ is provided, which at the resurrection will receive its complete proportions. In such a body Moses appeared to the higher sense of the rapt apostles, and not as a disembodied spirit. In such a

body was Lazarus carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. Whether that body is already formed in the believer by the Holy Spirit, and escapes from the earthly tabernacle on its decay, we cannot tell; but there is nothing in Scripture to forbid this supposition. If it be so, then the life in Christ is one uniform and consistent life from the beginning, a soul and body life within the decaying body of sin, not checked at that body's death, but advancing still in the heavenly sphere until the renewed elements of the mortal body complete its growth and perfection. What wonderful emphasis have our Lord's words in this view, "He that liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

Such, then, brethren, is the future which our Lord Jesus has pledged to us by being Himself the first to rise from the dead. He partook of our nature that we should partake of His experience as glorified man. The way He trod we are to tread. Heaven opens to us because it opened to Him. His glorified body necessitates our glorified body. He is in us forever. We are in Him forever. Nothing can separate us, not even death. He lives. Therefore we live. We cannot die.

You see why the apostles dwelt so much on Christ's resurrection. You see why they so constantly referred the Christians to their own resurrection. It was the non-dying, ever-living thought, which so nerved the soul to boldness of action and patience in suffering, and which made the apostolic age such a marvel for the progress of the truth through the world. We

must revive this apostolic theme. We must think more of our risen Christ as our elder brother in heaven, and of our own brotherhood to Him, never to be suspended for a moment, but to continue and expand until we are like Him, and see Him as He is. With this divine thought and prospect we shall think less of earthly pleasures or earthly cares, and more copiously impart the elements of the heavenly life to sanctify and bless this earthly life of ours.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW.*

ROMANS viii. 4: "THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT."

THE law of God is never a pleasant subject of thought to an unregenerate man. To him it means antagonism and penalty. He sees it with his conscience, not with his heart. In the same way he sees God himself. There is no harmony between him and God. Why is this? Is it anything else than that God is holy and *he* is unholy? Is not this repulsion between him and God a satisfactory proof of his unholiness? Were he holy, would not his heart be drawn to God and his delight be to do His holy will? Ought not every unconverted soul to be alarmed at this dissonance between himself and God? Is it not a constant, pressing argument of God to him to seek for a harmony where certainly a harmony should be? If the unregenerate man should turn and be reconciled to God, the law of God, now so unpleasant to his mind, would wear a very different aspect. What

* This sermon was preached by Dr. Crosby in his own pulpit Sunday morning, March 15, 1891, the last day of his public ministry.

is that law? Is it not simply the expression of His holiness in His dealings with man? The law of God is not a tyrannical imposition nor a wanton exercise of power. It is a provision for man's highest happiness. "Do this and *live*" is its cry. It is the inculcation of love, and in the Decalogue it takes largely the form of prohibition simply because of man's sin, which requires this negative treatment; but our Lord gave the marrow of God's law when He explained it in two sentences: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Ought there to be anything repulsive in that? That which repels the sinner is the consciousness of his disobedience and his instinctive dread of consequences. He feels (though he may not analyze the feeling) that to be out of harmony with such a divine law is to be in harmony with evil. He knows that the converse of "Do this and *live*," is, "Do not do it and *die*," and he has a vague knowledge of that sentence of death resting upon him. His conscience may be dulled, but it cannot be altogether destroyed, and it is the trouble there which makes him hostile to God's law, so that he will either openly revolt from it, or, if he fear to do this, he will think to appease it by a conscience-religion, in which the heart has no share.

It is not strange that man should hate God's law. His selfish desires run in the opposite direction from that of love, which is the essence of God's law. There is a great talk about love among sentimental

unbelievers, but it is like the charity of a charity-ball, where the dancers are attracted by the ball, but not by the charity. So this love that the godless world prates about is a very pretty sentiment, but never has any power to alter the selfish life. It's a love that doesn't cost anything and that doesn't interfere with self-indulgence. These unbelievers, who are very plenty in literature, are wont with an air of self-satisfaction, while sneering at Christians, to compliment the Lord Jesus in a patronizing way and to say that the Sermon on the Mount is all the religion they want. They seem to forget that the Lord Jesus in that sermon speaks of the Gehenna of fire and of those men that go thither; that in that sermon He commands a heart-service of God, and that He concludes it by pronouncing a fearful destruction on such as hear the sayings of that Sermon on the Mount and do them not. God's law is not to be obeyed by sentiment and by the poetic approbation of those that go on in sin. Unless the heart of sinful man is thoroughly changed, there can be no obedience to God's law of love. And here we reach the expression of our text, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Now note from this Scripture that men can obey God's law, and who are the men that can.

I. *Men can obey God's law.* God's law, as given to sinful man, was not intended to be a dead letter, nor was it intended by a loving God to increase man's condemnation, although that will be the result, if it is

despised. God's law is a law of holiness, and man is to obey it by becoming holy, according to the epitome of that law, "Be ye holy even as I am holy." It is very true that man cannot in his natural powers obey that law. His fallen nature is slave to sin and obeys only the law of sin. His heart is enmity against God, however he may polish his outward life with worldly refinements and culture. But that holy God who has promulgated His holy law to man has with it promulgated His glorious Gospel, which offers to renew the natural heart so that it *may* obey God's holy law. The Gospel comes in the service of the law and to the aid of man. It is the glad tidings that there is One who is ready to be our surety, to identify Himself with us, to give us His Holy Spirit, and so to put us in full connection with a holy God. This great Redeemer is the King of kings who stoops from heaven to unite Himself with us, and so rescue us from our utterly lost condition. Is the Gospel, then, to be considered as antagonistic to the law, as many superficially consider it? By no means. The law and the Gospel are all of one and seek the same end. Some are led astray by the apparent antagonism of law and Gospel in the epistles of Paul. But in those epistles Paul is treating of the law as a *justifying power*, in which it fails through the weakness of the flesh. As a justifying power the law is good for nothing, because the natural heart cannot obey it, but the Gospel comes and justifies the man. In this view the law and the Gospel are contrasted by Paul. But the same apostle shows that law and Gospel are all

one in their perfection. The law is holy, just, and good, he says, and in our very text he shows that the righteousness of the law is to be fulfilled in us.

There is a great deal of foolish language used, through failure to understand the apostle, and we hear people say, "I don't believe in the law—I believe in the Gospel," and then they carry this folly so far as to ignore the Old Testament as if it were a book no longer of any value, but only meant for the Jews before Christ. Many superficial minds say, "Oh! I never read the Old Testament—the New Testament is what is meant for the Christian Church," as if the Old Testament was of different doctrine from the New. The Bible is *one*. The Old Testament is a Gospel Testament. It teaches the same doctrine as the New. It teaches that man can be saved from sin only through an atoning sacrifice and only by a personal faith wherein the soul is renewed. It calls for obedience to God's holy law only through this Gospel process. Because the Jews perverted the Old Testament and made their religion a religion of works, this no more proves the Old Testament religion a religion of works than the perverted teaching of the Roman Church proves that Christianity is a religion of works. Man a sinner, an alien from God—an atoning, suffering victim in his stead—an approach thus to God and reception of His righteousness,—these are the three points of Old Testament teaching and the three points of New Testament teaching. The whole desire of God from the beginning with sinful man has been to bring him back to obedience to His holy law. The Gospel is

the means to do this. Does it save from hell? That was not its design. It saves from *sin*, and only so does it save from hell, for hell is the full flower of sin. God's law demands not only *clean hands*—that is, a fair exterior—but also a *pure heart*, a cleansing at the fountain-head, a purification of motive, aim, feeling, taste, and purpose, and men are by the Gospel made able to fulfil this demand, which to the natural man is an impossibility. Hence those that receive the Gospel are called “saints” or “holy ones”; they are “the righteous” in God's sight. This does not mean that they have no sin left in them, but it *does* mean that they have the divine principle of righteousness within them, which has taken possession of the citadel of their being and has brought them into union with God. This leads us to our second point from this Scripture.

II. *Who are the men that obey God's law?* “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Here those who fulfil God's holy law are exactly defined. They are those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Flesh and spirit are often contrasted in Scripture as referring to the human body and human soul, as when Christ excuses His disciples and says, “The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak,” and when Peter says “that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but living according to God in the spirit.” But there is another and more common use of the contrast between flesh and spirit in the Scripture. It is where the *flesh*

refers to all the natural life of man as closely connected with his bodily desires and confining his soul to low and selfish interests, while the *spirit* refers to the new and higher life of man brought to him by the Holy Spirit, who unites with man's spirit and revives it in holiness. It is this contrast which our Saviour makes when He says to Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is of this that Paul speaks when he says: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh"; and when again he catalogues the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit: "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; . . . but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Hence they that walk after the flesh are they that are guided by their natural impulses, which work principally in the direction of fleshly lusts or low earthly ends. They rise no higher than the level of fallen humanity. Their minds may be stored with knowledge, they may learn and practice many of the graceful courtesies of life, they may make a creditable appearance before men, but before God they are walkers after the flesh. Their spirits, that which would connect them with God, are dead. They are wholly disjoined from God. He is not in all their thoughts. Their thoughts are on this world,

its gains, its pleasures, its honors and advantages. Gross outward sins they may avoid through a cultured education or through a sense of ultimate gain to the worldly life, but the heart is not purified and the root of righteousness is not to be found there. The morality which many such men boast of is an outward varnish over an immoral soul. God, who looks not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart, judges very differently from man.

Now, in contrast with these, they that walk after the spirit are those whose spirits have been raised from the dead by the Spirit of God, and have become their guides instead of the flesh. They abandon the leadership of the carnal impulses. They see that such leadership was a domination of their fallen nature. They have now a divine principle within them. Their own natures have not developed into this. There is no development or evolution in the whole matter. Development would have been only development in vice and folly. How, then, have they become "righteous"? They have received "the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of their salvation." It is a gift of God, in answer to the cry of the sinner. The Lord's promise to fallen man is, "Turn ye unto me and I will turn unto you" (Zech. i. 3). And when poor, lost man calls to God, the Lord gives him His Holy Spirit, which He is more ready to give than earthly parents are ready to give good gifts to their children. It is then and thus that man, who had utterly lost the divine nature, recovers it again by the divine gift, and the whole transaction

has been made possible only by the sacrifice of the Son of God, which absorbed the penalty for sin and enabled God to come near the sinner with His Gospel of salvation. God can now be just, maintain His perfect character of holiness, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus, trusting heaven for heaven's righteousness. We see from this how the believer is righteous, and yet how his righteousness forbids all boasting, because it does not evolve from himself, but is the gift of God. He is righteous, because God has placed His righteousness in his heart. He is holy, because the Holy Spirit has entered into him and witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God. He can thus see and know his position before God as a saint of God without the first particle of vanity or self-praise. He feels through and through his being that this sainthood is all God's free gift. And *as* God's gift it is for him to acknowledge it and rejoice in it, and not to hide it or disbelieve it. It's a false modesty that does not rejoice and be thankful for the gift of God. Now, then, we see the distinctive character of God's own as compared with the world at large. They walk after the Spirit, while the world walks after the flesh. They are the comparatively few who have a new spiritual life created in them by the indwelling Spirit of God, and who obey that life and its laws as against the old carnal life now subdued. They are thus fulfillers of God's holy law. They practically solve the problem as to who shall be saved, when salvation requires the *clean hands* and *pure heart*, and when without *holiness*

no man can see the Lord. These poor sinners now united to God, with the old nature still clinging to them and often tormenting them, are nevertheless the beloved children of God—the saints—the righteous ones. The world cannot understand this, but God's own understand it, and the understanding begins their heaven here.

Brethren, the practical point in this meditation is that we, as made able by the Spirit to obey God's holy law, should be ever zealous for that law in all our lives. Watchfulness and prayer to this end should mark our days. We can never admire enough the beauty of God's law. It is the expression of His own perfections. And this Bible contains it. Here we find it all. Here is the will of the almighty, the all-perfect, the all-loving One, for us to know and do. And we are *able* to do it. All excuse of inability is false, because we have the Holy Spirit given us for this very purpose to make us holy and able to do God's will. We, of course, are not to trust our *native* ability—that is worthless—but we are to trust our *given* ability. We are to use prayer constantly to this end. Is not *that* our failure? Do we pray without ceasing? Do we not practically think we can do it alone most of the time and so ignore God's Spirit in us? Isn't that the reason why we fail and fall and have such sad experiences? Let us remember that we are "walkers after the Spirit." That is the name God gives us. Let us live up to it. That means constant communion with the Spirit in us, and that means a life of prayer, which is synonymous with a life

of power and a life of peace. It is by looking at our high privileges in Christ, as partakers of the Holy Spirit, that we shall be made proficient in a holy life. But remember a holy life does not mean that bastard thing of the Middle Ages which consisted in a long face and a peculiar costume and a round of ceremonials, but it means a heart loving God and truth and righteousness and helping our fellow-men, a heart that glories in our Redeemer and longs to be like Him. *That's* a holy life. So that we may have such a life testifying for God, let us take the only way to it, the close communion with our blessed Lord and Saviour. Remember that we fulfil the righteousness of the law not by walking after the *law*, but by walking after the *Spirit*. They who try to walk after the law find it very hard and unsatisfactory, but they who walk after the Spirit find the fulfilling of the righteousness of the law their highest joy. And it is that fulfilling which glorifies God and convinces our fellow-men of God's truth.

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